GLOBAL STUDIES (GLBS)

The courses listed on this page are exclusive to the LPS BAAS degree (https://lpsonline.sas.upenn.edu/features/what-bachelor-applied-arts-and-sciences-degree/) and LPS Online certificates (https://lpsonline.sas.upenn.edu/academics/certificates/).

GLBS 1000 Introduction to Global Studies
A focus on three major historical circulations of ideas, people, capital, and goods introduces basic concepts about cultural change, economic interest, the creation of new societies, and human preoccupations with ethical and moral issues. Through study of these global circulations, students develop analytical skills that support further work in global studies. We look at the early historical creation of a “Sinosphere” in East Asia, as demand for ideas from China, from Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, led to the expansion of Chinese language and script and the invention of phonetic scripts. This innovation in scripts and interest in Chinese learning, and then Buddhism coming through China, contributed to the development of an East Asian thought world that is still defined by distinctive cultural traditions. The Indian Ocean trade, from the 7th to the 16th century, connected different cultural worlds by trade routes that themselves contributed to the spread of Islam. These trade networks built complex alliances and new societies with use of military power. The third circulation, the Atlantic trade from the 16th to the 19th century, connected Europe to West Africa, building an expanded trade in enslaved Africans and disrupted and transformed that region. Scholars analyzing the end of the slave trade have made competing arguments about changing economic interests, the emergence of new economic interests, and efforts based on ethical commitments. These global circuits present essential ideas for considering global connections today.
1 Course Unit

GLBS 2000 Globalization: Social, Economic, and Political Aspects
This course offers an analysis of globalizing and anti-globalizing tendencies in the world. It combines the insights of sociology, economics, and political science to provide an understanding of topics such as population and migration trends, the evolution of global consumer and financial markets, the spread of digital technologies, inequality, populism, climate change and food security, and the shifting geopolitical balance of power. Students will learn how different theories explain the current interplay among social, economic, and political forces.
1 Course Unit

GLBS 2800 Contemporary Issues in Global Health
This course focuses on how social, political, and economic forces—increasingly global in nature— influence how biomedical diseases are experienced, understood, and treated. The course covers topics such as structural violence, narratives of illness, and global pharmaceuticals. The larger approach in the course is that of medical anthropology, where disease, health, and treatment are understood in their social contexts. As we explore how people in different global contexts confront and are affected by disease, poverty, and unequal access to treatment and information, students will gain an understanding of the interconnectedness of the issues that the larger “global health project” seeks to uncover and address. Specifically, students will: 1.) learn some of today’s most pressing global health issues; 2.) learn how to explain the connections between social, economic, and political systems and health outcomes for individuals and groups; and 3.) develop their own toolkit for engaging with global health issues. All readings will be available in the course site.
1 Course Unit

GLBS 3000 Global Economic Events, Policies, Consequences
This course draws on dramatic economic events: depressions, recession, inflation, commodity booms and post-transition economies to introduce economic ideas and economic policy. The global recession of 2008, the difficult economic transformation of the former Soviet Union, and the end of the License Raj in India are among the events and economic situations that will be analyzed through the analyses of economists and competing policy recommendations. Students will identify and present their own analysis of a significant economic event. Prerequisite: Two BAAS Global Studies courses, or other relevant course-work.
1 Course Unit

GLBS 3200 Latin America and the Caribbean: Themes, Trajectories and Disruptions
This course explores the world region now known as “Latin America” over centuries, helping students see aspects of the present for which “Latin” is definitely the wrong word. We will examine the diverse political and economic relationships that preceded Europeans’ arrival, analyze the complexities of conquest-era texts, learn about Africans’ resistance to enslavement, and trace multiple revolutions in the modern period. The course includes attention to current events. For example, we will discuss both the way coca leaf was used by indigenous people going back millennia and debates in the present about what many call the “War on Drugs.” Throughout, we will pay primary attention to the experiences of people rooted in the region, including writers, musicians, religious leaders, revolutionaries, military officers, artists, and people who led lives marked by manual labor. Some readings will be available in Spanish, but everything required will also be accessible in English translation.
1 Course Unit

GLBS 3800 Putin's Russia
Winston Churchill famously said that Russia is “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.” Strikingly, today many informed Russians would agree: no one can provide definitive answers concerning what has driven Russian public life and politics over the past three decades, from the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, to the rise of powerful oligarchs amid social violence in the 1990s, to the seeming stabilization of social and economic life under president Vladimir Putin in the 2000s, to the whiplash of mass, oppositional protests in 2011-2012 that culminated in Putin’s reelection, the stabilization of a conservative, “patriotic regime,” renewed belligerence between Russia and Western states, and finally notoriety in the US as a shadow force in our own political life. In this course we will examine how Russians themselves represent Russia and what this reveals about this complex society and its development, as well as how Russia has been viewed from abroad. We will consider print journalism, novels, films, televised media, and the internet—paying close attention both to particular representations and to social institutions for their production, dissemination and consumption. Our work will triangulate between analysis of media representations and public discourse and close readings of works of literature and film, in order to analyze cultural life in the light of political and social actuality, and to learn how works of art and culture comment upon and inform social life and politics. Topics of special concern will include representations of Russian history, collective identity and patriotism, intellectuals and elites, gender and sexuality, consumption and wealth, and of course, the career and public image of Vladimir Putin himself. No prior knowledge of Russian history, culture or society is required.
1 Course Unit

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