

Loyola University New Orleans

Request for Proposals (RFP)

First-Year Seminars

2013-2014

The First-Year Experience Steering Committee is soliciting proposals from faculty in all undergraduate colleges for new first-year seminar courses that increase academic achievement and promote student engagement through the prism of the Jesuit vision of education embodied in the notions of “Thinking Critically, Acting Justly.”

Definition and Context

First-Year Seminars at Loyola introduce first-year students to the study of the liberal arts and sciences in the context of Jesuit values and reinforce interdisciplinary learning as embodied in the Common Curriculum. The purpose of the seminars is to help students make the transition to college-level work and to begin learning the critical thinking skills that are the cornerstone of a Loyola education. They also aim to help students make connections with faculty, peers, the university, and the curriculum.

The seminars are part of a larger First-Year Experience program that integrates academic course work, co-curricular activities, and residential learning. Abundant research on the first year of college indicates that such integrative programs offer the best opportunities to enhance student engagement and success.

Requirements

The seminars are regular, introductory level Common Curriculum courses, which carry three credit hours. All first-year students are required to enroll in a seminar in either fall or spring. The purpose of the seminars is to help students think about an academic topic from the perspective of the other courses they are taking and the other disciplines to which they are being introduced. The seminars will be offered in both fall 2013 and spring 2014.

Rationale

Two major goals of *Loyola 2012* support the first-year seminars. One is to improve student retention through “a fully-integrated First-Year Experience Program grounded in academic first-year seminars and supported by learning communities.” Another is to enhance Jesuit values by assisting faculty “to find expression of the University’s Jesuit/Catholic mission and identity in academic programming.”

Specifications for the Seminars

All First-Year Seminars

- Advance Loyola's core values of "thinking critically, acting justly."
- Take an interdisciplinary approach to a topic. The seminars are not introductions to a discipline but topic-based courses that bring perspectives from more than one discipline to bear upon subject matter.
- Develop students' critical thinking, reading, and writing skills through active learning and writing-to-learn assignments.
- Develop students' written and oral communication.
- Introduce students to basic information literacy.
- Encourage Loyola's goal for students of compassionate engagement with the world by encouraging students to think about issues of justice and injustice inherent in the topic.

The most successful first-year seminars tie the subject matter of the course to compelling contemporary issues and involve students in thinking critically about justice, injustice, and values. (This does not mean that the subject matter itself must be contemporary: we have had excellent seminars on medieval topics, but the instructors have tied key issues to similar issues in contemporary life.)

A document suggesting first-year seminar learning outcomes and suggested assignments to achieve them is attached.

It is not expected that your proposal will incorporate the level of detail outlined in the attached document. Your proposal should describe your idea for the seminar and include a preliminary course description as well as a tentative list of readings. Those whose proposals are accepted will participate in a faculty academy in which detailed syllabi and assignments will be developed.

Eligibility, Requirements and Stipends

All faculty are eligible to teach in the first-year seminar program and encouraged to submit proposals.

Faculty who have not yet taught first-year seminars and whose proposals are accepted attend the Faculty Academy, which will meet May 13-17. The Faculty Academy focuses on effective pedagogical strategies and best practices for first-year experience programs as well as syllabus and assignment development. During the Academy, participants complete a course syllabus and assignments. **First-time participants in the Faculty Academy receive a \$1,500 stipend.**

Application Process:

Complete the attached proposal form, obtain the necessary signatures, and submit in hard copy to Christi Sumich, Campus Box 198, with a duplicate electronic copy sent to cksumich@loyno.edu. Subject line should read FY SEMINAR PROPOSAL. Direct questions to this address or call Christi at x7122.

Deadline: 5:00pm on **Wednesday, October 24, 2012**. Proposals will be evaluated by a screening committee and selections announced before the end of the semester.

All proposals must include the attached cover page with a brief course description. The course description will be distributed to prospective students for promotional purposes. Signatures of approval from your department chair and dean must be included on the cover sheet.

First-Year Seminar

Proposal Cover Sheet

(If you have taught this course before,
simply fill out the cover sheet. No proposal is necessary.)

Name: _____

Department: _____

Title of Seminar: _____

Fall, Spring or No Preference: _____

Signature: _____

Approved, Department Chair _____

Approved, Dean _____

Course Criteria for First-Year Seminars

Learning Outcomes

A1. Critical Thinking

Students will be able to formulate questions about the subject matter and take a position that is supported with evidence. Students will show proficiency in the critical reading of texts, including discerning major arguments, salient points, and underlying assumptions and biases.

A3. Written Communication

Students will be able to reflect on issues in writing. This should include formulating and defending a position in writing.

A4. Oral Communication

Students will be able to reflect on issues in class discussion. This should include formulating and defending a position orally.

A6. Information Literacy

Students will demonstrate the ability to evaluate information and appropriately incorporate information into an assignment.

D3. Compassionate Engagement with the World

Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize issues of justice and injustice inherent in a topic, and they will be able to recognize multiple sides to an issue.

Achieving Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes	Suggestions for Activities and Assignments
A1. Critical Thinking	
Formulate questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small group or large group discussion• Student-generated questions and class discussion• Microtheme, one-minute paper, or other short written exercises
Take a position and support with evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Position paper• Class debate• Oral presentation• Performance or artwork• Student peer critiques
Show proficiency in the critical reading of texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading worksheets• Document analysis• Class discussion guided by “close reading” questions• Summarizing an article• Reflective writing on assigned readings
A3. Written Communication	

Reflect on issues in writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive student writing: Blogs, discussion boards, wikis • Reflection journals • Writing for a “real” audience: Letters to the editor or fellow students
Formulate and defend a position in writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis statement exercise • Position paper • Class discussion with WAC staff • Segmented writing assignments • Writing assignments with multiple revisions
A4. Oral Communication	
Reflect on issues in class discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group or large group discussion • Student-generated questions • Student-led discussion
Formulate and defend a position orally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class debate • Students “teach the class”: Individual or group presentations • Presentations with media • PowerPoint or other media workshop with librarian liaison • Student peer critiques
A6. Information Literacy	
Evaluate information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate a website • Identify popular vs. scholarly information • Evaluate information from two articles on the same topic • Case-based or problem-based activities • Collaborate with librarian liaison
Appropriately incorporate information into an assignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citation or plagiarism exercise • SafeAssign or other software for preventing plagiarism exercise • Write and revise • Worksheets • Case-based or problem-based activities • Collaborate with librarian liaison
D3. Compassionate Engagement with the World	
Recognize issues of social justice and injustice inherent in a topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case-based assignment: Identify the moral issues • Response paper on readings, film, or other media • Class discussion • Create blogs or other media that inform the public about injustice • Writing-to-learn • Student-led discussion
Recognize multiple sides to an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read articles on various perspectives • Class discussion or debate on different sides of the issue • Active reading • Role-playing

Assessment

Suggested Strategies

- Pre and post tests
- Rubrics for peer critiques/evaluation
- Rubrics for website evaluation
- Two-minute papers after a discussion
- Student surveys (Clickers, Blackboard, Survey Monkey, etc.)
- One-on-one conferences to assess progress and learning
- Rubrics for case-based/problem-based scenarios

Please note that the following criteria will be used to evaluate FY Seminar proposals.

**Scoring Sheet
First-Year Seminar Proposals**

Rating Scale, 5 -- 1, with 5 as highest and 1 as lowest.

1. Potential to engage first-year students (topic) _____
2. Appropriateness of content and texts for first-year students _____
3. Interdisciplinary approach (Not an introduction to a discipline) _____
4. Broad topic that can link to current issues _____
5. Potential to develop students' critical thinking _____
6. Potential to involve discussions of social justice _____

Total Score _____

Comments? (Include any concerns over appropriateness of workload, if applicable.)

Accept _____

Accept with Revisions _____

Reject _____