



Saint Louis University
Undergraduate Core

News From the Core

October 2025



In the Core Classroom: Shelter Pets in US History, Culture, and Society

What is a pet? How do cultural ideas shape “pethood”? These are some of the questions that students in Dr. Corinne Wohlford Mason's Ignite Seminar wrestle with throughout the semester. Dr. Wohlford Mason's class asks students to think critically about society's notion of pets. Rather than seeing pets only as soft, furry companions, the course encourages students to recognize that animals have histories and that becoming a shelter pet is the result of converging cultural forces. In this Ignite Seminar, pets, often overlooked as an academic subject, become an entry point into rigorous inquiry about social justice, race, class, and culture.

The idea for this course grew from Wohlford Mason's experience adopting a pit bull in 2017, which led her to learn more about the history of these “dangerous” dogs. She became interested in how race, class, and gender had in fact shaped people's perceptions of this particular breed and wanted to design a course for first-year students that asked similar questions. This course fosters community around animals and gives students opportunities to engage with the broader St. Louis community. In mid-September, the class visited the Humane Society and CareSTL to learn firsthand from experts about how the lives of shelter animals intersect with societal issues like homelessness and domestic violence.

Dr. Wohlford Mason, Chair of the Department of Women's and Gender Studies, hopes students leave her seminar connected to each other and to their communities and that they feel invited to consider how their own unique commitments, talents, and resources might become catalysts for lasting social change.

Have an Idea for Ignite Seminar?

Designing Your Life: A Collaborative Inquiry Course



How can we create a meaningful and fulfilling life? In *Designing Your Life*, a Collaborative Inquiry course co-taught by Drs. Justin Goodson and Abhimanyu Gupta, students wrestle with this question. Using principles from design science, students work to plan for a life that aligns with who they are, what they believe, and what they aspire to do in the world.

This course is designed around three broad questions: **Why** design my life? **What** do I want to do/be? **How** do I design my life? In late September, students explored their answers to these questions through the Japanese concept of *ikigai*. This concept asks us to consider what we love, what we are good at, what we can be paid for, and what the world needs, and then to visualize where each of these elements align. Through this visualization, students are invited to define who they want to be, what they want their lives to look like, and how to create their dream job. The course's culminating project is a poster session in which students present their life design posters.

Although both faculty members in the Chaifetz School of Business regularly live in the world of numbers and software, the idea for this interdisciplinary course arose from their shared commitment to the formation of the whole student. To Goodson and Gupta, the goal of higher education is not only to

student. To Goodson and Gupta, the goal of higher education is not only to earn a degree but to become someone, and they felt strongly that students needed a space where they could ask questions and find direction. According to Dr. Goodson, "Students tend to develop tunnel vision about their future, but the goal of this course is to give them new ideas to help them think outside the box and view themselves in new ways."

[Learn More About Collaborative Inquiry](#)

Core Happenings: Student Reengagement Workshop



Last year, the Core led six workshops, reaching over 200 Core instructors, that focused on developing a more holistic understanding of how discrete Core components intentionally create a unified curricular experience for SLU undergraduates. This year, the Core is broadening these efforts to engage our undergraduate students in similar conversations so that they can better articulate how their SLU education uniquely prepares them for their next steps beyond the University.

On September 30, the Core, in partnership with the University Honors Program, hosted the first of a year-long workshop series solely for undergraduate students. Entitled "Get It Together! Your Core Experience and Holistic Jesuit Education," these workshops will bring together students from diverse years, majors, and experiences with the Core to discuss how each requirement fits together to form a holistic and unique Core experience.

they felt particularly connected, and then in teams, educated each other on their respective Core areas and listened for connections and common themes. The teams then used these connections to create a vision statement that answered the question *"How does SLU's Core uniquely prepare students for their next steps beyond the University?"* and presented their statements to the larger group. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive. When asked what they would take away from the experience, one junior Biology major shared that she used to think of the Core as a checklist but now has an entirely new understanding of how Core classes interconnect to form a distinctive SLU education.

The Core plans to run additional student and instructor workshops this academic year to ultimately build a rich collection of statements representing how both students and instructors articulate the purpose and value of SLU's general education.

Interested in attending a Core Reengagement Workshop for instructors? Sign up below!

[Core Workshop Sign Up Form](#)

Upcoming Events and Deadlines

October 13 & 14 Core Student Reengagement Workshops-SLU Madrid
5:00 - 6:30 pm

October 21 Core Brown Bag, 12:00 - 1:00 pm
Verhaegen Hall, Room 219
"Accompanying Students through the Midterm Slump"

November 4 **Priority** deadline to submit a Core course for inclusion in the AY26-27 catalog

November 10 Core Coffee, 8:30 - 9:30 am

Pere Marquette, DuBourg Hall, Room 240
"Assignments and Grading in the Age of AI"

November 11

Core Instructor Reengagement Workshop
3:30 - 5:00 pm, [Register Here](#)

December 2

Ignite Instructor of the Year Award Ceremony

January 13

Priority deadline for new Ignite Seminar proposals for
AY26-27, [Ignite Proposal link here](#)

Full List of Core Events



Questions? Email core@slu.edu

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