Signature Courses
Spring 2013
PAST TODAY: WHY CONFLICTS ENDURE
01:195:270 (3 credits)
Professor Richard Serrano, French, Comparative Literature

The great American novelist William Faulkner famously said, “The past is not dead. It’s not even past.” Why do some conflicts endure despite the enormous political, technological, cultural, and economic changes of the past several decades?

What can we learn about 21st-century struggles through examining the representation of conflict in comparative literature and arts? How can we understand the ways in which the past remains “undead” through its continuing animation of today’s clashes while complicating all attempts to resolve them? How can literature, film, and other visual arts, as well as architecture and music, be used to understand how the past shapes political and cultural strife today? Focusing on three current conflicts from disparate cultures, this course explores how conflicts are constructed and searches for the means to look through and beyond them, to overcome them, and to loosen the past’s hold on the present and future.

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors in African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian languages; American studies; anthropology; art history; Asian languages and cultures; Asian studies; comparative literature; English; history; Latin American studies; Middle Eastern studies; political science; sociology; and South Asian studies. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in comparative literature. Past Today can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C] and Arts and Humanities [AHo and AHp].
HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN DIVERSITY
01:730/185:233 (4 credits)
Professor Stephen Stich, Philosophy, Cognitive Science

In an era of globalization, everybody talks about diversity, but how much do you actually know about human nature and human diversity?

Why is there so much variety in sex and gender, race, diet, morality and norms, political views, religious beliefs, cognition, perceptions, and emotions? Is this just human nature? Are there any universals in human nature? What explanations are offered by evolutionary psychology; environmental variability and cultural materialism; gene-culture coevolution and the tribal instincts hypothesis; and social construction theories? Does cognitive and perceptual diversity raise impenetrable barriers among people?

How should we react to human diversity and the moral controversies that specific diversities generate? Should we respond from a position of moral objectivity, cultural relativism, or moral skepticism? What is the role of reason, emotion, and intuition in moral judgment?

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in anthropology, area studies, art history, biological sciences, cognitive science, communication, comparative literature, criminal justice, English, history, languages, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, and women’s and gender studies. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in philosophy. Human Nature and Human Diversity can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C] and Arts and Humanities [AHo].
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].
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 business, economics, education, European languages and literatures, European studies, geography, journalism and media studies, life sciences, political science, public policy, 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].
Normality and Abnormality

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, area studies, business, criminal justice, history, life sciences or premedicine, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, studies of race and ethnicity, and women’s and gender studies. 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 [W Cd].
GLOBAL EAST ASIA

01:098/214:245 (3 credits)
Professor Paul Schalow, 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 anthropology, area studies, Asian languages, 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].
**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 Core 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. Developing a range of critical thinking skills, students build their capacity to face the public and private challenges of local and global citizenship and develop the habit of questioning the known and exploring the unknown. The Core Curriculum and our Signature Courses prompt students to examine both what they want to be and discover who they want to be, by discovering their values, talents, and passions. Learn more about the Core at sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/requirements/core.