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FYS as a Locus for Faculty Development:
Creating Mini Learning Communities

Kathleen Skubikowski
Mary Ellen Bertolini
Katy Smith Abbott

Middlebury College

First-Year Seminars at Middlebury
Original Program Goals

• Introduce First-Year Students to Small Courses
• Require a Second Writing Course
• Improve General Education Advising
• Encourage First-Year Students to Make Intellectual Connections within and between Disciplines
Within a First-Year Seminar framework, what might characterize an intellectual community?

**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)

THE TEACHABLE MOMENT
STUDENTS and FACULTY

- encounter the new, the different, the unfamiliar
- anxiety and consciousness
- seeing/experiencing oneself differently
- feeling/being unprepared
- not entirely sure what’s expected
- retention is important
- variety of learning styles
- learning from peers
- addressing the whole person
- changing demographics
### FYS Faculty Development Venues

#### “The Harvest Cycle”

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<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>• teamed resources</td>
<td>• Individual Conferences</td>
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#### SUMMER

- June Workshop Series
- “Exploring Pedagogies and Tools”

#### August Overnight Retreat

- on teaching writing
- on syllabus design
- on what binds us as a faculty

#### AUGUST/SEPTEMBER

- Half-day Workshop
- *goals review*
- *resource review*
- *advising advice*
- *Orientation preparation*

#### JANUARY

- Half-day Workshop for New Faculty

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### First-Year Seminars at Middlebury

#### Evolving Features

- Locus for Pedagogical Discussion and Experimentation

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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

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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

What Do We Want Students to Know about Research?

- How to use Library formats—collections, ILL, reserves, digital projects
- How to read citations, locate material
- How to recognize scholarly & popular publications—primary & secondary resources
- How to ask good questions
- How to evaluate and synthesize information
- How and why to cite materials
- How to avoid plagiarism and copyright infringements
### Basic Assignments
- Known Item and New Item
- Search Proper Citation
- Learn Scope of Library Resources

**Students locate online articles from citations provided by professor.**

**Students find scholarly articles by searching subject index.**

### Intermediate Assignments
- Critical Thinking & Analysis
- Learning About Audience
- Comparison & Response

**Students analyze topic by investigating popular & scholarly sources, and write about differences.**

**Students find reviews of a work, then compare them, or write a response.**

### Comprehensive Assignment Ideas:
Utilizes Broad Range of Research and Writing Skills

**Prepare for an Interview**
Gather and write summary as background for interview
List sources, annotating validity/usefulness and identify missing information

**Write Articles for Newspaper or News Magazine**
After reading results of a study, find existing news articles about same study
Write comparison, discussing decisions and assumptions of each article
Range of Tech Possibilities

Brief Technology Orientation

- Saving Work to Servers
- Overview of Technology at Middlebury
- Avoiding Lost Work
- Preventing Viruses, Spyware
- Accessing Segue

Available for Every Class

- can e-mail class (including self)
- can add support team to email list
- can attach documents
  - syllabus
  - readings
  - problem sets
  - handouts
Custom Course Sites

Or sites using Segue--Middlebury’s easy to use, Web 2.0 friendly course management tool

Course Management & Web-based Discussion

"Consuming Images" and "branded" personal identity through consumer products
"People like Us: Social Class in America" "Body Art"

On 2/24/2006 9:00 PM
by Hailu Christopher Kavolokian

"Consuming Images" and "branded" personal identity through consumer products
"People like Us: Social Class in America" "Body Art"

On 2/23/2006 9:30 PM
by Frances A. Warburton

Commencement of today has only grown since the movie “Consuming Images” was made. The movie successfully portrayed the way America chooses what they sell, what they think, how they see the world, and what they see the world to be. It is the story of how the story we tell is constructed and how it is used to manipulate and control us. It is the story of how we are told that we are what we consume and how we are told that what we consume is what we are.

On 2/22/2006 9:46 PM
by Eric Thomas Harvey

One of the great things about living in a democracy is being able freely express yourself. People always seem to find new ways to express themselves which is quickly copied by others. I think this is the key to democracy.
High-end Use of Technology

- Wikis--quintessentially Web 2.0
- Digital Media Projects
- Video Conferences
- Audio & Podcasting
  - Web sites for publishing audio
  - RSS feeds for subscribing to podcasts

CTLR Summer Workshops--Pedagogy & Tools

http://www.middlebury.edu/administration/ctlr

Student Team Members

ACEs & PWTs attached to FYSE

Academic Consultants for Excellence (3.7+ GPA)
Peer Writing Tutors (nominated by faculty)

**ACEs help first-years:**
- Improve Performance
- Reduce Stress & Anxiety
- Balance Commitments on Time
- Master Complex Projects
- Enhance Reading
- Maximize Discussions
- Increase Healthy Coping Strategies

**Peer Writing Tutors:**
- Work with All Parts of the Writing Process
- Help with In-class Workshops
- Work with Oral Presentation
- Model Research Skills
- Convey Intentionality
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.

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

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

Outcomes

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

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

FYS1144: Jane Austen & Film
Mini-Learning Community 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
FYS1144: Jane Austen & Film

Trained Students:
Peer Writing Tutors & ACEs

Papers
Special projects

FYS1144: Jane Austen & Film

Professional Staff:
Librarian & Educational Technologist

Special Assignments
Research-based Oral Presentation
I-Movie
Commons

Money, space, resources make events possible.

Professional Development

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?”
So what might a learning community look like in which both students and faculty grow?

1. Flexibility
2. Serve Two Constituencies

3. Self-Reflective
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Some materials contributed by Yonna McShane, Sheldon Sax, Jean Simmons, Jessica Holmes.