

Third-Year BA Meeting
What to expect. How to prepare.
Class of 2018

1. **Ethical Research and the IRB** (Katherine Lerner, <https://sbsirb.uchicago.edu/page/contact-sbs-irb>)
2. **The BA Thesis Calendar**
 1. Winter Quarter, Third-Year BA Meeting
 2. Summer, Rising Fourth-Years: *relax, read, refine, research?*
 3. Fall Quarter, **PBPL 298** (w/preceptor): seminar with 10-16 other fourth-year students
 1. *required*, but double majors can opt out of one of their BA seminars with a waiver
 2. double majors in BA prep class elsewhere, and those off-campus, are paired with PBPL preceptor
 3. you may have a preceptor from a different discipline, but that's generally not a problem
 4. **Deadline #1, end of Fall Quarter**: about 15 pages, depends on preceptor, outline, written sections
 5. Winter Quarter, **PBPL 299** (probably w/preceptor or second reader)
 1. *optional*, independent study with regular meetings with goal of making progress towards BA
 2. requirements depend on instructor, usually a contract or syllabus and quality grade
 3. cannot register on web; must see your college advisor and get other signatures
 4. *one-on-one work continues w/preceptor regardless of whether the student signs up for PBPL 299*
 6. **Deadline #2, February 14**: polished draft (BA theses tend to range between 35-55 pages)
 7. **Deadline #3, March 31**: PBPL Symposium for Seniors
 1. *required* miniature academic conference (10 min. presentations, some Q/A)
 8. **Deadline #4, April 18**: BA Final Draft Due
 9. May, decisions (no pass, pass, pass w/ special honors) and BA Prize nominations
 10. June, Senior Event and Best BA Prize awarded and you graduate!
3. **Finding a Topic, Focusing on a Question**
 1. ideas can come from a reading, RSO or advocacy concern, class paper, or even a new topic
 2. can be domestic or international, disciplinary or interdisciplinary
 3. methodological approaches vary substantially
 1. qualitative research: participant observation, interviews, focus groups, org. case study
 2. quantitative research: big data sets, GIS mapping, regressions, cost-benefit analysis
 4. critically, *you must be able to answer your question with methods available to you*
4. **Finding a Second Reader**
 1. a second reader is *not* necessary for special honors, but can improve your feedback
 2. can be any professor or lecturer from across the University
5. **Pursuing Special Honors**
 1. need an overall GPA of 3.4 or higher *and* have your BA thesis evaluated as worthy of honors
 2. preceptor and second reader can nominate; committee then vets nominations
 3. evaluation based on extent and originality of research, argumentation, writing quality, etc.
 4. avoid being vague, starting late, disrespecting the process, offering generic policy recs.
6. **An Opportunity to Develop...**
 1. will develop substantive policy knowledge and even expertise
 2. can pursue methodological skills in new area or a furthering of existing skills
 3. writing skills stretched, esp. in organizing and making coherent a longer paper
 4. a capstone experience that integrates ideas, skills, policy knowledge from your years here

Examples of Previous PBPL BAs

2016 Best BA Winner: Ebola Virus Disease Surveillance in Sierra Leone: Port Loko and Kambia District Ebola Response in the West Africa EVD Epidemic. The West Africa Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Epidemic is the worst outbreak of EVD in recorded history. While much has been published regarding the international and national-level EVD responses, there is a dearth of literature on more local structures, successes, and failures. This paper therefore seeks to understand how the EVD response unfolded in the Port Loko and Kambia Districts of Sierra Leone. 43 District Surveillance Officers, the epidemic's frontline responders, were surveyed. From this, it was found that political deference to the World Health Organization and their focus on technical epidemiology over logistical and operational needs had a strong and negative impact on the efficacy of both district's EVD response. A number of policy recommendations follow: most significant is the need to establish an Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response network in conjunction with the improvement of Sierra Leone's existing District Health Information Systems 2 architecture. Doing so will empower Sierra Leone's government to take the lead in future outbreak responses.

2015 Best BA Winner: Digital Dividends: Investigating the User Experience in Chicago's Public Computer Center System. Despite their growing prominence as a policy strategy, little research exists on public computer centers (PCCs), their impacts on users and communities, or their degree of success as a policy tool for workforce development, education, community building, or the reduction of digital inequality. Using data generated from 371 original surveys of the users of PCCs in Chicago, which were transformed by funds from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, this analysis seeks to understand how, why, in what way, to what end, and with what degree of success do Chicagoans use the PCC system. It concludes that PCCs facilitate social services access, educational advances, community development, and act as a powerful workforce development tool. This research demonstrates that PCCs are valued not only for access, but also for in-person assistance and training, and recommends that policymakers continue to fund PCCs and recognize that PCC value derives both from technical and human resources.

Example of quantitative study: The Geography of Local Education Reform: An Analysis of Renaissance 2010 and Gentrification: used Census, American Community Survey, and CPS data to explore relationship between school reform and gentrification, had to figure out how to measure gentrification, ran several regressions, and worked in ArcGIS, a mapping and spatial analysis software, to examine this relationship. Interviews too, but mostly quantitative analysis.

Example of qualitative study: Whose Culture is it? Analyzing Public Participation in Chicago's 2012 Cultural Plan: participant observation, this student attended and participated in 19 meeting where residents and arts and culture people discussed the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan. Qualitative analysis that looked for themes in the field notes that student took, wrote these up in a very colorful, ethnographic style.

Others titles

- Mental Healthcare Access for Female Veterans: A Case Study at the Jesse Brown VA Center's Women Veterans Health Center
- "Y Aunque La Jaula Sea de Oro, No Deja de Ser Prisión": Perils Faced by Unaccompanied Immigrant Children in the U.S.
- Additive Schooling for Asian Americans in Chicago Public Schools
- "I'm so busy with everything else": A Mixed-Methods Look at Challenges Low-Income Women with Type 2 Diabetes Face
- The Power of Police: An Examination of Stop and Frisk in New York City
- Town-Gown Relations at UChicago and Other Urban Universities
- Failure of the Dharavi Development Project in the Slums of Mumbai
- Modeling Transit Deserts: A Case Study of Chicago, Illinois (now works at Mathematica Policy Research)
- Creative Place-making and Economic Development in Cleveland (went to business school)
- Training and Evaluating Teachers in Chicago Schools (went into urban teaching)
- Transparency & Open Data in City of Chicago Government (became data person for both Obama campaigns)
- Innovative Strategies for Urban Rebirth in Detroit (went into community development, applying to Kennedy School)
- Exploring the Relationship between Non-communicable Diseases & Econ. Growth in Nigeria (medical school)