



CENTER FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT
OF TEACHING



FYS Design Sprint: Crafting a Strong Proposal

Spring 2026 Guidelines

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FYS Overview

Mindset, SLOs,
common proposal "red
flags"



Peer Review

Peer review and
feedback, Q&A



Design Sprint

Outcomes, scaffolding
content, alignment to
SLOs

Our Plan for Today



Part 1

FYS Overview

The FYS Mindset: Process Over Content

Standard Course

- Focus on content coverage or building specific skills
- Lecture and mastery
- Learning to write (grammar/mechanics)

FYS Course

- Focus on the process of learning
- Inquiry and deliberate practice
- Writing to learn (journals and reflections to process thoughts)

"The pace of the work should be deliberate so that students are afforded the time to develop increasingly sophisticated or nuanced ways of thinking..." –FYS Guidelines

The 4 Non-Negotiables: Student Learning Outcomes

Every assignment must map back to one of these outcomes

Critical Reading

Understand and question sophisticated texts before accepting or challenging them.

Inquiry and Analysis

Pose complex questions. Deconstruct the complex and develop informed judgments.

Student
Learning
Outcomes
(SLOs)

Critical Thinking

Evaluate diverse viewpoints. Test alternative perspectives against evidence.

Communication

Construct cogent arguments. Express ideas clearly in written and oral form.

The "Red Flags": Why Proposals Get Returned

Requests for revisions usually stem from one (or more) of these three



The Repackage Trap

- Uncertainty regarding overlap with upper-division courses.
- FYS must be problem-focused, not just content coverage.



The Vague Pedagogy Trap

- "We will discuss..." is not a specific-enough format.
- You must describe HOW students will engage in your class.



The Alphabetical Trap

- Do not list course content alphabetically.
- The committee needs to see an annotated bibliography approach that demonstrates scaffolding and progression.

Activity: Anatomy of an Aligned Proposal

Scaffolding

- She groups readings by UNIT not week.
- This shows the progression of difficulty.

Alignment

- Note Section 5. She uses a specific formula to link assignments to outcomes:

"Students will [FYS SLO] by [SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT], which requires them to [ACTION]."

Takeaway: Successful proposal explicitly outline their pedagogy; they don't assume committee members will intuit it



Part 2

FYS Design Sprint

Sprint Block A: The Inquiry (Sections 1 & 8)

Goal: Draft Title, Description & Synopsis

The Shift: Move from Topic to Wicked Question

Why: FYS must spark intellectual curiosity for non-majors. A question-based title helps avoid the "Repackage Trap".

Topic:
The Civil War



Wicked Question:
How Do Nations Heal?

Action: Write a title and synopsis that focuses on an unanswerable question rather than a disciplinary survey

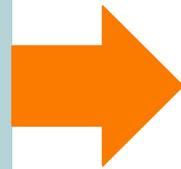
Optional:  AI prompt provide in your worksheet

Sprint Block B: Scaffolding (Section 3)

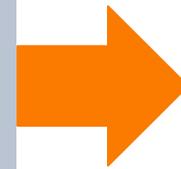
Goal: Draft Content List

The Rule: The list should trend toward an **annotated bibliography**. Do **NOT** list alphabetically.

Step 1: Select your hardest reading (~Week 10)



Step 2: Select a reading for Week 2 that provides the vocabulary/concepts needed to understand the Week 10 text.



Step 3: Group them into units.

Action: Group your content into 3–4 conceptual units. Write one sentence explaining why Unit 1 is necessary to understand Unit 2, etc.

Optional:  AI prompt provide in your worksheet

Sprint Block B: Pedagogical Approach (Section 2)

Goal: Articulate Format

The Rule: Avoid vague format (e.g., "We will discuss...").

The Fix: Explicitly name your methods

- Think–Pair–Share
- Student–Led Seminars
- Debates
- Lab/Site Visits (Blee Model)
- Problem–Based Learning
- Other (specify):

Action: Ensure you explain HOW the discussion is managed in the classroom, not just that it occurs.

Optional:  AI prompt provide in your worksheet

Sprint Block C: Alignment & Assignments (Sections 4 & 5)

Goal: Draft Assignments and Outcomes Narrative

The Rule: Do NOT assume the committee sees the link between your assignments and FYS SLOs. Make it explicit.

The Formula: Students will demonstrate [FYS SLO] by completing [Assignment X], which requires them to [Task].

Action: Draft assignment ideas and alignment sentences for each of the FYS SLOs.

Optional:  AI prompt provide in your worksheet

TIME FOR A
BREAK





Part 3

Peer Review

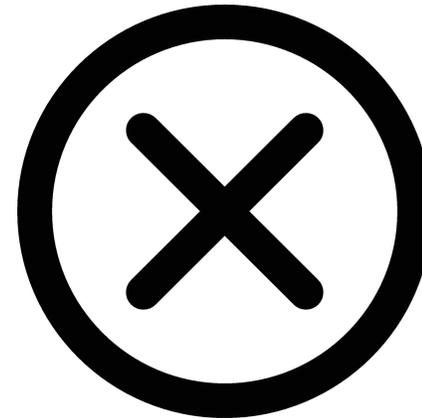
Peer Review: FYS Proposal "Stress Test"

Role Play: You are now a FYS Committee Member

Swap laptops or paper with a partner



The 30-Second Rule: If you cannot find the evidence in 30 seconds, mark it 'Missing'.





Closing

Submission Logistics & Timeline

Deadline



Friday, February 13, 2026
(for Fall 2026 courses)

Protocol



Do NOT email the
committee directly.

Email your department chair.
They must add an
endorsement and submit on
your behalf.

Timeline



Expect up to three (3)
weeks for the review
process

Summer FYS Note: These are extremely rare, require prior approval, and need OAA coordination.



Please take moment to tell us how you're feeling right now...

bit.ly/fys-design-sprint



Resources & Support

In-Person

- FYS Chair: Melissa Maffeo
(masicaml@wfu.edu)
- CAT offers individual consultations.
Request at:
cat.wfu.edu/programsandservices/consultations/

Digital Resources on FYS Website

- Proposal form
- Proposal guidelines
- FYS course evaluation form