

Proposal for First Year Seminar

The first-year seminar will engage students and faculty in a shared process of inquiry around a broad, interdisciplinary topic or question. Utilizing at least two different modes of inquiry, as well as varied and engaging pedagogies, this seminar will help students develop their abilities to think critically and communicate effectively. It will also help students make connections with faculty, peers, the university, and the curriculum.

General Education Objectives for the First-Year Seminar:

I. Thinking Critically & Creatively

- A. Recognize, differentiate, and effectively employ appropriate and increasingly sophisticated strategies to collect and interpret information;
- B. Successfully integrate disparate concepts and information when interpreting, solving problems, evaluating, creating, and making decisions;
- C. Examine and evaluate how their own personal, historical, and cultural perspectives affect the discovery and generation of knowledge;
- E. Apply theories from a variety of disciplines and advance convincing reasons to connect as well as differentiate theories from different domains of knowledge.

II. Communicating Effectively

- A. Articulate and comprehend effectively, using verbal or non-verbal communication suitable to topic, purpose, and audience;
- B. Use writing effectively to discover and develop ideas and to articulate positions in contexts of increasing complexity;
- C. Make rhetorical decisions appropriate to topic, purpose, and audience while correctly using the conventions of standard written English;

IV. Responsibilities of Community Membership

- C. Collaborate effectively with others in shared processes of inquiry and problem-solving;

The seminar should be taught primarily by full-time, tenure-track faculty. Faculty should be given a three-year appointment to teach the seminar, which should be built into the departmental evaluation process. Credit hours should reside in the faculty member's home department.

Class size = 22 students.

Common Expectations: The seminar will:

- 1) Utilize at least two different modes of inquiry.
- 2) Use engaging pedagogies and involve students in a shared process of inquiry.
- 3) Involve students in problem-based learning with a research component.
 - a. This would involve a library component and academic integrity (how to cite, etc)
- 4) Help students make connections with faculty, other students, their courses, and the university.
 - a. Include an intentional focus on community building (to ensure students build an academic community, make a connection with faculty members, and feel a sense of belonging).
 - b. Foster out-of-class engagement.
 - c. Incorporate some level of co-curricular involvement. (Faculty may choose).
 - i. Service learning, cultural events, outdoor programs, etc
 - d. Help students appreciate interconnectedness of knowledge and the disciplines and begin to think about integration of coursework.
- 5) Include an element of “how to do college”
 - a. Provide explicit support/expectations for how to meet level of challenge
 - b. Should include exposure to appropriate campus resources
- 6) Utilize a Peer Leader.
- 7) Be linked to at least one other course.
- 8) Help students understand the purpose of college and general education.
- 9) Require the use of the Summer Reading book
 - a. Perhaps have a common assignment (would give baseline measurement/writing sample).
 - b. All sections would attend Convocation
- 10) NOT be narrowly focused or an introduction to a specific discipline.

Questions that remain:

- (1) What is the ideal relationship with Learning Communities? Linked courses? Residential? Have all students in an FYS live in the same residence hall?
- (2) Who will approve topics and course plans for seminar?

Other thoughts:

- ◆ We should create a default template for this course that could be used for a sizable portion of the sections.
- ◆ Utilize “natural communities” of student interests to form future learning communities.
- ◆ We should retain several transitional type seminars for certain student populations.
 - Use the CSI and PGPA to help place students into the proper seminar.