Signature Courses
Fall 2012
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 innovative new Core Curriculum, which 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 [21C]
- Areas of Inquiry
  - Natural Sciences [NS]
  - Social [SCL] and Historical [HST] Analysis
  - Arts and Humanities [AH]
- Cognitive Skills and Processes
  - Writing and Communication [WC]
  - Quantitative and Formal Reasoning [Q]
  - Information Technology and Research [ITR]

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 universities 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. 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.

sas.rutgers.edu/signature
WAR: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES
01:920:273 and 01:988:270 (3 credits) Core: 21C, SCL
Professor Ethel Brooks, Women’s and Gender Studies, Sociology

Has the “war on terror” affected your life? In the absence of military conscription, do United States military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, or Guantanamo influence everyday life within our country? Are there connections between genocide and gang membership, or between war and particular modes of labor and production, or between military bases and sexual violence? What are the lived experiences, cultures, and historical contexts of war?

“War: Critical Perspectives” contrasts the study of war as an instrument of statecraft and a means of destruction dominant among international relations scholars with a modern, analytically rich, consideration of war as a mode of production, contestation, and transformation of nations in ways that are deeply racial and gendered. Rather than strategies and armaments, “War” considers displacement, migration, refugee experiences, nation building, changing labor regimes, production practices, and rights regimes.

This course is particularly recommended for students pursuing majors or minors in sociology, women’s and gender studies, criminal justice, geography, history, journalism and media studies, Middle Eastern studies, political science/international relations, psychology, and social justice. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in sociology and women’s and gender studies. It 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 interdisciplinary, diversity, or global awareness requirements. An honors section is available for SAS Honors Program students.
EXTINCTION
01:070:111 (4 credits) Core: 21C, NS, SCL
Professor Rob Scott, Anthropology

Do you worry about nuclear annihilation? Does the possibility of bioterrorism scare you? Are you dismayed by growing political violence and ongoing cultural genocides in places such as Darfur? Are you concerned about habitat destruction, catastrophic climate change, widespread famine, or newly drug-resistant diseases? Ever wonder what it means to be a species that can imagine its own demise, understand its role in the demise of another, or contemplate the end of all life?

“Extinction” takes a multiperspective, interdisciplinary approach to understanding extinction as a biological and cultural process, and probes the meaning and significance of such processes for humans around the globe in the 21st century.

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in anthropology, various area studies, biological sciences, ecology, geography, history, linguistics, philosophy, political science and public policy, religion, sociology, and women’s and gender studies. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in anthropology. It can be used to meet the new SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C], Natural Sciences [NS], and Social Analysis [SCL]. For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS social science, natural science, and diversity or global awareness requirements.
CONSERVATION
01:450:214 (4 credits) Core: 21C, SCL
Professor Richard Schroeder, Geography

What do we owe the future? The amount of land contained in conservation areas has more than tripled worldwide over the past three decades, now enclosing roughly 12% of the earth’s land surface. Despite this massive intervention, countless species of plants and animals are rapidly declining to the point of extinction, as are valuable habitats that support human populations.

Why do parks and protected areas so regularly fail in their mission to protect the environment? Are they just poorly designed, or do they suffer because of local resistance? Do we need more parks, or fewer? What else can be done? And, who should do it? Global organizations? Governments? Environmental organizations? Local people? Is stewardship a moral obligation? Is conservation necessary? Should we focus on human needs, or on nature’s? Which humans? Which nature? Can we afford not to do both?

“Conservation” considers the scientific, moral, political, and economic dimensions of the 21st century global challenge of balancing nature conservation and human needs, and the debates surrounding whether and how to do this.

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in geography, anthropology, area studies, biological sciences, chemistry, ecology, economics, geological sciences, philosophy, political science, and public policy. It carries credit toward the major and minor in geography. It can be used to meet the new 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 and global awareness requirements.
ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE
01:556:143 (4 credits) Core: 21C, NS
Professor Alan Goldman, Chemistry, with Faculty from Marine Science, Earth and Planetary Sciences, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Physics, Planning and Public Policy/Economics, and Environmental Sciences

Wondering what the “energy” problem is all about? Here is your chance to learn what energy is, where it comes from, how we make it, how we use it, and how we will have to change the way we make it in the coming decades. “Energy and Climate Change” introduces nonscience majors to science and scientific method in the context of one of the most critical challenges facing us today: society’s need for energy and the resulting impact on climate and the environment. The course surveys climatology, physics, chemistry, biology, engineering, economics, and public policy as they relate to energy and sustainability considered from a global perspective.

This course is particularly recommended for students pursuing majors or minors in the social sciences and in areas of the humanities impacted by energy and climate, and it is of interest to students in engineering and the natural sciences. It can be used to meet the new 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.
GENETICS, EVOLUTION, AND HUMAN HEALTH

01:19:156 (4 credits) Core: 21C, NS
Professor Terry McGuire, Genetics

Why do humans get sick? Why are diabetes and obesity on the rise? Why have cancer and cardiovascular diseases become so prevalent? Is there a mismatch between the environments in which we evolved and environments in which we now live? Why did cholera, measles, mumps, whooping cough, and malaria become epidemic diseases? Why has evolution failed to make us immune to disease?

Based in cutting-edge genetic and evolutionary biology research conducted at Rutgers, “Genetics, Evolution, and Human Health” explores what science can tell us about what it means to be human and why humans get sick. How can genetics be used and misused? What social, political, environmental, and medical changes would be required to improve human health in the 21st century?

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in anthropology, criminal justice, ecology, geography, history, philosophy, political science, psychology, public health, public policy, and sociology and it is of interest to students in the biological sciences and chemistry. It can be used to meet the new 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 requirements.
SOUL BELIEFS: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES
01:830:123 (4 credits) Core: 21C, HST
Professors Daniel Ogilvie and Leonard Hamilton, Psychology

Throughout history, the vast majority of people around the globe have believed they have, however defined, a “soul.” While the question of whether the soul exists cannot be answered by science, what we can study are the causes and consequences of various beliefs about the soul.

Why are beliefs in a soul so common in human history? Is there some adaptive advantage to assuming souls exist? What cognitive development is necessary in order to believe in a self that transcends the body? Are there brain structures that have evolved specifically for maintaining soul beliefs? Why? How do these beliefs shape the worldviews of different cultures and our collective lives? What is the role of competing afterlife beliefs in religion, science, politics, and war? “Soul Beliefs: Causes and Consequences” explores one of the oldest and most ephemeral axes of human difference.

Taking a multidisciplinary approach, this course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in psychology, anthropology, art, biology, history, literatures, neuroscience, philosophy, political science, religion, and sociology. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in psychology. It can be used to meet the new SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C] and Historical Analysis [HST]. For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS social science or interdisciplinary requirements and the diversity or global awareness requirements. An SAS Honors Program section is available.
EATING RIGHT:
THE ETHICS OF FOOD CHOICES
AND FOOD POLICY

01:730:252 (4 credits) Core: 21C, AHo, WCd
Professor Andy Egan, Philosophy

Thought much about food lately?

Eating can be mundane or sublime, but either way it is an occasion for moral decision making within cultures that have a range of traditions and structures surrounding human nourishment. What are the social and environmental consequences of various eating habits? What ethical obligations, if any, do we have toward nonhuman animals? Do the answers to these questions generate moral obligations to adopt (or to abandon) particular eating habits? How are our individual and societal decisions about what to eat expressive of aesthetic, moral, cultural, and religious values?

What is the moral (and policy) significance of particular cultural culinary traditions? How does membership in cultural groups with specific culinary traditions relate to individual well-being? What choices should we as individuals make and what actions should we as a society take to influence how our food is grown, processed, marketed, sold, and consumed?

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in the various area studies, anthropology, business, history, life sciences, philosophy, political science, public policy, religion, social justice, and sociology. The course carries credit toward the major or minor in philosophy. It can be used to meet the new SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C], Arts and Humanities [AHo], and Writing and Communication [WCd]. For students entering before fall 2011, it can be used to fulfill the SAS humanities and diversity requirements.
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
What Our Students Are Saying about Signature Courses*

“Great class. Great teacher. Great use of my time.”

“This course has broadened my understanding of the world we live in.”

“The professor was genuinely concerned about our learning.”

“The course asks tough questions and forces us to think critically.”

“The professor encouraged us to ask questions and think on our own. I have become better at reasoning and writing argumentative papers.”

“The professor talked a lot about her own experiences growing up, which helped me understand the material on a deeper level.”

“The interdisciplinary nature really intrigued me. I would recommend it to anyone.”

“I loved the class. I would definitely recommend it to a friend.”

View our signature course videos at sas.rutgers.edu/signature.

*Student testimonials courtesy of the Student Instructional Ratings Survey (SIRS)*
Rutgers University policy prohibits discrimination and harassment in its operations and programs based upon the categories enumerated in its Policy Prohibiting Discrimination and Harassment, which can be viewed at policies.rutgers.edu/PDF/Section60/60.1.12-current.pdf.

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