Critical Language Scholarship (CLS)  
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UChicagoGRAD

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• About me
• UChicagoGRAD
• GRADFair plug
• How do I make a competitive CLS application?
Tyler Blackwell, AM

Special Consultant to the Harris School

UChicagoGRAD, Career Development

- Master’s in Middle Eastern Studies from UChicago’s CMES
- CLS in 2010 in Amman, Jordan
- Presidential Management Fellow at U.S. Department of State (worked on CLS and Fulbright)
- Foreign Affairs Officer in Office of the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace
- Founded nonprofit in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood, Center for Arabic Language & Culture (CALC)
- At UChicago since September 2015
Career Development & Fellowship Support @ UChicagoGRAD

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GRADFair plug...

October 28th · International House

GRADFair 2016

The University of Chicago

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What is the CLS?

- A program of the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. However, it is administered by American Councils.

- Program objective: Broaden the base of Americans studying and mastering “critical languages.”
  - 8-10 week summer program
  - Intense language study and cultural immersion abroad
  - Equivalent to one year of academic language study
  - Approximately 550 scholarships awarded annually in fourteen languages
CLS Languages...

- **No prior language study required**
  - Azerbaijani, Bangla, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Punjabi, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu

- **At least one year of prior study required**
  - Arabic and Persian

- **At least two years of prior study required**
  - Chinese, Japanese, and Russian
Program benefits...

- Domestic travel to/from Washington, D.C. for the required pre-departure orientation
- International travel to/from host country
- Applicable visa fees
- 20 hours of class per week
- Housing and meals
- Cultural activities and group trips in host country
- U.S. academic credit through Bryn Mawr College
Eligibility Requirements...

- U.S. citizenship
- Enrollment as an undergraduate or graduate student in U.S.-based university degree program
- Be at least 18 years old
- Have completed at least year of college-level study by beginning of CLS Program
- All backgrounds/disciplines are eligible
Why Should You Apply?

• Advance your career goals and intercultural skills:
  • Rapid gains in a critical language
  • Experience on the ground in an important region of the world

• Make valuable connections in your host country and become part of a vibrant community of State Department alumni

• Supportive environment for first-time and experienced travelers alike
In-Depth Learning Opportunities

- The CLS Program integrates language learning into:
  - Excursions to explore the cultural heritage of the host country
  - Elective cultural classes
  - Host family and language partners

- In 2016, CLS will introduce a new pilot program:
  - Specialized courses at some institutes, focusing on topics such as health, climate and energy, business, and entrepreneurship.
  - Courses incorporated language learning with field-specific opportunities.
  - Applicants who reach the second round of selection may indicate their interest to opt-in.
In-Depth Learning Opportunities
CLS is a “group-based” program

- Program sites range from cohorts of 5 to 35 students
- Everyone shares the same weekly schedule:
  - 20 hours of class
  - Cultural activities and local excursions
  - Weekend overnight group trips
- CLS is not a research, independent study, or internship program
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Class (9:00-1:00)</td>
<td>Cultural Class</td>
<td>Study; free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Class (9:00-1:00)</td>
<td>Language Partner (1.5 hr)</td>
<td>Study; free</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Class (9:00-1:00)</td>
<td>Language Partner (1.5 hr)</td>
<td>Study; free</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Class (9:00-1:00)</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Study; free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Cultural excursion</td>
<td>Cultural excursion</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Free</td>
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</tbody>
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- 2 hours of homework/night. Curfew is at 10pm every night.
- Local cultural excursions take students to sites in the city on weekday afternoons or weekends
- Overnight cultural excursions
- Students may have only two or three free weekends
An Opportunity Open to Everyone

- Supportive environment
  - Alumni network and mentor programs

- Open to all fields of study
  - Summer commitment only
  - Offers academic credit

- CLS actively recruits students from groups underrepresented in study abroad

- CLS is fully funded!

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Participant Diversity Snapshot (2015)

- Over 40% identify as students of color
- Students come from public and private institutions, community colleges, and minority-serving institutions
- Nearly all 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico represented
- A wide variety of fields of study, including 15% STEM
- 78% Undergraduate, 22% Graduate
Students with Disabilities and Medical Concerns

- CLS does not discriminate on the basis of disability or medical condition.
- Applicants are encouraged to consider the challenges of program ahead of time.
  - CLS institutes are often in remote locations.
  - Public services for persons with disabilities and access to medical resources may be limited.
- Despite challenges, the experience can be extremely rewarding.
  - CLS makes reasonable accommodations necessary for participation in program activities, including cultural events, excursions, and host family arrangements.
  - Participants with disabilities have successfully completed CLS institutes in Russia, India, China and other locations.
Application is live!

• Online application at www.clscholarship.org.

• Apply for one language only
  – Not for a specific country or site

• Applicants must prepare:
  – Unofficial transcripts
  – Two letters of recommendation
  – Essay Responses

Deadline is November 16 at 7:00pm CST!

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Key Elements of a Successful Application

Make a clear connection between target language and academic and career plans.

Talk about:
- The importance of the language to your goals
- Your plans to continue studying and using the language
Key Elements of a Successful Application

Make it clear you can succeed in an intensive, group-based program.

Discuss how you are:
- Ready for intensive study
- Ready for a highly structured, group-based program
- Culturally adaptable and mature
Key Elements of a Successful Application

Get good letters of recommendation:

- Letters from faculty or instructors are preferred
- Ask early for a meeting and be polite
Key Elements of a Successful Application

Start your application early, and seek on-campus resources to help you improve your essays:

- Office of Grants, Scholarships, or Fellowships
- Study Abroad or International Education office
- Writing tutor
- Academic advisor, language instructor or other faculty member
- Trade proofreading duties with a friend
Questions?

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