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 conditions, 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 2200 Global Human Rights
This course will introduce you to key themes and debates in the field of international human rights. Starting with a discussion of the political and economic devastation in post-World War 2 Europe, students will examine the theoretical and historical foundations of international human rights law. The course will examine the way that the idea of “human rights” has expanded since the 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It will also focus on key human rights challenges in today’s world (e.g., digital rights, forced migration, business and human rights, women’s rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity). Using examples from around the world, we will pay particular attention to the complexity of advancing a human rights agenda in a world of power politics and will also look carefully at the interaction of international human rights law with other issues, including international security, development, environmental sustainability, and international humanitarian law.
1 Course Unit

GLBS 2750 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. No previous knowledge of the region is required and there are no prerequisites.
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 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 Portraits of Contemporary Russia: Politics, Culture, and Conflict
Winston Churchill famously said that Russia is “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.” These words still ring true. Following the collapse of the USSR in 1991, many observers predicted that Russia would join the world community as a democratic, free-market nation among others. Yet time and again, events in Russia have taken surprising turns: the cooptation of democratic institutions, first by oligarchs and then by Putin’s political machine, the whiplash of mass oppositional protests in 2011-2012, the renewed triumph of Putin’s conservative, “patriotic regime,” the reemergence of belligerence between Russia and Western states, and finally, the unprovoked 2022 invasion of Ukraine that initiated a continuing war that threatens global stability. In this course we will study Russian politics and culture in order to gain insight into this complex chain of events. We will consider journalism, novels, films, televised media, and the internet. We will analyze cultural life in the light of politics, and learn how works of art and culture comment upon the political. Units will focus on: representations of Russian history, collective identity and patriotism, intellectuals and elites, gender and sexuality, consumption and wealth, the career and public image of Vladimir Putin, geopolitics and war. As is evident from Churchill’s quip, Western observers often consider Russia to be an alien and unfathomable realm. This course will enable you to understand Russian politics and culture—both those aspects that are truly distinct, and others that may be unsettlingly familiar. “Portraits of Contemporary Russia” is an introductory level course for which no prior knowledge of Russian history, culture or society is required. All readings and viewings are in English.
1 Course Unit

GLBS 3900 Applied Economics in Global Contexts
An introduction to basic economics with emphasis on global contexts, this course combines economic studies with readings on contexts, examples, and applications. Scarcity, markets, market failures, monopolies, inflation, subsidies, famine, and growth are among the basic economic issues students will study. Examples from different countries will be used to further theoretical and practical understanding. Different economic policy approaches will also be presented. This approach relies on less math background although students will engage with economic models and economic thinking, and be able to participate in discussions about economic and business policies. Learning goals include a good grasp of basic economic terms and models of analysis, engagement with economics in the workplace, connecting to economics as a field, and understanding the global contexts of economic policy making.
No prerequisites are required however a previous course in Global and Regional Studies is strongly recommended. All readings will be available through the course site. All classes are asynchronous; any synchronous sessions are optional.
1 Course Unit