

(First Year Seminars)

INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR NEW COURSE PROPOSALS

Below are instructions and procedures regarding the process for getting new courses approved. Please read this information thoroughly before filling out the form.

- I. ***The Committee on Academic Affairs will only consider proposals submitted electronically. Course proposal forms available on the web site (<http://campus.hws.edu/adm/forms/>).***
 - A. Complete Sections A, B, and C. Section D will be completed by the COAA after action is taken on the proposal. **BE SURE ALL APPROPRIATE SIGNATURES APPEAR ON THE FORM** before submitting to the Registrar. **PLEASE USE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE (Email approval or PDF scan of signature.)**
 - B. All proposals must be completed electronically. Submit completed form to the Registrar.
 - C. After the Registrar has determined that all necessary information and signatures are included, the course proposal will be reviewed by the Committee on Academic Affairs.
- II. Administrative procedures following COAA action.

The COAA acts on the proposal and the Registrar records the action on the “New Courses Approved by COAA” page on the Registrar’s website. The instructor of the course and department chair are informed of the decision.
- III. Procedure following course approval.

After the course is approved, the Registrar’s Office will load the course and the course description into the PeopleSoft System.

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR COURSE PROPOSAL (Rev. 2/17/20)

All proposals must be completed electronically.

PLEASE USE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE (Email approval or PDF scan of required signatures.) Be sure all signatures are included BEFORE submitting proposal to the Registrar.

In 2015, the curriculum proposal voted into existence by the faculty proposed “that we enhance our current program of First Year Seminars in order to offer our students a more robust common experience and a more consistent foundation for academic success” and created the FSEM Fellows to help carry out that proposal (Curriculum Proposal, Feb. 2015). The Fellows developed the following three overarching goals for FSEM courses, which have been in place since 2016. All FSEM instructors are asked to design courses that help HWS first-year students:

- 1. Develop improved critical thinking and communication skills and practices,¹**
- 2. Enculturate themselves within the Colleges’ intellectual and ethical values and practices, and**
- 3. Establish a strong network of relationships with peers and mentors on campus.**

These overarching goals were then articulated as the following Guidelines for FSEM Course Design, in place since 2017 (see appendix).

A. FSEM information.

Term to be first offered: Fall Year _____

1. Seminar Title: _____ Course Number: _____

Short Title: _____
(MAX OF 30 CHARACTERS ONLY)

2. Course Instructor(s): Each person listed below will teach this course in the fall.
NOTE: If this is a group proposal, designate one of the instructors as the liaison with Academic Affairs and place the name by the asterisk.

* _____

¹ See HWS Curricular Goals 1 and 2.

3. Course description and catalog copy. (Please attach a fuller description if needed.)

4. What key questions will you address in your FSEM?

5. Readings and other materials:

5. Choose one of the following time periods: _____ Period 1: MWF 8:40AM-9:40AM
_____ Period 6: MW 3:00PM-4:30PM
_____ Period 7: TR 8:30AM-10:00AM
_____ Period 11: TR 3:10PM-4:40PM

B. Course Learning Objectives.

The FSEM learning objectives, adopted in 2019, outline five areas which the course should address. How those areas are addressed is left to the faculty member. The complete objectives are appended to this proposal form for your reference. Please review them and then in the questions below, provide explanation as to how your FSEM will both accomplish and assess the following:

1. Help students develop and exercise improved critical thinking skills.

2. Help students improve their ability to read, accurately summarize, and analyze texts (“texts” broadly understood).

3. Strengthen students’ communications skills and practices, especially academic written communication.

4. Gain or further develop students’ knowledge, strategies, and skills needed to accomplish their HWS academic work.

5. Gain or further develop students’ active, self-aware approach to their own learning.

C. Signatures required for COAA approval. *PLEASE USE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE (Email approval or PDF scan of signature).

FSEM Instructor Signature

Date

Print Name of FSEM Instructor

Instructor's Dept/Program Chair Signature

Date

Print Name of Instructor's Dept/Program Chair

Print Name of Instructor's Dept/Program

Associate Dean of Faculty for the FY Program

D. Action of the Committee on Academic Affairs:

Approved _____ Not Approved _____

Revise and resubmit _____

(Signature) Chair, Committee on Academic Affairs

Date

Additional Remarks:

Appendix 1: FSEM Program Course Design Guidelines

All FSEM courses should:

1. Emphasize equally content, skills and scholarly habits of mind:
 - a. See the FSEM Learning Objectives framework, below, to help make this emphasis clear to students.
 - b. Build into the course structure both explicit academic advising to help students understand HWS academic norms/policies and implicit academic mentoring to help students acquire scholarly habits of mind.
2. Use a writing instructive approach. See "Designing a 'Writing Instructive' FSEM," in Appendix 2.
3. Scaffold complex assignments to help students achieve expectations that are both high and realistic.
4. Rely on active learning techniques like interactive lecture and discussion that promote student learning agency; these techniques should drive most class meetings.
5. Reach an audience of institutional newcomers: specifically, instructors are asked to craft explanations, expectations, policies, and other materials that are clear, accurate, and thorough at both assignment and course levels.
6. Balance traditional modes of engaging texts/ideas with authentic projects that invite students to exercise multiple modes of learning (the annual FSEM Symposium offers one venue for such).
7. Make multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives visible and accessible.
8. Balance students' workload throughout the term to encourage first-year student success: in particular, provide feedback/assessment of academic work by the 2nd or 3rd week of classes.
9. Recognize that less is more: instructors should do their best to avoid overloading the FSEM course.

To further ensure that FSEM courses offer a robust, common, consistent foundation for student academic success, in the Spring of 2019 the FSEM Fellows began research² to develop *a framework that would help faculty articulate FSEM learning objectives to students*, below.

FSEM Program: Learning Objectives Framework for FSEM Courses **(Approved by FSEM Fellows/CoAA 5/2019)**

² This framework is based on, first, the Fellows' analysis of 36 2018 FSEM syllabi; second, a comparison study of similar institutions' learning objectives for first-year seminars; also, on specific scholarship on best practices for first-year learning in higher education.

In their FSEM courses, all first-year students will

1. Develop and exercise *improved* critical thinking skills.

→ Because “critical thinking “ is the most often referenced but least often defined learning objective in FSEM syllabi, the Fellows offer five *options* below, suggesting that students *may* practice:

- a. Building “habits of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion,”³.
- b. Comprehending the difference between inference and opinion, and practicing the former.
- c. Experiencing objectives 2-5, below, as critical thinking in action.
- d. Creating, evaluating, applying, and analyzing (especially analyzing assumptions both explicit and implicit).
- e. Learning to identify and question underlying assumptions, even and especially when doing so causes discomfort.

2. Improve their ability to read, accurately summarize, and analyze texts (“texts” broadly understood).

→ Faculty have implemented this objective and articulated it to students *in many ways*, suggesting variously that students in an FSEM *may* practice

- a. Summarizing key claims in primary or secondary texts,
- b. Engaging in “close reading,”
- c. Identifying implicit and explicit arguments in both primary and secondary texts,
- d. Accurately and critically reading and annotating texts,
- e. Summarizing accurately, analyzing, and later synthesizing source material,
- f. Critically analyzing texts.

3. *Strengthen* communications skills and practices, especially academic written communication.

→ *At minimum, students should*

- a. Synthesize readings/sources and their own ideas,
- b. Enhance the knowledge, abilities, and flexibility needed to navigate writing in multiple disciplines across four college years by
 - i. Practicing interpreting writing assignments and responding appropriately,
 - ii. Being introduced to the reality of multiple, competing definitions of “good” college-level academic writing, and strategies for navigating these multiple definitions,

³ Association of American Colleges and Universities (2009). “Critical Thinking’ VALUE Rubric.” <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/critical-thinking>

- iii. Taking a piece of writing through the process of revision, preferably with feedback from HWS resources,
 - iv. Having experience of any of the HWS support resources for improving writing,
 - v. Articulating their writing strengths and weaknesses, and HWS-relevant options for continued growth,
 - vi. Demonstrating improvement in an aspect of their academic writing, to instill and reinforce the belief that they not only are capable of continuing to expand their academic writing skills, but that successful college students expect to do so.
- c. Experience class discussion as an opportunity to practice oral communication and active listening skills in an environment of mutual learning and respect.

4. Gain or further develop knowledge, strategies, and skills needed to accomplish their HWS academic work.

→ **At minimum, students should**

- g. Know how/where to access knowledge on and articulate three aspects of academic honesty:
 - i. HWS academic honesty policy as stated in the Community Standards Handbook,
 - ii. Rationale(s) for acknowledging sources in an academic environment (the “why”),
 - iii. Where/how they can learn more about at least one of the three most common methods (APA, MLA, or Turabian [aka “Chicago”]) for citing sources.
- h. Practice evaluating, selecting, using and citing sources to inform their HWS academic work,
- i. Understand their advisor’s role and their own responsibilities as advisees,
- j. Experience at least one HWS academic support resource,
- k. Review the HWS curriculum, especially those elements that can help FY students select Spring semester courses,
- l. Navigate PeopleSoft and other HWS infrastructure, as necessary,
- m. Gain, as appropriate to the FSEM course and determined by a combination of the student’s own needs and the FSEM instructor, some among the many other sets of HWS information, effective student strategies, and specific skills needed to successfully navigate college.

5. Gain or further develop an active, self-aware approach to their own learning.

→ **FSEM faculty have implemented this objective and articulated it to students *in many ways*, suggesting variously that students in an FSEM *may practice***

- n. Self-assessing progress on using several methods,
- o. Reflecting on and analyze the progress in their individual learning,

- p. Articulating norms related to good academic citizenship and effective growth as students at HWS,
- q. Venturing into new personal and/or academic territory,
- r. Modeling themselves as students on their FSEM Mentors or Writing Colleague,
- s. Setting specific immediate and long-term learning objectives for themselves,
- t. Approaching their college work and life as thoughtful professionals,
- u. Taking an active role in their own comprehension of material and use all available HWS resources, from the Librarians to Canvas to the CTL to our Writing Colleagues, and more.

Appendix 2: Designing a Writing Instructive FSEM

(Strongly) Suggested Structures for Course Design

- Balance low-stakes and high-stakes writing (“low-stakes” = writing to learn or “training writing” methods): see Gottschalk and Hjorthshoj's *The Elements of Teaching Writing* (Bedford, 2004).
- Infuse writing as a method for content learning: for a variety of useful methods, see Gottschalk & Hjortshoj Chapter 5, or Bean' *Engaging Ideas* (Jossey-Bass 2011), Chapter 7 and 8.
- Scaffold long or complex assignments: see G & H Chapter 2, Bean sections 2 and 3.
- Maintain a fairly even (or decrease the) writing workload throughout term; provide first-year students with feedback on writing early—by week 2 or 3 of the semester, if possible.
- Emphasize the writing process through feedback and revision, and emphasize improvements and gains as much as deficits and needs: see G & H chapter 3-5 , Bean part 4.
- Integrate writing support resources (students often need incentive to try these a first time).
- Keep the amount of writing reasonable—for them, for you.

(Strongly) Suggested Writing Goals

By the end of term, students should be able to:

- understand that there exist multiple, competing expectations for college-level academic writing (multiple definitions of “good” writing).
- improve in synthesizing readings/sources with their own ideas.
- know where to access more information about and begin to understand three aspects of academic honesty: HWS academic honesty policy as stated in the Community Standards Handbook, the rationale for citation of sources, and the basic use one citation method.

- improve in one aspect (possibly minor) of their academic writing.
- understand their own writing strengths and weaknesses AND options for continued improvement in the Spring and throughout their college career (remember that advisors can require WRRH 100).
- believe they can & should continue to learn more about college writing (studies show that the most important factor in student writing success is the belief that they not only can learn more about how to write well after high school, but that they should seek to do so).

Useful Writing Texts for Students

Hjortshoj, Keith. *The Transition to College Writing*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009.

- A guide to the understanding the why of college writing.

OWL at Purdue (Links to an external site.).

- The online writing center of Purdue University. Content similar to “handbooks,” at no cost.

Graff, Gerald & Birkenstein, Cathy. *They Say I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014.

- A manageable and engaging guide to academic writing that provides techniques and best practices for introducing, explaining, and incorporating other's writing into their own ideas.