First Year Seminars
In the First Year Seminars students discover the excitement of learning on a personal level and develop their potential for academic exploration and research. The seminars teach students to think critically in a community of learners mentored by an engaged faculty member. The seminars set a standard for academic excellence that continues throughout the academic career of every student.

First Year Seminars emphasize interdisciplinary exploration and discovery under the guidance of a faculty member. After completing this seminar, students will become better thinkers and have a foundation for the skills and knowledge necessary for lifelong learning. The mission of the First Year Seminars is to foster academic and social success for first-year students by helping integrate them into the community of learners that is Webster University. Students receive individual attention from their instructor on both academic and non-academic issues. To support this goal, First Year Seminars are limited in class size, and instructors work together to share ideas and strategies for encouraging student success.

• Goals for First Year Seminars
  o To make students more purposeful in their thinking.
  o To explore an interdisciplinary approach of a subject matter
  o To develop critical thinking skills.
  o To help students improve communication skills.
  o To develop a connection to Webster through interpersonal relationships.
  o To teach students how to collaborate well with their peers.

• Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by the following:
  o Critiquing the seminar topic from a variety of disciplinary perspectives
  o Identifying authors’ theses and demonstrating an understanding of authors’ arguments
  o Being able to express their insights about the seminar topic accurately and clearly in their writing and orally

Successful seminars will touch on some of the practical and intellectual skills that are necessary for success in the 21st century. These skills include but are not limited to: inquiry and analysis, critical thinking, creative thinking, written communication, information literacy, problem solving, and teamwork.
PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR FIRST YEAR SEMINARS (FRSH 1200)
First Year Seminar is the first course in the Global Citizenship Program and is required of all first-year students. An experienced faculty member who has chosen a topic of particular interest to him or her teaches them. Although the seminars and texts studied vary, every section is demanding and will help students develop the essential skills of critical thinking, written communication, oral communication and integrative learning.

Institutional Goals
1. To create a seminar structure in which students and faculty can explore an interdisciplinary topic of mutual interest in an atmosphere energized by the love and excitement of learning.

2. To introduce students to instructors as learners enthusiastically and systematically pursuing a topic of interest to themselves and inviting students to share that pursuit.

3. To provide a small-class setting for first-year students where they can get personal attention from the faculty, both for academic and nonacademic issues and problems.

4. To set a standard for academic excellence that will carry over into other courses.

5. To introduce students to significant texts and equip them to confront these texts critically.

6. To integrate students into the life of Webster University through the guidance and support of a single faculty member who will demonstrate a consistent and personal interest in them.

7. To provide systematic evaluation of students’ improvement in the development of intellectual skills.

Policies
1. All departments will be encouraged to participate in these offerings.

2. First Year Seminar is the first course in the Global Citizenship Program. It is required of all full-time degree-seeking students (18-20 year olds) and can’t be counted as part of any major.

3. Seminars shall carry the prefix FRSH, and the Global Citizenship Program shall review syllabi from departments and faculty participating in the program. The committee solicits course proposals, which are reviewed by the seminar program director. Syllabi are to be submitted to the First Year Seminar program director, who serves as an ex officio member of the committee, by August 1.
4. Faculty teaching each seminar shall ordinarily be full-time or adjunct with a proven history of teaching at Webster University.

5. During Freshman Advising, efforts will be made to ensure that all seminars have at least 10 students in them before adding more than 15 students to any one seminar. Each seminar may have as many as 17 total students enrolled (or 18 with permission of the instructor).

6. All seminars will be offered in fall semester.

7. Faculty will participate in development workshops in preparation to teach seminars. These workshops typically take place during the Collaboratory May 18-20, 2014.

8. Seminar faculty will hold monthly meetings during the Fall semester. The times, dates and locations will be set by the seminar program director.

9. Seminars must meet more than once a week. (Exceptions can be made by seminar director)

10. Seminar Faculty will help in the assessment process by assessing their section of FYS for Oral Communication and Integrative Learning. They will also assign out a 4-7 page paper that focuses on Critical Thinking and Written Communication. (An assessment committee will assess Critical Thinking and Written Communication during the summer).

Specific Requirements and Expectations

Each seminar should include:

1. Critical reading and discussion of between three and six texts, which may include films, recordings or other media.

2. Frequent writing assignments to total approximately 15-20 pages on which the instructor should provide substantial feedback. Writing assignments should prompt students to engage in a critical analysis of the subject. Purposeful journal writing may be incorporated into the course but should not make up more than ¼ of the totally required pages. The student must revise at least one graded assignment after the instructor has responded to the paper with substantial written feedback. Near the end of the semester, Faculty will assign a 4-7 page paper using the FYS assessment template that focusing on Critical Thinking and Written Communication.

3. Assignments that develop critical thinking skills, written and oral communication and integrative learning.
4. Instructors are strongly encouraged to have each student make more than one oral presentation during the course.

5. Frequent student/teacher conferences, or at least opportunities for conferences over the term.

6. Instruction and experience in using the library.

7. Continuing orientation of students to the routines, practices and procedures of the school.

Faculty Are Encouraged:

1. To choose a topic outside of their disciplines. If the teacher is also put in the position of learner, the seminar may work better. It also avoids the danger of a seminar turning into just another course in the teacher’s discipline. This course must be interdisciplinary.

2. To schedule one or two out-of-class events during the semester. (Faculty will be compensated up to an amount determined annually.)

3. To assure seminar assignments and expectations are relatively uniform across all seminar sections, and that seminars retain their academic character. Class time should not ordinarily be devoted to Student Affairs presentations, for instance.

4. To be watchful for academic or emotional problems and report these to the appropriate offices.

5. To inform the seminar director if circumstances force the cancellation of more than one class meeting. Important Note: The class is expected to meet during its designated time and also during the designated final exam period, whether or not a test is given. In the case of courses meeting just once a week, cancelled classes must be made up.
First Year Seminar COURSE PROPOSAL FORM*

Name:

Seminar Title:

Description:

How does your topic fit into the mission of the First Year Seminars? Please explain the interdisciplinary nature of it.

How will your students demonstrate Written Communication, Oral Communication and Critical Thinking?

What makes this topic appeal to 18-20 year-old students?

Readings and/or other resources such as:

Brief Biographical Sketch:

*Please submit your proposal by Dec 19. The First Year seminar team will be determined by Jan. 16, 2015. You will be notified by then whether your proposal has been accepted. If you have any questions, email me at assner@webster.edu.