Signature Courses
Spring 2018
About the School of Arts and Sciences

The School of Arts and Sciences is the academic heart and soul of Rutgers University–New Brunswick, providing a comprehensive undergraduate liberal arts and sciences experience. Students engage with an education of uncommon breadth and depth, acquiring the tools and knowledge necessary to pursue a wide variety of career and life paths and equipping them with the intellectual and practical skills to successfully meet the rapidly changing demands of the 21st century. The School of Arts and Sciences combines superb teaching with world-class research in an environment of remarkable cultural diversity.

Students fashion an undergraduate course of study that combines our bold Core Curriculum with deeper explorations of particular areas of interest through study in a major, a minor, and other elective courses. The School of Arts and Sciences is home to more than 30 academic departments ranging from the biological and physical sciences to the humanities, mathematics, and the social and behavioral sciences. Our departments, centers, and interdisciplinary programs offer more than 70 majors and minors, providing multiple opportunities for students to explore and understand our increasingly diverse world. Students study and actively join with our world-class research faculty in following their curiosity to the creation of new knowledge and understandings of the natural world and human behavior, belief, culture, and society.

The School of Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum embodies our belief in and aspirations for our student body and reflects the mission of Rutgers as a comprehensive public research university for the 21st century.

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Signature Courses and the Core Curriculum

Rutgers 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 community of students and scholars working together.

The Signature Courses are specially designed for the 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:

- Contemporary Challenges [CC]
- 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]

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/core.

View our videos at sas.rutgers.edu/signature.
HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN DIVERSITY

01:730:253 and 01:185:253 (4 credits) Core: CC, 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 diversity 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 co-evolution 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 Core Curriculum goals in Contemporary Challenges [CC] and Arts and Humanities [AHo].
DATA 101

01:198:142 and 01:960:142 (4 credits) Core: CC; QQ or QR; ITR
Professor Tomasz Imielinski, Computer Science

“Big Data,” algorithms, and statistics are everywhere today. How do you tell good data from bad? Misinformation from useful analysis? And who owns the information about our lives and decisions?

Data 101 will help you improve your data literacy and develop a healthy skepticism about empirical claims presented in the popular media. We will explore examples of erroneous, rushed, and ad hoc conclusions based on so-called “big data,” and you will get hands-on experience analyzing and using data to make persuasive arguments. You will also learn to make more informed decisions about what you find and share online. Along the way, you will learn fundamental concepts in statistics and probability and acquire basic programming skills that will benefit you in your future coursework and beyond.

Students from all schools and disciplines are welcome to sign up for this course. The course does require placement into Intermediate Algebra or above, or credit for 01:640:025. Data 101 can be used to meet the Core Curriculum goals in Contemporary Challenges [CC], Quantitative and Formal Reasoning [QQ or QR], and Information Technology and Research [ITR].
How are indigenous/aboriginal peoples impacted by planetary and local environmental changes? How are their lives changed by their own responses and activism? In this course we will focus on feature films, documentaries, fictions, and testimonies produced by indigenous and aboriginal intellectuals, or by authors in close collaboration with such communities. Their stories take place in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Haiti, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, and South Africa.

The mainstream media and popular culture often represent indigenous and aboriginal communities as models for reimagining our own relationship with nature. Yet, at the same time, stories in these media can’t help but be fatalistic regarding the future of such peoples. In their plots, modern progress is inevitable, and the damages brought by modernization seem to be unavoidable. Therefore, indigenous and aboriginal cultures apparently would have no choice but to adapt and survive, or go down into extinction albeit fighting heroically.

On the contrary, the readings and films in this course will offer us alternative perspectives on this conundrum. For instance, we will learn about the conflict but specifically the confluence between traditional aboriginal and indigenous beliefs of the human and the nonhuman, on the one hand, and modern economic development, scientific knowledge, and Western environmentalism, on the other.

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in African, Latin American, or South Asian studies; anthropology; cinema studies; communication; comparative literature; economics; English; environmental studies; geography; journalism and media studies; political science; religion; Spanish and Portuguese; and sociology. Students from all schools and disciplines are welcome to sign up for this course. This course carries credit toward the comparative literature major and minor, and the environmental studies minor. The Global Ecological Imagination can be used to meet the Core Curriculum goals in Contemporary Challenges [CC] and Arts and Humanities [AHo].
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 contemporary 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 Core Curriculum goals in Contemporary Challenges [CC] and Arts and Humanities [AHo or AHp].
INEQUALITY

01:220:120 and 01:790:120 (4 credits) Core: CC, SCL
Professor Douglas H. Blair, Economics and Political Science

What accounts for the striking increase of economic inequality over the past four decades in the United States? Does it have parallels in earlier time or in other advanced countries? Has political equality increased too? Do Americans care about growing inequality? Should they? What might we do to reduce inequality?

After an initial look at how we measure economic inequality, we will examine the evidence of its increase and set it in international context.

We will then embark on a tour of some leading economic hypotheses for the rise in inequality, ranging from immigration and globalization to superstars and winner-take-all markets. We will also explore differences between rich and poor in voting power and political voice and participation—and whether these differences matter in the extent to which average citizens or elites get their way in the making of public policy.

This course is particularly recommended for students pursuing majors or minors in Africana studies, anthropology, business, communication, criminal justice, economics, geography, Latino and Caribbean studies, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, and women’s and gender studies. It is also appropriate for humanities, life sciences, and physical sciences majors seeking Core or elective credit. This course carries credit toward the major or minor in either economics or political science. Inequality can be used to fulfill the Core Curriculum goals in Contemporary Challenges [CC] and Social Analysis [SCL].
GLOBAL EAST ASIA

01:098:250 (4 credits) Core: CC; HST or SCL
Paul Schalow, Professor of Japanese Literature, Department of 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, Japan, and Korea are recognized as major global players in the 21st century. At the same time, it’s clear that the push for globalization within East Asia is being met with an equally powerful resurgence of nationalism and regionalism. What is the history of globalization in East Asia, and how far back can we trace it? When does it make sense to study China, Japan, and Korea in relation to the Eurasian landmass, and when must we shift our perspective to the Asia Pacific? Do the global flows of trade, tourism, and pop culture circulating in and out of East Asia make the world’s people more alike, or do they create cultural diversity? How will global and regional dynamics in East Asia and the interrelated issues of the economy, environment, and geopolitical balance of power shape events in the 21st century?

This course is particularly recommended for students who intend to pursue majors or minors in anthropology, Asian languages, business, Chinese, economics, geography, history, Japanese, journalism and media studies, Korean, political science, public policy, religion, sociology, and women’s and gender studies. It carries credit toward the majors and minors in Asian Studies, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Global East Asia can be used to meet Core Curriculum Goals in Contemporary Challenges [CC] and either Historical Analysis [HST] or Social Analysis [SCL].
CITIES
01:450:250 (4 credits) Core: CC, SCL
Professor D. Asher Ghertner, Geography

The 21st century is an urban century.

More than half of the world’s population now lives in cities. The United Nations estimates that net global population growth henceforth will take place entirely in cities, meaning the rural population has reached its historical maximum. Cities also now dominate the economic output of most nations and have become the most dynamic sources of ideas, opportunities, and dreams. Yet, cities are also where inequality is most visible, making them contested territories where different classes and interest groups jostle for space and influence.

This course examines what makes cities contradictory spaces of work, residence, and play that at once enable the release of creative energies, aspirations, and economies yet simultaneously restrict, control, and confine. It does so by using cities to explore the most pressing social concerns of our times: from the urbanization of terrorism and security, to the enduring effects of housing segregation in the United States and abroad, to the impacts of global climate change on human settlement patterns, to the causes and consequences of suburbanization and gentrification.

Students from all schools and disciplines are welcome to sign up for this course. The course carries credit toward the major and minor in geography, and the minor in international and global studies. Cities can be used to meet the Core Curriculum goals in Contemporary Challenges [CC] and Social Analysis [SCL].
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