TO: WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY FACULTY

FROM: 2015-16 Committee on First Year Seminars: Judy Kem (Chair), R. Saylor Breckenridge, Lynn Neal, Leah Roy and Akbar Salam

RE: PROPOSALS FOR FIRST YEAR SEMINARS – FALL 2016 AND SPRING 2017

The First Year Seminar Committee is soliciting proposals for new First Year Seminars to be offered during the 2016–17 academic year. Any full-time regular faculty member is eligible to offer a First Year Seminar and departments/programs are encouraged to include these courses in their regular course-schedule planning. The “Motivations for First Year Seminar Structure and Content” can be found at the end of this document.

FYS PROPOSAL SUBMISSION: Proposals should be prepared by instructors using the official form (downloadable from URL: http://college.wfu.edu/academics/first-year-seminars/) then the relevant Department Chair/Program Director should review and submit the proposal via email to the Dean’s Administrative Coordinator, Tammy Griffin (burketj@wfu.edu). The following endorsement should be included in the body of the email:

To the First Year Seminar Proposal Review Committee –

I have reviewed this proposal for a First Year Seminar titled “TITLE” to be taught by INSTRUCTOR NAME through the DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM NAME of which I am the CHAIR/DIRECTOR. I endorse it as a plan for an effective course to be taught by the instructor as described.

Sincerely,

NAME

DUE DATE: Noon on first Friday following start of semester (Fri 15 Jan, 2016 for new proposals to be taught in Fall 2016, and Fri 26 Aug, 2016 for new proposals to be taught in Spring 2017). Note that proposals should be submitted at least one semester in advance of when they will be first offered.

FYS PROPOSAL PREPARATION GUIDELINES:
Proposals should be no more than three pages in length, must include the instructor’s name, department, and rank (including dates of appointment if temporary faculty), and the following eight elements.

1. Title and Description Provide the title and a brief description of the topic and general goals of the proposed course.

2. Format Describe how the course will be conducted and what pedagogical methods will be employed.

3. Content Provide a list of proposed readings with full citations, films, art and other objects, pieces and documents to be viewed as well as any other content to be used in the course (with full citations). Briefly describe how they, as a whole, connect to the topic and goals of the course.

4. Assignments and Evaluation of Students Provide and describe brief examples of the assignments and activities (e.g. written papers, oral presentations, performances, class discussion, etc) by which students will be evaluated. Note that a significant amount of written work and oral presentation is expected, though the precise amount can vary based on course characteristics.
5. **Outcomes and Assessment** Briefly describe how combinations of the proposed course structure, content, assignments, and activities will successfully meet the four Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) of the First Year Seminar Program (see list provided below).

6. **Schedule** State the semester(s) in which you plan to offer your seminar, how many sections you plan to teach, and any timing constraints that may apply. Please note that classes that meet two or three times per week are preferable to (and may be required over) those that meet just once a week. In very rare cases the regularly scheduled FYS may meet once a week. If this option is requested, please provide a short justification. Also note that proposals may be submitted for approval without a precise plan for the semester in which it will be offered (i.e. approval for a yet-to-be-determined semester offering is allowed).

7. **Internal or External Support** If relevant, describe any internal or external funding support being received for this course. Note: If there are out-of-class events and associated expenses that would enhance the overall academic content of the FYS, faculty are encouraged to review the College Course Enhancement Fund at: [http://faculty.college.wfu.edu/funding-awards/](http://faculty.college.wfu.edu/funding-awards/) to determine applicability. Once the seminar has been approved by the FYS Committee, development of the seminar may be supported through one of the following, from which further details may be obtained: Center for the Study of Capitalism, the Office of Entrepreneurship and Liberal Arts, Office of Sustainability, IPLACe, Pro Humanitate Institute, Humanities Institute, etc.

8. **Synopsis for Dissemination** Please provide a brief (approximately 50 word) summary describing the course for dissemination to prospective students and academic advisors.

**Motivations for First Year Seminar Structure and Content**
Following Dean Fetrow’s request in 2012 for a comprehensive evaluation of the First Year Seminar (FYS) program, the FYS Committee produced a list of findings, pedagogical recommendations and specific Student Learning Outcomes (see below and 2014-15 Annual Report of the Committee on FYS) to be used to guide future FYS courses.

**Findings**
First Year Seminars should be designed to: i) spark the intellectual curiosity of students; ii) introduce them to a thought-provoking topic across the arts, humanities, and sciences; iii) foster alternative forms of conceptual and creative expression; iv) create a welcoming and open learning environment that emphasizes forging good relationships among the students and with the faculty member; v) foster lifelong learning and academic excellence in a small classroom setting.

The following are important points of pedagogy to create First Year Seminars as sites of student-centered learning (rather than content-oriented) and to distinguish FYS classes from Writing Seminars:

1. A central focus of the FYS should be attention to the processes involved in learning, in addition to the coverage of content and mastery of topic. For example, students might learn different ways to investigate or think about the topic by the faculty member framing questions, providing methods of investigation, demonstrating ways of testing evidence, framing alternative questions and responses, etc., in addition to training students in knowledge and research skills practiced in a specific discipline.
2. The pace of work should be deliberate so that students are afforded the time to develop increasingly sophisticated or nuanced ways of thinking, reading, listening and writing/creating.
3. Students should be given opportunities to reflect on their development as learners and thinkers, as well as on specific skills, such as reading, writing, oral proficiency, and development of the whole person.
4. The priority of the class is on student participation; therefore, faculty members are encouraged to act as listener, guide, or mentor.
5. Though writing is an important component of the FYS course, faculty should consider it in the context of writing to learn, rather than learning to write, since the Writing 111 course is focused on building specific writing skills.
**Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)**
So that students understand rigorous academic expectations and develop the intellectual skills needed to practice or meet these expectations, the following are SLO for each FYS. By the end of an FYS, students will have practiced the following:

i) *Read increasingly sophisticated texts critically*
As one of WFU’s Core Competencies, critical reading is defined as: “the process of understanding, extracting, and questioning written text that allows for the comprehensive explanation of issues, ideas, artefacts, and events before accepting or challenging an opinion or conclusion or constructing new meaning.”

ii) *Pose and respond to complex ideas*
This may occur in a variety of formats such as written or oral form, or in class discussion. This maps onto the WFU Core Competency of Inquiry and Analysis defined as: “the systematic process of exploring issues, objects, or works by collecting evidence, deconstructing that which is complex, and developing informed conclusions or judgments.”

iii) *Identify, analyse, interpret and evaluate different points of view*
Again, this may occur in a variety of formats. This corresponds to the WFU Core Competency of Critical Thinking defined as: “the ability to explore ideas comprehensively, to ask relevant questions, to evaluate evidence, to imagine and test alternative points of view before accepting or formulating a conclusion.”

iv) *Construct cogent arguments in both written and oral form*
This supports the WFU Core Competency of Communication defined as, “The ability to express ideas clearly, exchange knowledge, foster understanding, and/or persuade one’s audience in written and oral form.”

While all FYS should be designed so that students develop the above learning outcomes, faculty may focus on, or emphasize additional competencies, such as creative thinking, quantitative literacy, social relevance and intercultural learning.

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 helped them meet the FYS student learning outcomes. Faculty may prepare their own survey if additional feedback from students is desired.

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, Librarian – Research and Instruction, at collinsb@wfu.edu or ext. 4654 to schedule a session.

If you have any questions regarding the development of your proposal, please contact the Chair of the First Year Seminar Committee, Dr. Judy Kem, at kem@wfu.edu (Ext 5349).