

# Complex Problem & Enduring Question Courses

FALL 2024 OFFERINGS FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS



EXPAND  
YOUR WORLD

EXPAND  
YOURSELF

BOSTON COLLEGE

## THE UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

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 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 the Arts	<i>Art History, Studio Art, Film, Music, or Theatre</i>
1 course in Cultural Diversity	
2 courses in History	<i>1 course in History I 1 course in History II</i>
1 course in Literature	<i>Classical Studies, English, Romance Languages and Literatures, or Eastern, Slavic, and German Studies</i>
1 course in Mathematics	
2 courses in Natural Science	<i>Biology, Chemistry, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Environmental Studies, or Physics</i>
2 courses in Philosophy	
2 courses in Social Science	<i>Economics, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology</i>
2 courses in Theology	<i>1 course in Christian Theology 1 course in Sacred Texts and Traditions</i>
1 course in Writing	

To view all courses that satisfy Core requirements, visit [BC.EDU/CORE](https://bc.edu/core)

*Student comments in this brochure taken from anonymous survey responses*

### COMPLEX PROBLEM COURSES

Complex Problem courses are six-credit courses of 76 students, team-taught by two professors from different disciplines. Students meet multiple days each week for lectures and once per week for labs. Students and faculty also gather for weekly Reflection sessions, which may involve group activities, guest speakers, or field trips off campus. Each Complex Problem course fulfills two Core requirements. Some may fulfill an additional Core requirement for Cultural Diversity through either Difference, Justice, and the Common Good (DJCG) or Engaging Difference and Justice (EDJ).

### ENDURING QUESTION COURSES

Enduring Question courses are two linked three-credit courses taught by professors from different disciplines. The same 19 students take both courses. 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 Question courses fulfills two Core requirements. Some may fulfill 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, please e-mail [core@bc.edu](mailto:core@bc.edu).

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



**AS A MEMBER OF THE CLASS OF 2028, YOU ARE INVITED TO** enroll in Boston College's innovative Complex Problem and Enduring Question Core courses. These courses are collaboratively taught by two faculty members from different fields and are designed to engage students in interdisciplinary explorations of topics of critical importance. These include areas such as ethics and engineering; migration; markets, cultures, and values; faith and virtue; the value of freedom; climate change and urban planning; and more.

Complex Problem and Enduring Question courses extend inquiry beyond the classroom to labs, Reflection sessions, conversations with outside speakers, and off-campus field trips, creating an intensive shared learning experience for both teachers and students. They exemplify Boston College's distinctive 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 Problem and Enduring Question courses when you register during your summer Orientation session. Both types of courses are worth six credits and fulfill up to three of the University Core Curriculum requirements. In November, you will be eligible to register for spring 2025 Complex Problem and Enduring Question 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](https://bc.edu/complexenduring)**





### Climate Change and the Corporation: Risks, Rewards, and Responsibilities

EESC1704 + UNAS1733

Tara Pisani Gareau, Environmental Studies  
Mary Ellen Carter, Carroll School of Management  
Courtney Humphries, Core Fellow

► **Fulfills 1 Natural Science + 1 Social Science + Cultural Diversity**

Climate change is a complex, existential threat to humanity, manifesting in heat waves, droughts, wildfires, and flooding. Corporate America is a contributor to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, corporations are impacted by climate change as it threatens their physical assets and their ability to supply goods and services. Through an integrated approach that blends scientific analysis of climate change with case studies of corporations, students will learn the science behind climate risk and study how businesses are managing and communicating to stakeholders both the impacts of climate change on the firm as well as the firm's impact on the environment.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTh 1:30-2:45 p.m.

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

- M 11-12:50 p.m.
- M 1-2:50 p.m.
- F 11-12:50 p.m.
- F 1-2:50 p.m.

**Reflections will be held:**

- T 6-7:15 p.m.



“I couldn’t be more appreciative of that experience because it really set me up for a great four years here.”

### Exchange and Values: Stories and Measures of Inequality

ENGL1738 + ECON1503

Kalpna Seshadri, English  
Can Erbil, Economics  
Peter Giraud, Core Fellow

► **Fulfills Literature + 1 Social Science + Cultural Diversity**

This course explores inequality through a blend of literature and economics, providing a rich, interdisciplinary perspective. By examining real-world cases, literary narratives, and economic data, students will understand different forms of inequality in society. The course is organized around five key themes and includes interactive lectures and labs for in-depth analysis. It is designed to foster critical thinking about social justice, encouraging students to reflect on their values and aspirations in relation to societal inequities. This engaging course aims to deepen students' awareness and understanding of the economic and social aspects of inequality.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTh 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.
- M 1:30-2:45 p.m.
- W 12-1:15 p.m.

**Reflections will be held:**

- Th 6-7:50 p.m.



### Planet in Peril: The History and Future of Human Impacts on the Planet

SOCY1509 + HIST1505

Juliet Schor, Sociology  
Prasannan Parthasarathi, History  
Gayathri Goel, Core Fellow

#### ► Fulfills 1 Social Science + History II

The 21st century opened with crises of climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem functioning. In this course, we address ecological overshoot from the perspectives of sociology and history, emphasizing the role of inequality, the state, and power. The course combines contemporary analyses with a long historical record of human impact, considering both the familiar and the novel in the realm of ecological challenges. We devote substantial attention not only to causes but also to solutions. Topics to be covered include the Columbian exchange, forests, agriculture, water, climate change, toxics, and population. Solutions include state policy, social movements, individual action, and social innovation.

#### These course lectures meet:

- MWF 11-11:50 a.m.

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

- T 10:30-11:45 a.m.
- T 12-1:15 p.m.
- Th 10:30-11:45 a.m.
- Th 12-1:15 p.m.

#### Reflections will be held:

- W 6-7:50 p.m.

"I loved the community  
that we created  
in and out  
of the classroom."

### Making the Modern World: Design, Ethics, and Engineering

ENGR1801 + HIST1627

Kristen Conroy, Engineering

Jenna Tonn, Engineering

Luke Perreault, Core Fellow

Héctor Rodríguez-Simmonds, Core Fellow

► **Fulfills 1 Natural Science + History II + Cultural Diversity**

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. Engineering systems present pressing technical, ethical, and moral problems that we must grapple with as engaged global citizens. In this course, 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 tradeoffs associated with building the modern world. Students will collaborate on group design projects based on human-centered engineering.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTh 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 1-2:50 p.m.
- F 10-11:50 a.m.
- F 2-3:50 p.m.

**Reflections will be held:**

- Th 6-7:15 p.m.

### Real Estate and Urban Action: Transforming Communities and Increasing Access to Opportunity

ECON1704 + UNAS1725

Geoffrey Sanzenbacher, Economics

Neil McCullagh, Carroll School of Management

Andrei Guadarrama, Core Fellow

► **Fulfills 2 Social Science + Cultural Diversity**

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 delving 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. Through field projects, simulations, and a practical final project, the course will challenge students to explore and test solutions for transforming distressed communities into safe, desirable neighborhoods that produce better outcomes for all residents.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTh 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 1-2:50 p.m.
- F 10-11:50 a.m.
- F 1-2:50 p.m.

**Reflections will be held:**

- W 6-7:15 p.m.



**Aesthetic Exercises: Empathy, Engagement, Ethics** MUSA1701

**Spiritual Exercises: Empathy, Engagement, Ethics** THEO1701

Daniel Callahan, Music  
Brian Robinette, Theology

► **Fulfills Arts + 1 Theology (Christian Theology)**

**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:**

- TTh 12-1:15 p.m.
- TTh 1:30-2:45 p.m.

**Reflections will be held 4 times during the semester:**

- T 6-7:50 p.m. (by arrangement)

**A Life of Virtue: The Wisdom of the Ancient Greek Tradition** PHIL1729

**A Life of Virtue: The Wisdom of the Judeo-Christian Tradition** THEO1729

Deborah De Chiara-Quenzer, Philosophy  
Matthew Petillo, Theology

► **Fulfills 1 Philosophy + 1 Theology (Christian Theology)**

**What does it mean to be virtuous and why does it matter?**

These courses will consider what it means to be virtuous and how that contributes to living a flourishing life. Both courses begin with ancient texts—the Bible and writings of Plato and Aristotle—and introduce students to foundational ethical and religious notions of virtue. Each course, in its own distinctive manner, will invite students to think about how notions of virtue relate either to famous literary figures (Philosophy course) or to the works of later philosophers and theologians (Theology course). The texts of Plato and Aristotle will serve as a point of connection between the two courses.

**These course lectures meet:**

- MWF 9-9:50 a.m.
- MWF 10-10:50 a.m.

**Reflections will be held 4 times during the semester:**

- M 6-7:50 p.m. (by arrangement)

“The dynamic was truly unlike any other compared to my other classes and it helped me learn that I was in it together with my classmates.”







**Why Do the Wicked Prosper?: Portraits of Good and Evil in Literature** UNAS1728

**Why Do the Wicked Prosper?: Portraits of Good and Evil in Film** FILM1702

Susan Michalczyk, Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences

John Michalczyk, Art, Art History, and Film

► **Fulfills Literature + Arts**

**Why do the wicked prosper?**

At the heart of so many stories told through the centuries is the question, “Why do the wicked prosper?” It remains without an answer, as authors and artists offer endless interpretations—lessons with or without morals—to an audience eager for explanations. Students will have opportunities to study narratives of heroes and villains and reflect upon the ways in which writers influence how we think about good and evil in the world, how we react to the unfairness we see happening around us, and how we come to terms with our own choices and understanding of the complexities of human nature.

These course lectures meet:

- TTh 12-1:15 p.m.
- TTh 1:30-2:45 p.m.

Reflections will be held 4 times during the semester:

- Th 6-7:50 p.m. (by arrangement)

“I met my closest friends, and I made strong connections with the professors. I loved the interdisciplinary aspect; it expanded my critical thinking.”



**From Hiroshima to K-Pop: Historical Perspectives**

UNAS1716

**From Hiroshima to K-Pop: Filmmakers' Perspectives**

UNAS1717

Ingu Hwang, International Studies

Christina Klein, English

► **Fulfills History II + Arts + Cultural Diversity**

**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:

- TTh 12-1:15 p.m.
- TTh 1:30-2:45 p.m.

Film screenings will be held:

- M 7-8:50 p.m.

**Roots and Routes: Reading Identity, Migration, and Culture** ENGL1712**Roots and Routes: Writing Identity, Migration, and Culture** ENGL1713

Elizabeth Graver, English

Lynne Anderson, English

**► Fulfills Literature + Writing + Cultural Diversity****How does migration in today's world shape questions of identity, borders, and belonging and lead to a reimagining of home?**

In these paired courses, students 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. They will explore their own migration stories, the routes that brought them here, and the ways in which their family roots shape their identities. Some of the questions students 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? Reflection sessions will include an author talk, a museum visit, creative writing, and several shared meals.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTh 10:30-11:45 a.m.
- TTh 12-1:15 p.m.

**Reflections will be held 4 times during the semester:**

- W 6-7:50 p.m. (by arrangement)





“I have never felt so intellectually engaged and challenged.”



**Humans and Other Animals: The Mental Life of Animals** PSYC1092

**Finding the Animal: Beasts & Boundaries in Literature** ENGL1721

Jeffrey Lamoureux, Associate Dean, Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences & Psychology  
Robert Stanton, English

► **Fulfills 1 Social Science + Literature**

**What is a human, and who is an animal?**

What is a human and who is an animal? Humanism has questionably attributed reason, morality, speech, ritual, and the capacity to imagine future worlds to humans alone. All major philosophies and religions try to separate humans from animals. For instance, in Genesis, God distinguishes Adam and Eve from the beasts, then instructs Adam to name them. Humans still grapple with the ethics of eating, wearing, and experimenting on animals, as well as with understanding how various mental abilities are represented across species. These courses use comparative psychology and literary study to interrogate the blurry and problematic boundaries between human and non-human animals.

**These course lectures meet:**

- MWF 12-12:50 p.m.
- TTh 4:30-5:45 p.m.

**Reflections will be held 4 times during the semester:**

- T 6-7:50 p.m. (by arrangement)

**The Self and Its Limits: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives** PHIL1727

**The Self and Its Limits: Greco-Roman Slavery** CLAS1706

Dermot Moran, Philosophy  
Thomas Sapsford, Classical Studies

► **Fulfills 1 Philosophy + Literature + Cultural Diversity**

**What is the relationship between the individual self and its social roles?**

These paired courses examine what factors make us free individuals and how that freedom has historically been removed from certain people. One course will explore the nature of the self in historical and contemporary perspectives from East and West to look at the nature of self-consciousness and personhood. The other will investigate how ancient Greeks and Romans justified the enslavement of individuals for material gain and how ancient slavery influenced American society both in terms of its use of slave-labor and in the arguments made for abolition.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTh 10:30-11:45 a.m.
- TTh 12-1:15 p.m.

**Reflections will be held 4 times during the semester:**

- T 6-7:50 p.m. (by arrangement)



# BOSTON COLLEGE

## Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences

### CORE CURRICULUM

STOKES HALL S260  
140 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE  
CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467

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



“Small class size,  
passionate professors,  
and engaging  
discussions”

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