

**Master of Arts in Liberal Studies
Duke University**

Core Course

LS 260.02

THE SELF IN THE WORLD (new student requirement)

Dr. Kent Wicker and Dr. Donna Zapf

How have people within Western culture made sense of themselves, their experience, and their place in the world of others? What new insights can we gain on those identities and meanings through the disciplinary methodologies of history, the sciences, the arts, or the humanities? How are those concepts influenced by values and contexts—whether of family, region, religion, class, race, or gender—that we inherit from our culture?

In this introductory course for the MALS degree, we will read provocative texts ranging from the seventeenth century to the present, in order to discuss aspects of the modern self and what we take for granted when we think of individual identity, subjectivity, authenticity, and autonomy. Our exploration of human identity and the relationship of self to others will be informed by the perspectives of various academic disciplines. Our goal is to explore how scholars think, read, and write, with particular attention to: 1) the critical analysis so vital to graduate level work, and 2) the reading and writing skills necessary for interdisciplinary study.

Class work will include readings, discussion, short papers, and one long research project.