

St. Olaf College OLE Core General Education Curriculum
First-Year Experience: The First-Year Seminar Requirement

Description:

This course emphasizes critical thinking, conversation, collaboration, and academic habits for the liberal arts. Students learn key skills like locating and evaluating academic sources, as well as reading, reflecting, and responding to texts. Students will cultivate their own curiosity while also learning how to engage in community, better understanding their responsibilities to each other. The First-Year Seminar is part of the First-Year Experience, which includes two distinct activities to support college transition: students participate in structured and sustained orientation to support their academic and co-curricular development, and students reflect on this development.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. Practice academic and student success skills, learned through sustained, structured first-year student orientation, necessary to navigate the liberal arts college experience. Identify and practice academic skills necessary to navigate the liberal arts college environment.
2. Identify, evaluate, and utilize a variety of academic sources.
3. Practice inclusive classroom discussion and collaboration.
4. Reflect on their learning during the course and articulate how they will apply it to their college experience.

Course Guidelines:

Students complete the First-Year Experience through courses that fulfill First-Year Seminar and Writing & Rhetoric. The First-Year Seminar course guides students in responding to OLE question 1: In what ways can I understand the world and my role in it? This course is not designed to deliver any particular disciplinary content; rather, instructors are free to explore any content that will excite and engage them and their students as they navigate college knowledge and academic skills. St. Olaf students enter their first year of college with varying levels of awareness and comprehension of college environments and expectations. The First-Year Seminar should provide opportunities for all students, regardless of background, to learn how a college is organized, to practice accessing resources, and to understand the purpose of a liberal arts education.

1. **Practice academic and student success skills, learned through sustained, structured first-year student orientation, necessary to navigate the liberal arts college experience.**
Practice habits that support academic success. The First-Year Seminar course (part of the First-Year Experience) guides students in responding to OLE question 1: In what ways can I

understand the world and my role in it? This course is not designed to deliver any particular disciplinary content; rather, instructors are free to explore any content that will excite and engage them and their students as they navigate college knowledge and academic skills. St. Olaf students enter their first year of college with varying levels of awareness and comprehension of college environments and expectations. The First-Year Seminar should provide opportunities for all students, regardless of background, to learn how a college is organized, to practice accessing resources, and to understand the purpose of a liberal arts education. Faculty teaching First-Year Seminar and Writing & Rhetoric will collaborate with staff leaders of sustained orientation to reinforce co-curricular programming. Course proposals must demonstrate integration of sustained, structured orientation programming into courses.

2. Identify, evaluate and utilize a range of sources.

The First-Year Seminar is a place for students to cultivate intellectual curiosity through engaging independently with a variety of sources. A “variety of sources” refers to multiple texts that can be in different formats, such as written, digital, or video. First-Year Seminar courses should provide opportunities for students to read and annotate these sources for deep understanding, to reflect on and respond to these sources, and to understand how these sources communicate to particular audiences for particular purposes.

3. Practice inclusive collaboration.

The First-Year Seminar should provide opportunities for students to prepare for, train for, and participate in inclusive classroom discussion and collaboration. Specific skills include speaking effectively, engaging with difference and different points of view, learning how to listen, and learning how to have difficult conversations. Collaborative exercises and projects are highly encouraged.

4. Reflect on their learning during the course and articulate how they will apply it to their college experience.

Students will reflect at the end of each course in the First-Year Experience taken at St. Olaf, typically at the end of First-Year Seminar, Writing & Rhetoric, or Conversations courses in fall and spring. Reflection should focus on three key areas introduced during New Student Orientation, in First-Year Seminar, Writing & Rhetoric, or Conversations courses, and expanded on during their sustained orientation programming: academic development, co-curricular involvement, and living in community. Reflections can be integrated into course assignments and take any number of forms appropriate to course content and aligned with reflection goals. Students should reflect on the First-Year Experience overall in order to make sense of their first year and begin shaping their college experience. Reflection should focus on three key areas: academic development, co-curricular involvement, and living in community. Reflections can be integrated into course assignments and take any number of forms appropriate to course content and aligned with reflection goals.