

Committee on First Year Seminars (Leah Roy, chair)
2014-15 First-Year Seminars Committee Annual Report

The members of the First Year Seminar (FYS) Committee for the 2014-2015 Academic Year are:

- Leah Roy (Chair)
- Saylor Breckenridge
- Robert Browne
- Judy Kem
- Monique O'Connell
- Anne Boyle (representative from the Dean's Office: non-voting)

A. New FYS Proposals: The Committee approved the following FYS Proposals.

Spring 2015

- Renaissance Men/Renaissance Women (Bernadine Barnes)
- Unraveling the Riddle that is Russia: Contemporary Russian Culture and Society (Elena Clark)
- Laughter and Forgetting: Czech Literature from the Early Twentieth Century to the Present (Kurt Shaw)
- Audio Engagement: Ethics and Meaning in the Philosophy and practice of Sound (Elizabeth Clendinning)
- Art of the Wild: Creativity, Activism and the Environment (Rachel Paparone)
- "Born this Way?" Science and the Politics of Sexuality (Kristina Gupta)

Fall 2015

- THRIVE: Creating a Life of Positive Well-Being (Allison Forti)
- Promise and Perils: Bioinformatics in the Post-Genomic Age (William Turkett, Jr)
- Debate Like a Champ (Adam Dovico)
- Blue Grass Music (Billy Hamilton)
- Mathematical Puzzles and Games (Sarah Mason)
- Multiple Modernities and the Quest for Universal Human Rights (Luis Roniger)
- Performance and Political Activism (Brook Davis)
- Dressing the Part: Expressing Identity Through Fashion (Caitlin Quinn)¹

¹ The proposal was approved but the course will not be offered.

B. New FYS Courses Taught in AY 2014-2015

Dept	Name	Seminar Title	Semester
ANT	Ayla Samli	Value of Home	Fall 2014
ART	Laura Veneskey	Cultural Convergence & Artistic Exchange in the Medieval Mediterranean	Fall 2014
CLA	Ted Gellar-Goad	Beware the Ides, Beware the Hemlock: Reenacting Crisis in the Ancient Greece & Rome	Fall 2014
CLA	John Oksanish	STEM - Societies and Technology in Antiquity	Fall 2014
EALC	Nicholas Albertson	Natural and Unnatural Disasters in Modern Japanese Literature and Film	Fall 2014
EDU	Ann Cunningham	Globalization, Education, and Technology	Fall 2014
ENG	Dean Franco	Uncertainty	Fall 2014
ENG	Casey Wasserman	Deconstructing Beyoncé	Fall 2014
GER	Molly Knight	In Cold Blood: Examining the Psychopath in Literature, Film, and Television	Fall 2014
HST	Ken Zick	Film & Justice: Cinematic Portrayals of Justice in American History	Fall 2014
HUM	David Phillips	Humans and the Environment in Film, Media & Literature	Fall 2014
Rom Lang	Alison Atkins	"Are You What You Eat?: Defining Ourselves Through Food in a Globalized World"	Fall 2014
THE	JK Curry	There Goes the Neighborhood: Revisiting <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Fall 2014
ART	Bernadine Barnes	Renaissance Men / Renaissance Women	Spring 2015
BIO	Katy Lack	Behind the Scenes: Forensics	Spring 2015
Ger & Rus	Elena Clark	Unraveling the Riddle that is Russia: Contemporary Russian Culture and Society	Spring 2015
Ger & Rus	Kurt Shaw	Laughter and Forgetting: Czech Literature from the Early Twentieth Century to the Present	Spring 2015
HST	Simone Caron	Controversies in American Medical History	Spring 2015
HST	Monique O'Connell	The Floating City: Public Life in Venice through the Ages	Spring 2015
MUS	Elizabeth Clendinning	Audio Engagement: Ethics and Meaning in the Philosophy and Practice of Sound	Spring 2015
PHI	Adam Kadlac	Sports and Society	Spring 2015
Rom Lang	Rachel Paparone	Art of the Wild: Creativity, Activism and the Environment	Spring 2015
WGS	Kristina Gupta	"Born This Way?" Science and the Politics of Sexuality	Spring 2015

C. New FYS Courses sorted by rank

New FYS Offered by Faculty Member's Rank											
TBD											
FALL 2015		SPRING 2016		FALL 2014		SPRING 2015		FALL 2013		SPRING 2014	
Assistant Teaching Professor	1			Assistant Teaching Professor		Assistant Teaching Professor	2	Assistant Teaching Professor	1	Assistant Teaching Professor	
Associate Teaching Professor				Associate Teaching Professor		Associate Teaching Professor		Associate Teaching Professor	1	Associate Teaching Professor	
Visiting Clinical Professor	1			Visiting Clinical Professor		Visiting Clinical Professor		Visiting Clinical Professor		Visiting Clinical Professor	
Visiting Assistant Professor				Visiting Assistant Professor	3	Visiting Assistant Professor	1	Visiting Assistant Professor	3	Visiting Assistant Professor	
Adjunct				Adjunct		Adjunct		Adjunct	1	Adjunct	1
Lecturer				Lecturer		Lecturer		Lecturer		Lecturer	1
Teacher/Scholar/PD Fellow				Teacher/Scholar/PD Fellow	1	Teacher/Scholar/PD Fellow	1	Teacher/Scholar/PD Fellow		Teacher/Scholar/PD Fellow	
P/T Assistant Professor				P/T Assistant Professor	1	P/T Assistant Professor		P/T Assistant Professor		P/T Assistant Professor	
Assistant Professor	1			Assistant Professor	3	Assistant Professor	2	Assistant Professor	3	Assistant Professor	1
Associate Professor	2			Associate Professor	3	Associate Professor	3	Associate Professor		Associate Professor	3
Professor	3			Professor	2	Professor	1	Professor	2	Professor	4
Fall 2015	8	Spring 2016	TBD	Fall 2014	13	Spring 2015	10	Fall 2013	11	Spring 2014	10

D. All FYS courses sorted by department

FALL 2015		SPRING 2016		FALL 2014		SPRING 2015		FALL 2013		SPRING 2014	
ANT	2	ANT	2	ANT	2	ANT	2	ANT	2	ANT	1
ART	1	ART		ART	2	ART	1	ART	3	ART	1
BIO	2	BIO	3	BIO	2	BIO	1	BIO	2	BIO	1
CHM	1	CHM		CHM	1	CHM	2	CHM		CHM	3
CLA	2	CLA		CLA	2	CLA	3	CLA	1	CLA	3
CNS	1	CNS		CNS	1	CNS	1	CNS		CNS	
COM	3	COM		COM	3	COM	3	COM	2	COM	3
CSC	1	CSC		CSC		CSC		CSC		CSC	
EALC	0	EALC	0	EALC	1	EALC		EALC		EALC	1
ECN	1	ECN		ECN		ECN	1	ECN	1	ECN	1
EDU	5	EDU	2	EDU	2	EDU	2	EDU	2	EDU	1
ENG	1	ENG	1	ENG	2	ENG	2	ENG	2	ENG	2
GER & RUS	2	GER & RUS	1	GER & RUS	1	GER & RUS	1	GER & RUS		GER & RUS	1
HES	0	HES		HES		HES	1	HES	2	HES	
HST	5	HST		HST	4	HST	3	HST	2	HST	4
HUM	1	HUM		HUM	2	HUM	1	HUM		HUM	
MTH	1	MTH	2	MTH		MTH	1	MTH	1	MTH	
MUS	1	MUS		MUS	2	MUS	1	MUS	2	MUS	1
PHI	2	PHI		PHI	1	PHI	4	PHI	2	PHI	3
PHY	3	PHY		PHY	2	PHY	1	PHY	2	PHY	
POL	2	POL	2	POL	4	POL		POL	3	POL	1
PSY	0	PSY		PSY	2	PSY	2	PSY	2	PSY	3
REL	2	REL	2	REL	2	REL	1	REL	2	REL	1
ROM	2	ROM	2	ROM	3	ROM	2	ROM	2	ROM	1
SOC	2	SOC	1	SOC		SOC	1	SOC		SOC	1
THE&DCE	2	THE & DCE	2	THE&DCE	3	THE & DCE		THE&DCE	3	THE & DCE	3
WGS		WGS		WGS		WGS	1	WGS	1	WGS	1
				Total							
2015-16	45		20	65	2014-15	44		38	2013-14	39	37

Special Report from the FYS Committee: First Year Seminar Program Review

History:

In 2012, Dean Fetrow charged the First Year Seminar (FYS) Committee with conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the FYS program. In Fall 2012, the Committee formed the FYS Assessment Subcommittee². The Subcommittee completed its evaluation, including analysis of 1,675 student and 223 faculty responses to a survey about the FYS experience, and submitted its report to the FYS Committee in mid-April 2014. The FYS Committee then fully endorsed the Subcommittee's recommendations for changes to the program, but in light of Dean Fetrow's leaving, further discussion was tabled until a new Dean was hired. However Co-Deans Rebecca Thomas and Randy Rogan, in conversation with Anne Boyle, suggested that the recommendations be revisited and presented to the faculty.

Findings:

The Subcommittee recommended that First Year Seminars should be designed to spark the intellectual curiosity of students; to introduce them to a thought-provoking topic across the arts, humanities, and sciences; to foster alternative forms of conceptual and creative expression; to create a welcoming and open learning environment that emphasizes forging good relationships among the students and with the faculty member; and to foster lifelong learning and academic excellence in a small classroom setting.

The specific recommendations of the Subcommittee, which have been endorsed by the FYS Committee, were the following: increased administrative support of the FYS program, pedagogical adjustments, and clear student learning outcomes. Pedagogical recommendations and student learning outcomes will be detailed below.

Pedagogical Recommendations:

The following are important points of pedagogy to create First Year Seminars as sites of student-centered learning (rather than content-oriented) and to distinguish FYS classes from Writing Seminars.

1. Small class sizes should be maintained, ideally capped at 15.
2. FYS courses should be taught by full-time regular faculty.
3. The primary focus of the FYS should be on the processes involved in learning, rather than coverage of content or mastery of topic. For example, students might learn different ways to investigate or think about the topic by the faculty member framing questions, providing methods of investigation, demonstrating ways of

² The Assessment Subcommittee was chaired by Professor Kathleen Kron, who chaired the 2011-2012 First Year Seminar Committee. Brian Gorelick, a member of the FYS committee, agreed to serve as FYS representative on the FYS Assessment Subcommittee. Faculty from each division of the college were represented on the committee. These include the following: David Levy, Michael Pisapia, Peter Santago, Kendall Tarte, Patrick Toner, Grace Wetzel (replaced by Ryan Shirey in 2013), and Ulrike Wiethaus. Anne Boyle served as the Dean's representative.

testing evidence, framing alternative questions and responses, etc., but not training students in a specific set of research skills practiced in a specific discipline.

4. The pace of work should be deliberate so that students are afforded the time to develop increasingly sophisticated or nuanced ways of thinking, reading, listening and writing/creating.
5. Students should be given opportunities to reflect on their development as learners and thinkers, as well as on specific skills, such as reading, writing, oral proficiency, and development of the whole person.
6. The priority of the class is on student participation; therefore, faculty members are encouraged to act as listener, guide, or mentor.
7. Faculty should be mindful of the importance of building academic relationships in our increasingly diverse community.
8. Though writing is an important component of the FYS course, faculty should consider it in the context of writing to learn, rather than learning to write, since the Writing 111 course is focused on building specific writing skills.

Student Learning Outcomes:

So that students understand rigorous academic expectations and develop the intellectual skills needed to practice or meet these expectations, the following are the suggested student learning outcomes for each FYS. By the end of an FYS, students will have practiced the following:

1. *Read increasingly sophisticated texts critically*
As one of WFU's Core Competencies, critical reading is defined as, "the process of understanding, extracting, and questioning written text that allows for the comprehensive explanation of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or challenging an opinion or conclusion or constructing new meaning."
2. *Pose and respond to complex ideas*
This may occur in a variety of formats such as written or oral form, or in class discussion. This maps onto the WFU Core Competency of Inquiry and Analysis defined as, "the systematic process of exploring issues, objects, or works by collecting evidence, deconstructing that which is complex, and developing informed conclusions or judgments."
3. *Identify, analyze, interpret and evaluate different points of view*
Again, this may occur in a variety of formats. This corresponds to the WFU Core Competency of Critical Thinking defined as, "the ability to explore ideas comprehensively, to ask relevant questions, to evaluate evidence, to imagine and test alternative points of view before accepting or formulating a conclusion."

4. *Construct cogent arguments in both written and oral form*

This supports the WFU Core Competency of Communication defined as, “The ability to express ideas clearly, exchange knowledge, foster understanding, and/or persuade one’s audience in written and oral form.”

While all FYS should be designed so that students develop the above learning outcomes, faculty may focus on, or emphasize additional competencies, such as creative thinking, quantitative literacy, social relevance and intercultural learning.

Assessment of First Year Seminars will be drafted by the First-Year Seminar Committee.

Appendix to FYS Assessment Report 4.16.14

Charge from Dean Fetrow

With changes having occurred in the undergraduate curriculum, numbers of new students, and with a look to the future, the First Year Seminar (FYS) Committee is charged with the following: Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the current FYS programmatic elements, including, but not limited to: program purposes and goals, stated student learning goals, and effectiveness of achieving both the program goals and student learning goals. Ideally, this evaluation will include assessments by the two primary stakeholders: college students and faculty. Coordinate/interface this evaluation with existing College curriculum and practices, the Writing Program, and academic advising. The committee might consider ways to better integrate the FYS and the Writing Program. Prepare a written report and recommendations to the College faculty at a faculty meeting during the spring semester.

Brief History of FYS at WFU

According to the 1995 report of the Committee on Academic Planning in 1994, the initiative to create a first-year seminar program emerged through several discussions between the committee and student government leaders. In that report, the summary aims of the program include the following:

- **To provide an opportunity for students to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills at the outset of their college career**
- **To provide a setting where writing and problem solving can occur**
- **To provide a setting in which the individual first-year student is challenged, drawn into discussion, or supported as his or her needs and preparation requires. Throughout, intellectual rigor remains a constant as the student is forced to become an active participant rather than a passive spectator in the learning process.**
- **To improve retention and graduation rates of students.**
- **To contribute to the intellectual climate on campus.**

The first-year seminar program was the first initiative advertised in the Plan for the Class of 2000; the second was the recruitment of approximately forty new faculty. At the time of the faculty vote, the first-year seminar proposal was linked with the laptop initiative for the class of 2000. Class size in the first-year seminars was capped at a maximum of 15

students per section. Over time, class size increased; our first-year seminars are now capped at 18. After a pilot year, guidelines for designing first-year seminars became centered on critical thinking, oral and, especially, written proficiency. Among the few explicit requirements for teaching a First Year Seminar was the number of pages (20) of “finished written work.”

The 2013-14 Assessment Committee

In late fall of 2012, the First-Year Seminar Committee created the FYS Assessment Subcommittee to carry out the charge of the Dean. Professor Kathleen Kron, who chaired the 2011-2012 first year seminar committee, agreed to chair the committee. Brian Gorelick, a member of the FYS committee, agreed to serve as FYS representative on the FYS Assessment Subcommittee. Faculty from each division of the college are represented on the committee. These include the following: David Levy, Michael Pisapia, Peter Santago, Kendall Tarte, Patrick Toner, Grace Wetzel (replaced by Ryan Shirey in 2013), and Ulrike Wiethaus. Anne Boyle served as the Dean’s representative.

The committee studied past documents and recent studies of first-year seminars; they surveyed faculty and students, held focus groups, and submit the following report of their activities and recommendations.

Overview of survey of students and faculty opinions of FYS in 2013

Our survey of both faculty and students in 2013 revealed mixed opinions on the value of FYS in its current manifestation. Students reported a positive experience when the professor was actively engaged with students, provided feedback on each writing assignment, focused on critical thinking, increased confidence of the student to share thoughts in a classroom setting, and established relationships with the students. Negative experiences were most often attributed to being placed into an undesired FYS, lack of a true seminar setting that focused on discussion, vague expectations for assignments and course overall, and a course too similar to ENG 111. Both students and faculty were concerned about disparities of workload or level of difficulty among FYS offerings. The survey of faculty indicated that the original summary aims for FYS were important (in varying degrees) but that most important were encouraging intellectual curiosity, building relationships and developing a student’s skills in oral and written communication. Faculty concerns and reasons for not teaching an FYS included lack of availability (home department teaching needs and emphasis on importance of scholarship), increased enrollments in the seminars, the challenges associated with teaching proficiency in writing, and, for a few respondents, concern about increased workload.

Guiding Principles

The First Year Seminar concept and practice has been extensively studied by experts in education.³ Major findings from these studies include:

³ A good overview may be found in Keup, Jennifer R. and Joni Webb Petschauer. *The First-Year Seminar: Designing, Implementing, and Assessing Courses to Support Student Learning and Success*, South Carolina: National Resource Center, 2011.

1. Nearly all FYS that focus on academics, rather than orientation, have two general goals for students: a) acquisition of skills for success in college and b) the creation of a peer support group.
2. FYS has a very significant positive impact on student retention, especially among historically underrepresented and first generation students.
3. To allow students to develop and practice the skills necessary for academic success and to increase student's sense of efficacy, the primary focus of FYS should be student centered rather than focused primarily around topic, or faculty centered. In student-centered classrooms, faculty may initiate and guide discussion, but students have more responsibility for discussing the material, rather than deferring to an authoritative faculty who lectures them.
4. Student centered approach requires emphasis on *process* rather than a product or mastery of content.

General Findings and Recommendations

The educational landscape at Wake Forest has changed dramatically since 1995; some of these changes include the following:

- challenges associated with our teacher-scholar model, including our increased emphasis on both the faculty's international scholarly reputation and the expectation of close engagement with students in and outside of the classroom
- growing enrollment
- changing student demographics, including first-generation, international students, and the millennial-aged students
- technological developments
- emerging pedagogical approaches
- renewed need to identify and assess learning objectives
- the professionalization of the Writing Program and the refinement of learning objectives for English 111
- the Faculty Fellows program
- the piloting of learning communities and linked courses.

With these in view, the subcommittee recommends a shift in the vision and goals of the FYS.

2014 Vision and Goals: First Year Seminars should be designed to spark the intellectual curiosity of students; to introduce them to a thought-provoking topic across the arts, humanities, and sciences; to foster alternative forms of conceptual and creative expression; to create a welcoming and open learning environment that emphasizes forging good relationships among the students and with the faculty member; and to foster lifelong learning and academic excellence in a small classroom setting.

Specific Recommendations for WFU First Year Seminar

Pedagogy:

1. Small class size should be maintained (enrollment capped at 15) as this increases the one-on-one interaction with professor and the students. Studies find small class size to be a key factor in the retention of students, particularly among students from underrepresented groups or who are first-generation. Without small classes, most or all of the other goals of the FYS would be significantly compromised.
2. FYS should be taught by full-time regular faculty because of the importance of creating an academic relationship with the student that may be sustained beyond the seminar. As our surveys indicate, students and faculty have noted the importance of such a relationship.
3. The primary focus of the FYS should be on the improvement or development of skills that will enable and encourage life-long learning (see Desired Outcomes), i.e., that the professor serves as a resource and facilitator rather than the sole source of knowledge.
4. While all FYS should be designed to allow students to practice skills in inquiry and analysis and oral and written proficiency, flexibility should be allowed so that specific seminars may focus on additional competencies, such as creative thinking and expression, quantitative literacy, global learning, civic discourse, etc.
5. FYS should provide a *supportive environment* for the development of rigorous intellectual and academic skills. A supportive environment includes the following:
 - a. Small class size, capped at 15, as mentioned above.
 - b. Pedagogical focus on processes involved in learning are more important than coverage of content or mastery of topic
 - c. Pace of work is deliberate so that students are afforded the time to develop increasingly sophisticated or nuanced ways of thinking, reading, listening, and writing/creating
 - d. Faculty takes stance as listener, guide, or mentor, more often than as authority
 - e. Faculty is mindful of importance of building relationships/community and well-being

Desired Outcomes for Students in First Year Seminar with assessment measures:

1. Spark intellectual curiosity of students through investigation of a topic likely to stimulate student interest
2. Enable first-year students to understand rigorous academic expectations and develop intellectual skills needed to practice or meet these expectations

- a. Academic skills include the following: (Definitions can be found in Association of American Colleges and Universities Value Rubrics)
 - i. Ability to read carefully and critically (Reading Rubric)
 - ii. Ability to pose and respond to complex ideas (Inquiry & Analysis Rubric)
 - iii. Ability to identify, analyze, interpret and evaluate different points of view (Critical Thinking Rubric)
 - iv. Ability to construct cogent arguments /Ability to create alternate ways of seeing or being (Oral & Written Communication Rubrics)
 - v. Ability to embrace contradictions and think innovatively (Creative Thinking Rubric)
 - b. Students will be given opportunities to reflect on their development as learners and thinkers, as well as on specific skills, such as reading, writing, oral proficiency, and development of whole person.
 - c. Students learn, through faculty modeling, different ways to investigate or think about the topic by framing questions, providing methods of investigation, demonstrating ways of testing evidence, framing alternative questions and responses, etc., but not training students in a specific set of research skills practiced in a specific discipline.
 - d. Students are encouraged to frame their own questions, seek solutions, test hypotheses, enter into critical debate, create alternative ways of analyzing and interpreting, etc.(Problem Solving & Creative Thinking Rubrics)
3. Assessment of First Year Seminars will be drafted by the First-year Seminar Committee. We recommend using the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) Value Rubrics (www.value@aacu.org). These rubrics provide a baseline for assessment and can be used to inform the FYS proposals for new seminars. The following rubrics are likely the most applicable and most useful for the First Year Seminar: Inquiry & Analysis, Critical Thinking, Oral Communication, Written Communication, Reading, Creative Thinking, and Problem Solving. In addition, the Foundations of Lifelong Learning Rubric can be useful.

Administrative Support Necessary to Sustain and Enhance FYS

1. *Set a firm cap for class size at 15.* Without this, other new pedagogical practices will be compromised.
2. Name a faculty Director to the FYS Program and charge the Director with:
 - a. showcasing the value of teaching and learning in the FYS – particularly the importance of FYS in building long-term academic relationships with students
 - b. organizing an annual Student – led FYS Symposium
 - c. creating a FYS Teaching Fellows Program
 - d. creating a faculty FYS award or fellowship/provide campus-wide recognition of FYS faculty
 - e. maintaining a dynamic FYS webpage
 - f. evaluate the program every five years

- g. Revise the first-year orientation text, Forestry 101, to include more about the importance and value of FYS.
3. Provide models and incentives to pilot and sustain pedagogical practices within or across disciplines that enhance seminars that may include such practices as the following:
 - a. Living-Learning communities—Kendall Tarte piloted this during fall 2013. Her students lived in the same residence hall; she serves as their lower division adviser; they have engagement outside class time, supported by course enhancement funds
 - b. Linked courses—faculty can consider linking their FYS with a Writing Seminar, a core course, a language class, an elective, LAC, etc.
 - c. Two or more faculty with a specific interest or “theme” are encouraged to offer first-year seminars at the same time and take advantage of organizing outside events with course enhancement funds. Themes might include an emphasis on trans-culturalism, education and democracy, science and arts, civic engagement, environmental studies, etc.
4. Increase availability of online resources by developing a FYS webpage with *direct link from WFU Homepage and on the new students webpage during the summer.*
 - a. Faculty — section specifically for faculty teaching or desiring to teach a FYS. Including:
 - i. Online FYS proposal application with links for easy access to information on rubrics and assessment guides
 - ii. List of current FYS Faculty
 - iii. List of current FYS offerings
 - iv. Examples of successful FYS
 - v. Link to FYS Faculty group informal discussion page (not in Sakai)
 - b. Parents & Prospective Students — section for parents and prospective students including:
 - i. Vision and rationale for FYS
 - ii. Description of what makes the FYS program at WFU vital to long-term success (e.g., life-long learning)
 - iii. List of faculty teaching FYS
 - iv. List of current FYS offerings
 - v. Student tab that links to writing center, other campus resources, and library research pages
5. Timely offering of training courses etc., specifically for those teaching or desiring to teach FYS.
 - a. Teaching and Learning Center
 - b. Writing Center <http://college.wfu.edu/writingcenter/>