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 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 who they want to be, by discovering their values, talents, and passions. Learn more about the Core at sasundergrad.rutgers.edu/academics/requirements/core.

View our videos at sas.rutgers.edu/signature.
THE ARTS OF POWER: RITUAL, MYTH, AND PROPAGANDA FROM THE AGE OF AUGUSTUS TO THE WORLD OF WIKILEAKS

01:510:245 (4 Credits) Core: HST, SCL
Professor Alastair Bellany, History

Power. How is it constructed and exercised? What legitimates the use of power and what makes for effective acts of resistance and revolution? What do the conceptual tools of historians, anthropologists, literary critics, and art historians reveal about the cultural construction of political power? What light do the complex experiences of the past throw on our turbulent present and future?

From the cult of the Roman emperor to the sacral kingship of the middle ages; from Renaissance courts to revolutionary cities; from the propaganda image of the totalitarian leader to the tabloid celebrity of the modern princess; from the imperial colony to the surveillance state and wikileaks, myths, rituals, and the arts have created and sustained (and, at times, resisted) many different forms of political authority.

The Arts of Power explores how religious beliefs and legends, art and movies, revolutionary hymns and street posters, dissident rock bands and poets, public executions and political advertisements, and coronations and festivals shape and legitimate, or de-legitimate, the exercise of power in the world around us.

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors in American studies, anthropology, area studies, art history, business, cinema studies, classics, communication, comparative literature, criminal justice, English, European studies, history, journalism and media studies, languages and literatures, medieval studies, political science, psychology, religion, sociology, theater arts, and visual arts. This course carries credit toward the major and minor in history. The Arts of Power can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in Historical Analysis [HST] and Social Analysis [SCL].
HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN DIVERSITY
01:730/185:253 (4 credits) Core: 21C, AHo
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].
PAST TODAY: WHY CONFLICTS ENDURE
01:195:270 (3 credits) Core: 21C, AHo, AHp
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 or AHp].
NORMALITY AND ABNORMALITY

01:920:240 (4 credits) Core: 21C, SCL, WCd
Professor Alan 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, 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 [WCd].
GLOBAL EAST ASIA
01:098:250 (4 credits) Core: 21C, HST, SCL
Professor Paul Schalow, Asian Languages and Cultures

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 languages and cultures. Global East Asia can be used to meet the SAS Core Curriculum goals in 21st Century Challenges [21C], Historical Analysis [HST], and Social Analysis [SCL].

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