

# The First Year Seminar

## Setting Students Up For Success

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## The First Year Seminar: Setting Students up for Success

- Background about instructors and ASU
- Academic Success Courses at ASU
- Partnership and rationale for FYS
- Curriculum and activities
- Results and outcomes
- Future plans



## The Instructors

- Robert E. Page, Jr.
  - Founding Director and Professor, School of Life Sciences
  - Behavior and Population Genetics Research
    - Complex social behavior in honeybees
- Katherine O'Clair
  - Life Sciences Librarian
  - B.S. Environmental Science – Biology Focus
  - Avian Research

## Arizona State University

- Four Campuses
- Research I Institution
- 62,278 Students\*
  - 51,234 at Tempe Campus
    - 9,052 First-time Freshman
- Over 200 degree programs across four campuses
- Freshman admissions requirements
  - Highly accessible
  - Diversity of academic abilities
- 79% Freshman retention rate
  - President Crow's goal is to improve retention rate

\* Arizona State University. 2006. Quick facts: Fall 2006.  
[http://www.asu.edu/uoia/pubs/quickfacts/Quick\\_Facts\\_Fall\\_2006.pdf](http://www.asu.edu/uoia/pubs/quickfacts/Quick_Facts_Fall_2006.pdf)

## Academic Success Programs

- UNI Courses
- Campus Match
- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS)
  - Learning Communities
  - Campus Match
  - First Year Seminar
- All are elective courses

## First Year Seminar (FYS)

- Small classes
- One credit hour
- Taught by top faculty in University
- Special topics
- Offered by numerous departments at ASU
- School of Life Sciences offers several every fall
- Curriculum designed by individual instructor

# Why Teach An FYS?

## Our goal is to foster student success.

- Transition from High School
- Teach Important Skills
  - Information Literacy
  - Technology Literacy
- Teach Responsibility
- Develop Partnerships for Learning

AND

- Improve Retention!

# Faculty-Librarian Collaboration

- Working together since summer of 2005
- Role of faculty member
- Role of librarian
- Work together to teach students skills that will help them to be successful college students.
- Participate equally in instruction and grading

## Fall 2005: FYS - Sociobiology

- Controversy surrounding Edward O. Wilson and *Sociobiology: A New Synthesis*
- Foundation of course
  1. What is sociobiology?
  2. What were the criticism's of Wilson's new synthesis?
  3. Who were the main players in the controversy and why?

## Fall 2006: FYS - Dance Language of the Honeybee

- Dance Language Controversy
  - Karl von Frisch
  - Adrian Wenner
- Foundation of course
  1. What were the fundamental criticisms of von Frisch's scientific methods that led to the controversy?
  2. What does the controversy tell us about the nature of science?
  3. Has the controversy been resolved, and if yes, who won?

## Learning Moments

**This course has been carefully designed to incorporate many different opportunities for learning.**

**In addition, the informal seminar format allows the instructors to redirect the course when necessary to take advantage of those unexpected opportunities for learning.**

## Expected Learning Outcomes

In the seminar, students will:

1. Engage in self-directed investigation
2. Become familiar with and use the resources and skills that will promote educational success
3. Learn to use library and internet resources to investigate scientific and historical questions
4. Work individually and in groups to solve problems and conduct investigative research
5. Learn how to organize thoughts and present to a group of peers.

# Grading

- Responsibility-based class

|                          |     |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Attendance               | 40% |
| Out of Class Assignments | 30% |
| Class Presentations      | 15% |
| Group Participation      | 15% |

# Out of Class Assignments

- Discussion Boards
  - Students discuss topic asynchronously using Blackboard
  - Three Discussion Board activities for semester
  - Minimum 2 posts per week
    - Initial posting
    - Response to posting
  - Students have the opportunity to practice form of online communication.
    - Incorporates technology literacy

## Out of Class Assignments

- Journals
  - Keep personal, individual journal of research for assignments
  - Information Literacy
    - Define information need
    - Access information
    - Evaluate information
  - Technology Literacy
    - MS Word
    - Upload to Digital Drop Box in Blackboard
    - Returned through Digital Drop Box
  - Provide insight on students' information seeking strategies
  - Feedback from librarian

## Class Presentations

- Assigned questions to investigate or research
  - Group assignment
    - Students randomly assigned to groups
  - Three presentations per semester
    - Different groups each time
- Present findings to class in PowerPoint presentation
  - Information Literacy
    - Use information
    - Understand ethical use of information
  - Technology Literacy
    - MS PowerPoint
- Presentations evaluated by peers as part of grade
  - “Peer review”



## Group Work

- Ability to work in groups is an important skill
- Class Presentation Assignments
- Participation Points
  - Students have input on group members participation grade
  - Grade is an average of scores given by group members
  - Incentive to contribute
  - Must turn in evaluation form to receive points.

## Outcomes and Results

- Students become familiar with the tools for learning
  - Blackboard
  - Library
- Positive student feedback
- Students become aware that we are partners in learning
- Students learn about and develop interest in an unlikely topic

## Plans For The Future

- Continue to teach FYS in future years
  - Fall 2007 – The Evolution of Social Behavior
- Revise curriculum as needed
- More evaluation
- Track students over course of degree program
- Teach Information Resources course for biology majors

## Conclusions

- ASU is large institution
- Diverse student body
- Retention is important issue
- Academic Success Courses foster student success
- FYS teaches skills students need to be successful through purposeful assignments and activities
- Continue to seek strategies that will improve retention to meet University's goals.

## Acknowledgements

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School of Life Sciences

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