

# **Proposal and Design Outline for a Universal First Year Seminar (first semester) for all incoming HSU Freshman that meets criteria for HSU General Education Area E**

The First Year Seminar provides first-time freshmen with an engaging and exciting learning environment which introduces them to the intellectual and social community of Humboldt State University and aims to help students become part of “Learning to Make a Difference.” As an Area E General Education course, the First Year Seminar will help students to better understand themselves as integrated individuals, connected to the physiological, psychological, and socio-cultural influences that surround them. It will also help them to begin to see themselves as self-reflective, lifelong learners and thinkers. Through this experience, students will lay the foundation for their time at HSU as well as their lives beyond and after the University.

## **Organizing Principles**

**Process:** Instructors will design engaging and exciting learning experiences such that students in each class will have opportunity to contribute to building community and developing increasing awareness of their own progress in their academic endeavors through:

- Establishing community early in the class in order to promote a sense of belonging and to create a safe and welcoming learning environment.
- Making explicit connections between the core content/skills of the broader HSU campus community and the skills learned in the First Year Seminar by requiring that these skills be applied within at least one other course.
- Receiving challenging assignments, accompanied by supports and formative assessments, which help develop metacognitive skills and academic self-efficacy.
- Increasing self-awareness and the development of attributes, mindsets, character and values that support lifelong learning and success.
- Early and consistent feedback.

**Outcomes:** Instructors will design their First Year Seminar courses in ways that enable students to meet HSU criteria for General Education Area E and CSU Executive Order 1033:

1. Students will be able to employ the physiological, psychological and socio-cultural influences in articulating the meaning of the nature of being human.
2. Each student will be able to articulate an informed philosophy that incorporates self-understanding and self-analysis in defining her/his life-long role of self-development as an individual within a community of others.

**From Executive Order 1033:**

*Student learning in this area shall include selective consideration of content such as human behavior, sexuality, nutrition, physical and mental health, stress management, financial literacy, social relationships and relationships with the environment, as well as implications of death and dying and avenues for lifelong learning. Physical activity may be included, provided that it is an integral part of the study elements described herein.*

**Philosophy and approach to creating an effective first-year seminar.**

The course will be built emphasizing Metacognition and Community-building through engaged academic experiences.

- The course must help students to complete a degree by developing their affective and intellectual capabilities, assisting their navigation of the campus and aiding their enculturation within the campus community.
- Instructors have full discretion to choose course content and design learning activities. The only stipulation is that these choices must lead to students successfully meeting the course outcomes.
- Success in meeting the outcomes must be demonstrated through use of appropriate assessment instruments that measure competency. Measures of declarative knowledge or student satisfaction are not acceptable substitutes for assessments of competency.
- The course should promote a safe and welcoming learning environment for both instructors and students. Thus, faculty who teach this course must be supported by training and opportunities for individual consultation in developing skills in the pedagogical practices needed for creating an inclusive classroom.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Student Learning Outcomes for this course, in the context of meeting Area E requirement include three areas:

### **Intellectual and Self Conceptual Development**

- Use metacognitive skills to reflect upon their own work, improve their work processes and product and take responsibility for learning and skill development such that they become independent, intrinsically motivated, persistent, and committed lifelong learners.
- Critically assess their beliefs and values in order to define what they expect from college, work, and life, and begin to identify an area of study.

### **Navigation**

- Use effective time management, note taking, reading strategies, brainstorming, and questioning and reasoning skills to improve learning and intellectual development.
- Navigate the college experience with awareness of relevant policies, processes, and procedures required to successfully access and use university and other support resources.

### **Affective**

- By the end of the semester students will begin to develop a sense of belonging to the HSU community both socially and intellectually.
- By increasing their awareness of the requirements for academic success, they will feel empowered to make a difference both at HSU and in broader communities.

## **Required experiences for all First Year Seminar sections**

### **Early and consistent feedback**

- Students in First Year Seminar will receive early and regular feedback about their academic performance so that they have some sense of their progress in the course prior to the withdrawal date.
- Students must receive a grade from at least one significant assignment within the first four weeks of the semester.
- Attendance must be taken and be part of the course grade structure.
- Instructors in First Year Seminar will be expected to provide information on their students' academic progress and attendance, and report any information that may point to a need for support and intervention on a regular basis through the HSU Early Warning System (EBI Map-Works).

- Faculty should make every effort to provide or assist students in gaining access to peer mentoring.

### **Participation in at least one “beyond the classroom” experience**

Each section will require students to participate in at least one beyond the classroom learning opportunity that involves not just attending or participating in the event, but has a tangible work (paper, project, reflection, presentation etc.) product associated with it. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Cultural event such as a theatrical performance, dance and/or music recital
- Community service
- Campus club/organization activities
- Residence hall programs
- Campus lectures
- Diversity events
- Outdoor Recreation programs through Center Activities
- Environmentally related learning activity such as a sustainability lecture, outdoor education field trip or public meeting on an environmental issue

### **Reading**

Although there is no proscribed textbook or common reading, substantive reading is required in the First Year Seminar. Choices can include but are not limited to a text/novel, the Book of the Year, library activities, local or national newspapers, or compilations of articles and/or chapters, and should represent a significant part of assigned work. Instructors should make substantive use of these readings.

### **Assignments**

Assignments will require students to demonstrate evidence of achieving the learning outcomes for the course through a mix of assignments, papers, presentations, and exams. At a minimum, each section will require students to complete:

- A method of regular written reflection (journals, blogs, short reaction papers, etc.)
- A formal paper written in an iterative fashion with formative reviews that allow students to respond and improve their work
- A formal presentation
- A midterm
- A culminating experience. The culminating experience should challenge students to reflect upon and synthesize the major course goals.

Methodologies could include a portfolio, take home projects or papers, presentations, in-class exam, etc.

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### **Common Assessments**

- The First Year Seminar Steering Committee will develop common assessment rubrics for selected assignments that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of individual sections and the program as a whole.