The Learning Sciences concentration involves understanding and promoting learning in a wide range of social contexts. Students learn about the most up-to-date theories of learning and applied design, including new technologies, learning environments, curriculum, social arrangements, and space. Learning Sciences is an appropriate academic choice for students who are interested in education technology, instructional design, museum education, educational research, curriculum design, and workplace learning. Courses examine the role of social and cultural contexts in learning, cognition and the processes through which individual learning takes place, and design and evaluation of learning environments using a variety of tools, techniques, and theoretical perspectives. Students choose interdisciplinary courses from anthropology, linguistics, education, computer science, psychology, and cognitive science. Students must choose one specialization: learning in schools, out-of-school learning, or design of learning environments. Students are strongly encouraged to develop a senior-year capstone project based on one or more learning sciences courses.

Program of Study


LRN_SCI 201-0 Cognition and Action (1 Unit) Perspectives on thinking and learning; how individuals reason and accomplish tasks, both on their own and in interaction with each other and with their immediate environments.

LRN_SCI 202-0 Culture, Language, & Identity (1 Unit) Social and cultural dimensions of learning, particularly how diverse linguistic and cultural tools mediate forms of identity, learning experiences, and participation in and transformation of social life.

LRN_SCI 214-0 Culture and Cognition (1 Unit) Explore the cultural ground of cognition. How do cultural environments structure and orient our conceptual knowledge, and how do these cognitive processes feed into cultural systems? Key topics include conceptual development, knowledge organization, causal reasoning, moral psychology, and environmental psychology. Jointly, the topics are integrated through a focus on social and ecological thought. We will engage in cultural artifact analyses, field experiences, and research inquiries. Combined with LOC 214-0; may not receive credit for both courses.

LRN_SCI 301-0 Design of Learning Environments (1 Unit) Conceiving, building, and testing products and services to help people learn. Topics include the human-centered design process, principles for designing learning environments, and agile project management and communication techniques.

LRN_SCI 302-0 Social Contexts of Education (1 Unit) Societal structures that organize, supply, and channel individual learning experiences and how they provide the formal and informal settings in which social interaction takes place, particularly in urban settings. How participation in these socializing settings molds the development of individuals’ capacities and forms their goals. Combined with TEACH_ED 302-0; may not receive credit for both courses.

LRN_SCI 306-0 Learning with New Media (1 Unit) Examines ways to study and learn from social media spaces and how digital platforms shape presentation of content and information sharing practices.

LRN_SCI 307-0 Designing Interactive Media and Technology for Learning (1 Unit) Building on theory in the learning sciences and a broad set of multimodal technological tools, students develop and test a collection of learning technologies and examine ways to assess the educational impact of their inventions. Prerequisite: COMP_SCI 110-0 or permission of instructor.

LRN_SCI 308-0 Redesigning Everyday Organizations (1 Unit) Concepts and methods for understanding and studying cognition and learning and putting these concepts and methods to use in a design/change project. Combined with LOC 308-0; may not receive credit for both courses.

LRN_SCI 309-0 Inclusive Making (1 Unit) Excitement for the Maker Movement continues to grow. Part of this growth stems from the idea that Making provides a means for democratization of fabrication and invention. While this is true, in part, the practices and people that are typically included under this brand are limited. In particular, issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity are seldom at the forefront of the design and implementation of Makerspaces, the tools used or the artifacts created. Hence, the purpose of this course is to bring issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity to the forefront. In particular, the goals of this course are to push students to 1) critically explore Making as a practice that promotes democratization, 2) develop interfaces that allow a broader population of students to participate in digital fabrication and 3) design artifacts that positively impact accessibility and inclusivity. The course will include guest speakers, laboratory portions and a projects that encourages students to develop publishable scholarship and/or functional prototypes, as they work in interdisciplinary teams. This is a hands-on project course. All students will design and implement interactive technologies. For this reason you will be expected to do computer programming and digital fabrication. However, all projects can be completed in teams. Hence, it is not essential that all students come with prior knowledge in computer programming and digital fabrication. Additionally, a portion of class and office hours will be devoted to helping students gain familiarity in basic digital fabrication and computer programming.

LRN_SCI 313-0 Tangible Interaction Design and Learning (1 Unit) Explores the use of tangible interaction to create innovative learning experiences, including distributed cognition, embodied interaction, cultural forms, and design frameworks. Combined with COMP_SCI 313-0; may not receive credit for both courses. Prerequisite: COMP_SCI 110-0.

LRN_SCI 338-0 Learning and Teaching with Technology (1 Unit) Theory and practice of designing school environments that integrate new technologies and media. Combined with TEACH_ED 338-0; may not receive credit for both courses.

LRN_SCI 351-0 Topics in Learning Sciences (1 Unit)

LRN_SCI 372-0 Designing and Constructing Models with Multi-agent Languages (1 Unit) Exploration and analysis of multi-agent models, which simulate ‘emergent’ scientific phenomena in a wide variety of content domains. Combined with COMP_SCI 372-0; may not receive credit for both courses.

SESP 114-0 Summer Internship (0 Unit)
SESP 115-0 Internship (0 Unit)
SESP 195-1 Community Engagement (1 Unit) Critical reflection on community service experiences in relation to broader societal issues.
Conceptual frameworks for understanding the meaning and nature of community. For Civic Engagement Certificate students only.

SESP 195-2 Community Engagement (1 Unit) Critical reflection on community engagement experiences in relation to broader societal issues. Conceptual frameworks for understanding the meaning and nature of community. For Certificate in Civic Engagement students only.

SESP 200-0 Understanding Knowledge (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 201-0 Human Development: Childhood and Adolescence (1 Unit) Personal, social, and cognitive development from birth through adolescence. Interplay of biological and experiential factors on linguistic and conceptual development, ego, and personality.

SESP 202-0 Introduction to Community Development (1 Unit) Historical and contemporary community-building efforts, focusing on Chicago’s neighborhoods. Community development strategies: the settlement house, community organizing, and community economic development.

SESP 203-0 Human Development: Adulthood and Aging (1 Unit) Psychological, sociological, and biological factors influencing socialization and development from young and middle adulthood through old age. Influences of family, school, and work on the individual.

SESP 204-0 Human Development through the Life Span (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 210-0 Introduction to Statistics and Research Methodology (1 Unit) Definitions and classifications of terms used in quantitative methods; measures of typical and maximum performance, reliability, and validity checks; reporting and displaying data; interpreting results.

SESP 218-0 Leaders Lab (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 251-0 Community Based Research Methods (1 Unit) N/A.

SESP 272-0 Field Research Methods (1 Unit) Guided practice in systematic and participant observation. Observer bias, field notes, unobtrusive measures.

SESP 291-1 Peer-Led Learning: Theory and Practice (0.25 Unit) SESP 291 is the training program for students working as first-time mentors in the Peer Leaders program. It is taken over two academic quarters, with each quarter offering .25 credit (a total of .5 credit). You will receive a ‘K’ grade for fall quarter, which means you are continuing in the course. After winter quarter, you will receive a letter grade which will be retroactively applied to fall quarter.

SESP 291-2 Peer-Led Learning: Theory and Practice (0.25 Unit) SESP 295 is the training program for students working as first-time mentors in the Peer Leaders program. It is taken over two academic quarters, with each quarter offering .25 credit (a total of .5 credit). You will receive a ‘K’ grade for fall quarter, which means you are continuing in the course. After winter quarter, you will receive a letter grade which will be retroactively applied to fall quarter.

SESP 295-0 Theory and Practice of Community Consulting (1 Unit) Course on the importance of community capacity building and the community-consulting process; start of preliminary work for the Certificate in Civic Engagement capstone project.

SESP 298-0 Student Organized Seminar (1 Unit) Courses proposed by students and supervised by faculty sponsors on special topics approved by the SESP undergraduate education director. May be taken only once per quarter; pass/no credit only. Consultation with the SESP student affairs assistant dean advised.

SESP 299-1 Civic Engagement Capstone Research (1 Unit) Independent study courses leading to completion of the Certificate in Civic Engagement capstone project.

SESP 299-2 Certificate in Civic Engagement- Capstone Project (1 Unit) Independent study courses leading to completion of the Certificate in Civic Engagement capstone project.

SESP 303-0 Designing for Social Change (1 Unit) Processes, challenges, and ethics of designing programs, at home and abroad, for realizing human rights and meaningful social change.
SESP 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)  Faculty-supervised study of special topics of the student's own choosing and not covered in regular courses. Prerequisites: consent of the supervising faculty member(s) and the SESP assistant dean for student affairs; submission of completed Request for Independent Study/Special Courses Form at registration.