The School of Humanities will offer four Big Questions courses in AY 2022-2023 (two in each semester). Please consider adapting an existing course or creating a new course for this exciting curricular initiative. The opportunity is open to faculty of all ranks, pending permission of their chair(s) regarding teaching obligations for 2022-2023. We are also open to second time offerings of previous Big Questions courses offered in the past.

Interested faculty should submit a proposal of two to four pages indicating the course’s guiding question and comprising a rationale and brief description. The proposal should also outline any projected pedagogical innovations. Send proposals by email to Associate Dean Fay Yarbrough (fyarbrough@rice.edu) by February 10, 2022. See below for additional details.

What are Big Questions courses?
- They are organized around an explicit question that is 1) of interest to a wide range of students, and 2) answerable in compelling ways through one or more humanities disciplines.
- They are distinguished by innovative assignments, projects, abbreviated practica, and extramural experiences designed to deepen understanding of the course material and to build greater intellectual community among members of the class, e.g. website, podcasting, mapping, interviews, presentations, smaller-scale research papers, field trips, salons, tutorials, writing groups, et cetera.
- The courses also apply pedagogical techniques that respond to the challenges and opportunities of larger-than-average class sizes (Big Questions courses will not be capped below forty students).
- They are led by faculty with strong records of effective teaching.
- They carry D1 distribution credit through the School of Humanities.

More information for Faculty Participants:
1. Big Questions courses may be team taught (though this is neither required nor preferred).
2. It is fine to adapt an existing course to this new format. If the content is too similar, it will be possible to place a “mutual exclusion” in the description so that no student can take the same course twice.
3. This initiative hopes to inspire faculty to teach their Big Questions class at least twice in a four-year period.
4. Please consult with your department chair or program director about potential course offerings.
5. Successful faculty applicants will receive a research fund of $2,500 each time the course is offered. If the course is team-taught, this sum may need to be split, depending upon our budget.
6. Our goal is to provide (or work with well-endowed departments to provide) a programming budget for each course for speakers, materials, etc. of up to $2,000, depending on the availability of funds.

7. The Dean’s office will handle publicity (fliers, emails to students, etc.). Otherwise, staff support for the courses will be the same as for other courses in professors’ department, center, or program.

8. Once a course has been chosen to go forward, a call for applications for TA positions will be disseminated to graduate students across the School. Faculty members will receive a list of applicants and will be asked to rank the applicants they would like to engage (in order of preference). A TA will be assigned to the course once it reaches an enrollment of 25 students or more.

9. Big Questions courses are pedagogically innovative. Ideas concerning the nature of a course’s particular innovations should be presented in the faculty member’s application, but planning along these lines should continue more intensely once a TA for the course has been selected. Faculty and graduate students should shape together the most pedagogically inventive facets of the course, and graduate students should have a significant hand in executing these aspects of the class.

More information for Graduate Student Participants:

10. Once the four courses have been selected, the process for graduate students to apply for the TA positions will be specified and publicized.

11. Graduate students who have completed at least one year in their program are eligible to apply. Graduate students will earn $5,000, which will render them eligible for a tuition waiver if in year six or beyond.

12. It is possible but not required that the faculty member and TA will come from different departments/disciplines.

13. Big Questions courses are pedagogically innovative. Ideas concerning the course innovations should be presented in graduate student applications, but planning along these lines should continue more intensely once TAs have been assigned to a particular course. Graduate students and faculty should shape together the most pedagogically inventive facets of the course, and graduate students should have a significant hand in executing these aspects of the class.

14. It is hoped that faculty and graduate students build a mentored teaching relationship, including frequent consultations and collaborations throughout the semester. Please note that an agreed-upon time during the summer or during O-Week could be an important planning time for the faculty members and TAs.

The “Big Questions” courses will

- demonstrate the power of the Humanities to address meaningful questions that are crucial to students’ growth as individuals, scholars, citizens, and future professionals
• draw upon our most talented teaching faculty and encourage them to develop a School-wide perspective on our teaching mission
• provide excellent new teaching opportunities for selected graduate students

Your interest and engagement are greatly appreciated!