Department of Comparative History of Ideas

Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) is an interdisciplinary department that integrates ideas from the arts, sciences, and humanities. We position our students to ask questions that matter, think critically about education, and creatively express their understanding through innovative coursework and independent thesis projects.

Highlights

The Comparative History of Ideas Department (CHID) is a unique interdisciplinary undergraduate department at the University of Washington. We encourage students to be the agents of their own education. Through close collaboration with faculty, staff, and local and international organizations, CHID offers students the creative freedom to tailor their education to their own interests and professional goals. CHID students have gone on to postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences, as well as professional careers in a wide variety of fields including law, medicine, education, and new media.

CHID offers a wide range of study abroad programs, all of which offer rigorous and collaborative experiences for students and faculty alike. Each year, CHID sends approximately 200 students abroad.

CHID’s academic adviser is a recipient of the UW’s 2009 Distinguished Staff Award for her extraordinary accomplishments and contributions to the University.

Education

CHID offers a Bachelor of Arts and a minor in the Comparative History of Ideas and works to maintain its identity as an intimate learning community. As an interdisciplinary department, CHID encourages students to explore different academic disciplines to gain an understanding of how diverse styles of inquiry engage experience and knowledge. Similarly, the program’s international orientation emphasizes an understanding of different cultural, political, and social contexts. Additionally, CHID foregrounds an intersectional approach to learning, highlighting the convergences of class, race, gender, sex, ability, and other vectors of difference.

CHID’s commitment to project-based learning culminates in the senior thesis, which helps students develop their own interests and increase the depth of their scholarly engagement. The processes of arriving at a research question, connecting with UW faculty on shared research interests, performing research, and writing are each integral parts of this capstone experience.

Students (Autumn 2019)

113 Undergraduate majors
20 Undergraduate minors

Degrees Awarded (Autumn 2018-Summer 2019)

38 Bachelor of Arts degrees

Selected Student Awards (Since 2010)

2 Beinecke Scholars
4 Bonderman Travel Fellows
2 Fulbright Scholarships
1 Gates Foundation Grand Challenges Explorations Grants
2 Gilman Scholars
1 Humanity in Action Fellow
1 Jennifer Caldwell Human Rights Fellowship
1 Martin and Ann Jugum Scholarship in Labor Studies
34 Mary Gates Research Awards
1 National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship
1 Scan|Design Fellowship
1 Sophomore UW President’s Medal
1 UW President’s Medal
2 UW Arts & Sciences Dean’s Medals in the Humanities
4 UW Library Research Awards
Faculty

CHID’s faculty represent a broad range of disciplines within the academy. CHID faculty come from the departments of English, History, Jackson School of International Studies, American Ethnic Studies, Program on the Environment, and Mathematics. CHID faculty have taught in the Summer Institute in the Arts and Humanities (SIAH) 7 times, and in 2019, 8 of the 20 participants in SIAH were CHID students.

CHID faculty honors include:
1  MacArthur Fellowship
3  UW Distinguished Teaching Awards
1  UW Arts and Sciences Alumni Distinguished Term Professorship
2  Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau
2  Fulbright-Hays Awards
1  Fulbright Specialist
1  Giovanni and Amne Costigan Endowed Professorship in History
3  Joff Hanauer Distinguished Professors in Western Civilization
1  Solomon Katz Distinguished Lectureship in the Humanities
1  Harlan Hahn Disability Studies Award

Study Abroad Programs

CHID's study abroad and study away programs are distinguished by their academic rigor, interdisciplinary scope, and thorough grounding in their site locations. Students pursue complex intellectual questions raised by their experiences through independent research and/or engaged community learning. Through engagement with local scholars, artists, political leaders, activists, and other community members, students are encouraged to think about studying abroad/away as a reciprocal, collaborative experience, rather than as a consumptive act of tourism. Students in CHID's study abroad programs are therefore asked to think critically and reflexively about the process and politics of studying abroad and away as a crucial part of the learning experience.

Around 200 students from across the University participate in CHID study abroad programs every year. CHID also offers an annual course in which students create a volume of Neither Here Nor There, an online multimedia collection of critical reflections on the experience of travel.

Collaborations

A key component of the CHID Department is the cultivation of new connections both within the University and between the University and outside organizations, including nonprofits, schools, and businesses, both regionally and globally. Our core faculty hold shared appointments in History; Latin American and Caribbean Studies in the Jackson School of International Studies; Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies; and English. They also have adjunct and affiliate appointments in American Indian Studies, Anthropology, and Geography. CHID housed the Disability Studies Program's first classes on campus and continues to cross-list all Disability Studies permanent course offerings as CHID courses. We also currently co-sponsor the Critical Animal Studies Working Group, an innovative interdisciplinary campus project.

CHID students have also worked with a variety of local organizations in which they conduct independent and public-facing research. Many of our international programs incorporate an Engaged Community Learning component, in which students are required to work with local community groups, non-governmental organizations, or school groups that deal with the issues covered in the academic portion of the program.

last update: November 2019