Admission to the Major

Interested students apply for admission to CSS during the spring of their first year. Each applicant is interviewed by a team consisting of a CSS tutor and usually two current CSS students. All CSS majors must complete the economics prerequisite either by taking ECON101 and achieving a grade of CR or a letter grade of at least C- or by taking ECON110 (for which a full-year of college-level calculus is required) and achieving a grade of CR or a letter grade of at least C-. Students are well-advised to have this required course work behind them before entering the CSS. However, some students who have not completed the economics prerequisite are admitted each year on the condition that they must complete the prerequisite in the fall term of the sophomore year. A student who has taken an introductory economics course in the first year but has not achieved a grade of C- or higher (or CR) must take another economics course, which will normally be a 200-level elective, and achieve a grade of CR. A score of 4 or 5 on the AP exams in both microeconomics and macroeconomics or a score of 5 or higher on the IB exam in economics is sufficient to satisfy the prerequisite. Failure to complete the economics prerequisite by the end of the fall term in the sophomore year will result in separation from the CSS.

Major Requirements

Sophomore Year. There are no letter grades in the sophomore year. At the heart of the program in the sophomore year are the weekly tutorial and tutorial essay that are designed to develop conceptual and analytic skills as well as precision in writing and argument. The academic year is composed of three trimesters of eight weeks each, and each student takes a trimester tutorial in history, government, and economics. Due to their intensive nature, tutorials account for more than half of the student’s academic work during the year. A semester-length colloquium in social theory in the fall and selected courses within and outside the social sciences complete the sophomore program. Comprehensive examinations, administered by external examiners at the end of the sophomore year, produce the only official grade for sophomores.

Junior Year. The second semester of the junior year involves a philosophy colloquium on the modes of inquiry in the social sciences and a sequence of two seven-week tutorials building on the sophomore tutorials, each carrying one course credit. Students will also take several of their elective courses in the three CSS disciplines to enhance their research skills and the ability to accomplish major writing projects in the social sciences. Juniors also have the option of studying abroad in their first semester.

Senior Year. In addition to a CSS Senior Colloquium in the first semester, the senior year requires completion of a substantial piece of written work. This requirement can be fulfilled by either an honors thesis (two semesters) or a senior essay (one semester). In all cases it is a sustained and serious investigation of an intellectual problem.

General Education

Completion of the University’s General Education Expectations at both stages I and II is also required of CSS majors, although majors have until the end of the junior year to complete stage I expectations.

Student Learning Goals

CSS Learning Goals:

- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Markedly improved reading skills
- Ability to write an argumentative, high-quality academic paper
- Expertise in participation, debate, and discussion, in a respectful manner, in the classroom
- Learning how to work with professors in order to improve written work
- Ease in conversation—about academic subjects and current events—in informal settings as well

Additional Information

The CSS Lounge, the CSS Library, the CSS Seminar Rooms, and the CSS Office reinforce the collegial atmosphere of the CSS. Social events such as Monday luncheons, Friday post-tutorial social hours, as well as semester banquets and occasional lectures, are regular features of college life, as are informal talks and discussions.

Capstone Experience

CSS students complete one of the following during their senior year:

- Senior honors thesis (two semesters)
- Senior essay (one semester)