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What are Figs?

First-year Interest Group Seminars (FIGS) are one-credit, ten-week courses taught by talented and informed upper-class Peer Instructors during the fall semester. Taking a FIGS course will allow you to explore an exciting area of study with a small group of peers and examine the opportunities available at Rutgers and beyond. Since our courses are taught by experienced upper-class students, you will gain valuable advice on how to navigate college life from someone who was once in your shoes. In your FIGS you will discover the basics of academic, research, and co-curricular involvement; connect with faculty in your interest area; identify educational tracks and career options; and learn the ins and outs of Rutgers resources.

Choosing a Figs

Because FIGS courses are popular, we recommend ranking several FIGS classes that interest you. In addition to alphabetical course descriptions, you will find course topics grouped thematically below. Please note that some courses address multiple interest areas(*).

Business & Media

- Business
- Communication
- Economics*
- Health Administration*
- Information Technology & Informatics*
- International Relations*
- Journalism
- Management & Labor Relations

Creative Arts & Literature

- Art & Art History
- Creative Writing
- English Literature
- Music
- Theater*

Education, Culture & Society

- American Studies & Pop Culture*
- Anthropology*
- Community Activism & Civic Engagement*
- Diversity & Social Justice*
- Education
- Foreign Language & Linguistics
- Psychology
- Religion
- Sociology
- Women's & Gender Studies
- Theater*

History & Politics

- American Studies & Pop Culture*
- Anthropology*
- Community Activism & Civic Engagement*
- Criminal Justice
- Diversity & Social Justice*
- Economics*
- Environmental Policy & Awareness*
- History
- International Relations*
- Law & Leadership
- Philosophy
- Political Science

Health Professions

- Careers in the Sciences*
- Dental Professions
- Exercise Science & Sports Psychology
- Health Administration*
- Health & Medicine
- Nursing
- Nutrition
- Public Health

Science & Technology

- Animal Science
- Careers in the Sciences*
- Chemistry
- Computer Science
- Ecology, Evolution & Natural Resources
- Engineering
- Environmental Policy & Awareness*
- Food Science
- Information Technology & Informatics*
- Mathematics
- Meteorology: Weather & Climate
- Physics



Fall 2016 Course Descriptions

American Studies & Pop Culture

Do you enjoy studying American history? Are you also interested in pop culture and cultural history? Have you ever thought about why pop culture is so widely discussed? If so, then join us as we discuss a wide range of topics on how pop culture affects our everyday lives. Filled with intriguing music, film, and texts, this course will be a great introduction to the field of American Studies. If you are interested in culture, then Exploring American Studies and Pop Culture is for you.

Animal Science

Do you love working with animals? Come and explore academic paths and career opportunities within the field of Animal Science. This FIGS will focus on degree programs that are directly related to the tending, care, and supervision of animals. Learn more about opportunities for involvement and research at Rutgers, meet faculty and professionals working in the field, and discover future graduate and professional school paths and specialization areas.

Anthropology

What do we mean when we use the words “culture” and “society”? What is the relationship between the individual and the collective? What role does cultural difference play in our lives and in the world around us? This FIGS will explore such questions by introducing students to the study of anthropology and to the various anthropological perspectives—sociocultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and evolutionary anthropology—that make for exciting educational paths and career opportunities.

Art & Art History

Are you interested in art? Have you ever given any thought to artistic technique or wondered why some works of art are prized more than others? Would you like to know what it takes to be an art historian? If so, join us as we explore the study of art and the field of Art History. In this FIGS, you will be introduced to important genres and time periods, visit local art museums and exhibitions, meet faculty from the Art History department, and learn about a variety of art-related resources available to Rutgers students. If you’re interested in art and want to share that interest with others, then this is the course for you.

Communication

Learn about this exciting field through the exploration of interpersonal, mediated, and organizational communication. Students will be introduced to issues within the study of communication— from the function of public relations, advertising, and reputation management to the outsized influence of the media and popular culture—and will see how this discipline impacts their everyday lives. Enroll in this seminar and discover the limitless possibilities available in this area of study.

Community Activism & Civic Engagement

This course will introduce students to different types of civic engagement— such as advocacy, rallying, and political campaigning—and will demonstrate how these practices have been used historically to promote social change. Students will learn to think analytically about how various forms of activism can be used to solve different social issues, and they will be introduced to social justice opportunities both on and off campus, relevant academic disciplines, and exciting career possibilities.

Computer Science

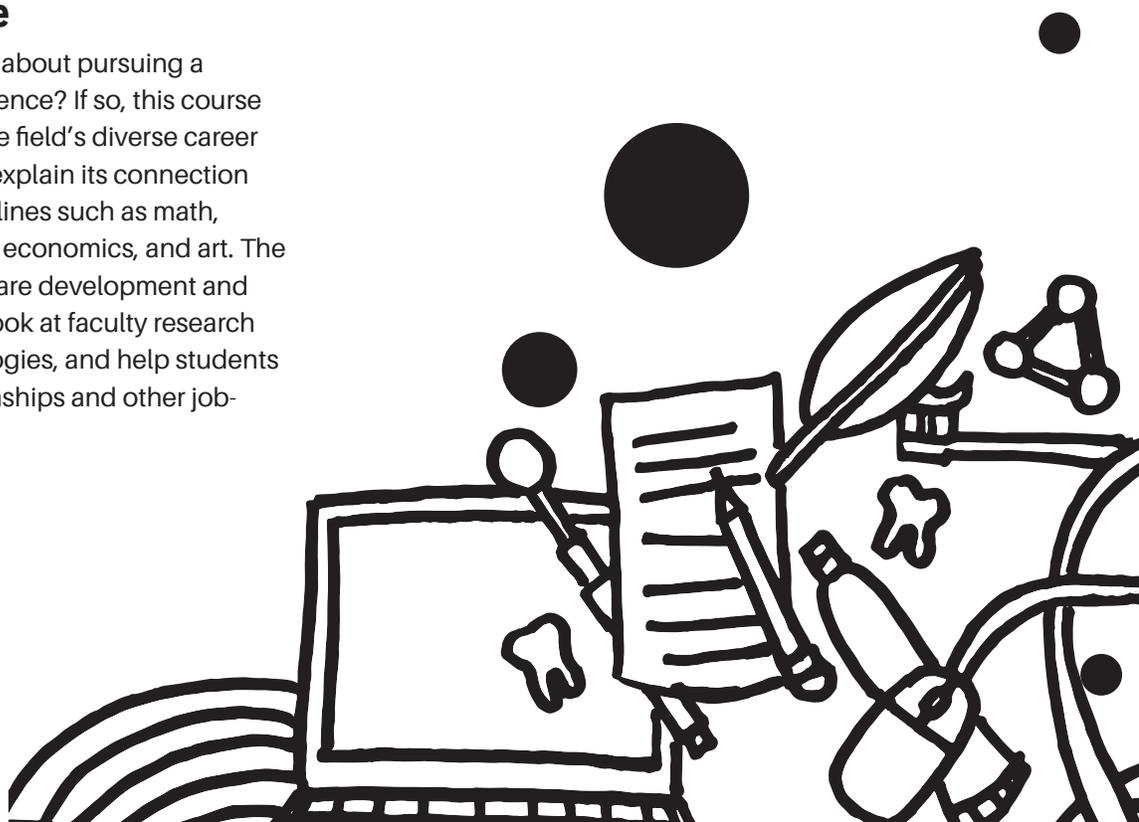
Have you ever thought about pursuing a career in Computer Science? If so, this course will introduce you to the field's diverse career opportunities and will explain its connection to other relevant disciplines such as math, computer engineering, economics, and art. The class will explore software development and hardware innovation, look at faculty research and emergent technologies, and help students learn more about internships and other job-related resources.

Creative Writing

Do you have a passion for creative writing? Would you like to make writing a part of your undergraduate experience? In this seminar, we will study the craft of story building and narrative voice and discuss ways to incorporate your interest in writing into your academic life. We will also learn about writing-related programs and workshops here at Rutgers, examine major and minor options and their departments, explore internship opportunities and job market resources, and discover how the Rutgers community can be an engaging place to foster your creativity.

Criminal Justice

Are you thinking about a career in criminal law, counseling, or law enforcement? Do you want to know more about working within the court system, correctional facilities, or even the FBI? A degree in Criminal Justice will satisfy a variety of interests and provide you with a strong foundation for academic and professional success. This seminar will explore the connections between criminal justice and social issues such as race, class, violence, and discrimination.





Dental Professions

Are you interested in dentistry as a possible career? Do you know what it takes to be a successful dentist? This FIGS will introduce students to new dental technologies and procedures, to dentists' involvement in both local and global health efforts, and to the many options and specialties available to dental students. If you would like to learn more about the field and understand its relation to other medical disciplines, come and explore the art of dentistry.

Diversity & Social Justice

What prejudices exist in society? Should they be challenged? How do we begin to do this? Regardless of your career interests, these questions impact us all. Join us as we explore the rich diversity of our world from historical, social, and political perspectives. Enjoy lively conversation on topics such as race, class, language, sexual orientation, and disability. Challenge yourself to openly discuss your beliefs about these issues and their place in the 21st century. If you're passionate about social justice and want to know more about relevant majors and minors, campus organizations, and career paths, then this is the course for you!



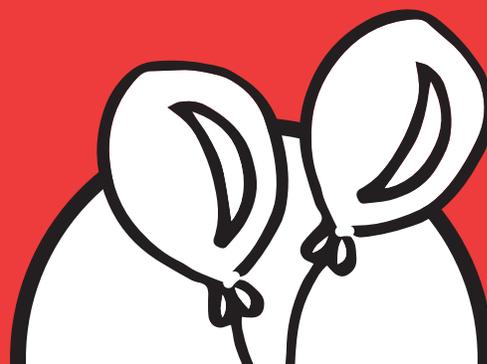
Ecology, Evolution, & Natural Resources

Are you interested in math and science? Would you like to develop your problem solving skills? Do you enjoy building things and, on occasion, tearing them down as well? If so, then this is the FIGS for you! This course will introduce students to the many Engineering majors and minors offered at Rutgers as well as the STEM-related career paths available to those who pursue a degree in this dynamic field. Discuss cutting-edge issues and advancements in Engineering, connect with research opportunities, and learn about other avenues for involvement. Come join us as we lay the foundation for future success.



Economics

Are you interested in working on Wall Street, in consulting, or for the government? In this FIGS, students will explore the diverse field of economics and learn the role it plays in areas like politics, psychology, public policy, health, and finance. Basic economic concepts such as resource allocation, consumer behavior, price determination, unemployment, individual decision making, and global trends will be explored. Students will get a taste of the powerful analytical tools and skills developed in the major as well as the flexible academic and career choices it opens up. We will also discuss the wide array of opportunities available for economics majors, such as research, extracurricular activities, the Quantitative Economics certificate program, internships and more!



Education

Are you passionate about changing the lives of tomorrow's youth? Interested in a career in K-12 teaching? Educators today face a wide range of issues in our ever-changing society. This course is designed to introduce you to teaching in the U.S. educational system. Discover your options in the field of education from the perspectives of upper-class students pursuing a teaching career and find out more about becoming a certified K-12 teacher in New Jersey.

Engineering

Are you interested in math and science? Would you like to develop your problem solving skills? Do you enjoy building things and, on occasion, tearing them down as well? If so, then this is the FIGS for you! This course will introduce students to the many Engineering majors and minors offered at Rutgers as well as the STEM-related career paths available to those who pursue a degree in this dynamic field. Discuss cutting-edge issues and advancements in Engineering, connect with research opportunities, and learn about other avenues for involvement. Come join us as we lay the foundation for future success.

English Literature

Do you love to read? Would you like to channel your literary creativity? In this FIGS, students will study short works of historical and contemporary literature and have lively discussions about significant authors and important literary movements. They will meet faculty from the English department with specialties in a variety of interdisciplinary fields, explore a wide range of curricular offerings and extracurricular resources available to Rutgers students, and learn more about the exciting internship and job opportunities available to English majors.

Environmental Policy & Awareness

Are you interested in improving and protecting our environment? This course will provide information about what you can do to be a global citizen and an ethical consumer. Topics to be covered include fair trade, locally sourced goods, sustainable initiatives, and environmental policies. Students will also learn about academic paths and career opportunities and will meet faculty specializing in environmental awareness. Learn what you can do to keep our planet safe and secure, both as a Rutgers student and as a future professional.

Exercise Science & Sports Psychology

Are you interested in exploring a future in Exercise Science or Sports Psychology? If so, then this is the FIGS for you! Learn more about this multi-disciplinary field; examine the links between psychology, science, and medicine; and discover the majors and career options available to you as a Rutgers student. Along the way, you'll gain valuable knowledge and experience as well as an introduction to the skills necessary to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

Food Science

Do you like food? How about science? Then you will love exploring food science. Learn how foods are formulated to taste better, last longer, and be safer and more health promoting. Join this FIGS course to discuss how chemistry, biology, microbiology, psychology, physics and engineering all contribute to making better food. Students will discover what classes are connected to this area of study, the research opportunities available at Rutgers, and the many exciting career options for students graduating with a food science degree.



Foreign Language & Linguistics

Are you interested in the acquisition and mastery of different languages? Do you know what linguists do? In this FIGS, you'll explore the relevance of foreign languages and linguistics in today's culture—as well as their impact in other parts of the world—and will learn about the variety of foreign language programs and linguistics-related opportunities here at Rutgers. In an increasingly connected global age, this course will provide you with insight into the career options available to foreign language and linguistic specialists and the real-world applications of such knowledge.

Exploring Health Administration

As the world of healthcare evolves and becomes more complex, the need for leaders to manage healthcare systems increases. Health services management is critical in various systems, such as hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and long-term care facilities. This class will discuss business concepts through the lens of healthcare, introduce students to opportunities at Rutgers and in local healthcare facilities, and prepare them for success in this fast-growing career field.

Health & Medicine

Have you thought about going to medical school or becoming a health care professional? Are you intrigued by scientific research? During this class, you will discuss current issues in domestic and international health care, network with fellow students and Rutgers faculty, look at the medical and graduate school application process, and learn about the many undergraduate plans of study for those interested in medical careers.

Six-Word Stories

They say a picture's worth a thousand words, but maybe six words paint a clearer picture.

Inspired by Ernest Hemingway's famous six-word story—"For sale: baby shoes, never worn"—we've challenged our FIGS Peer Instructors to create their own minimal masterpieces chronicling their experiences teaching a FIGS course.

Whether you took a FIGS as a student or taught a FIGS as a peer instructor, if you have a story that you'd like to share - six words or otherwise - please get in touch with us.

INSPIRED
HEARTS
GROWING
TOGETHER
FOREVER
LEARNING

Abraham Lincoln - 18

Creating a
DIFFERENCE
Leaving
YOUR
MARK

History

How is history relevant to our everyday lives? Can we really learn from the past?

In this FIGS, we will study both primary and secondary sources and discuss the methodologies that historians use to examine and understand historical events.

Learn more about the exciting courses offered by the History department, meet faculty and talented upper-class students, and discover the many career paths available to those who pursue a degree in History.

Information Technology & Informatics

Are you passionate about technology and looking to use your skills to change the world? Not only will this course cover the latest and greatest in all things tech, but it will also foster creative thinking in the modern technological era. Students will gain valuable skills in learning how to utilize a combination of emerging technologies to creatively solve prominent issues. In addition, students interested in an ITI career will learn about the plethora of exciting on-campus activities, internships, and job opportunities, in a leading and rapidly growing field.

International Relations

Who's who in the Middle East? What does a Taiwanese presidential election or Japanese constitutional shift mean for U.S.-China relations? How do governments manage conflict in a world where ethnic and religious tension, economic change, and territorial demands threaten their very existence? Exploring International Relations will provide students with skills to analyze the myriad questions that emerge daily in our fast paced global environment. In this FIGS, we will explore international relations theories, discuss case studies, debate current events, learn about academic and professional opportunities, and meet faculty and students from a range of departments.

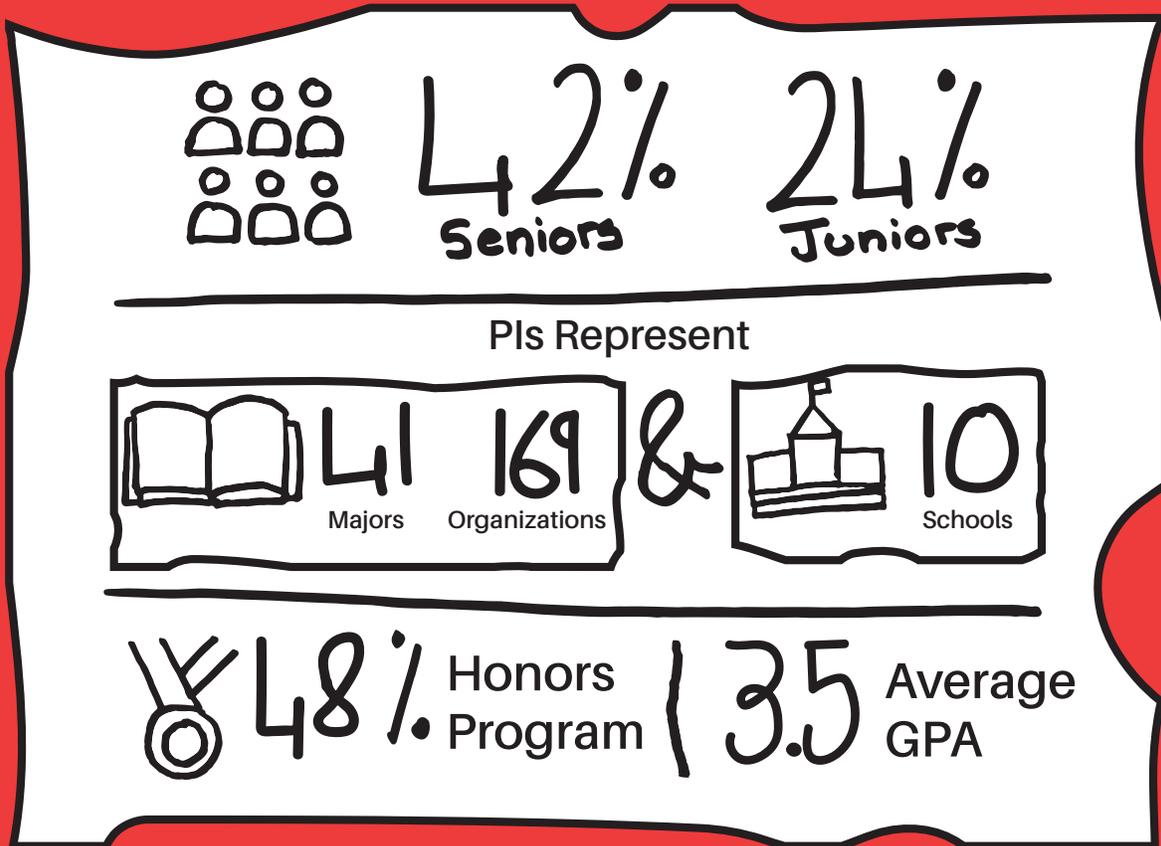
Journalism

Print. Radio. Television. Internet. Journalists navigate these branches of media every day. In this course, we'll discuss the role of networking, the importance of writing and presentation skills, and the practical experience and professional activities that you'll need in order to become a successful journalist. You will learn about the departments and academic resources at Rutgers related to the field of journalism and receive an introduction to the many on-campus publications and involvement opportunities available to Rutgers students.

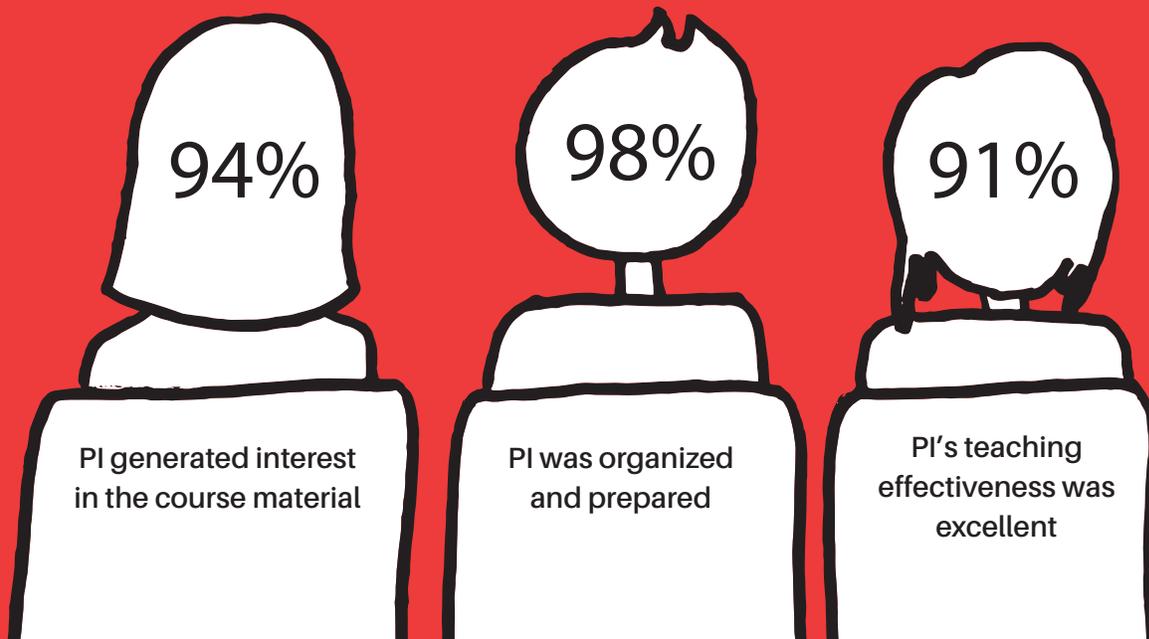


Who are FIGS Peer Instructors?

The FIGS program is not just about first-year students, it is also about the peer instructors who pursue teaching their fellow classmates with passion for sharing all the resources and amazing experiences that are available at Rutgers. Just as the first-year students in the program grow from discovery and engagement so do the peer instructors. Our peer instructors have painted us a visual of their experience teaching.



What students say about FIGS Peer Interest Group Instructors (PI's)





Law & Leadership

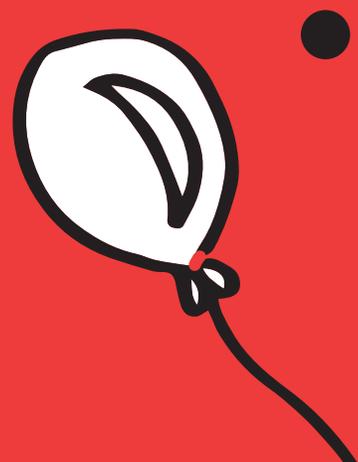
Are you a budding legal ace? Do you want to engage in civic leadership? This course will examine a wide range of legislative and judicial issues that have shaped our nation and our world and will introduce students to the political and legal spheres. Students will also learn more about different career paths and educational options (law school, Ph.D., etc.) and will be introduced to the tools and the information they'll need to become leaders in the Rutgers community and the greater world of law and politics.

Management & Labor Relations

This FIGS will explore questions surrounding the impact of the United States labor movement, contemporary ideas surrounding work and industry, and the development of effective teams and productive employees. Learn about the management of employees from entry-level jobs to corporate leadership, as well as American union movements and contemporary social movements. Students will be introduced to careers in the management and labor relations field, and will be able to discuss their experiences as workers and how their future goals fit into the American labor structure and workplace. Enroll in this seminar to discover your potential and goals amidst the world of work.

Mathematics

Do you enjoy solving math problems? Do you envision yourself working with numbers for a living? As one of the most uniquely versatile academic subjects, mathematics serves as the logical "common denominator" behind various disciplines including (but not limited to) computer science, education, engineering, and physics. This FIGS will introduce you to different courses of study and numerous involvement opportunities and will help you to integrate your mathematical passion into your Rutgers student experience. Meet fellow students who are as interested in this field as you are, network with faculty who have years of experience as advisers and mentors, and learn about the many career paths available to those who pursue a degree in mathematics. Come join us, and we'll prove it to you!



Meteorology: Weather & Climate

Do you find weather fascinating? Are you interested in learning more about climate change and its importance in the world today? This seminar will explore the science and forecasting of day-to-day weather patterns and severe storms of various climates. Students will also be introduced to the undergraduate program in Meteorology and learn about the various career fields meteorologists enter including broadcasting, the National Weather Service, and more. In this FIGS, you'll learn about how to become involved in weather-focused clubs and on-campus opportunities in forecasting and broadcasting.



Six-Word Stories

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Whether you took a FIGS as a student or taught a FIGS as a peer instructor, if you have a story that you'd like to share - six words or otherwise - please get in touch with us.



Music

From Paleolithic bone flutes to Spotify and Pandora, music remains a timeless, universal language. In this FIGS, we will delve into the origins of different musical genres and explore how music remains prevalent in a variety of art forms and professional career paths. Discover the music-related academic tracks that Rutgers offers; learn about out-of-class opportunities to experience, appreciate, and perform music; and discuss the career opportunities available to students interested in the musical arts. If you love music, then this course is for you!

Nursing

Have you ever considered a career in nursing? This course will teach students about the field's undergraduate academic paths, current issues in healthcare, research and internship possibilities here at Rutgers, as well as job opportunities in large hospitals, private clinics, and local schools. Join this FIGS to meet other students interested in nursing, to talk with faculty and professionals, and to learn more about the skills and experience that are necessary to pursue a career in this exciting field.

Nutrition

Are you eating healthy meals? Have you ever given any thought to the labels found on food packages? Do you know what it means to maintain a "balanced" diet? In this course, students will explore the different options within the nutrition major and the different career paths that the field of nutrition offers. In addition, students will learn about and discuss some of the current issues and advancements in nutrition and will meet with faculty from the Department of Nutritional Sciences.



Philosophy

Who are you? What gives your life purpose and meaning? Why do you do the things you do? Join this seminar as we explore such questions and engage in philosophical speculation and debate. Learn how to analyze major issues, strengthen arguments, and prove points. This FIGS will expose you to different philosophical fields and to the opportunities that exist at Rutgers to pursue an academic and career path related to philosophy. If you like to think about thinking, then enroll in this seminar and learn more about the field, network with upper-class philosophy students, and get to know faculty from the Department of Philosophy.

Political Science

Do you know how politicians get elected or how legislation gets passed? Have you ever wondered why countries get involved in some international conflicts but not in others? Are you interested in national politics and world affairs? Students who enroll in this FIGS will explore the various subfields of the political science major—including American politics, international relations, political theory, and public law—and will learn about involvement opportunities and professional career paths in both the public and private sectors. Come meet likeminded peers and faculty from the Department of Political Science!

Physics

Physics can be used to describe everything in the world around us, from fundamental natural phenomena to the processes that make even the most complex technologies work. This FIGS will explore the diverse array of subfields within physics, ranging from astrophysics to particle physics and all the scales in between. We will discuss modern advancements within the fields, the way these advancements impact our daily lives, and the variety of opportunities open to those who study Physics. Join us and embark on the exciting journey of becoming a physicist!



Psychology

Analyze this! Learn about psychological theories, discuss current psychosocial trends, and determine your personal and professional goals in this FIGS class. Discover what is really important to your life as a college student, what career paths exist for those interested in psychological study, and what research opportunities are available to members of the Rutgers community.

Public Health

Public health affects every aspect of our daily lives. From the food and water we consume to the air we breathe, our knowledge of public health can enhance the lives of people dramatically. This FIGS course will explore public health from an interdisciplinary perspective so that students can understand how it plays a role in human behavior, environmental policy, professional research, humanitarian interventions, and much more. Students will examine health statuses among different populations and be introduced to a wide variety of career opportunities within the Public Health field.

Religion

Are you interested in an interdisciplinary field that provides perspectives on international events, global culture, and human interaction? This seminar will give you insights into how religious and faith-based traditions impact our daily lives. Whatever career you plan to pursue, the study of religion can illuminate important issues that you will face as a Rutgers student and a member of an increasingly interconnected global society. In this FIGS, we'll examine belief structures, faith systems, and religious cultures, and we'll explore the diversity of religious life, experiences, and thought throughout human history. Meet faculty and upper-class students from the Department of Religion, get to know relevant academic paths and university organizations, and learn about the amazing career opportunities available to students interested in the study of religion.





Sociology

This FIGS will introduce you to the complexities of the sociological world. We will examine society and social relationships and will explore the sociological processes taking place in your everyday life—from your residence hall to your college classrooms, from the meals you share with family and friends to the media you consume on a daily basis. Meet faculty members from the Sociology department, learn more about academic and involvement opportunities here at Rutgers, and discover the many career paths available to Sociology majors.

Women's & Gender Studies

Have you ever given any thought to the acquisition and perception of gender roles? Are you interested in learning more about the depiction of women in today's society? This course will introduce you to the complexities of feminism and help you to understand its relevance to social, economic, political, cultural, national, and religious issues. Explore the department of Women's and Gender Studies and meet current faculty engaged in all kinds of exciting, creative research. Enjoy thoughtful, rousing discussions and begin to look at gender from a whole new perspective.

Theater

The theater is unquestionably a meeting place of the arts. In this seminar, we will discuss the wide range of academic options and career paths open to theater majors—from acting and playwriting to set design and production—and will explore involvement opportunities for Rutgers students interested in this field of study. In addition, we'll learn more about the theatrical world through local excursions and discussions with Rutgers faculty and professionals in the field. If you have a passion for the arts, this course is for you!

Does the credit count towards graduation?

Yes, all students who successfully participate in FIGS will receive one credit which counts towards graduation. If you do not come to class and complete the minimum assignments, you may receive no credit in the course. FIGS do not satisfy specific core curriculum requirements.

What should I expect each week in FIGS?

Your weekly FIGS class will be planned and facilitated by your Peer Instructor. FIGS are seminar courses, which means they are based on participation. You will receive the most benefit from this class if you come each week and take advantage of learning from your Peer Instructor and fellow students. All FIGS students will have the opportunity to go on an out-of-class excursion, hear from a peer panel, meet a faculty member, explore the various aspects of your interest area, and learn about the many services and resources available at Rutgers. You will have some short homework assignments and projects, but they are all designed to complement your learning, not provide you with busywork.

How do I register for a FIGS?

When you come to campus for an advising day, indicate your choices on the appropriate course registration form. Students that did not indicate interest in taking a FIGS during advising days, but are interested in being placed in a FIGS should fill out the online pre-registration form at <http://figs.rutgers.edu> by early August. If you find that you are not registered for a FIGS when you get your class schedule in August, you may still register for one during the first week of classes through the online Web Registration System (course number 01:090:120 or 11:090:120). To see the list of available FIGS, visit the Schedule of Classes in late August/early September at: sis.rutgers.edu/soc/

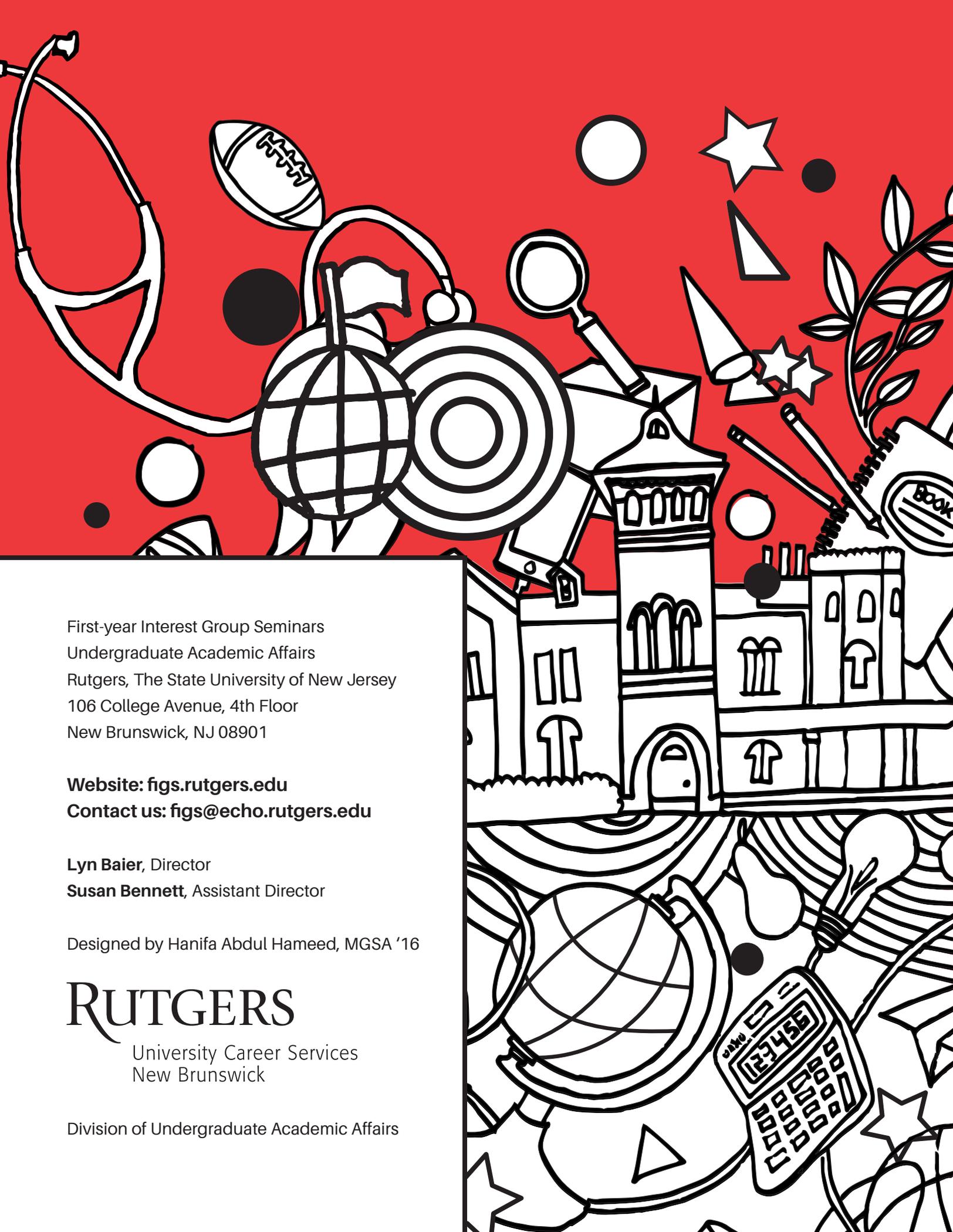
Can I take a FIGS and a Byrne Seminar?

Yes, if you are interested in both FIGS and Byrne Seminars, you should note this on your course request form when you are selecting your fall classes. FIGS are only offered in the fall semester; Byrne Seminars are offered in the fall and spring.

If I applied for a learning community, how do I reference the corresponding FIGS on the course request form?

Students selected to participate in the Discovery House, Health & Medicine and Bunting Cobb Learning Communities are guaranteed placement in the related FIGS course for that community and will automatically be assigned into this class by a first-year dean. You are welcome to list alternate FIGS options on course request forms in the event you are not assigned to a learning community.





First-year Interest Group Seminars
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