

Mellon Mays Summer Research Training Program: Learning Contract 2025

Overview of the SRTP:

A nine-week residential program (mid-June-mid-August), the UChicago Summer Research Training Program (SRTP) prepares students participating in Mellon-funded programs for graduate study and rigorous research. Students complete credit-bearing courses in academic writing and social theory; are closely mentored by advanced graduate students and faculty; attend multiple workshops; and make presentations at the Chicago Research Symposium (held in the final week of the program). Through the SRTP, students deepen their analytic and creative capacities, develop further their scholarly writing and presentation skills, explore research approaches and methodologies relevant to their areas of study, and experience a unique community living among others who share both a passion for ideas and research as well as common values and commitments. The experience of community fostered by the SRTP takes its inspiration from the life and work of Benjamin Mays-- an alumnus of the University of Chicago and lifelong civil and human rights activist.

Learning Contract

When students begin the summer with us, we want to make clear the expectations for this rigorous program. With your faculty advisor, please take the time to read through the work expectations below, as well as the course descriptions for the courses you will be taking as part of the program. Once you have read through the learning and work portion, there will be a community contract you will also be expected to read and sign.

Work Expectations:

- *Writing for Research: HUMA 29600*
 - Regularly Attend Lecture
 - Submit weekly writing assignment
 - Workshop writing with writing intern group
- *Engaged Scholarship: SOSC 29600*
 - Regularly attend class and contribute to discussion
 - complete weekly reading
 - submit weekly post on reading
 - complete final 2 page essay
- *Research Development Seminar*
 - Complete weekly proposal assignments and submit by deadline
 - Workshop drafts in weekly group meetings
- *Mentoring*
 - Meet weekly with assigned Graduate/Post-Doctoral Student Mentor
 - Prepare 3-5 critically annotated bibliographic entries
 - Students also put together **a critically annotated bibliography** as well as a **research proposal** that we hope they will build on when they return to their home institutions. Ultimately, we hope that the work MMUF students begin with us may serve as the foundation for their final research projects.
- Independent Research: work independently, following the guidance and expectations of your mentor, *while fulfilling the other expectations* of the Mellon Summer Research Training Program.
 - Submit an abstract of research proposal: August 9, 2025
 - Submit research essay & bibliography: August 11, 2025
 - Present on a research panel: August 12-14, 2025

Final Presentation Agreement

The final research presentations will take place from August 12-14, 2025. Participation in the final presentations at the end of the program is mandatory. These presentations serve as a culminating event that integrates all study and research components completed during the program. As part of the Learning Contract, admitted students acknowledge the following presentation requirements:

- **Non-Participation Clause:** Any student who does not participate in the final presentations will forfeit all credits earned in the program.
- **Delivery Format:** Final presentations must be delivered in person. Remote presentations via Zoom or other virtual platforms will not be permitted.
- **Guest Attendance:** While live guests are welcome to attend the final presentations, the program cannot guarantee the availability of Zoom or other virtual attendance options for guests.

By signing this contract, students affirm their understanding of these requirements and their commitment to fulfill them as part of their program participation.

Early Departure Notification and Agreement

Students who plan to leave the program prior to the program's official conclusion due to academic calendar conflicts (i.e., orientations, exams, classes), leadership roles (i.e., student government, residential advisor training, etc.) must adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Advance Notification:** Students must inform the program administration of their intent to leave early *before accepting their admission into the program*. This notification must include the specific departure date and a detailed explanation of the circumstances requiring early departure. Early departure requests will not be accepted at any point after this learning contract is submitted. Please note that our program administrators reserve the right to decline early departure requests.
- **Contact Information:** Students must provide the names, titles, and contact details of relevant school administrators, faculty members, or organizational leaders they have informed about their participation in this program. This ensures that those responsible for their early commitments know the program's requirements and expectations.
- **Acknowledgment of Responsibility:** Students acknowledge that early departure does not exempt them from completing all program requirements, including participation in the final presentations. They must make arrangements to return for the final presentations in person, regardless of their early start at school or other commitments.
- **Coordination and Communication:** Students must work closely with the program administration to address potential scheduling conflicts arising from their early departure. This may include ensuring that all deliverables and research components are finalized in advance.

By signing this contract, students confirm their understanding of these terms and agree to fulfill all obligations related to participating in the program, even if an early departure is necessary.

Course Descriptions

Engaged Scholarship: History, Culture and the Construction of Race & Ethnicity

In honor of the legacy of Benjamin Mays, this course explores what it means to be an "engaged scholar" and how academics can contribute to emancipatory politics by producing socially relevant scholarship. The goal is to help students understand how scholars can use their work to support social change and progressive thought. Through readings by critical thinkers, students examine the object and methods of these scholars' critiques and develop their analytical approaches. Where appropriate, the historical context of selected works is considered to evaluate their role in shaping progressive social theory and practice. This course, which includes lectures and directed discussions, is taught by a faculty member or post-doctoral fellow whose research engages with issues of culture, society, gender, race, and ethnicity. Readings cover global perspectives and encourage students from various disciplines to reflect on how their personal experiences—shaped by history, culture, class, gender, and race—inform their scholarly inquiry.

Writing for Research: Constructing Problems

Kathryn Cochran, Associate Director of Writing Programs at the University of Chicago, leads this course, bringing her expertise in academic and professional writing. Students meet twice a week: Thursdays for lectures and Tuesdays for writing seminars led by a Chicago Writing Program staff member. The course focuses on writing modes essential for developing research proposals, including summarization, annotation, analysis, and research question construction. Workshop groups, limited to 6-8 students, provide feedback on weekly writing assignments. By the end of the program, students present their research at a symposium, and they submit a 15-25 page research essay along with a critical annotated bibliography of 20 sources. These serve as a "roadmap" to guide their research throughout the academic year.

Research Mentor-Led Research Proposal Seminar

In small groups led by advanced graduate students, this weekly two-hour seminar supports drafting and refining research essays. Weekly assignments correlate with course content, fostering a collaborative learning environment where students provide and receive peer critiques. The seminar serves to guide and support students in writing their research essays. It offers practical suggestions and also helps students come up with strategies when they get "stuck." The seminar groups are small, anywhere from 4-8 students. Groups are assigned based on a combination of things—their research topics, themes, and questions, as well as their methodological approaches. When placing students, we take account of each student's discipline or field of study (humanities, social sciences, etc.). We aim to build a small learning community among students working on similar projects. Students also learn the etiquette of peer critique and ways to provide constructive feedback on others' work.

Acknowledgment and Signature: I understand the work and learning expectations outlined above, and I am familiar with the summer course descriptions. By signing this learning contract, I commit to meeting the program's requirements and fulfilling all associated obligations.

X

Student/Applicant

X

Faculty MMUF advisor/director

Community Contract

Students will be living in close quarters and working together in classroom settings throughout the program. The expectations for members of the Summer Research Training Program community are high, and we strive to foster an environment of mutual respect, responsibility, and excellence. We ask all participants to value and respect one another to ensure a positive experience for everyone.

Please read through the following community and living expectations with your faculty advisor, and sign below to confirm your commitment to these principles:

Community Living Expectations and Agreement

- Attend at least 4 weekly U.S. Social Histories workshops and outings
- Attend other occasional academic workshops
- Attend required campus life workshops
- Commit to no use of electronic media in classes unless instructed otherwise by instructors, or for which you have a professionally documented learning accommodation.
- Respect the privacy of all students
- Be mindful of the vulnerabilities and sensitivities of others in the program. No bullying of any sort will be tolerated.
- Encourage and promote the learning of other students in the program
- Commit to self-reflexivity and ethical behavior toward all
- Commit to critical and caring use of social media
- Respect dormitory rules as set out by the Summer Housing Office of UChicago

Acknowledgment and Signature: By signing this agreement, I confirm that I have read and understood the expectations outlined above and agree to uphold these standards throughout my participation in the program.

X

Student/Applicant

X

Faculty MMUF advisor/director