

UH cuts 40% of core curriculum, including climate change and LGBT studies

[Samantha Ketterer](#)



Renu Khator, president of the University of Houston, is shown during a UH System Board of Regents meeting in Houston Thursday, Aug. 20, 2026.

Melissa Phillip/Houston Chronicle

University of Houston cut about 40% of its courses from its core curriculum, meaning new students can no longer take classes like "Intro to Global Climate Change" or "Introduction to LGBT Studies" to satisfy their general education requirements.

The move comes as Texas colleges and universities face pressure to eliminate what conservative lawmakers see as "[indoctrination](#)" in the classroom. Some students and faculty have disputed that characterization and believe the targeted courses should be included to promote academic inquiry.

"As adults we should be able to pursue education without outside interference," UH student Haylee Snyder told the board at its meeting Thursday. "The vast majority of students at UH are adults, people with jobs,

families and children, and shouldn't we as adults be deciding for ourselves what we find appropriate and educational and not be treated as though we are elementary school children?"

The [UH System Board of Regents](#) unanimously approved the core changes, which were reviewed to comply with [a 2025 state law](#) that strengthened the power of governor-appointed regents and diminished faculty influence on campus.

The board also approved changes to the core curricula at University of Houston-Clear Lake and University of Houston-Downtown, though those two universities made smaller reductions.

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The core has become one of the most hotly contested topics in Texas higher education because it defines what every college graduate should know and affects all undergraduates.

Some conservative lawmakers find the current core to be problematic, with courses that are either too narrow or "woke." Faculty who teach those courses, however, have said they meet the state's learning objectives and are being needlessly eliminated.

[Senate Bill 37](#), an expansive 2025 higher education governance law, requires public colleges and universities to review their core offerings every five years, starting this year. The law does not explicitly restrict topics but

emphasizes preparing students for the workforce as well as civic and professional life.

UH System Chancellor Renu Khator, who is also president of the main campus, said that the review was a huge task for the faculty working group that conducted it. She said that those faculty, who were appointed by Provost Diane Chase, were respectful and understanding, though she acknowledged their opinions varied.

"We may not all agree, but we respect every voice," Khator said.

What courses did UH cut?

Texas requires students at its public colleges and universities to complete 42 semester credit hours — about 14 classes across certain subjects and learning objectives — though individual institutions have largely had the discretion to decide what courses they offer.

The board's vote on Thursday dropped the main campus' core offerings from 241 courses to 144 for students to choose from, a university spokesperson said. About 40,000 undergraduates were enrolled at the main campus last fall.

Some courses were removed because of low enrollment, or because they hadn't been offered recently. Others were labeled as upper-division courses, signifying that they weren't "core." And others didn't meet the framework the university developed to assess the SB37, the spokesperson said..

It's not clear why some courses were removed and others stayed. Some cuts involved classes centered on politically divisive issues, like the courses on LGBT studies, climate change, "Black Liberation Theology" and "Introduction to Women's Studies," according to a list of removed courses

obtained by the Chronicle.

The cuts don't appear to target race studies as a whole, however. Students can still take "African American Studies" and "Latino Cultural Studies" to satisfy a core requirement for language, philosophy and culture.

No history or government classes were removed from the core, meaning courses focused on histories for specific demographics, including Chicanos, women, Latinos and African Americans, remain. A few professors successfully appealed to have their courses reinstated in the core, according to a comparison of the proposed and accepted changes to the core.

UH's other campuses have smaller enrollments and recorded less substantive changes. UH-Downtown kept 87 courses and cut 11, including "Intro to Critical Race Studies," "Ethnic Minorities in American History" and two Latino history courses focused on time periods before and after 1898.

UHCL cut only one of its 83 courses in the core, UH general counsel Dona Cornell said.

The changes affect freshmen, transfer students and future students; upperclassmen can still choose core courses from the prior catalog.

What does state law say about the core?

GOP lawmakers who support SB37 have framed it as a way to hold Texas universities accountable as [public confidence in higher education has fallen](#). Former state Sen. Brandon Creighton, who is now the chancellor of the Texas Tech University System, wrote the bill and said it would "restore academic integrity" on campuses.

The law has some broad requirements for core courses: Two of the four

standards are that the courses must be "foundational" to a sound postsecondary education and "necessary" to prepare students for civic and professional life.

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So far, the universities have responded to SB37 in different ways. All colleges are reviewing their core curricula, but some universities have also passed policies restricting certain topics in the core, including the Texas A&M and Texas Tech university systems.

That restriction led A&M's flagship to end its [women and gender studies](#) program, a discipline under heavy conservative attacks in recent years. UH still has its Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies programs, which offer a bachelor's degree, two minors and a graduate certificate.

What do students and faculty say?

A vocal group of faculty in UH's chapter of the American Association of University Professors say they believe that the curriculum review process didn't include enough faculty input. They also maintain UH administrators over-complicated with state law in their review.

María C. González, an associate professor of English who served on the provost's SB37 working group, said that she believes the administration used the group to "whitewash" governance changes.

"Our committee was told all discussions should remain confidential," she testified Thursday. "In exchange, we would participate in a fair and transparent process. Today, we can see that the outcome was already predetermined, since our general counsel's narrow interpretation of SB37

guaranteed certain narrow decisions."

Professors have largely argued that they have the pedagogical expertise and knowledge of learning objectives to inform what they teach, and that they've already gone through rigorous processes to ensure that their core courses met state standards. Those processes were upended after SB37 disbanded [faculty senates](#), which have led previous curriculum reviews, and allowed colleges to replace them with smaller, more limited advisory councils.

Richard Armstrong, an associate professor of classical studies, said he believes the process was rushed and lack transparency, creating practical implications for students. He and other faculty have predicted that the changes will create bottlenecks at registration and potentially make it harder for students to graduate on time.

Five out of six core courses in Armstrong's department were cut, he said. He also questioned why a class on Greek and Roman myths and heroes was removed when the state has indicated an interest in more courses on [Western civilization](#).

"It's a popular course that we're teaching this fall that regularly fills, but it's also the course most often petitioned for transfer credit from students coming to the University of Houston, so the exclusion makes things worse," Armstrong said.

The removed courses can still be offered as electives for new and future students, though some faculty worry enrollment will drop and they won't be able to continue them. Some professors have said they expect smaller humanities departments to feel the effects because the departments often relied on the core to draw students to minors.

Ian Kariuki, UH's student body vice president, said he agrees that not as many students will take the courses as electives, even if they're interested in them. He said the core should reflect UH's diverse student body.

"I chose this very institution because of its diversity," he said. "I feel like now it's now ignorant to call it that because we take ... that diversity, that culture, that perspective out of our classrooms."