THE RENEWED CORE

ENDURING QUESTIONS | COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY (6 credits)

In Enduring Questions, first-year students critically examine and reflect upon fundamental human concerns through a pair of linked courses. These courses provide students with a foundation in the influential thinkers, writers, and artists who have wrestled with perennial questions across discipline, space, and time. As students grapple with the approaches they encounter, they reflect upon their own perspective, strive to articulate their own opinions and beliefs, and continue to define a core set of values.

Each Enduring Questions Community of Inquiry focuses on one overarching topic, such as "Self and Society," "Humanity and Nature," or "Understanding the Past" and is comprised of a cohort of roughly 225 freshman. This cohort is subdivided into pairs of linked courses, each taught by faculty from different departments. Within each topic, faculty agree on three enduring questions to examine in their courses. In addition to the linked courses, the 225 students participate in shared learning experiences and end-of-term presentations.

NOTE: First-year students who enroll in Perspectives or PULSE will satisfy their Enduring Questions requirement. See appendix for further detail.

2 EXAMPLES OF ENDURING QUESTIONS

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST
How do we know what we know?
How does the past shape the future?
How has religious belief influenced society?

Paired courses might include:
- Lost Civilizations
  (Classics and History)
- The City of Rome
  (History and Fine Arts)
- Memory and Trauma
  (Literature and Psychology)
- Boston's Past
  (Literature and History)
- History of the Book
  (Fine Arts and Literature)

INHABITING SPACE
How do imagination and reality intersect?
How do spaces shape (or are shaped by) human behavior?
What is the role of beauty?

Paired courses might include:
- Houses, Landscapes, Places
  in American Literature and Culture
  (Fine Arts and Literature)
- Imagined Spaces and
  Utopian Societies
  (Literature and History)
- Borders and Liminal Spaces
  (Literature and Sociology)

LINKED COURSES

Faculty from two disciplines co-develop and teach a pair of linked courses. Each instructor teaches his or her own course individually, with the two courses connected through content, theme, and syllabi.

Each pair of linked courses has an average size of ~12 students. Larger sections may be necessary based on departmental and course needs, and linked sections of First-Year Writing Seminar (FWS) will be capped at 16 students.

Writing Fellows will be available to assist faculty as desired.

SHARED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Over the course of the semester, all 225 students participate in regular lectures, presentations, screenings, excursions (e.g., museum trips, walking tours, musical and theatrical performances, etc.), and/or opportunities for reflection related to their Enduring Questions. One faculty member will serve as chair of each Enduring Questions Community, and will oversee the shared learning experiences.

COMMUNITY ACADEMY: A FESTIVAL OF IDEAS

The 1939 Jesuit Ratio Studiorum requires that students be grouped into "Academies," to give public presentations of what they have learned, including disputations, lectures, recitations of poetry, and other exercises. Working individually or in small teams, BC students will prepare projects related to their Enduring Questions course, that they present to a larger audience during the final week of the semester. Projects may include research presentations, debates, performances, exhibits, films, or other creative works.

*The Associate Dean for the Core, and the Director of Academics advising will be present at summer orientation sessions in order to make accommodations for students whose freshman schedule would be too crowded if they took the Communities of Inquiry courses.
THE RENEWED CORE

Complex Problems | Community of Inquiry (6 credits)

In a Complex Problem Community of Inquiry, students examine an issue of contemporary urgency and global significance. Through a team-taught lecture, students gain an understanding of the problem from multiple viewpoints, considering historical context, various interpretations, and attempted solutions. A complementary lab engages students to learn by doing, working in small teams to apply knowledge to real-world issues. By studying cultural, economic, historical, political, religious, scientific, and/or social currents in relation to their own experience, students foster habits of mind that are alert to global connections, differences, or comparisons.

Each Complex Problem Community of Inquiry focuses on one global challenge. This Community is made up of ~225 freshmen, who come together for weekly lectures, and are subdivided into 12 lab sections of ~19 students each. The semester culminates in a week of student presentations. Each Complex Problem counts as a double course for each faculty member, with six credits per student credited to each instructor.

NOTE: First-year students enrolled in PULSE satisfy their Complex Problem requirement. Students enrolled in Perspectives as freshmen may take their Complex Problem in the sophomore year. See appendix for further detail.

TEAM-TAUGHT LECTURES
Lectures are developed and team-taught by two faculty from different disciplines. Three times per week, the entire cohort of 225 students comes together for these lectures.

COMPLEX PROBLEM LABS
Once per week, the cohort breaks into smaller groups of ~19 students for a 90-minute lab. These may include research, discussion, case studies, problem-based learning modules, projects, and/or off-campus experiences. Faculty teaching Complex Problems will also be responsible for designing and directing the labs, which will be run by postdocs or graduate students, with assistance from two upperclass students.

SHARED LEARNING EXPERIENCES
Over the course of the semester, students participate in periodic lectures, presentations, screenings, excursions, and/or opportunities for reflection related to their Complex Problem.

ACCESS TO WATER
Hypothetical Lab assignment:
Students conduct research and calculations on their hometown watersheds in order to draw conclusions about their hometown water use. Students gain experience documenting and analyzing research methods and results.

COMMUNITY ACADEMY: A FESTIVAL OF IDEAS
The 1999 Jesuit Ratio Studiorum requires that students be grouped into "Academies," to give public presentations of what they have learned, including disputations, lectures, recitations of poetry, and other exercises. In the final week of the semester, BC students will present projects related to their Complex Problem to a larger audience. Working in small teams, they select and work on these presentations during the final month of the Complex Problem Lab. Projects may include research presentations, debates, performances, exhibits, films, or other creative works.
Reflection on the meaning, significance, and value of the work of the disciplines is an important component of Core courses. In addition, we are committed to developing and piloting new programs and experiences that encourage faculty and students to reflect on the purposes of a liberal arts education at a Jesuit, Catholic university. As an integral part of the renewed Core, students will be invited to develop skills for effective and purposeful reflection, and to employ those skills in exploring their relation to God and faith, developing as “men and women for others” through service, integrating the varied intellectual experiences of their Core courses and major, and furthering their vocational goals. Through Reflection, the Core aims to build habits of discernment that enable each student to chart a purposeful journey during their time at Boston College and throughout their lives. The Core Renewal Committee will work with faculty, Mission and Ministry, and Student Affairs to develop enhanced opportunities for reflection in three primary ways:

- Boston College already provides many opportunities for students to learn about and practice reflection, especially through programs offered by Mission and Ministry and Student Affairs. The CRC will work with these offices to develop ways to ensure all students are aware of these opportunities and encouraged to participate in them. Faculty participating in each Community of Inquiry will be partnered with colleagues from Mission & Ministry and Student Affairs who will help introduce all students to the concept, usefulness, and purpose of reflection.

- Advising enables opportunities for sustained reflection. The Core Renewal Committee will work to strengthen advising, especially during the first year. The Director of the Academic Advising Center, as a member of the Core Renewal Committee, will help develop relationships with Student Affairs and Mission and Ministry to foster more robust reflection in advising.

- Beginning with the Communities of Inquiry courses, new opportunities for reflection will be made available to students inside and outside the classroom. Working with Mission and Ministry, Student Affairs, the AHANA office, the Career Center, and other groups. Boston College will develop programs related to the enduring questions and complex problems being discussed. For example, some students might attend a retreat in Dover to reflect on the personal implications of their enduring questions or complex problem, or on the career possibilities afforded by it. Presentations by alumni, faculty, and administrators to the Communities of Inquiry can encourage a reflective approach to life.
### Course Characteristics, Communities of Inquiry

The Core Renewal Committee will work with each department to develop a portfolio of Core offerings. The balance of Enduring Questions, Complex Problem, Foundation, and Immersion courses will differ for each department, depending on the nature of the discipline and the most appropriate pedagogies for each course. The CRC will work with departments to create discipline-specific guidelines for each type of course based on the general templates listed below and on the following page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Enduring Questions Courses</strong></th>
<th><strong>Complex Problem Courses</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask students to reflect upon issues and values related to fundamental concerns of human life</td>
<td>Examine an issue of contemporary urgency and global significance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce students to influential thinkers, writers, or artists who have wrestled with the question across discipline, time, and space</td>
<td>Consider its historical context, various interpretations, and attempted solutions in a rigorous way</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduce the methods your discipline uses to approach a question, text, or object cultivating analytical and creative thinking.</td>
<td>Address global connections, differences, or comparisons; consider ethical implications and issues of justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage in a dialogue with the methods of the disciplinary approach of the other instructor</td>
<td>Develop an attached lab that provides hands-on problem-solving activities for students involving multiple media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offer some common readings or assignments across the paired sections</td>
<td>Introduce students to various disciplinary approaches to the problem, and to the ways in which they might intersect, cultivating appropriate analytical and creative skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work intensively with students to improve their writing (with help from writing fellows if desired)</td>
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Additional Thoughts on Renewed Core Courses

Ensure academic rigor

All Core courses will be academically rigorous. They will ask students to engage with complex concepts and challenging texts. Each Core course will require students to take on a significant workload (~6 hours per week of work outside of class on average over the semester). Core courses should require regular assignments and/or problems sets and should include mid-semester and final graded work. Core courses should aim for a median grade no higher than B+.

Develop communication skills for the 21st century, building towards written, oral, and/or visual eloquence.

Communication, especially through writing, is by nature an active effort to organize and express ideas. Effective writing requires critical thinking skills as well as knowledge about the writing process, awareness of rhetorical situations and audience, and knowledge of the conventions of grammar, rhetoric, syntax, documentation, and genre. Courses will inevitably differ in the ways they incorporate different forms of communication. While many Core courses should contain a strong writing component, faculty may choose to incorporate other communication skills, considering written and oral eloquence and visual presentation across a variety of print and digital media.

Courses should incorporate multiple opportunities for students to practice and get feedback in the chosen form(s) of communication. There are many possibilities for incorporating writing: Written exams, term papers and shorter papers (especially if students are expected to revise them), journals, overnight position papers based on class discussion or reading assignments, in-class reflections designed to feed into discussion, free-writing exercises in class, even question-box submissions. Examples for other forms of communication include presentations, posters, talks, debates, wiki articles, and videos.

Enduring Question courses should incorporate multiple opportunities for students to practice and get feedback in the chosen form(s) of communication. To build writing skills, students will be required to write at least 2 papers in each of the linked Question courses, comprising ~25 pages total over the course of the semester. Students should receive ample feedback on their writing and have opportunity to revise. Writing fellows will be available to assist if faculty choose to work with them.

Global Differences/Social Justice: Foster an ethical awareness of global connections and inequities; consider impact on society and on different groups of people

21st century society is both extremely diverse, at home and abroad, and more tightly connected as a global world. Preparing students to work and live collaboratively with people of different backgrounds and beliefs is crucial for their future success. To this end, students must develop an awareness of global connections and inequities, in order to understand their own place in relation to cultural, economic, historical, political, religious and social currents. Students should also consider the ways in which different groups - defined by region, nation, culture, religion, race, class and/or gender - might perceive, interpret and feel the impact of the same topic differently based on their values, customs, and circumstances.