Report on First-Year Seminar Best Practices for Faculty Senate and Academic Affairs

University of Wyoming

November 20, 2012
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I. Overview of findings on First-Year Seminars

a. National trends in First-Year Seminars (FYS)

- First-Year Seminars tend to be small (16-24 students), tend to last a semester or quarter, are usually offered for academic credit toward graduation, and award letter grades.
- First-Year Seminars, in teaching students how to learn by putting them in direct contact with faculty and other seasoned teachers, in several studies demonstrably improve student retention and graduation rates, as well as student satisfaction. Anecdotal evidence demonstrates teacher satisfaction with smaller, inquiry-based courses.
- First-year seminars are best conceived as part of a matrix of opportunities made available for first-years designed to encourage their ongoing academic success.
- The University of Wyoming has several effective Freshman Success programs in place, including Synergy, FIGs, undeclared learning communities, and the University Honors Program, which in the fall of 2012 is running 14 sections of their own Freshman Seminar.
- Statistics suggest that at the University of Wyoming, the correlation between first-year seminars and student success will be borne out. The number of first-year students on probation has increased from 16% to 22% since our original First-Year Seminar course was dropped in 2003. First-Year Seminars, conceived in terms of the academic mission of UW, may well result in fewer students on probation and higher first-year GPAs, as well as higher retention and graduation rates.
- In this context, the Enrollment Management Council’s “Proposal for a UW Credit-bearing First-Year Experience Course/Seminar” found that UW needs a first-year seminar “to provide our new students with the tools and knowledge to successfully navigate their college experience in an effective, intentional and consistent manner.”
- As of 2009, between 87% and 97% of four-year institutions had some form of freshman or first-year seminars.
- Among these four-year institutions, about 50% require that all students take a First-Year Seminar.
- The forms of First-Year Seminars vary, from courses conceived, like UW’s earlier first-year courses, as an extended orientation to college life, to seminars that derive from old Western Civilization requirements and seminars that are required to include a freshman writing component, to First-Year Seminars organized around a set of academic guidelines or goals that are otherwise open in topic and form. Nationally, “orientation” seminars are giving way to more academic forms organized around a short set of carefully conceived guidelines.
- In spite of the national enthusiasm for First-Year Seminars, they frequently disappear or lose effectiveness over time at even the most selective institutions. Maintaining an effective first-year program requires careful thought about establishing guidelines and outcomes, providing strong leadership and faculty support as well as meaningful assessment, while encouraging faculty members to exercise their creativity in developing, organizing, and teaching First-Year Seminars.
- Starting First-Year Seminars at UW will require a shift in the University’s culture, from student acceptance of the benefits of a small, relatively intensive course in the first year that emphasizes professor-student interaction, through staff and faculty’s increased engagement with an emphasis on first-year students’ experiences.
- Student and faculty discussion of First-Year Seminar guidelines could be an important first step in introducing the First-Year Seminar into the University of Wyoming culture.
b. Best guidelines / goals / outcomes for First-Year Seminars

These sample guidelines for First-Year Seminars are culled from a variety of sources and represent best available materials from institutional websites. The material in this section consists of quotations and paraphrased quotations. See Tab A for examples and sources. Please note that each guideline is based in the intellectual culture of its home institution, as UW's would be.

Dartmouth College:
1. First-Year Seminars focus in depth on a question or topic in a disciplinary or interdisciplinary context. By means of its specific focus, the seminar explores the thinking, research, and writing practices in a particular field and the ways in which ideas are communicated across fields or to a wider audience.
2. Each seminar provides instructional support for research by asking students to engage in some form of structural investigation beyond the common sequence of readings.
3. Each seminar provides structured occasions for students to take an active part in shaping discussion.

Pennsylvania State University (UW Comparator):
Seminars are designed to engage students in the scholarly community and to introduce them to the faculty, with goals that include
1. Introducing students to university study and to Penn State as an academic community.
2. Acquainting students with learning tools and resources.
3. Providing opportunities to develop academic relationships with faculty and peers.
4. Introducing responsibilities as members of the community.

Western Carolina University:
1. First-year seminars demonstrate how reasoning and communication skills are the foundation for life-long intellectual and professional growth.
2. First-year seminars discuss serious ideas and help students to develop rigorous intellectual habits.

Ohio State University Seminars (UW Comparator)
1. Provide first-year students opportunities for contact with faculty in small group-discussion settings.
2. Offer an introduction to frontier areas of scholarly pursuit, allowing first-years a glimpse of current topics of research and study.
3. Introduce students to unfamiliar academic areas.
4. Provide insight into how faculty pursue scholarship in their disciplines.

University of Richmond Seminars
1. Expand and deepen students' understanding of the world and of themselves.
2. Enhance their ability to read and think critically.
3. Enhance their ability to communicate effectively, in writing, speech, and other appropriate forms.
4. Develop the fundamentals of information literacy and research.
5. Provide the opportunity for students to work closely with a faculty mentor.

University of Alabama First-Year Seminars
1. Connect students to subject matter that is academically engaging and challenging.
2. Engage students in active learning.
3. Increase student-faculty interaction.
4. Provide an enriching educational experience.
5. Expose students to a supportive campus environment.

**University of Michigan First-Year Seminars (UW Comparator)**
1. Enable first-year students and faculty to interact in a small class experience.
2. Introduce students to the demands of intellectual inquiry.
3. Engage students as participants in the university’s intellectual community.
4. Develop students’ communication skills.
5. Help students to discover the value of specialized academic knowledge.

**University of Oregon goals for First-Year Seminars:**
1. Reinforce critical reasoning, reading, writing, and speaking skills.
2. Emphasize active discussion involving all participants.
3. Develop mentor relationships between faculty members and students.
4. Develop a sense of community among students with similar interests.

**University Oregon proposals for First-Year Seminars must include**
1. Emphasis on high-quality instruction in a setting that promotes interaction between professor and students.
2. Clear academic substance.
3. Appropriateness for first-year students.
4. Course content that sharpens the written, spoken, and critical reasoning skills of students and includes a variety of academic readings.
5. A teaching environment that promotes class discussion, helps integrate students into the campus community, and is conducive to a mentoring relationship.

**Texas A&M University Program Objectives (UW Comparator):**
1. Provide freshmen a small class learning experience.
2. Engage students through reasonable academic challenges and appropriate faculty/staff support.
3. Establish a foundation upon which first year students can begin to build life-long learning skills.
4. Foster integration across curricular and co-curricular learning through High-Impact Educational Practices, including
   a. Require students to devote time and energy to course tasks.
   b. Help students build substantive relationships with faculty and peers.
   c. Allow students to experience diversity and engage across differences.
   d. Provide frequent and significant feedback re academic performance.
   e. Help students apply what they have learned on and off campus.
   f. Foster students’ awareness of their abilities as a student and a person.
5. Support student skills needed to manage everyday life.
6. Provide freshmen with contact to faculty/staff as a resource on university processes, including academic advising.

**University of Kansas FYS Course Objectives:**
The FYS program is a cornerstone of KU’s plan to invest in first-year experiences furthering the intellectual life of the university. FYS courses are designed to encourage discovery and scholarly inquiry at the university, develop and inspire students’ own thinking and learning skills. The goal is to lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning. FYS also create early connections between students and faculty.

**University of Kansas First-Year Seminar Guidelines:**
1. Enrollment limited to 19 students.
2. FYS classes promote active learning, discussion, and engagement with peers.
3. All FYS are designed around critical thinking goals and learning outcomes for the KU core.
4. FYS course assignments also emphasize written communication skills.
5. FYS courses are organized around applied problems and expose students to hands-on or experiential learning opportunities.
6. FYS courses include a capstone assignment and a plan for gauging students’ achievement of learning outcomes on this assignment.
7. FYS courses include library training and promote collaborations with other units.

Padgett reports in 2009 survey of 800+ institutions that the most common objectives for First-Year Seminars are
1. Develop academic skills.
2. Develop a connection with the institution.
3. Provide orientation to campus resources and services.

c. Best modes of First-Year Seminar Assessment (see also Tab B)
   - Well-chosen guidelines and goals (see b., above) should lead to effective outcomes for assessment. Tying guidelines to outcomes is essential.
   - Constructing a separate online course evaluation form for the First-Year Seminar would help evaluate students’ response to the course, and allow them to self-report behavior, like use of library databases and interaction with professors and peers outside of class (Cuseo, 14-24). Asking students to help write this course evaluation form could help involve students in the arrival of the FYS at UW.
   - Keup & Petschauer suggest that the planning process for First-Year Seminars begin with the “desired end”: the Learning Outcomes in answer to the question, “What will we be able to show that students have learned or gained as a result of their participation in this course?” (38).
   - Outcomes can address a range of first-year student behavior and experience, including (40-41; Barton & Donahue, 260)
     - Retention
     - Academic skills/experience (analytical and critical thinking, academic engagement and achievement, study skills, intro to university-level research, connection to professor).
     - Campus connection (ability to seek & use campus resources and programs, feeling connected to campus community, understanding UW history and traditions, involvement in cocurriculars, satisfaction with student experience).
     - Interpersonal skills (time management, identity exploration, values clarification, life management skills, emotional wellness, moral and ethical development, leadership skills).
   - Several national assessment instruments exist for FYS. They could be used either to assess UW’s proposed First-Year Seminars outright, or to offer a sense of how our students perform compared to national norms. See Friedman, 27-35; Keup & Petschauer, 87-90.
   - In general, “classroom assessment should be teacher-directed” “context-specific (i.e., responsive to the needs and characteristics of students, teachers, and disciplines), ongoing, and rooted in good teaching practice” (quoted in Garner, 107).
d. Who should teach these seminars? These 3 examples are typical:

**Penn State University Seminars (UW Comparator):**
Are normally taught by regular faculty: tenured, tenure-track, or full-time fixed term faculty with at least three years experience.

**University of Michigan (UW Comparator):**
Tenure or tenure-track faculty and emeriti, doctoral-level research scientists, research investigators, and emeriti; Lecturer I and above teaching in their degree area; All instructors should hold a doctorate or another terminal degree; exceptions include someone with recognized expertise in a certain area.

**University of Texas at Arlington:**
Tenure stream, tenured full-time and part-time instructors with long term records of excellence in teaching and or student advising; University staff with appropriate degrees, relevant teaching and or advising experience.

**Concluding comments on who should teach these seminars?**
- Teachers of these seminars should be prepared to deliver both academic excellence and relevance.
- Good teaching is key “for first-year persistence,” as well as for the social integration of first-years” (Groccia & Hunter, 6).

e. How are best institutions initiating a culture of first-year seminars?

- Keup & Petschauer include a month-by-month guide to “Launching a Seminar” (pp. 22-36) with steps for creating a pilot First-Year Seminar Program, including
  1. Create a First-Year Seminar Leadership Team.
  2. Conduct institutional audit to determine campus readiness (attitudes and resources) for implementing a pilot program (pp. 24-25). At UW, this audit might include how many sections of First-Year Seminar-like courses are already being taught.
  3. Review campus mission and align seminar goals with mission.
  4. Identify and assign leadership team members to action areas, including
     a. curriculum development
     b. administration and logistics
     c. campus communication
     d. instructor recruitment and development
     e. student recruitment and seminar assessment.
  5. Create a campus webpage that is updated regularly with names and contact information of leadership team members.
  6. Determine a streamlined, effective FYS proposal process.
  7. Offer training or other support for teachers of the First-Year Seminars.
  8. Teach first sections of seminars.
  10. At the conclusion of the first semester or year, initiate seminar assessment to include
        a. Establishing baseline information for the program.
        b. Developing and administering course evaluation.
        c. Gathering other data (e.g., GPA, retention rates for student assessment).

- Changing UW’s culture to include an academic First Year Seminar could offer faculty inclusion and a variety of incentives, including
1. Small discussion groups of faculty and staff led by FYS proponents could be meet over several weeks or months, to discuss the definition and guidelines of UW’s FYS.

2. Faculty and staff could be offered a choice of inter-college or intra-college discussion groups.

3. An example of a standing definition that groups could discuss and revise is that of the First-Year Seminar as “A course designed to ‘assist students in their academic and social development and in their transition to college. A seminar, by definition, is a small discussion-based course in which students and their instructors exchange ideas and information. In most cases, there is a strong emphasis on creating community in the classroom’” (Hunter & Linder, 2005, 275-76, quoted in Padgett).

4. Faculty could be offered several forms of support for developing, teaching, and helping to assess these courses (see f., next point).

f. What kinds of support are faculty members receiving nationally as they develop, teach, and assess seminars?

- 76% of respondents to 2009 survey (Padgett, 800+ institutions) reported offering training for FYS faculty.
- 50% of respondents to Padgett survey reported requiring training for FYS faculty.
- Small group training seminars usually meet from 2-4 hours. 58% of respondents in Padgett survey reported training lasts less than 1 day.
- Podcasts can be made of some training sessions and made available at the First-Year Seminar website or similar.
- Several institutions have faculty handbooks on the First-Year Seminar available on the web, usually through Academic Affairs, but also through Student Affairs or another entity. These handbooks tend to include FYS guidelines/goals/objectives, course proposal guidelines, sample syllabi, statements of teaching philosophy regarding the FYS, and sample lists of courses. See Tab C.
- Course development grants vary in amount, but are common forms of incentive.
- Resources such as Garner’s Teaching the First-Year Seminar and Latino & Ashcraft, Using Peers in the Classroom could be common reading for discussion.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Thanks to Dean David Cozzens for lending many of the monographs below. See Institutional Websites of the specific institutions mentioned, above; see also tabulated material. In the fall of 2012, I made site visits to the following institutions and spoken with their administration about their First-Year Seminars: Claremont McKenna College, Pomona College, Harvey Mudd College, Occidental College, Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Alabama.


Tab A

Examples: best explanations / guidelines / goals about the first-year seminar experience. Dartmouth, Penn State Berks, Ohio State, Universities of Richmond, Alabama, Michigan, Oregon, Texas A&M, Kansas, UT Arlington, UT Austin
First-year Seminar Course Outcomes

PREAMBLE

Note: This document is intended as a starting place only, and will be revised and refined over the coming years. It should be understood to reflect the capabilities we agree on, but does not preclude other capabilities each of us might focus on developing in our students. It does not include capabilities/outcomes each seminar might have for its discipline-based subject matter, even as we recognize that the subject matter and the writing cannot be separated.

The First-Year Seminar models the academic life, in particular by its seminar nature, a hallmark of which is strong faculty-student interaction. The First-Year Seminar engages students in the integrated activities of reading, research, discussion, and composition around a designated subject. At its core, this course is designed to provide first-year students with opportunities for both sustained, rigorous investigation of a topic and close faculty-student interaction. Students will gain a deeper appreciation of the role of writing in scholarly investigation, as they refine, adapt, and expand their abilities to absorb, synthesize and construct arguments in close-knit community.

Accordingly, the FYS is both a writing (composing) course and a course that works with a particular content; the writing engages the content and enables deep learning of that content, and vice versa. "Writing" in this course is thus understood within the context of advanced learning--as a process that requires students to balance their acquisition of new knowledge and contextualized understanding (gained through reading, research, and discussion) against the challenges of synthesizing and re-presenting that understanding in ways that suit their current context.

In order to achieve that balance, the seminar helps students recognize analogies between the work of absorbing complex content--for example, through reading and research inquiry--and that of constructing it. In a seminar on medical imaging, for example, students could analyze how the most effective presentation of MRI data is similar to and differs from the most effective presentation of data in a scientific academic paper. Likewise, students in a history or sociology seminar can draw from their classroom analysis of historical evidence to find new methods for evaluating their own evidence in a class essay, project, or presentation. This integration of advanced learning, inquiry, and writing is the foundation of the course.

While this document separates out the capabilities students should develop in the course in order to help identify them, we acknowledge that they are all interrelated in the everyday reality of the course.

I. Academic Process

In the First-Year Seminar context, students are engaged in reading (both course assigned reading and research reading) as a core component of writing well on a particular topic. Likewise, students will write--both formally and informally--in order to process and engage with their reading. In both respects, reading and research are integral to the seminar's writing goals, and vice versa.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to perform close and critical readings.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to consider critically the motives and methods of scholarship and the relationship between them.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to distinguish opinions and beliefs from researched claims and evidence and recognize that kinds of evidence will vary from subject to subject. For instance, some fields call for quantitative support while others work more commonly with quoted, textual evidence.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to ask disciplinarily appropriate questions of the material and recognize when lines of inquiry fall outside of disciplinary boundaries.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate, credit, and synthesize sources.

II. Composing and Producing

As writers in the First-Year Seminar, students will practice capabilities related to entry-level thinking, research, and writing in a particular field. Specifically, they will develop the "rhetorical flexibility" necessary to recognize that different academic domains require their own approaches appropriate to the context. Since the problem of "how to write effectively" is dependent on what they are writing about, writing is not a separate "skill" that can be fully separated from disciplinary context. Understanding this need for flexibility, students will approach future course writing with a productive mindset, one that will allow them to make rhetorical adjustments as needed.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to take a piece of writing through the process of revision in order to advance their ideas and communicate more effectively with their readers.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to discern the assignment's intended audience and objectives and respond appropriately.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to identify the disciplinary context for different kinds of writing, including both informal writing (like scientific note taking) and formal writing (like a research paper in Government).
- Students will demonstrate the ability to construct a paper consistent with expectations of the discipline, including an appropriate organization, style, voice, and tone.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to perform critical readings of their own writing and the writing of others.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to proofread.

III. Interacting in the Course

These include capabilities related to interacting intellectually in a seminar through informal and formal speaking.

- Students will demonstrate the ability to collaborate with others as they work on intellectual projects (reading, writing, speaking, researching...).
- Students will demonstrate the ability to prepare appropriately to participate effectively in class discussion.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to follow discussions, oral arguments, and presentations, noting main points or evidence and tracking threads through different comments. Further, students will be able to challenge and offer substantive replies to others' arguments, comments, and questions, while remaining sensitive to the original speaker and the classroom audience.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to speak and debate with an appreciation for complex social and cultural sensibilities.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to offer compelling, articulate oral arguments, showing an understanding of the unique demands of oral presentation as opposed to writing.
1. First-Year Seminars focus in depth on a question or topic in a disciplinary or interdisciplinary context. By means of its specific focus, the seminar explores the thinking, research, and writing practices in a particular field and the ways in which ideas are communicated across fields or to wider audiences.

2. Each seminar uses a sequence of readings to develop the intellectual focus of the seminar and provide material for discussion. The readings should challenge students without making excessive demands on their time in preparing for class. The readings should:
   - demonstrate the genres and conventions of writing in the field of study
   - offer models of clarity, rigor, and style
   - afford opportunities and cues for further investigation on the seminar topic

3. Each seminar provides instructional support for research by asking students to engage in some form of structured investigation beyond the common sequence of readings, often in collaboration with reference librarians. Research may involve:
   - opportunities to find and evaluate primary and/or secondary sources
   - opportunities to engage with scholarly arguments in the field of study
   - instruction in the forms of appropriate citation, including a review of *Sources*

4. Each seminar provides instructional support for writing, using an array of different writing assignments typically including at least three formal assignments totaling about 6000 words. Students should write regularly, though not all writing need be graded. The 6000 words may include drafts that students submit for comment. Writing instruction in the seminar should include
   - discussion of writing in class workshops, small groups and/or individual conferences with the instructor
   - attention to and opportunities for revision
   - attention to conventions of grammar, spelling, and punctuation

5. Each seminar provides structured occasions for students to take an active part in shaping discussion. These may involve
   - the assigned responsibility to initiate and facilitate discussion on a particular reading
   - individual or small group oral presentations or debates
Administrative Guidelines

1. Enrollment in First-Year Seminars is restricted to first-year students and limited to 16 students per seminar. First-Year Seminars are closed to non-first-year students. First-year students are permitted to enroll in a second seminar within the limit of sixteen per group after all students who have not yet met the requirement have had a chance to elect one.

2. First-Year students must take a First-Year Seminar in the term following their Writing 5 (or Writing 2-3), i.e.:
   - First-Year Students enrolled in Writing 5 fall term must elect a winter seminar.
   - All Writing 2-3 students and those enrolled in Writing 5 winter term must take a spring seminar.

3. An instructor shall be free to schedule a seminar in any regular timetable hour.

4. A First-Year Seminar may serve in satisfaction of specific General Education requirements (Distributive and World Culture), provided that the individual seminar has been approved for this purpose, and for the specific year and term, by the Committee on Instruction.

5. Students are not eligible to participate in Off-Campus Programs until they have satisfied the First-Year Seminar requirement.

6. First-Year Seminars cannot serve for major credit or as a prerequisite to the major.

First-Year Seminar Forms for Faculty:

FORM #1

All faculty teaching a First-Year Seminar in 2012-13 must complete the First-Year Seminar Form #1 online by May 7, 2012.

You can access FYS Form #1 by clicking here:
FYS Form #1 (online form)

(The preferred method for submitting the FYS Form is the online form. If you are unable to access the online FYS Form, you can download and fill out a Microsoft Word or PDF version of the form:
FYS Form #1 (MSWord) - fill, save, and return as attachment
FYS Form #1 (PDF) - print, fill out, and then scan and return as attachment.)

After FYS Form #1 is submitted we will contact you about next steps, including deadlines to submit additional information and a syllabus if necessary.

FORM #2

All faculty repeating a previously-offered First-Year Seminar without changes in 2012-2013 must complete the First-Year Seminar Form #2 online by the deadline indicated in our email to you. A copy of your syllabus should be submitted.

The FYS Student Seminar Requirements

(L-9: First-Year Seminars)

In December 1997, the University Faculty Senate passed legislation mandating a first-year seminar requirement for all incoming first-year baccalaureate students who were admitted to the University after spring semester 1999.

Procedure

1. First-year seminars (FYS) are either identified by the course abbreviation "PSU" or by the suffix "S," indicating that the course is a first-year seminar; "I," indicating that the course is an honors course and a first-year seminar; or "X," indicating that the course is both writing intensive and a first-year seminar.

2. FYS are normally taught by regular faculty—tenured, tenure-track, or full-time fixed term faculty with at least three years experience.

3. The FYS section size is normally limited to 20 students. Minor exceptions to this limit may occur from time to time but should not be standard practice.

4. Content and number of credits (between 1 and 4) are at the discretion of colleges, but seminars are designed to engage students in the scholarly community and to introduce them to the faculty. Activities to achieve these goals include:
   - Introducing students to university study and to Penn State as an academic community.
   - Acquainting students with learning tools and resources.
   - Providing opportunities to develop academic relationships with faculty and peers.
   - Introducing responsibilities as members of the community.

5. It is expected that all baccalaureate degree candidates will include a first-year seminar as part of their first 27 credits scheduled in residence at Penn State. Students are encouraged to complete this requirement in their first two periods of enrollment.

6. The following students are exempt from the FYS requirement: provisional and nondegree (regular and conditional) students who have completed 16 or more credits in that status, advanced standing admits (19 or more transfer credits), admits with 19 or more credits in another status at Penn State (e.g., associate degree), and associate degree candidates.

7. Students who do not successfully complete an FYS must fulfill the requirement in an alternative activity as directed by the academic dean of their college.

8. If a student is changing colleges or equivalent units, his/her FYS course or approved alternative activity is wholly portable and must be counted as meeting the FYS requirement in the new college/unit. However, if a student's college/unit waives the FYS requirement, his/her new college/unit may require an alternative activity.

9. Each college at University Park will provide as many FYS seats as are required to meet the needs of all first-year students enrolled in that college, plus a proportion of Division of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) students. Annually, the executive director of DUS will identify and assign, in consultation with the colleges, the number of FYS seats that may be needed in each college. Colleges at other locations will provide as many FYS seats as are required to meet the needs of all first-year baccalaureate students enrolled at that location.

10. Annually, ACUE will review each college's participation rate using data provided by the University Registrar and Undergraduate Education.

Approved: ACUE (9-06-01)
Revised: ACUE (3-14-0)

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Who makes a difference in the experience of first-year students?
Nominate faculty, staff, or student:
Protocol: Associate Dean

http://www.bk.psu.edu/Academics/26510.htm  11/13/2012
The First-Year Seminar (FYS) is a course that must be completed by all baccalaureate degree students within their first year of enrollment at Penn State.

The 10 top reasons to enroll in a First-Year Seminar:

- Small class size—no more than 20 students in a class
- Active learning with critical thinking and problem solving
- Get to know the instructor—a full-time faculty member
- Get to know other students and the college community
- Learn skills to be successful in college—study skills, etc.
- Adjust to the demands of college—it's different from high school
- Learn technology and library skills
- Improve communication skills for later courses and life
- Explore new areas, goals, and career objectives
- IT’S A REQUIREMENT

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) is a course that must be completed by all baccalaureate degree students within their first year of enrollment at Penn State. This requirement can be met by enrolling in a three-credit general education course that has been designated as a FYS or by taking a one-credit FYS. The Berks Campus offers a variety of First-Year Seminars. Students may choose from three-credit general education courses which have the “S” designation or one-credit courses with the PSU 005 designation. (AG 150S for two credits is also available.)

It is recommended that students schedule a FYS in their first semester of enrollment.

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) is a component of Penn State’s revised General Education Requirement. The purpose of the First-Year Seminar is to introduce new students to an open and purposeful learning community, and to help them develop the habits and pleasures of good scholarship. Working with a regular faculty member in a small class environment, they will learn that expectations of personal integrity, level of effort, and civility at Penn State are much higher than in high school, but that there are many people, vehicles, and support to help them meet those expectations. They can learn to take charge of their own education, to plan for internships, international experiences, research, and, in general, to become active learners. And they will find that a life-habit of learning is satisfying, useful, and necessary.

Commonly Asked Questions:

1. Which courses are First-Year Seminar Courses? First-Year Seminar courses are identified in two ways. All courses that begin with the abbreviation “PSU” are first-year seminar courses. Example: PSU 005 is a First-Year Seminar course. All courses or sections that have a suffix of “S” or “T” following the course number are First-Year Seminar courses. Example: Stat 100S is a first-year seminar.

2. Must I enroll in a First-Year Seminar course? All first-year students in baccalaureate degree programs admitted to the University must enroll and successfully complete a First-Year Seminar course. This is a graduation requirement that will be recorded on your Degree Audit.

3. Which First-Year Seminar course should I register for? You should follow the specific advising provided by your college. Information will be provided to you during FTCAP, through your college’s academic advising center, and college meetings.

4. If I change colleges or change my major after I complete my First-Year Seminar course will I need to take another First-Year Seminar course? No. To fulfill the graduation requirement, you need to successfully complete only one First-Year Seminar course.

http://www.bk.psu.edu/Academics/26511.htm
with Form #2.

You can access FYS Form #2 by clicking here:
FYS Form #2 (online form)

(The preferred method for submitting the FYS Form is the online form. If you are unable to access the online FYS Form, you can download and fill out a Microsoft Word or PDF version of the form:
FYS Form #2 (MSWord) - fill, save, and return as attachment
FYS Form #2 (PDF) - print, fill out, and then scan and return as attachment

FORM #3

All faculty proposing a new or changed topic for a First-Year Seminar in 2012-13 must complete the First-Year Seminar Form #3 online by the deadline indicated in our email to you. A proposed syllabus should be submitted with Form #3.

You can access FYS Form #3 by clicking here:
FYS Form #3 (online form)

(The preferred method for submitting the FYS Form is the online form. If you are unable to access the online FYS Form, you can download and fill out a Microsoft Word or PDF version of the form:
FYS Form #3 (MSWord) - fill, save, and return as attachment
FYS Form #3 (PDF) - print, fill out, and then scan and return as attachment

Resources for use in preparing syllabi for First-Year Seminars:

Scroll to the top of this page for a list of basic guidelines for faculty for First-Year Seminars.
First-Year Seminar Outcomes document
IWR Checklist for Syllabi for First-Year Seminars
DCAL Syllabus Template available on the DCAL website

Contacts

For questions concerning the seminar's goals, and for discussion of the methods you might employ to meet these goals, contact Christiane Donahue, Director of the Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, or Karen Gocsik, Executive Director, Writing and Rhetoric Program.
To arrange library instruction, contact the Subject Specialist for your discipline.
Also, Writing Assistants are available to enhance your students' writing and revising processes. Tutors are available to students who require one-on-one help with writing. Students should also be made aware of the on-line materials on the Institute for Writing and Rhetoric's website. We encourage all instructors to take advantage of these services.
To request a Writing Assistant, please contact Stephanie Boone, Director of Student Writing Support.
Goals for the Freshman Seminar Program

- Provide first-year students opportunities for contact with faculty in small group-discussion settings.
- Offer an introduction to frontier areas of scholarly pursuit, allowing freshmen a glimpse of current topics of research and study.
- Introduce students to unfamiliar academic areas.
- Provide insight into how faculty pursue scholarship in their disciplines.

Instructional issues

- **Course Format**: The course is intended to be taught in a seminar format and to involve significant student participation. The seminars are offered for one credit hour. Syllabi should reflect an appropriate amount of coursework outside class for a one credit hour course, that is, a maximum of two hours of academic work outside of the classroom per week per credit hour. Seminars may receive the “S” (service learning) designation by completing the appropriate proposal as outlined on the Service-Learning Initiative website: [http://service-learning.osu.edu](http://service-learning.osu.edu).

- **Staffing**: Models for staffing the courses are flexible and might include a single faculty member or two faculty members, for instance team-teaching an interdisciplinary course. It is expected that there will typically be no more than two faculty teaching any individual seminar. With more instructors, students might not benefit from a sufficiently intense relationship with any individual faculty. Interdisciplinary offerings broaden student perspectives and we encourage such seminars.

  Faculty may choose to have a peer leader (usually a student who has taken the seminar in a previous quarter) who will assist with group discussions and planning. Peer leaders will be paid a stipend of $200/credit hour and complete a contract with the Program office.

- **Grading**: Courses may be graded using a letter grades or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. Courses using letter grades are offered under a decimalized section of Arts & Sciences 1137, whereas S/U courses are under Arts & Sciences 1138.

- **Content Focus**: Seminars should introduce first-year students to areas of research, scholarship, and study within a specific discipline or across disciplines. (Seminars could be offered in the spring to offer exposure to the Denman Undergraduate Research Forum. These seminars might involve guest presentations by students and faculty involved in Denman projects, as well as a required presence at the Denman for enrolled students.)

- **Enrollment**: Seminars are open to all first-year students, and each student may enroll in only one seminar. Enrollment is capped at 18 with a minimum enrollment of 10 necessary to offer the course.

Course Approval Process

- Proposals should include the following:

  1. A sample syllabus that includes the course goals, a brief description of the content, the distribution of meeting times, a weekly topical outline, a listing of assignments, grade assessment information (including whether the course will be graded by letter grades or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory), the required textbooks and/or reading list, and the academic misconduct and disability services statements. Sample syllabi can be found at [http://freshmanseminars.osu.edu](http://freshmanseminars.osu.edu).
2. A brief biographical paragraph that includes the current research interests, teaching awards and honors, and undergraduate courses taught by the participating instructor(s). The paragraph will be included in materials for first-year students.

- Proposals will be reviewed by a Panel of the College of the Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee. The membership of this panel reflects both colleges within the Arts and Sciences and the professional colleges.

- Courses are approved with the understanding that approval is attached to the individual faculty member(s) submitting the proposal. If the course is to be offered in future quarters with a different instructor, it will need to be resubmitted.

- Once approved, faculty may offer their seminar more than once in an academic year and in subsequent academic years, as long as there is a demand for seminars. A current syllabus must be resubmitted to the subcommittee after a period of five years.

Compensation
- For the initial offering of a seminar under the semester system, a $3,000 stipend ($1,000 of which is for course development) will be allocated to the instructor of each course, either as a cash stipend or research support, depending on the faculty member's preference for the initial offering of the seminar. For subsequent offerings of the seminar, $2,000 will be awarded.

- If two or more faculty team-teach a course, the stipend will be divided between them.
FYS Guidelines

All First-Year Seminars have the same five common goals:

1. expand and deepen students' understanding of the world and of themselves
2. enhance their ability to read and think critically
3. enhance their ability to communicate effectively, in writing, speech, and other appropriate forms
4. develop the fundamentals of information literacy and library research
5. provide the opportunity for students to work closely with a faculty mentor

To assist faculty in developing FYS proposals, please refer to the following expansion on the goals 2, 3, and 4.

Read & think critically

Students should improve their skills in evaluation, interpretation and analysis of texts and other forms of expression. Types of works that might be appropriate include, but are not limited to: movies, structures, paintings, theatrical performances, essays, journal articles, and books. When possible, the readings should come from primary sources. Readings should not come from disciplinary textbooks except in cases where students need to use this type of material for essential background information that might aid in their understanding of concepts related to the primary materials assigned.

Communicate effectively

In writing

The term "writing intensive" is common in the field of rhetoric and composition, but the FYS Committee takes it to mean not simply assigning lots of writing but paying attention to the process through which writers generate ideas, shape them in words, and revise them in response to others. This process should be done in a way that provides students practice and also guidance in and outside of the classroom. All students will benefit from a developmental approach to writing in which assignments are relatively simple initially, but gradually become more intellectually challenging over the course of the semester. In addition, students will benefit from frequent feedback from faculty as well as trained student Writing Consultants (formerly known as Writing Fellows) who will be assigned to each first-year seminar to assist faculty in reviewing and responding to drafts. All faculty will participate in a summer institute focused in part on developmental writing pedagogy before teaching the seminar.

In order to create an approximate parity in the writing requirements for first-year seminars, all seminars should include 5000 words (approximately 20 double-spaced pages) of academic writing.

In speech

Spoken communication is essential to student success. All seminars will include frequent class discussion and, where appropriate, oral presentations. As with writing, students will benefit from a process through which discussion guidelines are shared and students have frequent opportunity to practice and to develop their communication skills both within and outside the classroom. Students will benefit from frequent feedback from faculty as well as trained student Speech Consultants, who will be available to work with specific seminars, as requested by the faculty.

In other appropriate forms

Each seminar will have its own focus and its own appropriate forms of communication. These may include students composing their own music; creating sculpture, paintings or drawings; designing theatrical sets; choreographing or

http://fys.richmond.edu/faculty-resources/guidelines.html

11/13/2012
performing dances; making videos; designing webpages, etc. When these forms are central to the course, faculty members will include guidance and standards for evaluation in their seminar development.

Information Literacy

"Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning. Students should be able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally"

(Information Literacy Standards for Higher Education developed by the ACRL (Association of College & Research Libraries))

To that end:

1. All students will attend an information literacy lab session as part of their FYS which will incorporate the objectives covered currently in LIB 100 and 101. There will be an assignment from each FYS tied to these labs, based on the agreed-upon outcomes (library liaisons will work with faculty to facilitate using a common assignment framework, with customization based on the seminar topic).

2. All FYS will incorporate at least one session of information literacy/library research in their seminars - building on the information covered in #1, and tied specifically to the subject matter of the course.

3. All FYS will incorporate at least one assignment requiring library research.

Adopted by the University Faculty on September 24, 2009
Freshman Seminars

OUTCOMES

Freshman Seminars will achieve the following outcomes:

1. Connect students into a subject matter that is academically engaging and challenging.
2. Engage students in active learning.
3. Increase student-faculty interaction.
4. Provide an enriching educational experience.
5. Expose students to a supportive campus environment

ASSESSMENT

Freshman Seminars will be assessed through the following venues:

- National Survey of Student Engagement
- Course evaluations

The University of Alabama
Division of Academic Affairs
254 Rose Administration
(205) 348-6287

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Page contact: provost@ua.edu
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http://www.ua.edu/academic/provost/seminars/outcomes.html

11/13/2012
Faculty Eligibility Guidelines

- Tenured or tenure-track faculty and emeriti from any UM college or school
- UM doctoral-level research scientists, research investigators, and emeriti
- Lecturer I and above teaching in their degree area
- Sweetland Teaching Fellows are eligible to teach a FYWR seminar through ENGLISH 124 after completing SWC’s course about how to teach writing
- All instructors should hold a doctorate, or when appropriate, another terminal degree such as MSW
- Visiting faculty with an official UM appointment teaching in their area of expertise
- Exceptions to the eligibility guidelines may include: 1) someone with recognized expertise in a certain area that would offer an important educational opportunity not easily obtained from regular course offerings (e.g. a former Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who wishes to conduct a seminar on foreign policy); or 2) a recognized expert, who has published and spoken extensively in national forums, yet has acquired that knowledge apart from the usual doctoral training
- Emeriti professors may propose departmental FYS.
- A small number of seminars are offered through the University Courses Division administered in the Dean’s Office. Intended for emeriti, faculty with part-time appointments, or faculty in non-LSA academic units.

FYS Course Content and Enrollment Policies

- Each department establishes its own proposal deadlines and approves FYS offerings using the following criteria: 1) topic is appropriate for first-year students; 2) prior course evaluations indicate that the instructor is familiar with and enjoys teaching first-year students; and 3) content fits the distribution or requirement designation of the course number.
- FYS enrollment is restricted to first-year students with a maximum enrollment of 20 for distribution courses and 18 for FYWR courses. One of the primary goals of the program is to give incoming students an opportunity to take a small, interactive class taught by regular faculty with lots of faculty-student interaction. Discussion and active participation require a level playing field with no juniors and seniors and limited permissions that exceed the maximum enrollment of 20.
- As an exception to this rule, 200-level seminars offered by language departments are open to first- and second-year students.
- FYS enrollment is restricted by using the reserve group YJ, which identifies all entering students including those who are classified as sophomores due to AP credit.
- During Summer Orientation for new students, seminar spaces are opened in 3-4 increments during the enrollment period to accommodate students who register later. Please note: All FYS reserve caps must be set up by Lori Gould (gould@umich.edu), LSA Student Services Coordinator in the Dean’s Office. Staggering enrollment requires that we not open a waitlist until we open the last remaining spaces.

Revised 7/2/2012
Purpose and Goals of the First-Year Seminar Program

First-Year Seminars are intended to:

- Enable first-year students and faculty to interact in a small class experience  
  (maximum enrollment of 20 students)
- Introduce students to the demands of intellectual inquiry
- Engage students as participants in the university's intellectual community
- Develop students' communication skills
- Help students to discover the value of specialized academic knowledge

Coordination

The FYS office requests information from departmental staff about their seminar offerings and maintains a course database. It works closely with Academic Advising to ensure that the on-line Course Guide accurately lists each term's first-year seminars. The FYS office helps to allocate approximately 150-200 spaces reserved for students in specific Michigan Learning Communities, such as CSP, LHSP, MCSP, UROP in Residence and WISE.

Publicity

The FYS Brochure is produced in Fall term to highlight offerings arranged by distribution, along with basic course information and a brief description. LSA students scheduled to attend Summer Orientation receive a copy of the Fall brochure in their packet. Over 500 brochures are distributed to faculty, administration, LSA departments, and other UM Schools and colleges whose students enroll in first-year seminars. Academic Advising and several other Schools and colleges receive regular updates on course additions, cancellations, or changes.

Administration and Enrollment Management

Only first year students, including those with sophomore standing due to AP credits, may enroll in a First-Year Seminar. The FYS office is responsible for reserving all spaces accordingly.

Throughout Summer Orientation, the FYS office monitors enrollment in all seminars, including spaces reserved for MLC participants. Seats in First Year Seminars are opened up gradually throughout the summer. Academic Advising receives a weekly list of all open seminars. This list is posted online for students. In sum, the FYS office works closely with Academic Advising, CSP and incoming students who want to enroll in a first-year seminar.

http://www.lsa.umich.edu/facstaff/undergraduateeducation/academicinitiatives/firstyearse... 11/13/2012
Full-time LSA faculty are expected to teach departmental FYS as part of their regular teaching load.

- 3-credit distribution seminars as well as 4-credit FYWR seminars meet three hours weekly and 4-credit science seminars meet four hours weekly.
- It is preferable for seminars to meet 2-3 times weekly. A single 3-hour block can be difficult for both faculty and students.
- An ideal seminar classroom seats 20-25 people with moveable furniture to facilitate active discussion. When scheduling FYS, indicate “Seminar Room” under Room Characteristics.

**IMPORTANT:** When adding a first-year seminar after enrollment is underway, schedule it as requiring “department consent.” Immediately contact Lori Gould so that we can reserve the class for first-year students in the usual way and update our database and online information.

- Departments need to monitor FYS enrollment closely during the last few weeks of Summer Orientation and during the 3-5 day Winter early registration. Once a seminar reaches the enrollment maximum and a waitlist begins, the class is automatically closed. If a student drops, that space remains unused unless the department takes appropriate action.
- Since a student’s order on a waitlist is not the only consideration, we recommend that departments contact instructors before issuing any permission. Some faculty may want to give permission to a student lower on the list or one who contacted them via email.
- If instructors want their seminar closed at some point to control subsequent enrollment, the department should change the class status to require Department Consent.

### FYS Course Numbers and Distribution

- The Dean’s Office credits departments with a first-year seminar offering when it meets the faculty eligibility guidelines. Course numbers that count as seminars are listed on the next page. When two seminars are scheduled as a meet-together, both departments are credited with a seminar offering.
- FYS that earn NS and MSA distributions or the QR requirement typically have prescribed content. Most HU and SS seminars are taught as topics courses that may allow faculty to design syllabi with departmental approval.
- Some departments inherently straddle different disciplines. Examples include American Culture (HU/SS); Anthropology (HU/NS/SS); History (HU/SS); Linguistics (HU/NS/SS); Psychology (NS/SS); and Women’s Studies (HU/SS). Seminars that combine two or three of the college’s primary area distributions (HU, NS, SS, MSA and CE) are eligible for the Interdisciplinary distribution (ID). Interdisciplinary departments may want to create a new topics course number to accommodate such proposals.
- Some courses are interdepartmental but not interdisciplinary in the above sense. For example, a course that integrates sociology and psychology content would satisfy the SS distribution rather than ID.
- To offer a seminar for which no appropriate course number exists, the department needs to submit a Generic Approval of Required Form to the LSA Curriculum Committee. New topics course proposals should include generic content, plus a few examples of topics that would be offered under this number. For questions, contact JoAnn Peraino (763-7139 or jperaino@umich.edu).
COURSES CREDITED TO DEPARTMENTS AS FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR OFFERINGS

The Dean’s Office credits departments with a first-year seminar offering for sections of the following courses taught by eligible faculty (see above guidelines). The third column reflects departmental commitments to the college, made in budget meetings in the late 1990s, regarding the average number of seminars offered each academic year. If you have questions or concerns, contact Phil Deloria, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Distribution Requirement</th>
<th>Annual Commitment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAS 103-104</td>
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<td>ACABS 192; AAPTIS 192</td>
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<td>ANTHRARC 180; ANTHRBIO 168-169; ANTHRCUL 158</td>
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<td>CLCIV 120-121</td>
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<td>COMPLIT 140</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC 190</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLAVIC 150-151</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC 105</td>
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<td>STATS 125 &amp; 150</td>
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<tr>
<td>UC 150-155</td>
<td>HU, SS, NS, FYWR, ID, CE</td>
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<tr>
<td>WOMENSTD 150-151</td>
<td>HU, SS</td>
<td>4</td>
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* Committed: annual departmental FYS offerings established with Budget (under John Cross)
Proposing a Freshman Seminar

CALL FOR PROPOSALS
2013-2014 Freshman Seminars

- Engage with a small class of freshmen
- Explore a special research area of your choice
- Teach during fall, winter, or spring term

Proposals are due
Monday, Jan. 14, 2013

Quick Links:
- Application Guidelines & Proposal Cover Sheet (pdf)
- How do I submit a proposal?
- Freshman Seminars List 2012-2013 (pdf) – for information on current course offerings

Proposals are due Monday, January 14, 2013

What are Freshman Seminars?
Three- or four-credit courses that have a class size of twenty-three or fewer students. Seminars are offered fall, winter, and spring term, and students may take them either for a grade or pass/no-pass.

What are the goals of the Freshman Seminar Program?
http://fyp.uoregon.edu/faculty/proposing-a-freshman-seminar/
• Reinforce critical reasoning, reading, writing, and speaking skills
• Emphasize active discussion involving all participants
• Develop mentor relationships between faculty members and students
• Develop a sense of community among students with similar interests

Who is eligible to enroll in a Freshman Seminar?

All incoming undergraduates in their first year of university or college study after high school graduation. Students may enroll in more than one Seminar within the same term and/or academic year.

Who is eligible to apply for Freshman Seminar Funding?

Faculty members from every discipline and department are encouraged to propose seminars. Current and emeritus faculty must have an appointment in a sponsoring department in order to teach a Freshman Seminar. Proposals must receive approval from the head of the department in which the course is taught and in which the faculty member has an appointment (often the same).

What is the compensation policy?

Total compensation for a three- or four-credit course is $6,000 (+OPE*, if taken as pay). Two faculty members co-teaching a Freshman Seminar may choose to split the compensation. Any health insurance costs are paid by the faculty's home department. For more complete information, see Compensation Policies and Procedures.

*OPE: Other Payroll Expenses. These are expenses that the University (through your Department) pays for you such as PERS contributions, Social Security, Medicare, Workers Compensations, etc. Heath Care is a separate expense.

Note: Course cancellation can occur if a course fails to achieve a minimum enrollment of ten students. Its status is reviewed with the instructor immediately following the end of the registration period.

What kinds of courses are supported?

Course selection is competitive. Successful Freshman Seminar proposals should first and foremost focus on the following elements, which exemplify the philosophy and goals of the Freshman Seminar Program:

• Emphasis on high-quality instruction in a setting that promotes interaction between professor and students
• Clear academic substance
• Appropriateness for first-year students
• Course content that sharpens the written, spoken, and critical reasoning skills of students and includes a variety of academic readings
• A teaching environment that promotes class discussion, helps integrate students into the campus community, and is conducive to a mentoring relationship

How are course proposals evaluated?

The First-Year Programs Advisory Board reviews all new proposals and makes recommendations on acceptance or revision of course syllabuses. Previously accepted courses are reviewed every three years and may receive additional recommendations from Board members.

http://fyp.uoregon.edu/faculty/proposing-a-freshman-seminar/
Preference will be given to new proposals in order to include more faculty members in the program and to vary the course offerings. Previously offered courses may receive expedited review but should include all pertinent information as described on the proposal form. It is important that we receive an updated syllabus.

Faculty who are proposing a Freshman Seminar for the first time should be aware that Board members look closely at the structure and substance of writing assignments, type of final project, evidence of teaching methods that involve discussion and critical thinking, and provision of context through reading.

See the Freshman Seminar Proposal Scoring Rubric (pdf) for more information.

Course Proposal Requirements
1. Proposal Cover Sheet (pdf)
2. Draft copy of the syllabus (which must include ALL of the following elements)
   - Course description.
     Describe the course's purpose and content in one to three paragraphs.
   - Course structure.
     Provide descriptions of primary class activities. Consider a variety of methods besides lecturing (workshops, films, readings, guest lectures, field trips, simulations, writing [reports, essays, journals, critiques], oral presentations).
   - Tentative course outline by week.
     Board members will evaluate the pace and density of material covered. When possible, include reading sources and page numbers.
   - Course requirements.
     List criteria and expectations for readings and projects. Board members will look for a set of assignments that will hold students accountable and develop their skills. Consider reading that will give students an appropriate background for your topic; try to focus on an amount of reading that students can reasonably process in the time you allow. Consider several short writing assignments instead of a larger final writing project. Include an opportunity for students to turn in a draft of any longer assignment for comments.
   - Grading structure.
     Percentage of grade based on class discussion, attendance, and activities described above.

Please refer to the following documents for examples of Freshman Seminar course syllabi and grading expectations:
   - Sample Syllabus – Hattfield Freshman Seminar (pdf)
   - Sample Syllabus – Moreno Freshman Seminar syllabus (pdf)
   - Sample Rubric – Voelker-Morris Discussion Rubric (pdf)
   - Sample Rubric – Voelker-Morris Writing Rubric (pdf)

For more detailed ideas and suggestions, please see Developing an Interactive Classroom.

How do I submit a proposal?

Review the Application Guidelines & Proposal Cover Sheet (pdf), which summarizes the information found on this webpage. Then fill out the Proposal Cover Sheet, attach a syllabus that meets the
described criteria, and submit your application to Freshman Seminars, First-Year Programs by post, fax or email **on or before Monday, January 14, 2013**: 

Post: Freshman Seminars, First-Year Programs, 470 Oregon Hall  
Fax: 541-346-6204  
Email: freshsem@uoregon.edu

For more information on the application process, please contact: Amy Keir (Freshman Seminar Coordinator) at 541-346-1136 or freshsem@uoregon.edu.

**Search**

*Division of Undergraduate Studies*  
*Academic Advising*  
*Disability Services*  
*Student Orientation*  
*Teaching and Learning*

**Calendar**

November 2012  
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First Year Seminar Course
2011 Program Guidelines

The First Year Seminar (FYS) Course, UGST 181, applies “seminar-style” teaching to a learning community setting that is focused around an academic topic. This one-credit course is only open to first year students. The FYS Course provides an intellectual and social transition to the university under the guidance of faculty/staff instructors in a small classroom environment of 20 or fewer students. The FYS Course encourages students to actively participate in their learning through critical inquiry; listening and contributing to class discussion; reading broadly from research sources and writing original works.

Program Objectives

The FYS Course is intended to:
- Provide freshmen a small class learning experience
- Engage students through reasonable academic challenges and appropriate faculty/staff support
- Establish a foundation upon which first year students can begin to build life-long learning skills
- Foster integration across curricular and co-curricular learning through High-Impact Educational Practices
- Support student skills needed to manage everyday life
- Provide freshmen with contact to faculty/staff as a resource on university processes, such as Q-drop, FYGE, and academic advising

Course Requirements

Learning Outcomes for First-Year Students: When developing topical learning outcomes, instructors may draw from their disciplinary expertise, outside interests, current events, or popular culture. In addition, all FYS Courses should promote and encourage students’ abilities in one or more of the seven learning outcomes specific to first-year students found at Learning Outcomes for First-Year Students (Freshmen). To illustrate, students that complete an FYS Course that promotes collaborative work should be able to do one or more of the following:
- Explore, identify and maximize strengths in collaborative work
- Recognize and understand principles associated with group dynamics, different roles in groups, and general responsibilities of team membership
- Recognize and reflect upon their own roles in groups
High Impact Educational Practices: While first year seminars are examples of High Impact Educational Practices, one or more additional High Impact Educational Practice is required of all FYS Courses. Research has shown that implementing these practices will:

1. Require students to devote time and effort to their course tasks
2. Help students build substantive relationships with faculty and peers
3. Allow students to experience diversity and engage across differences
4. Provide frequent and significant feedback based on performance
5. Help students apply what they have learned on and off campus
6. Foster students' awareness of their abilities as a student and person

High Impact Practices typically include: common intellectual experiences (such as general education requirements or a core curriculum), learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity and global learning, service- or community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects (Kuh, High-Impact Educational Practices, AAC&U 2008). For more information on this, you may refer to the following document: [http://us.tamu.edu/files/2010/01/High-Impact-Practices.pdf](http://us.tamu.edu/files/2010/01/High-Impact-Practices.pdf) and/or you may consult with C. J. Murphy (emurph38@tamu.edu).

Course Proposal Process

- A completed Instructor Data Sheet must be submitted in the course proposal packet. If the course is being co-taught by more than one instructor, each individual must include a completed Instructor Data Sheet with the packet.
- Submit a copy of the course syllabus describing how the course topic and assignments will address the FYS course program objectives. Courses are required to incorporate one or more additional High Impact Educational Practice which must specifically address the FYS Course priorities indicated on the Course Proposal Instructions (See syllabus requirements as listed at [http://ucc.tamu.edu/syllabus.html](http://ucc.tamu.edu/syllabus.html)).
- A High Impact Practices in Undergraduate Education Form must be included in the course proposal packet. No additional information is required on the form. Print as provided and include with the packet.
- Non-faculty instructors who have NOT previously taught a FYS Course are required to submit a current résumé and graduate transcript with the Instructor Data Sheet. Non-faculty instructors who taught during Fall 2010 and who submitted this documentation last year are exempt from this requirement. **Faculty members do not need to submit credentials.**
- Professional staff may need to request flex-time within their department if the teaching of an FYS Course is considered ‘above and beyond’ the individual’s job responsibilities.
- Submit the Course Proposal Form, Instructor Data Sheet(s), course syllabus, High Impact Practices in Undergraduate Education Form, and résumé or graduate transcript if necessary by Tuesday, March 1, 2011 as outlined in the Course Proposal Instructions.
- Course proposals will be evaluated on the alignment to the FYS program objectives and the strength of out-of-classroom experience. Selected courses will be announced by Friday, March 11, 2011.
Compensation

- If a course is selected as an FYS Course, the instructor(s) (faculty and staff) may receive $2,000 in professional development funds the first time the course is taught. Instructors may receive $1,000 in the form of a professional development bursary for the second offering of the same course.
- If the seminar is co-taught by two or more instructors, the stipend provided in professional development funds will be split evenly.
- Course proposals will be considered from faculty and staff who are not seeking the bursary.

Course Teaching Matters

- Faculty, professional staff, and administrators may teach a FYS Course.
- Team teaching is acceptable and encouraged. We especially encourage collaboration with professional staff in areas such as Student Affairs and Academic Advising when developing course proposals and class assignments. Contact Kristin Harper (kharper@tamu.edu) if you need assistance in forming partnerships.
- Teaching a seminar is in addition to the faculty teaching load. Teaching a FYS Course may be considered ‘above and beyond’ a professional staff member’s job responsibilities, depending upon the decision of that particular staff member’s department director.
- FYS Courses are meant to be more experimental than typical classes and may be taught as a learning community. In lieu of traditional course evaluations, FYS Course evaluations will be administered by the Office of the Associate Provost of Undergraduate Studies. Instructors will also receive summary reports regarding their course after FYS Course evaluations have been processed.
- All FYS Courses are listed as UGST 181 for 1 SCH. Section numbers will be assigned after courses have been selected.
- Courses may be taught as Pass/Fail or by letter grade. It is the instructor’s decision.
- Course day and time assignment will be based on availability of instructors and rooms.

Instructor Support

- Instructors of selected FYS Courses will be asked to attend a workshop on Wednesday, May 4, 2011 on High Impact Educational Practices and teaching first year students.
- Instructors will be provided a review of university processes, such as Q-drop, FYGE and academic advising.
- In addition, FYS Course instructors will be offered other professional development opportunities throughout the summer and fall semesters.

Program Contacts:  
Kristin Harper  
kharp@tamu.edu  
845.3210  
C. J. Murphy  
cjmurph@tamu.edu  
845.3210
First-Year Seminars

First-Year Seminars (FYS) are 3-credit hour courses developed for freshmen. The provoking and innovative topics that capitalize on the faculty member’s expertise, steering committee of faculty, staff, and students designed the FYS program and Members of the steering committee are currently teaching pilot First-Year Seminars the detailed FYS steering committee work plan for Spring 2012 and committee.

FYS Program Objectives:

The FYS program is a cornerstone of KU’s plan to invest in first-year experiences intellectual life of the university (Goal 1C in Bold Aspirations). FYS courses are designed to discovery and scholarly inquiry at the university, develop and inspire students’ own thinking and learning skills. The goal is to lay a strong foundation for lifelong learners, academic and professional careers. FYS also create early connections between

FYS Course Guidelines:

- Enrollment in each First-Year Seminar is limited to 19 freshmen students.
- There are no prerequisites for FYS; therefore they should be designed for students the topic.
- FYS classes promote active learning, discussion, and engagement with peers.
- All FYS are designed around the critical thinking goal and learning outcome for the course.
- FYS course assignments also emphasize written communication skills.
- FYS courses are organized around applied problems and expose students to hands-on learning.
- FYS courses include a capstone assignment and a plan for gauging students’ academic progress.
- FYS courses include library training and promote collaborations with other units.
- Interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary courses, or cross-course connections between

https://provost.ku.edu/strategic-plan/implementation/first-year-seminars
Proposal Process:

The Office of First-Year Experience (firstyear@ku.edu) is now soliciting proposals for 14 new First-Year Seminars for Fall 2013. Please review the following documents for more information:

- Proposal invitation to deans, directors, and department chairs (57 KB)
- First-Year Seminar program description (90 KB)
- First-Year Seminar proposal (108 KB)
- List of 2012 First-Year Seminars (248 KB)

First-Year Seminar Steering Committee Roster:

- Andrea Greenhoot (chair) - Psychology
- Jill Becker - Libraries
- Robert Bayliss - Spanish & Portuguese
- Sarah Crawford-Parker - Provost's Office
- Chuck Epp - Public Affairs & Administration
- David Fowle - Geology
- Lisa Friis - Mechanical Engineering
- Alison Gabriel - Linguistics
- John Gronbeck-Tedesco - Theatre
- Dennis Karney - Business
- Deron McGee - Music
- Haley Miller - Student
- Milena Stanislavova - Mathematics
- Mike Williams - Journalism
- Nathan Wood - History

Links on this page:

2. https://provost.ku.edu/strategic-plan/implementation/first-year-seminars#committee
3. firstyear@ku.edu

https://provost.ku.edu/strategic-plan/implementation/first-year-seminars

Contact Office of the Provost

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785.864.4904

1450 Jayhawk Blvd.
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The University of Texas at Arlington

First Year Seminar Frequently Asked Questions

What is a First Year Seminar (FYS)?

The First Year Seminar is a three-hour, graded seminar with 25-30 students per section that is taught by UTA faculty with peer mentor inclusion. The seminar combines disciplinary content designed to appeal to incoming first year students with instruction on academic success and transition skills. Seminars will vary in topic depending on the faculty instructor, but will follow a standard set of learning objectives relating to the enhancement of competencies central to academic success at the University (active learning techniques, test taking and preparation, and campus resources and campus life, among others).

What is the process for proposing a new FYS?

At this time, given the review of the Core Curriculum, we are only accepting proposals for a new FYS course if the course will be embedded in the major field of study. For example, FS-NURS 1100 is a requirement to graduate with an undergraduate nursing degree and is not dependent on the core curriculum or electives for the course to meet degree requirements. Contact Dr. Amy Tigner, Assistant Professor of English and University College Faculty Fellow, at atigner@uta.edu if you have further questions.

What are the benefits of the FYS for students?

More than 80% of colleges and universities across the nation reporting having a First Year Seminar (FYS) in some form. Once a feature of just small liberal arts colleges, FYS courses are now prominent at major research institutions such as Stanford, UCLA, UT-Austin, Northwestern, Michigan and Wisconsin, to name a few. Studies have shown that student participants in First Year Seminars are more engaged, self-directed, skilled and persistent in their studies than students who do not take this kind of course.

What are the benefits of the FYS for faculty?

Faculty who teach in the First Year Seminar program are rewarded with the opportunity to teach exciting disciplinary content while developing meaningful mentoring relationships with first-year students. The First Year Seminar program also provides a supportive environment for faculty to have rewarding exchanges with each other about pedagogy and active learning. Since participation in this selective teaching program is vetted by the FYS Faculty Review Committee, selection to participate and or continue in the program should be considered a teaching distinction.
The University of Texas at Arlington

Common Goals And Objectives For First Year Seminar - University College - The University

The University of Texas at Arlington

Common Goals And Objectives For First Year Seminar

First Year Seminar Conceptual Outline

University of Texas at Arlington

Nationally, higher education faculty are reporting concerns regarding the preparedness of entering students to deal with the rigors of college-level work, and colleges and universities are struggling to maintain retention and graduate rates of their students. To address these types of issues, more than 80 percent of colleges and universities across the country have created a first-year seminar (FYS) in some form. Once a feature of just small liberal arts colleges, FYS courses are now prominent at major research institutions such as Stanford, UCLA, UT Austin, MIT, Northwestern, Michigan, and Wisconsin, to name a few.

Proposed Course Type

The following points highlight the basic nature of an FYS course based on national "best practices" and the needs of our institution:

- Seminar course with 25 students per section
- Faculty-taught, with peer mentor inclusion
- Three-hour, graded course
- 50 percent disciplinary-based or popular-interest topic, 50 percent academic success and transition skills
- Standard set of objectives that will be approved, monitored, and evaluated by a Faculty Review Committee chaired by the Faculty Fellow of University College
- Professional development for faculty and teaching modules available for the non-discipline-specific course material

Goals and Objectives for a First Year Seminar at UT Arlington

Goal 1: To enhance the essential academic skills of incoming students
Objective 1.1: Students will examine and develop academic survival and success strategies (e.g., note-taking, active reading, test preparation and-taking, deep learning techniques, collaborative learning skills).

Objective 1.2: Students will examine and develop self-management skills necessary for academic success (e.g., time-management and goal setting, motivation, self-responsibility, concentration, financial literacy).

Goal 2: To facilitate the transition of incoming students to the university environment

Objective 2.1: Students will examine and understand the nature of a university and of academic disciplines, faculty expectations, and academic integrity.

Objective 2.2: Students will understand University policies and procedures that impact their ability to acquire a degree.

Objective 2.3: Students will explore their strengths and learning styles and relate them to college tasks and major.

Objective 2.4: Students will become aware of and use academic and student support resources.

Objective 2.5: Students will explore and apply techniques that promote student wellness.

Goal 3: To develop and utilize critical-thinking skills necessary for academic success

Objective 3.1: Students will explore and engage in higher order thinking activities related to a topic from an academic area.

Objective 3.2: Students will practice oral and written communication skills.

Objective 3.3: Students will conduct library research that includes a critical analysis of sources.

Goal 4: To develop a connection with UT Arlington

Objective 4.1: Students will develop a connection with faculty member and peer academic leader.

Objective 4.2: Students will explore and become involved on campus.

Objective 4.3: Students will become aware of and use academic and student support resources.

Objective 4.4: Students will develop an appreciation for the diversity of the student body.
What are the benefits of the FYS for academic units?

Supporting incoming first-year students benefits the entire University. More specifically, First Year Seminars are an opportunity for academic departments to recruit majors, build enrollments in non-FYS courses, and develop strong cohorts of students for future academic work in its program.

How many first year seminars will be offered each year?

The First Year Seminar at UTA is a building, new program. The number of seminars offered each year will grow over time, as faculty and academic units become more familiar and engaged with the program. There are no quotas or disciplinary restrictions on who can participate in the program.

Do departments receive credit for offering these courses?

Yes. All departments offering a FYS will be required to have a three credit hour 1300 special topics course specifically designed for FYS. Our plan is to list these courses "First Year Seminar" and use the four-character disciplinary department prefix with the letters "FS". For example: FY-MATH 1300: First Year Seminar, FY-MODL 1300 First Year Seminar, and FY-POLS 1300: First Year Seminar, etc. (Please note that if your department already uses the course number 1300 that the "FS" designation creates a different course. The course should be a special topics class specifically designated for FYS use and its description should read: "Special topics in [discipline] in conjunction with college transition skills."

Topics include: [here list of broad, potential topics in discipline], critical thinking and active learning skills, engagement with UTA community. Only offered as a First Year Seminar for incoming first-year students.

Does the the FYS privilege any academic discipline over another?

The First Year Seminar program at UTA is unaffiliated with any one academic discipline and seeks to promote the creation of seminars in all academic disciplines for all first-year students. Our program supports both "special topics" FYS courses by individual faculty members and multisection FYS programs coordinated from within different academic units on campus.

What kind of faculty does the FYS seek?

The cornerstones of the First Year Seminar are quality teaching, advising and mentoring. The program seeks dedicated, creative and supportive faculty who are committed to promoting skills essential to the academic success of our students. Our program seeks to showcase our most talented and promising faculty members because we believe that they are the best ambassadors of what lies at the heart of our university: learning, dialogue and achievement. Tenured stream, tenured full-time and part-time instructors with long term records of excellence in teaching and or student advising are eligible to apply to our program. We also welcome applications from University staff with appropriate degrees in a particular discipline, relevant teaching and or advising experience and the support of a sponsoring academic department on campus. The University College is not just seeking to staff individual courses. We seek to build an interdisciplinary community of dedicated teachers who can dialogue with each other about our shared mission to support student learning and success at UTA.

What kinds of courses does the FYS program seek?

Our program seeks courses in all disciplines designed to appeal to and engage incoming first-year students. The First Year Seminar is a "topics" course, so we encourage interested faculty to propose an exciting subject that may serve as a point of entry to the richness of their broader academic discipline. Moreover, since this course is 1000 level, the course should not presuppose any previous college level preparation in the topic.

How are the course proposals vetted?

The First Year Seminar Faculty Review Committee screens proposals for the FYS and provides feedback to applicants. The committee is composed of an interdisciplinary cohort of UTA faculty with a strong background in and commitment to best practices in teaching. The committee recommends strong proposals to Dr. Michael Moore, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies for final approval.

What is the Course MOU and why is it in place?

MOU stands for Memorandum of Understanding. The Course MOU is an agreement between a faculty member who wishes to teach a First Year Seminar and the University College, which oversees the First Year Seminar Program. The agreement is also between the faculty member's department chair and the University College. (For departments and schools with multi-section FYS courses, and a FYS coordinator, please see the next question. What is the Multi Section FYS MOU and why is it in place?) The purpose of the Individual Course MOU is to ensure that all participating faculty and departments are well informed of the program's requirements. In order for the program to function cohesively and benefit all students, it is important that certain basic preconditions be met. These include: how to offer a seminar, assigning No Limits: Foundations and Strategies for College Success as one of the required textbooks in each First Year Seminar, agreeing to work with a PAL (Peer Academic Leader, see below), utilizing pre-post surveys provided by the University College to measure the common goals and objectives of the course, and others. (Please see the MOU document for more information.) The spirit of the MOU is to ensure that all participating faculty work together with the University College to meet basic guidelines.

May faculty teach in the program for more than one academic year?

If an individual FYS course is successful, faculty who have participated in the program will be invited to participate again, pending approval from their department chair and the submission of a new MOU. Instructors and faculty who teach FYS as a part of a larger multisection program overseen by a coordinator, are overseen by that coordinator, who will renew or dismiss positions depending on performance, need and or scheduling issues.

Does a FYS count toward a faculty member's normal teaching load?

Yes, the Individual First Year Seminar counts toward a faculty member's normal teaching load. This means that the decision to apply to participate in the First Year Seminar is predicated on interested faculty members consulting with their department chairs. In order to apply to the individual FYS program, faculty need to submit a MOU that includes their department chair's signature, agreeing to free the faculty member to teach a First Year Seminar as a part of their teaching load.

Who is a Peer Academic Leader (PAL) and what is his/her role in the seminar?

http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/faculty/faculty/fys-resources/general-faq.php 11/13/2012
The Peer Academic Leader (PAL) is an undergraduate student who serves as an academic role model and mentor to students registered in a First Year Seminar. The PAL helps the professor of the seminar by teaching their first-year peers on a series of topics related to campus life, academic success strategies and campus connections. The PAL also provides support to the faculty member by providing extra office hours, helping to manage classroom discussion and other class activities. Each PAL is carefully vetted before entrance into the program and receives extensive training to perform his/her duties in the program. PALS are required to make a minimum of eight, 50-minute classroom presentations on college survival and transition skills, and no more than sixteen.

Is there a required FYS textbook?

Yes, there is, but the course is only partially based on it. Other textbooks may be assigned. The required textbook's title is No Limits: Foundations and Strategies for College Success. The textbook was edited by Dr. Dawn Remmers, Executive Director of the University College, and written by UTA faculty and staff for our very own incoming first year students. It is illustrated with photographs of our campus, students, faculty and staff and expressly designed to teach students what they need to know to thrive at UTA. Contact Dawn Remmers at drremmers@uta.edu for a desk copy of the text. Again, No Limits is not the sole textbook for the seminar.

May individual faculty assign other textbooks in addition to the FYS textbook?

The required textbook, No Limits: Foundations and Strategies for College Success, is just one half of the content of the first year seminar. Faculty need to assign other course materials pertaining to the topic that they are teaching.

How do faculty learn how to teach college transition skills?

Some faculty members interested in our program may worry because they have never taught the subject of “college transition skills,” which is a required part of our seminar content. No faculty should feel this way for three important reasons:

1) All faculty, by virtue of their credentials, career and academic and professional success, are well aware of the motivational, logistical and academic skills required to thrive as a student. In a manner of speaking, all faculty are “experts” right at the outset, although they may not have consciously thought about how to teach this subject before.

2) The First Year Seminar textbook, No Limits: Foundations and Strategies for College Success, is designed to take the pressure off of faculty members with regards to the teaching of college transition skills. Written expressly by UTA faculty and staff for our very own first-year students, No Limits facilitates the instruction of college survival skills for both faculty and PAL.

3) The PALS which will be working with individual faculty members in their seminars will have received extensive training in presenting college survival and transition skills to the first year students. Since PALS are required to make a minimum of eight, 50-minute classroom presentations on college survival and transition skills, a faculty member can benefit from the collaboration and input of their PALS. (PALS are permitted to make up to sixteen presentations on college transition skills in their assigned seminar, but faculty will only be required to utilize eight.)

Together, faculty and PALS can create an exciting learning environment on the subject of college success in their First Year Seminar. Moreover, University College has developed a series of classroom activities to support the teaching of college transition skills. Please see the FYS Resource Library part of our website for a list of these learning modules.

How much academic freedom do faculty have in teaching their FYS?

Faculty should not feel restricted. In the same manner that lower level courses in academic units have previously agreed upon goals and objectives to ensure that separate sections of the same course meet certain benchmarks so that students can succeed in upper level courses, our First Year Seminar has the same goals and objectives across all sections across the campus. We want students to get the benefits of a variety of teaching styles and disciplinary subject matter while ensuring that they succeed in acquiring some of the basic college transition skills that we have incorporated into the seminar goals and objectives. No two professors are required to teach in the same way, as long as they are taking measures to implement the course’s common goals and objectives. One of the things that is most exciting about our program is how it prizes interdisciplinarity and faculty expertise by predating our seminars on the “special topic” model, rather than a standardized course that only contains college survival and transition skill content.

Where should faculty go for more information?

In our resource library, faculty will find many resources relating to the First Year Seminar Program, such as sample proposals, syllabi and other reports. In addition, as the year progresses, more resources for teaching the FYS will be posted and available online for faculty to reference and use. For further help, please contact Dr. Amy Tigner, Assistant Professor of English and Faculty Fellow of the University College at altigner@uta.edu.

Related Links

- National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition

The University of Texas at Arlington

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http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/faculty/faculty/fys-resources/general-faq.php 11/13/2012