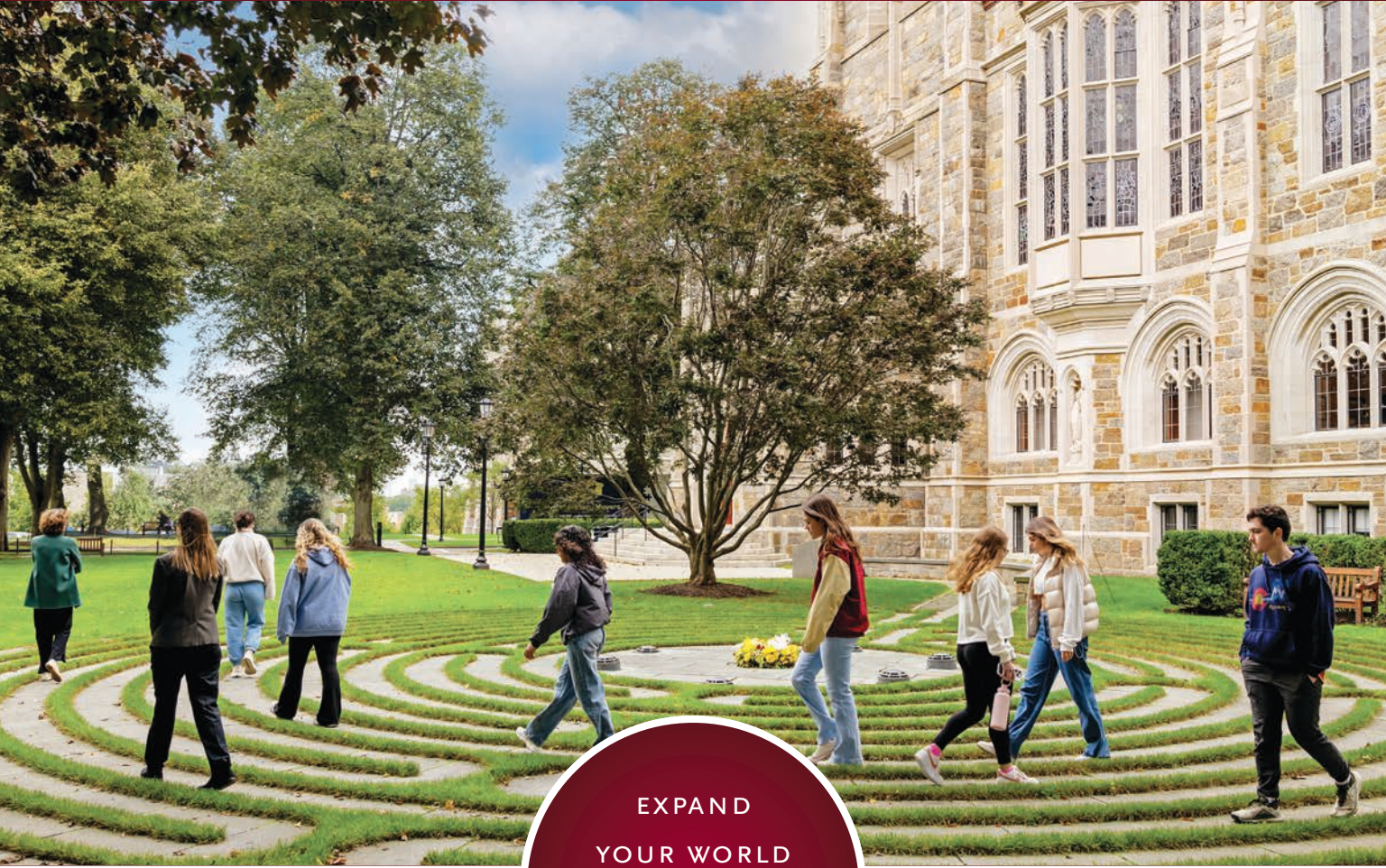


# Complex Problems & Enduring Questions

SPRING 2024 COURSES FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS



EXPAND  
YOUR WORLD

EXPAND  
YOURSELF

BOSTON COLLEGE

## THE CORE

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:

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

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1 course in Cultural Diversity

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

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

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1 course in Mathematics

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

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2 courses in Philosophy

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

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

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1 course in Writing

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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

Each of these six-credit courses, team-taught by professors from different disciplines, satisfies at least two Core requirements. Complex Problem courses consist of lectures and weekly lab sessions, along with a weekly meeting during the evening for reflection.

## ENDURING QUESTION COURSES

These linked pairs of courses are taught by professors from different disciplines, who collaborate on exploring a single, long-standing question for students to address throughout the semester. The same group of 19 students takes each class. Four evening reflection sections will be scheduled over the course of the semester. Taken together, the courses are worth six credits and fulfill at least two Core requirements.


Some Complex Problem or Enduring Question courses fulfill three Core requirements by also satisfying the Cultural Diversity Core requirement through either Difference, Justice and the Common Good in the U.S. (DJCG) or Engaging Difference and Justice (EDJ).

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



**AS A MEMBER OF THE CLASS OF 2027, YOU ARE INVITED TO** enroll in Boston College's innovative, team-taught Core courses: Complex Problem and Enduring Question. 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; psychological and literary perspectives of disability; 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 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 Complex Problem and Enduring Question courses when you register for spring courses this November. Both are worth six credits and fulfill at least two of the University's Core requirements.

To view faculty members describing their courses and for more information, visit **[BC.EDU/COMPLEXENDURING](https://bc.edu/complexenduring)**



Some **Complex Problem** 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.”



**Faith, Ethics, and the Sciences in the 21st Century** THEO1723 + PHIL1723

**Stephen Pope, Theology**  
**Holly VandeWall, Philosophy**  
**John Yargo, Core Fellow, English**

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

The rise of modern science has raised and continues to raise a wide range of questions for both religious belief and religiously based morality. The sciences have made it clear that the cosmos is much older and much bigger than the pre-moderns had recognized. The sciences are often taken as challenging traditional views of religion, morality, and the world. Contemporary critics regard religion as either obsolete or a threat to humanity. Why have the modern sciences been taken to carry these implications and need they be taken in this way? Alternatively, can the sciences play a constructive role in how we think about faith, ethics, and human nature? Can contemporary believers fully accept the findings of science? If so, how might doing so influence how believers think about God and God’s relation to the world. This course will be team-taught by a philosopher and a theologian who have been researching the relationships between natural science and religious belief. We will explore the implications of modern physics and evolutionary biology for Jewish and Christian understandings of human origins, the good life, and ethical responsibility for ourselves, our communities, and our wider natural world.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTH 3–4:15 pm

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

- M 9–10:50 am
- M 11–12:50 pm
- F 9–10:50 am
- F 12–1:50 pm

**Reflection will be held:**

- TH 6–7:15 pm

**Understanding and Protecting Our Oceans in the Wake of Global Change** BIOL1706 + ENVS1075

Heather Olins, Biology

Vena Offen, Core Fellow, Environmental Studies

Courtney Humphries, Core Fellow, Environmental Studies

► **Fulfills 2 Natural Science + 1 Cultural Diversity through EDJ**

The ocean, which covers more than 70 percent of the Earth's surface, is vital to human societies. Yet, we have better maps of Mars than our own sea floor. This course introduces students to what we know and don't know about the marine realm, focusing on biodiversity and ecosystem services. It then describes the effects of global change on the ocean—including rising temperatures, acidification, and sea level rise—and the resulting impact on life within and outside of the ocean. We end discussing the importance of effective governance and explore innovative ways in which people are working to repair and protect the ocean.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTH 10:30–11:45 am

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

- M 9–10:50 am
- M 11–12:50 pm
- W 9–10:50 am
- W 11–12:50 pm

**Reflections will be held:**

- T 6–7:15 pm

“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.”



**Constructing Deviance: Madmen, Hysterics, and Criminals** GERM1701

**Constructing Deviance: Power, Control, Resistance** SOCY1710

Daniel Bowles, Eastern, Slavic, and German Studies  
 Stephen Pfohl, Sociology

- Fulfills 1 Literature + 1 Cultural Diversity through EDJ + 1 Social Science

**Why do we define ourselves against, and try to control, what we perceive as deviant, different, and abnormal?**

How societies reckon with behaviors that deviate from powerful social norms has long haunted both social scientific inquiry and the literary imagination. These paired courses explore the historical construction, enforcement, and transgression of normative boundaries separating conformity from deviance. Exploring the politics and poetics of deviance from the perspectives of both literature and sociology, both courses invite critical reflection on dominant religious, legal, medical, and cultural practices of social control and the challenges they face from behaviors that violate conventional rituals of spirituality, economic life, sexuality, political authority, morality, mental well-being, aesthetics, and criminal law.

**These course lectures meet:**

- MWF 11–11:50 am
- TTH 1:30–2:45 pm

**Reflections will be held:**

- TH 6–7:50 pm (By arrangement)

“This course got me and my peers talking about very touchy subjects that demand attention. It helped me develop language for topics I formerly did not know how to discuss and helped me understand the nuances of oppression in the U.S.”



**Global Health Inequities and Disparities**

UNAS1732

Tara Casebolt, Core Fellow, Global Public Health and the Common Good

- **Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 Cultural Diversity through EDJ**

**How do we, as a global society, perpetuate inequalities and disparities in health? And why do we continue to tolerate them?**

This class will focus on the social factors that impact health outcomes in a global context. Using a combination of documentary films, scientific studies, case studies, and statistical analysis, we will assess how people around the world experience health and healthcare differently. Specifically, this course will focus on disparities in health outcomes and the accessibility of healthcare services based on race, ethnicity, education, income, class, caste, sex, gender, sexuality, place, and environment and how these identities intersect. We will also assess differences in health equity issues between countries of different income levels. The social determinants of health model will be used to frame these disparities.

**This course lectures meet:**

- TTH 1:30–2:45 pm

**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 School

- **Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 History II + Cultural Diversity through EDJ**

**Why is healthcare 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 healthcare and health insurance have become more important than ever in the pursuit of life, liberty, and health. Topics include the history of our healthcare 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:**

- MW 12–1:15 pm
- MW 1:30–2:45 pm

**Reflections will be held:**

- W 6–7:50 pm (By arrangement)



### Love, Gender, and Marriage: Writing & Rewriting the Tradition ENGL1704

### Love, Gender, and Marriage: The Western Literary Tradition RLRL1701

Treseanne Ainsworth, English

Franco Mormando, Romance Languages and Literatures

► **Fulfills 1 Writing + 1 Literature**

#### What are the nature and role of romantic love, marriage, and gender in human life and society?

These courses explore the concept of “romantic love” from the Middle Ages through the present, examining the meaning of marriage and gender and legal, literary, and theological texts. This section of First-Year Writing Seminar prepares students for writing at the college level in a variety of genres and across disciplines.

#### These course lectures meet:

- TTH 12:00–1:15 pm
- TTH 4:30–5:45 pm

#### Reflections will be held:

- TH 6–7:50 pm (By arrangement)

### Making American Landscapes: Building and Living in Asian America HIST1730

### Making American Landscapes: Geographies of Race, Place, and Power ENV51703

Honyang Yang, Core Fellow, History

Robin Wright, Core Fellow, Environmental Studies

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

#### What does it mean to belong in America?

As Dorothy says in *The Wizard of Oz*, “There’s no place like home.” In her adventures, Dorothy realizes that a sense of belonging comes from feeling “at home” in a particular place. Yet in the U.S., the struggle to belong, to find one’s place, has never been as simple as clicking one’s heels. These paired courses explore how in the United States, a sense of belonging is tied to a set of ideas and practices about race and space. Students will engage in interdisciplinary thinking through the fields of Geography, Whiteness Studies, Architectural History, and Asian American Studies to learn about the ramifications of racism and racial inequity as well as the resilience of communities through studying places. Collectively we will explore how certain spatial policies and practices mediate racial identities, and how race and racism have shaped a wide swath of spatial policies in the U.S., ranging from westward expansion and plantation slavery, urban development, and incarceration, to the places Asian immigrants and Asian Americans inhabited and designed as results of exclusionary immigration laws and cultural resilience. To apply learned knowledge, students will participate in mapping projects and contribute to developing the “Immigrant History Trail” in Boston’s Chinatown.

#### These course lectures meet:

##### Section 01

- TTH 9–10:15 am
- TTH 10:30–11:45 am

OR

##### Section 02


- TTH 12–1:15 pm
- TTH 1:30–2:45 pm

#### Reflections will be held:

- TH 6–7:50 pm (By arrangement)







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

MCNEIL FAMILY GARDEN

**The Making of the Modern Mind: Morality**

POLI1034

**The Making of the Modern Mind: Mathematics**

MATH1702

Ryan Hanley, Political Science

Avner Ash, Mathematics

► **Fulfills 1 Social Science + 1 Math**

**What are the relationships, both diachronic and synchronic, between knowledge as pursued in the sciences and values as held by the philosophical humanities?**

Modern mathematics, science, even computers, all arose in the 17th century. New moral problems began to be articulated and old ones rethought. Our courses are devoted to this transformative period in moral and mathematical thought, with a focus on how these changes have shaped the ways in which we think and act today. We concentrate on three major thinkers who transformed mathematics and morals in the 17th century: Descartes, Pascal, and Leibniz. We will attempt to understand how a new, abstract algebra came into being and what it meant for the development of the “exact” sciences and for science in general. On the philosophical side, we will examine ways in which our three thinkers used their methods to understand concepts ranging from love, faith, and grace, to virtue, justice, and happiness. We will also investigate how mathematical and moral thought influenced each other, and how their volatile mixture persists in important issues of the 21st century. What help can we derive from the thoughts of our trio, each of whom was both a mathematician and a philosopher, in shaping our own approaches to mathematics and the choices we make in our personal and political lives?

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTH 12–1:15 pm
- TTH 1:30–2:45 pm

**Reflections will be held:**

- TH 6–7:50 pm (By arrangement)

**Revolutionary Media: How Books Changed History** HIST1705**Revolutionary Media: How Reading Changed Us**

ENGL1715

Virginia Reinburg, History

Mary Crane, English

► **Fulfills 1 History I + 1 Literature**

**How have books and reading shaped the modern world?**

The printed book has been the most powerful and disruptive medium of communication the world has seen. Today, as new technologies and media also compete for our attention, it is especially important to understand the role books have played in Western culture, and how various modes of reading have shaped our minds. One of these courses traces the revolutionary history of the book in Europe from 1450 to 1800. The other focuses on the ways in which different media have, from 1450 up to the present, demanded different strategies for reading.

**These course lectures meet:**

- TTH 12–1:15 pm
- TTH 1:30–2:45 pm

**Reflections will be held:**

- TH 6–7:50 pm (By arrangement)



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

**Reading In/Justice: Literature as Activism from  
Abolition to #BlackLivesMatter** ENGL1718

**Writing In/Justice: The Power of Response**  
ENGL1719

Alex Puente, English

Lori Harrison-Kahan, English

- Fulfills 1 Writing + 1 Literature + 1 Cultural Diversity  
through DJCG

**How does reading literature about injustice and  
inequality compel us to respond through writing?**

In these courses, students will read and write about justice and injustice from the time of the abolitionist movement through current human rights crises. They will explore multiple genres—poetry, fiction, autobiography, drama, and graphic narratives—as well as journalism and social media. Students will learn to identify literary and rhetorical techniques in a variety of texts and to employ those techniques in their own writing. Questions include: What is the relationship between language and power? How have writers and activists deployed language and storytelling to draw attention to injustices and effect societal change? How do historical works speak to present social issues? How does reading about injustice and inequality compel us to write and to act? How might lived encounters with injustice—through family histories, personal experiences, and service—inspire us to write and to deepen our knowledge through reading?

**These course lectures meet:**

- MWF 10–10:50 am
- TTH 10:30–11:45 am

**Reflections will be held:**

- W 6–7:50 pm (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



"It changed my life."

**BC.EDU/CORE**