Signature Courses and the Core Curriculum

School of Arts and Sciences Signature Courses are foundational courses covering engaging topics of grand intellectual sweep and enduring importance. They are designed and taught by our renowned scholars and scientists who are not only recognized for their specialized research but are also eloquent and demanding award-winning teachers. Each course is made up of a combination of capacious lectures by faculty and small discussion sections led by graduate students from our nationally ranked graduate programs. They establish a common basis for intellectual exchange and define us as the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) community of students and scholars working together.

The Signature Courses are specially designed for the exciting new Core Curriculum that SAS launched for students entering in fall 2011 and beyond. The innovative Core Curriculum consists of three groups of learning goals that form the core of a modern liberal arts and sciences education at a leading public research university:

- 21st Century Challenges
- Areas of Inquiry
  - Natural Sciences
  - Social and Historical Analysis
  - Arts and Humanities
- Cognitive Skills and Processes
  - Writing and Communication
  - Quantitative and Formal Reasoning
  - Information Technology and Research

All SAS Signature Courses meet goals in at least two of these groups, and some meet goals in all three.

The SAS Core Curriculum is different from the traditional model of general education distribution requirements that students at other schools fulfill by taking introductory courses in a range of majors. The SAS Core Curriculum establishes Core learning goals that clearly articulate what SAS students will be able to do upon completion of the Core, incorporating the reasons for these requirements right into the requirements themselves. Progress in completing the Core is measured not by the number of courses taken, but by the range and number of goals met.

Achievement of the SAS Core Curriculum learning goals opens the door to new worlds of intellectual adventure, advanced study in particular majors, and success in a wide variety of postgraduate programs and careers. Through the Core Curriculum, SAS students equip themselves for a range of careers as the demands of the 21st century continue to evolve. They gain the capacity to face the public and private challenges of local and global citizenship in the 21st century, and they develop the habit of questioning the known and exploring the unknown. In short, the SAS Core allows students to examine both “what” they want to be and, more importantly, “who” they want to be, by discovering their values, talents, and passions.
FROM PLANTATION TO WHITE HOUSE
01:512:268 (4 credits)
Professors Deborah White and Donna Murch, History

November 4, 2008, the day Barack Obama won the United States presidential election, is certainly among the most significant historical moments of your lifetime. But history is not made in a moment. How did a people who were just such a short time ago on the margins of citizenship move to the center of political power in a land where their color and ascribed status marked them as outsiders? Has racism disappeared? When and how did it begin in America; how was it sustained; and what groups have been its victims?

Michelle Obama’s heritage takes us from American slave plantations to the White House, raising questions about the intersecting histories of slavery, race, and women and gender in America. Barack Obama’s interracial and international heritage prompts us to ask: “Who is black in America?” Can someone choose to be black or is blackness thrust upon oneself? What does it mean to be brown in America today? Can a person choose their race?

By exploring America’s legal and social history to answer these questions, this course challenges you to rethink American history while preparing you to address contemporary issues of profiling, neoliberal and neoconservative politics, immigration, racial identity, and gender in the 21st century.

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in history, Africana studies, American studies, business, criminal justice, journalism and media studies, labor studies, political science, public policy, social justice, sociology, women’s and gender studies, various area studies, and studies of race and ethnicity. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in American history and the major and minor in history. From Plantation to White House can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C], Historical Analysis [HST], and Social Analysis [SCL]. For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS interdisciplinary and diversity requirements.
SEA CHANGE: THE RISE AND FALL OF SEA LEVEL AND THE JERSEY SHORE

01:460:110 (3 credits)
Professor Kenneth Miller, Earth and Planetary Sciences

What do woolly mammoths and the Jersey Shore have in common? How long until your dorm room has an ocean view?

Why is sea level rising? Is it our fault? Can we stop it? Should we? What are the economic, ethical, and political realities of dealing with rising sea level?

Viewing modern sea-level and climate change through a 100-million-year geological perspective, in this course you will reconstruct sea-level changes using different geological methods and try to predict the future, the impact on the Jersey Shore, and our options to fight back.

Designed not just for the environmentally conscious but also for skeptics and those simply curious about where we have been and where we are going, this course employs basic science concepts and helps nonspecialists build the scientific literacy needed to confront the economic, ethical, and political challenges of sea change in the 21st century. Leave your preconceived notions behind!

This course is particularly recommended for students pursuing majors or minors in the social sciences and in areas of the humanities impacted by changing sea levels, such as anthropology, art history, business, classics, economics, European studies, history, human ecology, journalism and media studies, Latino and Hispanic Caribbean studies, political science, public policy, and sociology. It is of interest to students in the physical and biological sciences. Sea Change can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C] and Natural Sciences [NS]. For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS natural science, interdisciplinary, and global awareness requirements.
POLITICS AND SOCIAL POLICY: LESSONS FROM EUROPE

01:360/790:290 (3 credits)

Professor Dan Kelemen, Political Science, European Studies

Welcome to citizenship in the 21st century! You’re inheriting a global economic crisis, an unaffordable health care system, a mounting climate crisis, failing schools, a fractured social safety net, an aging population, high unemployment, and growing deficits. What can we learn from studying the approaches to these problems taken by the economically advanced democracies of the European Union?

On the left, despite the current economic turmoil, many believe Europe offers successful models of how to balance capitalism and the pursuit of economic growth with a greater commitment to social justice and sustainable development. On the right, by contrast, many warn of the dangers of importing these ideas, arguing that European social democracies suffer under high taxes, excessive state control of the economy, and economic stagnation, and point to Europe’s current economic woes as proof of their analysis. What’s fact and what’s fiction? And, what are the lessons for the United States in the 21st century?

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in European studies, political science, public policy, business, economics, education, European languages and literatures, geography, journalism and media studies, life sciences, social justice, sociology, and women’s and gender studies. The course carries credit toward the major and minor in political science and European studies. Politics and Social Policy can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C] and Social Analysis [SCL]. For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS social science or interdisciplinary requirement and the global awareness requirement.
NORMALITY AND ABNORMALITY
01:920:240 (4 credits)
Professor Allan V. Horwitz, Sociology

Am I normal?

Human conceptions of normality and abnormality pervade social life, shaping expectations about physical appearance, eating habits, sexuality, gender, mental illness, and happiness, among other things. Individuals use ideas about what is normal and abnormal to judge and modify their own behavior. And, so does society.

But, what is normal? How do we know? And, is normal something worth being?

Do definitions of normality stem from people’s own experiences, from science, from social definitions, or from universal standards of morality or human nature? What does normal mean in different cultures and historical eras? To what extent is it possible to change deviations from normal and is it desirable to do so? Who decides?

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in anthropology, various area studies, business, criminal justice, history, life sciences or premedicine, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, women’s and gender studies, and studies of race and ethnicity. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in sociology. Normality and Abnormality can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C], Social Analysis [SCL], and Writing and Communication [WCd]. For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS interdisciplinary and diversity requirements.
GLOBAL EAST ASIA
01:098/214:245 (3 credits)
Professor Dietrich Tschanz, Asian Languages and Cultures and Asian Studies

It touches your life every day, yet how much do you really know about East Asia—home to three of today’s most powerful nations and over a fifth of the world’s population?

China, Korea, and Japan are major economic, political, and cultural players in an increasingly global 21st century. At the same time, the push for globalization within East Asia is being met with an equally powerful resurgence of nationalism and regionalism. How do social, cultural, and political narratives that posit enduring patterns influence the future of the East Asian peoples? How have national memories of wartime traumas such as colonization, massacre, and bombing been constructed and used in modern East Asia? How are the global and regional dynamics in East Asia and the interrelated issues of modernity, war, gender, and the geopolitical balance of power shaping events as they unfold in the 21st century?

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in the various Asian languages and area studies, anthropology, business, economics, geography, history, journalism and media studies, political science, public policy, religion, sociology, and women’s and gender studies. It carries credit toward the major and minor in Asian studies and Asian languages and area studies. **Global East Asia can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C], Historical Analysis [HST], Social Analysis [SCL], and Writing and Communication [WCd].** For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS writing intensive, interdisciplinary, and the diversity or global awareness requirements. (Credit not given for this course and 01:098/214:242, East Asian Civilizations: Modern Era.)
School of Arts and Sciences
An unparalleled liberal arts education

The School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) is the largest and most diverse unit at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The academic heart and soul of Rutgers–New Brunswick, the school combines exceptional teaching with world-class research, creating ongoing opportunities for faculty to share their expertise in the classroom and for students to learn firsthand about new scholarship and research.

The simultaneous creation and transmission of new knowledge come together at the School of Arts and Sciences as it prepares graduates for meaningful lives in a society that places a premium on the combination of imagination, knowledge, and wisdom—those three most essential products of a great liberal arts and sciences education.

Launched in fall 2009 and led by Rutgers’ award-winning faculty, Signature Courses provide our students with a common experience and a strong foundation for a quality arts and sciences education. With their grand scope and broad multidisciplinary perspective, these courses are designed to introduce students to enduring questions addressed by the modern research university and to the challenges of the 21st century.

The Signature Courses are specially designed to support the bold new SAS Core Curriculum introduced in fall 2011. The Core consists of three groups of learning goals—21st Century Challenges, Areas of Inquiry, and Cognitive Skills and Processes—that, together with the in-depth exploration of major and minor academic fields, will prepare students for successful and rewarding futures in our increasingly complex world.

“Our aim is audacious but essential: to create Signature Courses of such depth and power that the best undergraduate students in the state and the country will enroll here just to be able to take them.”

Douglas Greenberg
Executive Dean
School of Arts and Sciences