

First Year Seminar

The purpose of the First Year Seminar is to provide an effective introduction for first-year students to the intellectual life of the college. This is done in the context of a small discussion-oriented course designed around a specific theme or topic approached from the perspective of one or more of the traditional academic disciplines. In this context students work toward enhancing their ability in the basic intellectual skills: how to read critically, think logically, and communicate effectively. In addition, students are encouraged to begin thinking about how the Christian faith can and should be related to the intellectual life. In short, First Year Seminars are designed to encourage positive attitudes toward academic work and stimulate appropriate mental habits. The specific objectives for this course include the following:

By the completion of the course the students will demonstrate the ability to

- a. apply skills of critical thinking to reading, writing, and discussion.
- b. read analytically and critically.
- c. write essays using effective prose.
- d. apply basic methods and skills of information literacy: accessing, evaluating, and using information effectively and ethically.
- e. relate aspects of Christian faith to intellectual life.
- f. participate in conversations with students and faculty about significant ideas related to the identity of the College, thus enhancing an intellectual campus climate.

The emphasis in First Year Seminars is on the process of intellectual discovery rather than on the acquisition of facts or content related to a specific academic discipline. First Year Seminars help first year students achieve critical thinking and communication skills essential to success in the world of academic scholarship.

The seminars have no prerequisites and are not intended to provide preparation needed for advanced work in specific departmental programs. The topical or thematic content of each seminar is determined by the individual faculty member. Each seminar adheres to stipulated requirements for the writing component common to all seminars, as specified in the policy on Writing Across the Curriculum. Since reading and interpreting texts is an important component of the delineated objectives, seminars also include a substantial amount of required reading. Seminars are designed to be taught by a single faculty member, with enrollment limits of sixteen students per seminar section.

The course is required of all first year students. While Seminars are offered during the fall and spring terms, the majority of sections are scheduled for the fall semester. Faculty in First Year Seminars must be individuals who write and who are interested in the reading/writing/thinking process, their own and others'. Faculty members teaching seminars are required to attend yearly workshops designed to enhance teaching in this context.