

\* In next year's FYS call for proposals, put in an extra sentence or two that indicates if extra funding is required, the amounts and purpose must be stated in the proposal and that no additional funding will be allowed later.

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 20, 2008

**TO:** WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY FACULTY

**FROM:** THE FIRST YEAR SEMINAR COMMITTEE:  
Jennifer Burg (chair), Sally Barbour, J. K. Curry, Kline Harrison, Simeon Ilesanmi, Paul Ribisl, Eric Stone, and Paul Orser (nonvoting member)

**RE:** PROPOSALS FOR FIRST YEAR SEMINARS – FALL 2009 AND SPRING 2010

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The First Year Seminar Committee is soliciting proposals for new First Year Seminars for the 2009– 2010 academic year. **Proposals are due by January 26, 2009 and should be sent to Paul Orser in the Dean's Office.**

#### FYS PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Please organize your two-page proposal as follows:

1. Title and Brief Description of your seminar.
2. Goals: describe how the proposed seminar fulfills the intent of the First Year Seminar (see below).
3. Content: please provide a tentative list of reading, writing, and oral assignments, as well as other requirements for the course. Please provide page or word counts for written assignments.
4. Format: describe how the course will be conducted (what pedagogical methods will be employed).
5. Chair/Appropriate Program Director Endorsement: A signature of approval from your chair or program director should appear at the top of the first page of the proposal.
6. Semester(s) in which you plan to offer your seminar and how many sections you plan to teach. Please note that classes that meet two or three times a week are preferable to those that meet just once a week.
7. Synopsis: on a separate, third page provide a brief **two to four** sentence summary describing the course (for dissemination to prospective students).

Recommendations made in 1995 by the Committee on Academic Planning suggest that First Year Seminars should include “**intense intellectual interchange, both written and oral**, in a **seminar setting** in which all participate...in critical thinking and analysis of arguments. [Seminars] should include **discussion and debate** on issues, examination of opposing viewpoints...and **written and oral assignments that force students to make explicit their ideas and thoughts...**” These recommendations further state that the First Year Seminar “should not be simply construed as a scaled-down lecture class.”

Please note that requests by the First Year Seminar Committee for clarification or revision of proposals have often resulted from lack of prior departmental/program approval; omission or inadequate specificity with respect to reading and writing assignments; insufficient information regarding pedagogical method (particularly the opportunities for discussion anticipated for the course and how these will be evaluated); or uncertainty regarding possible overlap with other courses, especially divisional requirements.

The evaluation survey completed by students at the end of their First Year Seminars asks them to assess how the course improved their skills in the following areas: reading, writing, critical thinking, the ability to discuss and debate, and the ability to do research. As a committee, we have learned and student evaluations confirm, that students learning to improve their writing benefit most from feedback that they get immediately following an assignment, coupled with advice and criticism at the draft stage. This helps students master a clear writing style, topic development, and critical thinking in manageable pieces, and we believe this leads to better outcomes in critical thinking and writing for the seminar. One way to do this is to assign several short papers; another is to assign a longer term paper but to design into the course structure several opportunities for students to obtain feedback over the course of the semester. **First Year Seminars should include at least twenty pages of finished written work during the semester. Informal writing assignments, like journals, free-writing, and responses to readings, while encouraged, do not count toward the twenty page recommendation.**

We strongly recommend that those teaching First Year Seminars schedule one or more library instructional sessions for their students. The First Year Seminars are an effective way of introducing library research and classroom tools to first year students. Please contact Bobbie Collins, Library Instruction Coordinator at [collinsb@wfu.edu](mailto:collinsb@wfu.edu) or ext. 4654 to schedule a session.

Copies of these guidelines, along with the student evaluation form and sample proposals are available on the Teaching and Learning Center’s web page at [www.wfu.edu/TLC](http://www.wfu.edu/TLC) under Teaching at Wake Forest.

If you have any questions regarding the development of your proposal, please contact Jennifer Burg at [burg@wfu.edu](mailto:burg@wfu.edu) or ext. 4465.