





At Boston College, a major research institution in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition, our overall goal for undergraduate education is the intellectual, social, and religious formation of students.

A Boston College liberal education has four key components: a core curriculum that establishes a common intellectual foundation for all undergraduates, a major that provides a curricular sequence for intense exploration of a particular discipline, electives that allow the pursuit of special interests outside of the core and the major, and campus community life that offers opportunities for religious, emotional, and social growth outside the classroom setting.

The renewed Core reaffirms our belief that the foundation of our students' education is based on the disciplines that constitute a broad liberal arts education. The Core has a special responsibility to educate students to make sure they receive the content and skills that will enable them to grow into adults who lead lives of meaningful consequence in the world.

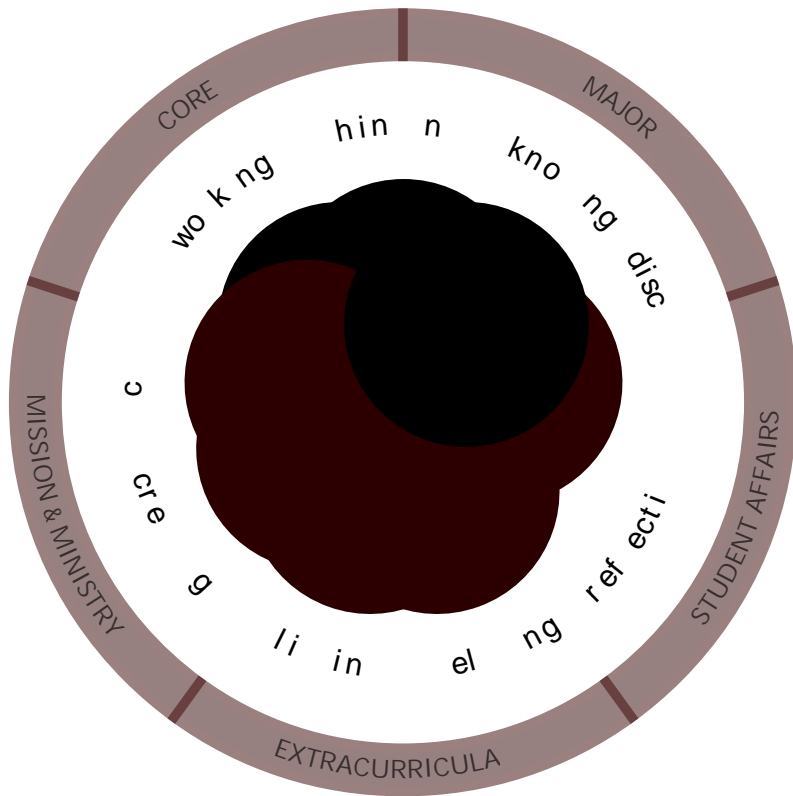
The renewed Core places special emphasis on creating an intensive, rigorous, interdisciplinary learning experience in the first year. Interdisciplinary courses based on Enduring Questions and Complex Problems, respectively, will help students develop effective habits of mind, acquire necessary content, and reflect on important issues.

Beyond the Enduring Questions and Complex Problem courses, students will complete their Core requirements by taking discipline-based Exploration courses throughout their four years. There are two types of Exploration courses: Foundation and Immersion. Students will gain foundational knowledge of the disciplines with grounding in time, in relationship to other disciplines, and in relation to perennial questions. Students will also take Immersion courses that go into depth within the disciplines and build on foundational knowledge.

Throughout four years of the Core, we will create opportunities for Reflection that will encourage all students to integrate the various strands of their education and draw personal meaning from their Core courses and other elements of their lives.

The renewed Core has been developed through an intensive process of collaborative innovation, developing and then building on ideas contributed by faculty from throughout the university. The renewed Core also contains a new leadership structure that will ensure ongoing collaborative improvement and innovation into the future. The Core Renewal Committee will use the frameworks contained in this document and the spirit of collaboration that has emerged over the past six months to continue working with faculty and departments to foster ideas and experiments that will keep the Core vital, grounded in Boston College's Jesuit, Catholic mission.

renewed core vision

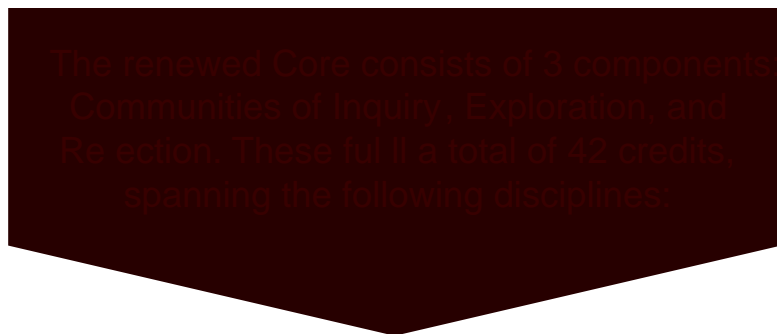


Boston College seeks to prepare students to chart a life of meaning and impact by integrating the intellectual, the social, and the spiritual. Through this integration, each student will develop as a whole person, prepared for citizenship, service, and leadership in a global society. Through



at a glance

## The Renewed Core



ARTS  
(3 credits)

GLOBAL DIFFERENCES/  
SOCIAL JUSTICE

HISTORY  
(6 credits)

LITERATURE  
(3 credits)

MATHEMATICS

### Communities of Inquiry (12 credits during the first year)

Communities of Inquiry are courses taken in the first year, where students come together to engage in intensive multidisciplinary study of fundamental questions and global challenges. Each Community of Inquiry is a group of roughly 225 students. One of these is called Enduring Questions, the other Complex Problems. Through Communities of Inquiry, students are immersed in a shared intellectual undertaking.

#### Enduring Questions:

Enduring Questions is a six-credit program consisting of two linked courses from different disciplines connected by content, theme, and syllabi. Each pair of courses focuses on perennial questions united by a common topic. Students also participate in shared learning experiences outside of class, and end-of-term presentations.

#### Complex Problems:

Each Complex Problem is a six-credit interdisciplinary course focusing on one contemporary, global challenge. Students learn about the problem through three weekly team-taught lectures, experiential, problem-based labs, shared learning experiences outside of class, and end-of-term presentations.

### Exploration (30 credits over the course of four years)

During their four years at Boston College, students take 10 Exploration courses across the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. Exploration courses satisfy a renewed set of characteristics, which ensure students gain a rigorous education in the liberal arts while enabling intellectual engagement and exploration. Characterized as Foundations or Immersions, these courses range in level of breadth or depth, class size, and pedagogical approach.

### Reflection (over the course of four years)

The Core invites each student to take knowledge gained about the world and turn with that knowledge back to oneself. New opportunities for reflection inside and outside the classroom will help students discern the meaning, significance, and value of the work taking place in their disciplinary studies and lives outside of class. The Core program in Reflection will involve Mission & Ministry, Student Affairs, and participating faculty.

## Understanding the Past

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

## Inhabiting Space

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.



### 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 post-docs 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.











the renewed core

## Leadership and Ongoing Innovation

To support excellence and creativity in Core teaching, the CRC will bring faculty from across the university together based on shared interests and research foci to develop and teach courses in the Core. Through this effort, the CRC will be committed to open dialogue, transparency, and collaboration with faculty and departments. The CRC will be responsible for

- œ Ensure that new Core courses reflect the six principles of the renewed Core
- œ Establish a process and tools for developing and approving Core Courses
- œ Oversee and enable new course development including funding and faculty development
- œ Maintain a balanced offering of courses that reflect the commitments of the renewed Core
- œ Work with departments and undergraduate schools to manage supply and demand
- œ Hold final authority to review courses for inclusion in the renewed Core

### Management & Operations

- œ Manage day-to-day operations of the Core
- œ Liaise with schools and departments

### Advocacy & Promotion

- œ Champion and communicate the value of the Core to incoming freshmen, students, faculty and alumni
- œ Recognize faculty for outstanding contribution to the Core
- œ Ensure that the Core is involved in annual university budget processes

### Ongoing Innovation & Assessment

- œ Establish (and evolve) characteristics of Communities of Inquiry and Exploration courses
- œ Facilitate interdisciplinary engagement and awareness
- œ Establish and maintain a process for individual Core course renewal
- œ Provide faculty with tools, support and training to encourage experimentation with new technologies and methods (e.g. experiential learning)
- œ Provide a forum for inspiring continuous improvement through broad-based sharing of best practices and new ideas
- œ Assess Core courses for successful inclusion of the six principles of the renewed Core
- œ Maintain awareness of successful developments in liberal arts learning around the country
- œ Oversee outcomes-based assessment of the Core curriculum
- œ Establish ongoing course feedback and assessment process
- œ Monitor the review of grading practices

## Ay14 Launch

A Core Working Group will:

- œ Coordinate the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of pilot first-year Enduring Question and Complex Problem course to be offered in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 academic years
- œ Draft a foundational statement that grounds the vision and rationale of the Core Renewal proposal in the mission of the university and the Jesuit, Catholic tradition of education
- œ Promote continuing conversations among faculty, Mission and Ministry, and Student Affairs to develop and pilot new programs that encourage faculty and students both to reflect on the purposes of a liberal arts education at a Jesuit, Catholic university and to develop a reflective view of life
- œ Work with departments to promote a common understanding of the goals of the proposed renewed Core curriculum, develop discipline-specific guidelines for future renewed Core courses that will ensure that they promote the goals that will animate the Core curriculum, and assist departments and Core faculty in developing effective ways to reach those goals

Checkpoint for Provost and President:

- œ Report on discipline-specific course guidelines, collaboration with Mission & Ministry and Student Affairs, plans for pilot courses

## AY15, 16, & 17 Pilots

- œ First Enduring Questions and Complex Problem pilot courses offered in AY15
- œ Continued development of Enduring Questions, Complex Problems, and Exploration courses across all 3 years
- œ New Enduring Questions, Complex Problem, and Exploration courses offered
- œ Continued development of new reflection opportunities
- œ Intensive collaboration with Student Affairs and Mission & Ministry to develop pilots of new reflection opportunities
- œ Checkpoint for Provost and President each year: Report on assessment of pilots, collaboration with Mission & Ministry and Student Affairs, development of Exploration courses

## AY18 Full Implementation

- œ 10 Enduring Questions and 10 Complex Problem courses offered; all first-year students required to complete 1 Enduring Questions course and 1 Complex Problem course
- œ Expanded roll-out of TI /1.16M8T1DC em coars



Renewed Core Courses:

A.



## Enduring Questions Courses:

Ask students to reflect upon issues and values related to fundamental concerns of human life (E, F)

Introduce students to influential thinkers, writers, or artists who have wrestled with the question across discipline, time, and space (D)

Introduce the methods your discipline uses to approach a question, text, or object cultivating analytical and creative thinking. (B)

Engage in a dialogue with the methods of the disciplinary approach of the other instructor (B)

### Foundation Courses:

Provide students with the necessary foundation in the discipline, addressing either methodology, or content, or both (B,D)

Help students understand how the discipline approaches significant issues, texts, or artifacts (B, D, E)

Cultivate student interest in and excitement about the field (A)

Introduce students to discipline-specific modes and genres of communication (C)

### In addition, all Exploration courses will choose at least 3 of the following 6:

Make explicit connections between traditional or historical materials and contemporary questions or issues (A, E, F)

Make explicit connections between the topic of the course and enduring questions of human life (E, F)

Incorporate the perspective or method of another discipline (A, B)

Global Differences or Social Justice: Foster an ethical awareness of global connections and inequities; consider impact on society and on different groups of people (E, F)

Address the role of the discipline in the human search for truth, including the relationship between faith and reason in that search (B, E, F)

appendix

## Additional Thoughts on Renewed Core Courses

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 reactions 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, disability, class and/or gender – might perceive, interpret and feel the impact of the same topic differently based on their values, customs, and circumstances.