Growing Faculty and Students in FYS Learning Communities

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Within a First-Year Seminar framework, what might intellectual growth look like?

First-Year Seminars at Middlebury Legislated Features

Seminars are:
- Required in the First Semester
- Writing Intensive
- Limited to 15 Students
- Taught by Regular, Full-time Faculty

Faculty:
- Are Students’ Academic Advisers
- Select Individual Seminar Topics
- Develop their Students’ Thinking, Writing, and Speaking Skills

First-Year Seminars at Middlebury Evolving Features

- Locus for Pedagogical Discussion and Experimentation
- Students Housed in Commons (dorm clusters) by Seminar
- Seminars Eligible for Resource Team: Peer Writing Tutor, Reference Librarian, Educational Technologist, and Peer Mentor (ACE)
- Locus for Institutional Assessment
# The Commons System at Middlebury

- 5 Residential Communities
- First-years and sophomores continue in Commons
- Administrative structure
  - Commons Heads
  - Dean
  - Coordinator
  - CRA (Commons Residential Advisor)
- FYCs (First-Year Counselors)

## First-Year Seminars and Commons

- What does it mean to affiliate?
- Benefits for Faculty
  - Relationship with Commons Head
  - Enhanced Advising (Dean)
  - Course Support
- Benefits for Students
  - Close-knit intellectual community
  - "Seamlessness"

## First-Year Seminars at Middlebury

### Evolving Features

- Locus for Pedagogical Discussion and Experimentation
- Students Housed in Commons (dorm clusters) by Seminar

## Locus for Faculty Development

**“The Harvest Cycle”**

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<tr>
<th>May</th>
<th>SEPTEMBER to APRIL</th>
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<td>Half-day Workshop</td>
<td>Weekly Lunch Table</td>
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<tr>
<td>• teaching goals</td>
<td>• Occasional Workshops</td>
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<td>• syllabus planning</td>
<td>• “Talking About Teaching”</td>
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<td>• learned resources</td>
<td>• Individual Conferences</td>
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<td>SUMMER</td>
<td>• CTLR &amp; FYS Websites</td>
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<td>June Workshop Series</td>
<td>• Ward Prize</td>
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<td>&quot;Exploring Pedagogies and Tools&quot;</td>
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<td>August Overnight Retreat</td>
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<td>• on teaching writing</td>
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<td>• on syllabus design</td>
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<tr>
<td>• on what binds us as a faculty</td>
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<tr>
<th>AUGUST/SEPTEMBER</th>
<th>JANUARY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Half-day Workshop</td>
<td>Half-day Workshop for New Faculty</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>goals review</em></td>
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<td><em>resource review</em></td>
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<td><em>advising advice</em></td>
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<td><em>orientation preparation</em></td>
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First-Year Seminar Resource Team

Innovation-- Staff and Peers Attached to Individual FYSE

Reference Librarian-- the research contact person for students and faculty
- helps with research, supports research assignments
- teaches workshops on research fundamentals

Educational Technologist-- provides, coordinates, facilitates technologies
- provides essential familiarity with the College’s servers
- supports sophisticated multimedia projects and websites

Peer ACE-- Academic Consultant for Excellence
- helps students enhance academic planning skills
- works with students on optimum performance, study skills, stress management.

Peer Writing Tutor-- works with students on writing assignments
- facilitates peer critiquing groups either in class or outside
- provides oral presentation support

A Librarian

- Consults with Faculty Preparing for Seminars
- Offers Seminar-specific Workshops
- Creates Online or Print Resource Guides
- Holds Follow-up Sessions with Students
- Can Help Design Independent Student Assignments
- Provides Instruction in Copyright Compliance

Range of Tech Possibilities
FYSE 1146: The World of the Italian Renaissance Artist

Instructor’s Goals:
- New approach to familiar material
- Emphasis on context over chronology
- Reliance on a single, new text as the source for many of the questions raised in the course
- Possible model for an upper-level seminar?

FYSE 1146: The World of the Italian Renaissance Artist

Goals of the Course:
- Solid Introduction to Content: help students to understand the production of Italian Renaissance art as the result of a series of collaborations.
- Writing: Challenge students to think of themselves as “writers in progress,” and commit themselves to writing as a process.
- Oral Communication: establish active discussions within a community of scholars, with high expectation of a polished presentation at the end of the term.
- Strong research skills that go well beyond informational websites.

Achieving Goals:

Institutional Support
- Reference Librarian
- Technology Consultant

Peer Support
- Peer Writing Tutor
- ACE (Academic Consultant for Excellence)

Content Support
- “Apprenticeship” with local artist
- Field trip to Clark Art Institute
- Presentation by upper-level seminar (HARC 401)

Social/Intellectual Support
- Commons experience
Student Learning Outcomes

• Case-Studies (a modest goal)
• Apprenticeship
• Research
• Writing
• Intellectual Community

Faculty Learning Outcomes

• Managing “the team”
• Ensuring effective use of institutional, peer, and Commons resources
• Motivating students to make use of resources

FYS1144: Jane Austen & Film
Learning Teams and Commons

Seminar Goals: How to Achieve?

Professionals and Trained Students
• Available to assist with goals throughout the semester
• Provide on-going support for assignments & projects

Commons Support--
• One Dean and proximate housing create community
• Financial and logistical support for special events

Trained Students:
Peer Writing Tutors & ACEs

Papers
 Special projects
Professional Staff:
Librarian & Educational Technologist
Special Assignments
Research-based Oral Presentation
I-Movie

Faculty Learning Outcomes
How did I develop professionally?
Helped me let go of control (a little bit).
Gave me a safety net to risk new things.
Made my pedagogy transparent to my students.

"We achieved all these goals!
Wow, we did learn a lot in this class, didn't we?"

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Assessment

- Participants in the Study
- Embedded Portfolios
- Writing Rubric Development
- Assessment of Papers
  - High School, First FYS, Last FYS, Best Spring
  - Each paper read by at least 2 readers
  - Norming and re-norming of readers
- Feedback Loop

### Writing Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
<th>Scoring Scale 4 highest</th>
<th>Scoring Scale 3 middle high</th>
<th>Scoring Scale 2 middle low</th>
<th>Scoring Scale 1 lowest</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information and Evidence</td>
<td>The writer selects persuasive, interesting, and insightful information to contextualize and inform the argument. Sources are cited appropriately. When necessary, evidence counter to the argument is effectively addressed.</td>
<td>Sufficient and appropriate persuasive information informs and contextualizes the argument. Sources are appropriately cited. Ineffective counter argument.</td>
<td>Information informing and contextualizing the argument is sometimes insufficient or unpersuasive for the argument. Sources are sometimes inappropriately cited. No counter argument.</td>
<td>Information informing and contextualizing the argument is rarely sufficient or persuasive for the argument. Sources are generally inappropriately cited or not cited.</td>
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For Writing Objective: Evidence, change over Writing Samples

For Writing Objective: Structure, change over Writing Samples
For Writing Objective: Thesis, change over Writing Samples

Correlation between the 10 Writing Objectives and Students’ Self-Reported Time Management (CIRP)

So within a first-year experience, what might characterize a learning community in which both students and faculty grow?

1. Flexibility
2. Serve Two Constituencies
3. Self-Reflective
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in FYS Learning Communities

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