ENVIRONMENTAL AND URBAN STUDIES (ENST)
3RD YEAR BA THESIS / CAPSTONE INFORMATION SESSION
Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU)
February 8, 2023
1. Introduction
2. Options: Capstone or Thesis
3. BA Capstone
4. BA Thesis
5. IRB Information
6. Symposium, Grants and Prizes
7. Chicago Studies
8. Timeline for Third-Year Students
9. Q&A
10. Chat with Capstone and Thesis Students
OPTIONS: CAPSTONE OR THESIS

All students majoring in ENST will complete either a BA Thesis or BA Capstone in their 4th year.

Students can complete either the thesis or capstone, but the BA Thesis is required for honors in the major.
BA CAPSTONE

The BA Capstone is completed within the framework of a designated course taken in their 4th year.

This option allows for structured creativity using skills developed throughout the major program, culminating in an engaged project showcasing knowledge and experience in environmental and urban studies.

Capstone projects will be presented in the Spring BA symposium.
BA CAPSTONE COURSES
(only a selection!)

- Writing the City (Carver)
- U.S. Environmental Policy (Lodato)
- Environmental Justice in Principle and Practice (Lodato)
- Chicago Neighborhoods (Talen)
- Spatial Cognition (Bae)
- Urban Design with Nature (Talen and Shaikh)
- Changing America in the Last 100 Years (Conzen)
- City Imagined, City Observed (Joyner)
- Big Problems: People in Motion (Carver and Joyner)
- Water: Economics, Policy, and Society (Shaikh)
- Mapping Global Chicago (Maidhof)
- Chicago’s Urban Morphology (Conzen)
BA THESIS

• An extended piece of research (40–60 page paper), conducted independently by students under faculty advisement;

• Supported by evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, gathered from publicly available sources or generated through data collection;

• Guided by a question that is narrow enough to be fully addressed in a year, yet expansive enough to have broader scholarly relevance;

• Supervised by faculty with whom students establish shared expectations and work closely throughout the year.
BA THESIS PROCESS

• Attend the **thesis brainstorm on February 15**\textsuperscript{th} to begin identifying a topic, developing a research question, and identifying an evidence base.

• Attend the **BA thesis alumni panel on February 24**\textsuperscript{th}

• Meet with a preceptor (Kristi or Xixi) and possible faculty advisors

• **Submit the thesis application by March 31**\textsuperscript{st}

• Thesis activities continue in Spring quarter for those accepted into the thesis program. See the **thesis page** for activities and dates

4\textsuperscript{th} year:

• Enroll in the two-quarter BA colloquium in 4\textsuperscript{th} year

• **Continuous one-on-one advising** throughout the year to anticipate each stage of the thesis and receive feedback along the way.
BA THESIS
SAMPLE AREAS OF FOCUS

- **Climate change** as a problem of governance, political economy, eco/socio/biodiversity, and ethical reasoning/action

- **Food and farming**, including cultures and conflicts

- **Transportation and mobility**, its living legacies and coming transformations

- **Sustainability practices**, their possibilities, promises, and pitfalls

- **Community engagement** with environmental change, from urban sustainability to digital activism

- **Energy** cultures, histories and geographies

- **Chicago** as an archive and field site to study questions about the environment and urbanization processes
SAMPLE THESES

Chicago Studies Prize Authors: February 10th
ENST Alumni Panel: February 24th

Ruby Rorty AB’22
Is There a Legal Path to Environmental Justice? Movement-building, strategic litigation, and a case study of Chicago’s General Iron dispute

Sindu Soundararajan BA’22
Structured, Scalable, and Just: Evaluating the Implementation of the Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement Project through Risk-Mitigation Strategies

Marc Loeb BA’21
Building a Selective Permeability of Space: Urban Renewal and The University of Chicago Campus Shuttle System

Sam Joyce’20
Renters, Buildings and Scale: A Spatial Analysis of Urban Tree Cover in Chicago

Yuna Song BA’19
Transforming the Fashion Industry through Millennials: An Analysis of Millennials’ Consumer Behavior in Relation to Sustainable Fashion
Research with Human Subjects Requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

IRB contacts, trainings, and resource links

- Social & Behavioral Sciences IRB Office
- AURA IRB (Application)
- Templates | Social & Behavioral Sciences IRB Office
- Contact the SBS IRB Office at sbs-irb@uchicago.edu
SYMPOSIUM, GRANTS AND PRIZES

- All students will present at the BA Thesis and Capstone symposium in Spring of their 4th year.
- This year’s symposium will be held on May 23rd, 2023
- There are research grants and prizes for undergraduate research.
  - CEGU grants and prizes will be announced in the next few weeks.
  - A full list of opportunities across the College will be added to our website shortly.
- Chicago Studies Undergraduate Research Prize
• **Research Workshops** exploring Chicago topics, archives, datasets, and more (see [http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/events](http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/events))

• **Chicago “Thesis Universe”** visualization to identify advisors and research mentors on campus, as well as access previous undergraduate research on the city (see [research](http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/events))

• **One-on-one advising** to help you identify additional resources or navigate collaborative projects in the city (see [people](http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/events))

• **Weekly writing days** (“Writing Wednesdays”) complete with sugar *and* caffeine...and walk-in Chicago research advising

• **Chicago Research Colloquium**, undergraduate research prize, *Chicago Studies Annual*, and collection on [Knowledge@UChicago](http://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/events).
## THIRD YEAR, WINTER AND SPRING QUARTER DEADLINES

| Winter Quarter | Seventh Week: 2/15, Wednesday 12pm | BA Thesis Brainstorm Session with CEGU Research Mentors  
Room 129, 1155 E. 60th St. |
|---|---|---|
| Eighth Week: 2/24, Friday, 12:30-1:30pm | BA Thesis Chat with Alumni Panel  
Room 129, 1155 E. 60th St. |
| Spring Quarter | Second Week: 3/31, Friday | *Due: Faculty-approved BA Thesis Application* |
| | Fourth Week: 4/14, Friday | Students are notified whether they are approved to proceed with the BA Thesis |
| | Seventh Week: 5/3, Wednesday, 5pm | BA Thesis Workshop led by CEGU Research Mentors |
| | By the end of Finals Week: 6/2, Friday | **Due:** BA Thesis reading list, plan, and timeline for review by CEGU research mentors and faculty advisor |
## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## RELEVANT LINKS

- [ENST Major/Minor page](#)
- [BA Thesis/Capstone page](#)
- [Office Hours](#)
- [About IRB and info slides](#)
- [About CS Undergraduate Research Prize](#)
- [Recent Thesis Examples](#)
QUESTIONS?