The centerpiece of a Jesuit education has always been a common curriculum that emphasizes the study of defining works in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. The Boston College Core Curriculum is designed to provide a broad understanding of the forces that have shaped the world by challenging students to think across the disciplines in order to make good decisions, and to communicate effectively in an increasingly complex world.

To fulfill Core requirements, each student must complete:

1 course in Arts: Art, Art History, Film, Music, Theatre

1 course in Cultural Diversity

2 courses in History:
   - 1 course in History I
   - 1 course in History II

1 course in Literature:
   - Classics; English; Romance Languages and Literatures; Eastern, Slavic, and German Studies

1 course in Mathematics

2 courses in Natural Science:
   - Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Physics

2 courses in Philosophy

2 courses in Social Science:
   - Economics, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology

2 courses in Theology:
   - 1 course in Christian Theology
   - 1 course in Sacred Texts and Traditions

1 course in Writing

To view all courses that satisfy Core requirements, visit: BC.EDU/CORE

Student comments in this brochure taken from anonymous survey responses

COMPLEX PROBLEMS COURSES

Complex Problems courses are six-credit courses, team-taught by two professors from different disciplines. Students meet multiple days each week for lectures and once per week for lab. Students and faculty also gather for weekly Reflection sessions, which may involve group activities; guest speakers, or field trips off campus. Each paired Complex Problems course fulfills two Core requirements. Some may fill an additional Core requirement for Cultural Diversity, through either Difference, Justice and the Common Good (DJCG) or Engaging Difference and Justice (EDJ).

ENDURING QUESTIONS COURSES

Enduring Questions courses are two linked three-credit courses taught by professors from different disciplines. The same 19 students take both classes. Four times during the semester, students and faculty gather for Reflection sessions, which may involve group activities, guest speakers, or field trips off campus. Each pair of Enduring Questions courses fulfills two Core requirements. Some may fill an additional Core requirement for Cultural Diversity through either Difference, Justice and the Common Good (DJCG) or Engaging Difference and Justice (EDJ).

If you have any questions about these courses or how to register, e-mail core@bc.edu.

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to learn more about the courses
AS A MEMBER OF THE CLASS OF 2026, YOU ARE INVITED TO enroll in Boston College’s innovative, team-taught Core courses: Complex Problems and Enduring Questions. Each one is collaboratively taught by two faculty members from different academic departments, and each is designed to engage students in interdisciplinary explorations of topics of critical importance. These include areas such as ethics and engineering; race and violence; markets, cultures, and values; economics, law, and health policy; the value of freedom; climate change and urban planning; and more.

Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses extend inquiry beyond the classroom to labs, reflection sessions, conversations with outside speakers, and off-campus field visits, creating an intensive shared learning experience for both teachers and students. They exemplify Boston College’s innovative approach to Core education by establishing a foundation for students’ intellectual development and preparing them to become engaged, effective world citizens.

You will have the opportunity to enroll in this fall’s Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses when you register during your summer orientation session. Both are worth six credits and fulfill two of the University’s Core Curriculum requirements. In November, you will be eligible to register for spring 2023 Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses; you will receive a Spring brochure later this fall.

To view faculty members describing their courses and for more information, visit bc.edu/complexenduring
Global Implications of Climate Change
(SOCY1501 + EESC1501)

Brian Gareau, Sociology and International Studies
Tara Pisani Gareau, Earth and Environmental Sciences
Robin Wright, Core Fellow, Environmental Studies

▶ Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 Natural Science +
Cultural Diversity through EDJ

Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time. Decisive and swift action to mitigate carbon emissions is needed in order to prevent catastrophic events and unhealthy environments for future generations. Societies worldwide will need to adapt to a new environmental reality. However, the causes, effects, and costs of climate change are not equally distributed, which raises ethical questions about responsibility and justice. This course will encourage critical engagement with and personal reflection on these important issues, covering the science behind climate change, the roles that social, political, and economic conditions play in understanding and internalizing climate change, and the different roles of governments, businesses, religious communities, and individuals for enacting (or preventing!) ambitious solutions to climate change.

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.

You must select one of the following lab sections with your registration:
• W 3–4:50 p.m.
• W 5:30–7:20 p.m.
• F 10–11:50 a.m.
• F 1–2:50 p.m.

Reflection will be held:
• T 6–7:25 p.m.

Making the Modern World: Design, Ethics & Engineering
(ENGR1801 + HIST1627)

Jenna Tonn, Engineering
Glenn Gaudette, Engineering
Russell Powell, Core Fellow, Theology

▶ Fulfills 1 Natural Science + 1 History II +
Cultural Diversity through EDJ

Together we will consider how engineers and other stakeholders navigate risks related to industrial and environmental disasters; balance financial, technological, and regulatory pressures associated with complex socio-technical problems; and negotiate technical and political liabilities surrounding artificial intelligence, surveillance, and climate adaptation. Students will collaborate on group design projects based on human-centered engineering. Engineering systems present pressing technical, ethical, and moral problems that we must grapple with as engaged global citizens. In this class, students will explore the social, cultural, and institutional history of engineering; learn foundational skills in quantitative analysis of real-world engineering designs; and understand the political, environmental, economic, and ethical trade-offs associated with building the modern world.

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 10:30–11:45 a.m.

You must select one of the following lab sections with your registration:
• TH 12–1:50 p.m.
• TH 2–3:50 p.m.
• F 10–11:50 a.m.

Reflection will be held:
• TH 6–7:25 p.m.

Some Complex Problems courses will use PODs for their weekly Reflection sessions. With PODs (Purposeful Ongoing Discussion), upper-class students mentor first-year students in tackling course material through intellectual conversations and reflections. Through this engagement, students connect content to their daily lives. PODs help BC fulfill its mission to produce “men and women for whom discernment is a habit.”

(EESC1507 + HIST1513)

John Ebel, Earth and Environmental Sciences
Convery Valencius, History
Vena Offen, Core Fellow, Environmental Studies

▶ Fulfills 1 History II + 1 Natural Science

This course explores U.S. energy from the perspectives of history, culture, technology, engineering, and foreign policy. We ask how we created and distributed energy in the past, how energy systems function in the present, and how they may evolve. We investigate energy production, distribution, and use—coal, oil, nuclear power, hydropower, wind, and solar power—along with cables, pipelines, and transmission systems. Through hands-on exercises and field trips, students learn how past technological and economic choices shaped current U.S. energy systems, affect the environment, and how sustainable energy systems will be in the future.

These course lectures meet:

• T TH 3–4:15 p.m.

You must select one of the following lab sections with your registration:

• M 9–10:50 a.m.
• M 12–1:50 p.m.
• W 9–10:50 a.m.
• W 12–1:50 p.m.

Reflection will be held:

• T 6–7:25 p.m.

“I believe this course is great in helping students to learn how to draw connections between different disciplines.”
Real Estate and Urban Action: Transforming Communities and Increasing Access to Opportunity

(ECON1704 + UNAS1725)

Geoffrey Sanzenbacher, Economics
Neil McCullagh, Carroll School of Management
Nora Gross, Core Fellow, Sociology

▶ Fulfills 2 Social Science

This course explores concepts of social economic and racial inequality with a focus on the interaction between housing, labor markets, and the ultimate accumulation of wealth. Housing will be examined through a study of the history of affordable housing, an exploration of the transformation of Columbia Point Public Housing Development to Harbor Point, and an applied simulation. Labor markets will be explored at the theoretical level (e.g., labor supply/demand, human capital, discrimination) before diving into data and literature on how changes over the last 40 years have expanded inequality. The course will conclude with how the lack of both affordable housing and quality labor market opportunities can interact to restrict intergenerational wealth accumulation and opportunity. It will challenge students to explore and test solutions for transforming distressed communities into safe, desirable neighborhoods that produce better outcomes for all residents through field projects, simulations, and a practical final project.

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 10:30–11:45 a.m.

You must select one of the following lab sections with your registration:
• W 10–11:50 a.m.
• W 3–4:50 p.m.
• F 10–11:50 a.m.
• F 1–2:50 p.m.

Reflection will be held:
• M 6–7:25 p.m.

Beyond Price: Markets, Cultures, Values

(ECON1501 + ENGL1503)

Can Erbil, Economics
Kalpana Seshadri, English

▶ Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 Literature

This course is about wealth and values—what it means to “know the price of everything and the value of nothing.” In an era where the super-rich seem to have so much glamor and power, we examine how the economy, values, and the dominance of the market hold sway in our environment and personal lives. We look at markets, incentives, ecology, and ethics through the lenses of literature and economics, and use case studies to explore the relationship between business decisions and market interests and their impact on ordinary lives.

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 12–1:15 p.m.

You must select one of the following lab sections with your registration:
• M 9–10:15 a.m.
• M 10:30–11:45 a.m.
• W 12–1:15 p.m.
• M 1:30–2:45 p.m.

Reflection will be held:
• TH 6–7:50 p.m.

“This is one of the best classes you could ever take while at Boston College. There is no better way to engage in scholarly research and debate than through this class.”
Roots and Routes: Writing Identity (ENGL1713)
Roots & Routes: Reading Identity (ENGL1712)

Lynne Anderson, English
Elizabeth Graver, English
▶ Fulfills Writing + Literature

How does migration in today’s world shape questions of identity, borders, belonging, and this reimagining of home?
We will read a range of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry (including spoken word poems) by authors whose migration stories to the United States offer multiple ways to think about what it means to be an outsider and build a new life and home. We will explore our own migration stories—the “routes” that brought us here and the ways in which our family “roots” shape our identities. Some of the questions we will consider include: What are the gifts and challenges of making a home across cultures? Of being multilingual? What do you know—and what don’t you know—about your own family’s migration story, whether recent or more removed? How might that story intersect with the topics we encounter in our texts? How does the writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk on the “danger of the single story” invite us to ask questions about power, memory, silence, and voice? What does it mean to migrate in a globalized, wired, yet often divided world?

These course lectures meet:
- T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.
- T TH 3–4:15 p.m.
Reflection will be held:
- TH 6–7:50 p.m.

Life, Liberty, and Health: The Economics of Healthcare (ECON1702)
Life, Liberty, and Health: Policy, Politics, and Law (UNAS1702)

Tracy Regan, Economics
Mary Ann Chirba, BC Law
▶ Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 History II + Cultural Diversity through EDJ

Why is health care so interconnected with policy, law, and economics?
We have rights to vote and free speech, but do we have a right to health? With the global COVID-19 pandemic, access to health care and health insurance have become more important than ever in the pursuit of life, liberty, and health. Topics include the history of our health care system, prescription drug costs, vaccine mandates, the opioid crisis, youth vaping, and sports-related concussions. Such complex issues are best understood through interdisciplinary study. Through the lens of contemporary problems, students will learn basic principles of economics and law, and examine how they intersect to drive health policy involving the enduring questions of government authority and individual autonomy, morality and ethics, and social justice and human rights.

These course lectures meet:
- T TH 10:30–11:45 a.m.
- T TH 12–1:15 p.m.
Reflection will be held:
- W 6–7:50 p.m.
How do societies define justice, and what role do lawyers, authors, and dramatists play in illuminating the many complex issues underlying this concept?

In this course, we will explore the range of experiences of law for its ministers (lawyers, judges, law enforcement agents) as well as for its recipients/suppliants (citizens, plaintiffs, defendants, and victims). We will first begin with the question of what is “justice” and approach that issue from the standpoint of political theorists. What does justice mean? Is it fairness? equality? morality? maximization of utility? We will use Michael Sandel’s *Justice: A Reader* as an introductory text to major political theorists on the justice question, from the ancients to the moderns. We will then examine how the law is mobilized and deployed by professionals as an instrument of justice. What do we mean by the “rule of law,” what roles do lawyers and judges play in safeguarding and promoting the rule of law, and what, if anything, does the rule of law have to do with justice? A set of topics has been selected to develop an understanding of the situational and systemic demands under which legal actors perform their roles in the United States. For this part of the course, we will use Lord Thomas Bingham’s reader *The Rule of Law*. The course concludes with an investigation of where lawyers stand in American society today, assessing whether they have succeeded or failed in their larger ambitions to protect the rule of law and to serve as architects of a just society. If not, how might they better serve both society and themselves in uncertain times? For this latter part of the course, we will examine the work of two lawyers, one a criminal defense lawyer and one an environmental litigator, in the texts *Just Mercy* and *A Civil Action*.

These course lectures meet:

- T TH 12–1:15 p.m.
- T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.

Reflection will be held:
- T 6–7:50 p.m.
From Hiroshima to K-Pop: Filmmakers’ Perspectives (UNAS1717)
From Hiroshima to K-Pop: Historical Perspectives (UNAS1716)

Christina Klein, English
Ingu Hwang, International Studies
▶ Fulfills Arts + 1 History II

What is the relationship between politics and popular culture?

How did East Asia emerge from the wreckage of the Second World War to become the dominant political, economic, and cultural force it is in the world today? What is the relationship between politics and popular culture? Since 1945, East Asia has experienced the Cold War, civil war, communist revolution, modernization, capitalism, democratization, and economic booms and busts. It has also become a powerhouse producer of popular and art cinema. In these paired courses, students will explore the relationship between politics and culture as they learn how historians and filmmakers have grappled with the tumultuous events of the past 75 years.

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.
• T TH 3–4:15 p.m.
Reflection will be held:
• T 6–7:50 p.m.
Spiritual Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics (THEO1701)

Aesthetic Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics (MUSA1701)

Brian Robinette, Theology
Daniel Callahan, Music

▶ Fulfills 1 Theology (Christian Theology) + Arts

How might we train for encounters with beauty and the sacred?

One objective of these linked courses is to help students realize that their own personal experiences can be the departing point for—and even the subject of—scholarly inquiry; that theology, the arts, and philosophy are not mere disciplines to be learned but practices that are indispensable to being alive and serving the common good.

Another aim is for students to realize that deeply meaningful experiences—whether of the true, the beautiful, and the good or the divine in the world and in one’s self—often don’t just happen. Instead, such experiences are usually the result of being situated in the right place and time with the right preparation and mindset; in other words, they are usually the result of a certain type of exercise.

These course lectures meet:
• M W 1:30–2:45 p.m.
• M W 3–4:15 p.m.

Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
By arrangement

St. Petersburg: Dream & Reality (CLAS1703)

Rome: Art, Regime & Resistance (CLAS1702)

Thomas Epstein, Classical Studies
Christophr Polt, Classical Studies

▶ Fulfills Literature + History I

To what kinds of life and culture do great cities give rise?

Rome is the West’s oldest archetype of the imperial city; St. Petersburg the youngest, and perhaps, last. To what kinds of life and culture do great cities give rise? Exploring artistic, intellectual, and social dimensions of Rome and St. Petersburg, we will ask about the responsibility of the human person to the society in which he or she lives. How do artists respond to official conceptions of identity and how, conversely, does the state view its artists and intellectuals? How are local and national self-identities made and unmade by art and artists? Our reflection sessions will explore how these questions find expression in our own first “great” city, Boston.

These course lectures meet:
• M W F 1–1:50 p.m.
• M W F 2–2:50 p.m.

Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
By arrangement

Geographies of Imperialism: History of Colonization (HIST1716)

Geographies of Imperialism: Theology of Colonization (THEO1707)

Elizabeth Shlala, History
Natana DeLong-Bas, Theology

▶ Fulfills 1 History I + 1 Theology (Sacred Texts & Traditions) + Cultural Diversity through DJCG and EDJ

The age of empires is past—or is it?

In this course, we examine the enduring ideas of empires and their challengers through the present day using the lenses of history and theology (Christianity and Islam). Beginning with the traditional geographies of maps, we explore how empires colonized not only territories with physical borders, but also bodies and minds, using race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, education, laws, and institutions. Using the British and French empires in the Middle East and North Africa as case studies, we will identify and question how to overcome the boundaries still imposed on people today.

These course lectures meet:
• M W F 1–1:50 p.m.
• M W F 2–2:50 p.m.

Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
• TH 6–7:50 p.m.
“I was pushed to my limits academically and spiritually. Overall, what I have learned in this class goes outside of the classroom and will genuinely stay with me for years to come.”
Flawed Founders: George Washington and the Mythology of a Heroic President (POLI1051)
Flawed Founders: King David and the Theology of a Political Hero (THEO1710)

Marc Landy, Political Science
David Vanderhooft, Theology

▶ Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 Theology (Sacred Texts & Traditions)

How can we understand the greatness of heroic political founders who are also flawed human beings?

Ancient Israel’s monarchy and America’s constitutional democracy represent two historically influential and innovative political systems. Each had a major founder, King David and George Washington, respectively, who transcended their times and exemplified greatness. David’s messianic identity and theological legacy remain enduring elements of Jewish and Christian theological reflection. Washington’s mythological status persists in the American secular imagination. Yet both figures betrayed significant personal flaws: temper; self-doubt; political conniving; immoral treatment of women, slaves, and peers; and dubious military judgment. Must great founders also be moral exemplars? What obligations do we have today to celebrate, condemn, study, and understand these flawed founders?

These course lectures meet:

• T TH 12–1:15 p.m.
• T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.

Reflection will be held: (4 times per semester):
• TH 6–7:50 p.m.

Coming of Age in Literature (UNAS1708)
Coming of Age in Film (FILM1701)

Susan Michalczyk, MCAS College Faculty
John Michalczyk, Art, Art History & Film

▶ Fulfills Arts + Literature

When do we come of age?

We ask whether the depiction of coming of age experiences provides readers/viewers with ways to navigate and contextualize concepts of self and community within the complex social, political, religious, and psychological forces that create the worlds in which we live. When do we come of age? What influences our actions and reactions throughout our journey into adulthood? How do these experiences affect the lives we choose to lead? From times of crisis to moments of calm, childhood memories cover a range of experiences, from the mundane to the transformational. Literature and film adaptations can capture both the individual and collective experience of these critical years of development and memorialize a common experience of both private and public struggles. In both courses, students will analyze approaches used by authors and directors to connect these individual moments to current social concerns.

These course lectures meet:

• T TH 12–1:15 p.m.
• T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.

Reflection will be held: (4 times per semester):
• TH 6–7:50 p.m.
The Meaning of Boston: Literature and Culture (ENGL1735)
The Meaning of Boston: History and Memory (HIST1630)

Carlo Rotella, English
David Quigley, History, Provost and Dean of Faculties
▶ Fulfills Literature and 1 History II

What does a city—this city in which we find ourselves—mean?
Meaning flows through a city just as populations, capital, power, resources, and ideas do, and each of these flows conditions the others. As we consider what Boston has meant in different moments and to different people, we engage follow-up questions: How does the form of a text express meaning? How can we understand the relationship between that text and the historical moment in which it took form, and/or the historical moment it seeks to capture? What happens when we consider the local in relation to national and international events and artistic movements? Our students develop skills of historical reasoning, learn how to interpret works of literature and allied arts, and will sharpen their analytical thinking and writing skills within the disciplinary traditions of history and literary/cultural studies. We will encourage them to move beyond the received meanings and standard tropes of Boston—the accent, the city on a hill, the regular-guy mythos retailed by Hollywood—and explore questions that Boston has consistently raised about human beings and nature, race and class difference, the form and function of the good life, the double-edged quality of moral causes, and the contest between the persistence of old ways and the succession of new ones.

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 12–1:15 p.m.
• T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.
Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
• T 6–7:50 p.m.

Growing Up Gendered: Contemporary Media Representations (COMM2216)
Growing Up Gendered: Socio-Cultural Perspectives on Gender in Contemporary Society (SOCY1708)

Lisa Cuklanz, Communication
Sharlene Hesse-Biber, Sociology
▶ Fulfills Literature + 1 Social Science + Cultural Diversity through EDJ

How is our gendered identity constructed?
In these linked classes, we will explore How different eras and cultures have pressured people to grow up as either male or female, and to behave in masculine or feminine ways. We will ask: how is our gendered identity constructed? How do families, schools, the mass media, and our social relationships online and off reinforce or challenge gender identities? Why do conversations about gender get bound up in discussions of sexual behaviors and preferences? How do gender and sexuality intersect with other dimensions of personal identity, such as race and religion?

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 12–1:15 p.m.
• T TH 1:30–2:45 p.m.
Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
• TH 6–7:50 p.m.

Maternity and Science: Society, Culture, and Public Health (PHCG1701)
Maternity and Science: Neuroscience and Genetics (UNAS1718)

Tara Casebolt, Core Fellow, Global Public Health and the Common Good
Jessica Black, Graduate School of Social Work
▶ Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 Natural Science

In what ways is the maternal experience informed and determined?
Birth is one of the building blocks of the human experience. Throughout history, cultures around the world have developed specific beliefs, traditions, and
The Formation of Early Christian Thought: A Theological Examination (THEO1722)
The Formation of Early Christian Thought: A Philosophical Examination (PHIL1722)

David Hunter, Theology
Sarah Byers, Philosophy
► Fulfills 1 Theology (Christian Theology) + 1 Philosophy

How did Greco-Roman philosophy contribute to rational Christian theology?

These courses address the enduring question of the relationship between faith and reason. In the early Christian era, leading intellectuals attempted to integrate the Jewish and Christian scriptures and traditions with rational philosophy. They employed Greek and Roman philosophy to reflect upon foundational issues in metaphysics, human psychology, epistemology, ethics, and God’s action in time. We will examine important concepts, arguments, and theories of ancient pagan philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Epictetus, Plotinus) and trace their adoption and adaptation by leading Christians (Justin Martyr, Origen, Lactantius, Athanasius, Augustine).

These course lectures meet:
• M W F 1–1:50 p.m.
• M W F 2–2:50 p.m.

Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
• W 6–7:50 p.m.

Reckoning with Incarceration: The Stories that Must Be Told (UNAS1726)
Reckoning with Incarceration: Understanding Administrative Violence (UNAS1727)

Celeste Wells, Communication
Andrés Castro Samayoa, Lynch School of Education and Human Development
► Fulfills Literature + 1 Social Science

How do U.S. beliefs around justice, dignity, vengeance, safety, and rehabilitation shape administrative practices of incarceration and their effects on those imprisoned, their families, and their victims?

We will consider the ways that the universal needs of justice and safety are understood by the legal system, social institutions (e.g., schools) and popular culture, as well as victims and perpetrators of crime, and the families of both. Both courses will take for granted that the current mass incarceration system has been designed to focus on retribution versus rehabilitation and that ever-increasing mass incarceration rates are predicated on a legal system demonstrated to mete out justice unequally. Each class will examine said beliefs through the differing lenses of social science and literature.

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 10:30–11:45 a.m.
• T TH 12–1:15 p.m.

Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
• By arrangement

These course lectures meet:
• T TH 9–10:15 a.m.
• T TH 10:30–11:45 a.m.

Reflection will be held (4 times per semester):
• TH 6–7:50 p.m.
“It’s the most diverse class I ever had at BC. It was the first class where I could talk about social justice in a very open setting.”
BOSTON COLLEGE
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
CORE CURRICULUM

GASSON HALL 109
140 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to learn more about the courses

“It changed my life.”

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