

First Semester Experience/Big Chicago Fall 2016 Assessment Report

Executive Summary

The Fall 2016 semester represented the second year of our revised series of courses for new freshmen at Columbia: “Big Chicago.” We offered a total of 11 different courses with 14 total sections (compared to 14 courses and 16 sections in Fall 2015). Two new courses were added for Fall 15, the other nine were offered the prior year. One other change was the inclusion of an Honors section for incoming Honors students (Stephen Asma’s *Curiosity in the City* course).

In Fall 16, we implemented the same assessment approaches (student surveys and panel review of student work) as Fall 15, except for the focus groups, which we did not conduct (since the focus groups corroborated the responses we received in our multiple surveys). Assessment results were consistent with those we received in Fall 15, confirming a very positive impact on these classes. Overall, students were very positive about their experiences in these classes.

One significant change was the elimination of the New Student Commons Fridays, which did not demonstrate its effectiveness via the surveys, focus groups or student attendance. Perhaps the greatest challenge to New Student Commons was that this was likely the only “course” students were scheduled to take on Fridays and students, especially commuter students, did not feel the programming was valuable enough to merit presence on campus.

The College is committed to the Big Chicago series of classes in future semesters. In fact, a high majority of Fall 16 faculty are committed to returning in Fall 17 and two new courses will be added to the schedule. In addition, the College’s new general education program proposal (*The Columbia Core*) includes the Big Chicago classes as the foundational academic experience for incoming first-year students.

I. Student Survey: Week 4

To gauge student perceptions early on in the semester, we administered a survey Week 4 of the semester (N = 608).

The first item asked students to identify the reasons they registered for their Big Chicago class. They were able to identify more than one reason:

Reason for Registering	Pct.
Interest in Topic	49%
Day and Time Offered	16%
Is a Requirement	27%
I know other students	2%
Other	6%

	Strongly Agree	Neither			
		Agree or Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
Even though this class is large, the class size does not prevent me from interacting with others.	37.3%	43.1%	12.5%	5.9%	1.2%
Even though this class is large, the class size does not prevent interaction with others.	21.1%	39.6%	23.6%	12.5%	3.1%
Even though it's early in the semester, my experience in this class has been positive.	36.5%	40.5%	15.8%	5.1%	2.1%

Responses to these items were also very positive and were similar to last year's results (from our Week 2-4 Survey). Most notable are the results for the third item ("my experience in this class has been positive") with a high percentage of respondents agreeing (77%) and only 7% disagreeing with this statement. This more or less matches the results from Fall 15, with 81% positive responses and only 5% negative. This is a very nice trend.

II. Student Survey: Week 13

We also surveyed students during Week 13 of the semester. The results:¹

¹ Student comments appear as Appendix A.

Big Chicago Week 13 Survey (N = 273)

1. The topic and course were Interesting.

Strongly Agree	45.8%
Agree	40.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7.0%
Disagree	4.4%
Strongly Disagree	2.2%

2. I learned much about the City of Chicago that I did not know before taking this course.

Strongly Agree	50.0%
Agree	36.8%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	8.5%
Disagree	3.7%
Strongly Disagree	1.1%

3. I understand the urban context of Columbia College Chicago as a rich resource for questioning, exploring, and inquiry.

Strongly Agree	43.0%
Agree	46.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	7.7%
Disagree	1.8%
Strongly Disagree	0.7%

4. The course allowed me to become engaged in the City of Chicago and/or outside of the Columbia campus.

Strongly Agree	43.2%
Agree	35.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	13.9%
Disagree	4.8%
Strongly Disagree	2.2%

5. The course encouraged me to meet and work with other students at Columbia College Chicago.

Strongly Agree	20.5%
Agree	29.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	24.5%
Disagree	19.8%
Strongly Disagree	5.5%

6. The number of students in the class was appropriate for the learning activities.

Strongly Agree	24.9%
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Agree	44.7%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	18.3%
Disagree	10.3%
Strongly Disagree	1.8%

7. I would recommend this course to a friend.

Strongly Agree	42.6%
Agree	32.4%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	13.6%
Disagree	5.9%
Strongly Disagree	5.5%

Overall, the student responses were very positive: A high majority found the class interesting, reported that they learned much of the City and Columbia's urban context, and would recommend the course to a friend. A small majority (53%) reported that they met and worked with other students. The results to this item is not surprising; some faculty made a concerted effort to have students work in groups/teams; others did not place a priority on this.

III. Panel Assessment of Student Work

Similar to the inaugural year, a panel of Teaching Assistants assessed submitted samples of student work. Faculty were asked to identify the student work "that best represented the program outcomes." The same TAs who assessed student work in Fall 15 assessed the work this year, using the exact same rubric.² The rubric used a four-point scale, with 4 = "Excellent" and 1 = "Poor."

The results:

	N	Experience the City of Chicago	Reflected on the Experience		Demonstrate		Work at the College Level
			Disciplinary Content	Analytical Thinking	Content	Thinking	
Pacyga 01	97	3.00	2.34	2.70	1.78	2.24	
Pacyga 02	77	2.95	2.20	2.84	1.61	1.95	
DeRogatis	190	N/A	N/A	2.84	1.97	2.06	
Asma	95	N/A	N/A	2.67	1.86	2.16	
Asma Honors	94	N/A	N/A	3.14	2.10	2.79	
Spinner	98	2.49	N/A	2.66	N/A	2.15	
Fuller	108	N/A	N/A	2.59	1.93	2.05	

² A copy of the rubric is in Appendix B.

Gorman	55	N/A	N/A	2.63	1.13	2.16
Whatley/Hawkins	163	N/A	N/A	2.58	2.00	1.98
Weller 01	106	N/A	N/A	2.97	2.10	2.56
Weller 02	56	N/A	N/A	2.63	1.77	2.21
	1,139	2.75	2.20	2.80	1.87	2.28

Similar to last year, there were a high number of submitted work with did not represent engagement or reflection with the City of Chicago. A review of the course content and schedule for all classes does, in fact, show a significant amount of time and focus on the City of Chicago in all of these sections, so the “N/As” are more a reflection of the work the faculty member decided to submit as the assessment artifact. The student achieved the highest scores in “Demonstrating Disciplinary Content,” which validates the importance and emphasis of the individual instructor’s expertise and scholarship in their disciplines (and is corroborated by the positive survey responses about the course topics). That the student work was (more or less) rated “at the college level” is also important and a sharp departure from much of the work submitted in the former First Year Seminar course (that Big Chicago replaced). That these assignments (relatively speaking) did not demonstrate analytical thinking can be seen as a bit of a concern.

Appendix A: Student comments from Week 13 Survey

- Overall, I think the class served well as an "intro" freshman class for any college in an urban setting.
- Enjoyed the topic and the projects. I think the class would have been more beneficial if it was fully in person rather than half online.
- Teacher was really cool. As much as I enjoy actually going to class and seeing my teacher, I actually liked how this class was online
- I LOVED IT
- The instructor is such an extraordinary teacher and I really enjoyed making films for this class. I was worried about the whole online thing beforehand but I really ended up enjoying it. Job well done with this course.
- I was in the Big Chicago XXXX class. What I was disappointed with here was to see how many film majors were in this class. I thought when we registered we were specifically told to register for a course that did not align with our major. I felt like this gave me a huge disadvantage going into the class not being a film major.
- It was a very pleasant experience for my first semester. The workload was very well balanced and I really enjoyed this class.
- The Instructor created a wonderful environment for our class and gave excellent lessons and feedback; his class was truly a pleasure.
- The instructor is amazing
- This was very independent. For someone who is new to Chicago, I found it intimidating to explore the city on my own. The projects themselves were fine to handle and the professor was encouraging.
- I really enjoy having our professor. He was very fun and understanding. He always went out of his way to help you with the course, but also with other things outside of the class that you needed help with.
- I love the instructor, wish he could stay and teach longer, but if that's not his plan I can't tell him what his journey is
- This was by far my favorite course in my first semester of college. The classes were always upbeat and interesting and the instructor was incredible!
- Keep rocking it! Favorite class this semester
- Best. Class. Ever.
- The instructor is an inspiring teacher and I am grateful for all the effort he has put into this class.
- I love the teacher and TA's and I'm glad that I chose this class
- It was very hard for me to get a hold of same outside of class. The instructor always told us to contact him via twitter, but many of my friends including I do not have a twitter account, and he does not respond to his email. But, he is a great teacher and my GTA was very kind and wanted to help we every step of the way.
- The instructor was a great motivator and inspiration providing interest mixed with firmness of what needed to be done.

- The instructor is hands down the best professor at Columbia. He genuinely cares for his students and their art, and he is a constant inspiration. He's a real guy, and he tells it like it is. He's a total badass and an awesome teacher and anyone would be lucky to be in his class.
- Great Class
- Very interesting course with a very low quality auditorium with bad acoustics so it was hard to hear the professor half the time
- I felt personally offended in this class and very uncomfortable majority of the time. Cops are not bad. They are only doing their jobs and trying to keep us safe, If you are going to shit on them then don't call them.
- The instructor is a goof
- This class was very boring. There wasn't much effort to engage the students and very little opportunity to discuss current topics with students. This was more of a lecture class than a seminar.
- He was a very nice professor, but some of the students were really rude to him and I didn't like that.
- This course was great to be apart of, because of the great conversations and discussions we had.
- I enjoyed the course, for me most of it was a review but the aspects that related to the city of Chicago were new to me and very interesting
- I felt the course was often biased against a select group of people. Although I did not feel victimized, some of my friends did.
- The class didn't speak about civil rights in Chicago, but talked about the beginning of slavery and went through history as much, spending more time on content that people already know rather than actually teaching us about Chicago-specific civil rights movements. More so, I wasn't expecting things like LGBT rights to be touched on since it's always erased in history, but I at least expected the course to include other races other than black and white, and to not act like the only races that even exist are black and white. Also, it doesn't make any sense for a cisgender white person to be teaching this. If you're going to focus on black civil rights, find a black professor who knows what they're talking about.
- I really enjoyed this class
- Great class
- The course was interesting and engaging. Overall enjoyed this class and took on some additional knowledge.
- Simple, easy to follow, friendly professor
- It was very discussion based and I really liked that.
- The class is definitely a must for any freshman in college.
- I really enjoyed the discussions we had during the class. It was interesting to hear you talk because you are so knowledgeable about the subjects. I also enjoyed when it was opened up to students to talk as well. The only part I did not enjoy was the group project. It was very difficult to work with 9 people and get all the projects done. I would have enjoyed having smaller groups.

- This class was my favorite class that I took. The only frustrating part is trying to get other people in my groups to do their part, but that frustration lead me to learning more about how to work on group projects. Once, a TA didn't email me back but most of my experiences with the TA's and my TA for my group have been amazing. I will miss this class greatly.
- I appreciate that the group work is graded on what I produce and not what other group members fail to produce because they don't care about my grade.
- I really enjoyed this class as a whole, both in content and in experience. I think that it ended up being my favorite class I attended this semester as it kept me interested and it also allowed me to relate the content to my life.
- It was such a cool class, and the professors were also very nice.
- Had an enjoyable experience taking this class.
- I would have preferred a smaller class size (around 80) so that we as a group could do things during class. Often times I went alone or with one other person to site visits because no one's schedule matched with mine. I understand and appreciate the content of the class and that you were trying to challenge our thinking, but when entering the class I was under the assumption that it would either be a class where we learned about the Worlds Fair, or we travelled to different sites together.
- I enjoyed learning from this class and working with my classmates.
- More tighter lecture lessons
- Interesting class
- I enjoyed this class. There were some bumps in the road, but overall I was able to learn and grow throughout the class
- I wish I dropped out earlier.
- I could be a bit biased, because I love to journal and I love the professors, but I thought this was a great class.
- The instructors are amazing when they work together! I hope to see more of both of them in the future!
- LOVED THE CLASS. THANK YOU
- Smaller class, and if that's not an option maybe something due weekly to keep appearances up.
- Fun working with people
- The course was really hit or miss in terms of whether or not the lectures were interesting. The guest speakers were very engaging and I would say about half of the instructors lectures were equally engaging, but the other half of the course students were - literally, pretty often - falling asleep.
- No more book
- I feel the journalistic angle of this class should be more prominently advertised, so students not interested in that part of the program are more aware of what they're getting into. Also I feel having a graded assignment where the goal is simply to retweet the professor's own article so it can gain exposure for her is in no way beneficial to us and highly inappropriate.

- This course was very amazing honestly, as it got me to go out and explore my little neighborhood. Prior to the class, I knew little to nothing about my neighborhood. Now after having explored it for my assignments, I now know it is a strong and friendly neighborhood that has tons of niche and large events throughout the year and a backbone that helps the community strong, the Neighborhood Watch.
- I feel like most of the assignments I could finish in 5 minutes of being in my area along with the fact that most of what we talked about in class didn't really correlate to social media story telling, which is what the class was supposed to be about.
- This class was not what I expected. It was not easy but it pushed me and I enjoyed the class.
- Probably wouldn't recommend for students that live further away
- This class was a lot of fun and the instructor was the perfect teacher for such a course.
- Lots of sad videos in early mornings ??
- Learned an abundant amount of info about music that came from Chicago! Very insightful
- Great class. Great teacher.
- This makes me excited to venture into Chicago's music scene, as well as a bit more prepared. There are elements of wisdom I now have which I can take into becoming a performer in Chicago.
- Lot of fun! Keep being funny!
- The instructor was great and I loved this class.
- Great Teacher!!! One of my favorite classes of the semester
- The course contained too much liberal propaganda
- Wanted more interesting material to learn, there were the same assignments every week which got annoying, and for a music and media class in Chicago I was expecting some field trips or some people that would come in to talk to us, just something a little more stimulating than sitting in a dark room every week watching movie clips
- I'd like to thank the instructor for bringing out an interest that I did not know I had as strongly: writing about music is now something I do recreationally as well as for school. Thanks instructor!
- awesome teacher, made lecture's interesting and stories note-worthy.
- The instructor was a very honest teacher which was great for the learning experience. He didn't sugarcoat anything in the course and said everything how it is.
- My favorite class this semester! The instructor was hilarious and had very interesting stories to share.
- fun class. The instructor has a lot of knowledge about the history of music and media about Chicago
- Great Class! Learned a lot from it!
- My favorite class ever!! I get so excited to come to this class. I do feel like the breakout sessions are pointless, but i made some friends in mine, so im not complaining too much!
- The course was really interesting and it allowed me to better understand Chicago.
- Just wish we could have watched more

- Really great films were shown
- The class has increased my interest in Deaf culture and American Sign Language. I will most likely try to take ASL classes in my upcoming semesters.
- This class was the best! Loved every second of it!
- The instructor is amazing
- I love everything we learned but there was a lot of wasted time when we could have been learning more
- This was my favorite class this semester. I'm not sure it would be as good if it was bigger. I really liked the Landmark presentations because I learned about a lot of places in Chicago I never heard of before.
- This class is amazing!! The instructor and the entire staff were wonderful!
- Loved the Class
- The teacher is great at teaching the topics in a fun and interesting way.
- Overall this was my favorite course this semester. I took it because I love serial killers and the way they think as well as mental illness and how it works. However I ended up learning a lot more about myself as well and why I am curious about gory movies or things like that. I also learned a lot about my new home. Thank you so much for having this wonderful course here and teaching it so excellently. I loved every moment of it.
- Awesome class, I found it to be super interesting and actually paid attention.
- Loved this class, I definitely feel more comfortable in the city now!
- The instructor is very great to hear speak on the wide breadth of topics we discussed and that he knows so much about. If he and his TAs maintain the class in the same way it'll go swimmingly for years.
- What an amazing class. Absolutely fantastic.
- Good class, helped inspire a couple things in my major despite not relating to it even in the slightest, appreciated the thought experiments.
- It was a really interesting class and I hope to use the knowledge learned in here as an inspiration to my artwork one day.
- It was a really interesting experience and it influenced approaches to work.
- The instructor was a really amazing professor and I enjoyed this class a lot.
- It was cool
- The instructor, for a lack of a better word, SO COOL and entertaining
- did not really get to know anyone else in the class since it was set up more like a lecture class
- Topics and lectures were interesting and very nice to listen too. Quizes felt pretty ee Asg
- When describing the course, make sure it's clear what students are getting into, because I was not expecting this class to be like this. I thought it was going to be more engaging, small in size, and fun while learning in the class.
- The instructor is funny as hell. He taught me a lot and kept things interesting.

Appendix B: The Assessment Rubric

Columbia College Chicago
First Semester Experience Course (“Big Chicago”) Rubric

To what extent does/is the work:	Poor	Fair	Well	Excellent	N/A
1. Illustrate an understanding of the city of Chicago as a site of questioning and exploration?					
2. Identify frameworks for new and/or deeper ways of thinking for understanding the urban context and communities that surround Columbia College Chicago?					
3. Demonstrate the student has experienced aspects of the City of Chicago firsthand and reflected on those experiences?					
4. Demonstrate analytical thinking?					
5. Executed at college level (i.e., well-written, organized, presented)?					