WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY
PROPOSAL FOR UNIVERSITY STUDIES COURSES

Department ____________________________ Orientation ____________________________ Date __________ Feb. 22, 2006

Course No. 101  Course Name First-Year Seminar (One-Time Course Offering) Credits 3

This proposal is for a(n) ___x___ Undergraduate Course

Applies to: _____ Major Required  _____ Minor Required

_____ Elective  _____ Elective

University Studies (A course may be approved to satisfy only one set of outcomes.):

Course Requirements:

Basic Skills:  Arts & Science Core:  Unity and Diversity:

1. College Reading and Writing  1. Humanities  x 1. Critical Analysis

2. Oral Communication
3. a. Mathematics/Statistics

Prerequisites ____________________________

Provide the following information (attach materials to this proposal):

Please see “Directions for the Department” on previous page for material to be submitted.

Attach a University Studies Approval Form.

Department Contact Person for this Proposal:

Chris Buttram, English  457-5448  cbuttram@winona.edu
James Armstrong, English  457-5418  jarmstrong@winona.edu

Name (please print) ____________________________ Phone ____________________________ e-mail address ____________________________
**WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**UNIVERSITY STUDIES APPROVAL FORM**

Routing form for University Studies Course approval.  
Course **OR 101, First-Year Seminar**

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Department Chair  
Date  
e-mail address

**Dean’s Recommendation**  
_____ Approved  _____ Disapproved*

Dean of College  
Date

*In the case of a dean’s recommendation to disapprove a proposal, a written rationale for the recommendation to disapprove shall be provided to the University Studies Subcommittee.

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President  
Date

Please forward to Registrar.

Registrar  
Date entered  
Please notify department chair via e-mail that curricular change has been recorded.
Title of Course: OR 101, First-Year Seminar (3 s.h.)

Catalog Description: First-year seminar in interdisciplinary inquiry, with an emphasis on facilitating the transition to university life and academic discourse. Specific topics are published online and in the Web Registration module. 3 s.h. Grade only. Offered in fall semester only.

Proposed for Fall 2006: 3-6 Pilot Sections

Submitted for University Studies Program (Unity & Diversity: Critical Analysis)

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT OR 101

As designed, this first-year seminar is proposed, beginning with the offering of 3-6 pilot sections in Fall of 2006, as a potential means of improving the first-year experience by providing—in small sections devoted to interdisciplinary topics—an orientation to university life and academic discourse. Students who enroll in these seminars would participate in orientation week activities just as would their peers in OR 100, Intro to Higher Education. However, they would enroll in OR 101 instead of OR 100, and their OR 101 course would include the existing content of OR 100. These seminars, to our thinking, would provide additional benefits for our students, providing (1) weekly close interaction with faculty in the pursuit of academic inquiry; (2) additional instruction and feedback in reading, writing, reasoning, and research; (3) a much-desired novice-level elective in the Critical Analysis category of University Studies; and (4) incentive to attend and participate in numerous extracurricular university events.

Faculty may propose seminars in any academic topic, yet the purpose of a first-year seminar is to provide students with an initial exploration of the theme or topic—and not to duplicate the entry-level courses of major programs. For that reason, proposing faculty will need to articulate the interdisciplinary nature of their proposed seminar topic. Additionally, the seminar will neither duplicate nor replace the content of requirements in the Basic Skills (English, Math, Oral Communications) of the University Studies Program; rather, it is intended to enhance those skills through additional opportunity for academic inquiry. Last, the seminar is designed to connect students and their studies with the world beyond their classroom, and the means of doing so may well include significant field research, extracurricular events, collaborative inquiry, service learning, and/or project-based learning.

Potential Section Topics:

- Seminar topics, which change from year to year, are to be selected by the individual professor and generally reflect that faculty member’s research interests or an area of expertise not directly addressed in departmental courses. These are not intended as survey courses. Rather they are designed to pique students’ intellectual curiosity.

- Seminar topics might build in links to other local initiatives: the CLASP Lecture Series (“Does Science Matter?”), a topic related to the Common Book selection, the Frozen River Film Festival (e.g. “Film and the Environment”), or Athenaeum (a series of topic related only by venue).

Course Enrollment: 20
COURSE CONTENT

The content of a first-year seminar is designed to accomplish three main objectives, the latter two of which are directly and tangibly supportive of the outcomes for Unity and Diversity: Critical Analysis.

1. Facilitate the student’s transition from high school to university.
2. Engage the student actively in interdisciplinary inquiry into an academic subject (or subjects).
3. Introduce the student to university-level critical analysis and academic discourse.

Each of these objectives is discussed in detail below. The outcomes for the Unity and Diversity: Critical Analysis category are addressed in the discussion of (2) and (3).

1. **Facilitate the student’s transition from high school to university.** As has its one-credit cousin, Introduction to Higher Education, the FYS includes a transition component, one that attends to college orientation, life transition, and academic skills. Additionally, the seminar will introduce students to student support services and other campus resources (Library, Writing Center), as well as include a wellness component.

   However, OR 101 will aim to provides this material in the context of academic inquiry: students will not be “told about” the Library but engage its resources for their studies; they will not “lectured to” about successful lecture-note taking but practice such skills for lectures they attend.

   Among the transition and life skills to be integrated within (and not merely “covered” by) the course are those comprising the content of OR 100 …
   _ Campus Resources
   _ Relationships and Personal Wellness (healthy body, healthy mind, alcohol/tobacco/drugs, sexual harassment, sexual assault)
   _ Learning Styles
   _ Critical Thinking
   _ Time Management
   _ Note Taking
   _ Study Techniques
   _ Test Taking
   _ Diversity
   _ Advising/Registration
   _ Career Planning

As the course engages these concerns, instructors may choose to adopt a text like *College Success Strategies* (Penguin: Nist and Holschuh, $20) or *Foundations for Learning* (Pearson/Prentice Hall: Hazard and Nadeau, $17) to use in the course, as the larger, more expensive, books may overwhelm the other materials and objectives. One potentially rich source of readings on transition issues can be found in the library and on the internet, as some orientation instructors have found.
UNIVERSITY STUDIES COURSE OBJECTIVES: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

More specifically in support of the objectives for USP, the course is designed also to …

2. *Engage the student actively in interdisciplinary inquiry into an academic subject (or subjects).* OR 101 is designed *not* as an orientation to a specific major or professional field, but as a seminar that undertakes an interdisciplinary means of inquiry. Its specific subject matter will be announced with a note in the Web Registration module and published to students in advance of fall registration. Students in the course will be active participants not only in seminar discussion, but also in the life of the mind in the modern university: they will frequently be expected to attend lectures, film screenings, exhibits, presentations, and other extracurricular programming as appropriate to the topic of study; these presentations will need to be integrated into the fabric of course discussions and assignments.

and, as well, to …

3. *Introduce the student to critical analysis and academic discourse.* Through a carefully designed and selected sequence of challenging readings, related materials, and extracurricular activities or programming, the student will, first, encounter multiple and interdisciplinary perspectives on the subject. The “reading” for this class may include any combination of nonfiction books or anthologies, films or television shows, imaginative literature, scientific or technical data or reports, religious or philosophical treatises, cultural artifacts, and/or public events—but it must be designed to provide multiple and conflicting perspectives on the subject.

As a course proposed for the Critical Analysis category in University Studies, the seminar must also provide practice in identifying sound arguments and distinguishing them from fallacious ones, in the process helping to develop students’ abilities to effectively use the process of critical analysis.

The course includes requirements and learning activities that promote students’ abilities to...

(a) *Evaluate the validity and reliability of information.* Readings and course texts are to be analyzed and evaluated for their use of evidence. Among the methods of critical reading to be employed are evaluating sources based on logical structure and appeals, historical context, political bias, factual accuracy, numerical/statistical representation, and other criteria.

Requirements and activities:
Students will be expected to take notes on and attend public lectures; introduced to research methods and expected to provide additional information on class topics; introduced to different modes and methods of proof, as well as to disciplinary conventions of argument and theory. (For example, students will be asked to examine what constitutes proof and evidence in the humanities as opposed to sciences.)

Students will be introduced to methods of critical reading and evaluating source material as indicated in the appended course handouts on critical reading and listening. For example, Worksheet 1, “Evaluating Information Used as Evidence in Written Texts,” and Worksheet 2, “Evaluating Information Used as Evidence in Oral Discourse,” both promote students’ abilities to discern major from minor propositions or claims, claims from the evidence used in their support, and types and sources of evidence from their function. Additionally, students will be expected to
examine rhetorical appeals, logical fallacies, and the validity and reliability of information in assigned texts.

(b) Analyze modes of thought, expressive works, arguments, explanations, or theories. As noted above, each section of the seminar will be devoted to the interdisciplinary analysis of an academic subject. Each student will be expected to read critically, engage expressive works, analyze arguments, and consider the various explanations and theories posited in the course readings and extracurricular events; in both seminar discussion and student presentation (oral and written), the student will articulate individual analysis of those works, texts, and presentations.

It is worth noting that students in these sections will be assigned to read and experience book-length and other academic presentations of considerable intellectual substance. (This is not a course that merely requires identification of fallacies or brief models of argument.) Seminar sections will be capped at 20 to foster rigorous classroom discussion.

Requirements and activities: For the section of the course described here and below, the seminar will require the reading of four or five nonfiction trade books focusing on scientific concepts as well as a range of expressive, literary, and theoretical works distributed on a weekly basis. Students will read Bjornerud’s *Autobiography of the Earth: Reading the Rocks*; Pollan’s *Botany of Desire*; Levitt and Dubner’s *Freakonomics*; and Fremling’s *Immortal River*. Additionally, they will be required to attend many of the CLASP Lectures on the topic “Does Science Matter?” These materials will constitute the subject matter of the three short course papers, numerous short written assignments, and class seminar presentations and discussions.

(c) Recognize possible inadequacies or biases in the evidence given to support arguments or conclusions. Students will be provided various lenses through which to evaluate evidence, arguments, and conclusions, and they will be expected, both in seminar discussions and formal assignments, to identify common fallacies, distortions, (mis)representations, and sophistic appeals.

Requirements and activities: Students will be expected to complete short analyses and evaluations of arguments (both written and oral); to lead and participate in discussions and debates on course topics; and to compose three short formal papers evaluating and responding to arguments.

(d) Advance and support claims. Through reading and analysis of assigned texts and materials located through their research, students acquire a broad basis for analyzing and critiquing sources. Individually and in collaborative projects, students will write papers which utilize primary and secondary source materials to advance and support persuasive hypotheses on course subjects.

Requirements and activities: The intention of the course is to promote students’ abilities and confidence not only in the critical analysis of arguments, as indicated in (a-c) above, but also to promote their abilities to advance and support claims in their daily discourse and formal papers. Through the weekly presentation of course material, the discussion of critical perspectives, and the short analyses of others’ arguments, students will be better prepared to articulate their own claims and support them with compelling and reasonable evidence. In the worksheets and short assignments, students will evaluate the validity and reliability of information as discussed in (a)
above; in their seminar moderation and short paper assignments, they will advance and support their own claims in response to those articulated by others. The text *They Say, I Say* provides students with models and advice for positing and supporting their own claims.

**Course Information or Syllabus:**

OR 101, First-Year Seminar, will be offered in different sections with varying academic foci, at least some of which are certain to assign/address WSU’s extracurricular programming. The following prospective course syllabus is presented as an example of that which would be assigned students in OR 101. We recognize that all such syllabi, regardless of the topic of the section, would be designed to meet the requirements of the course and the USP Critical Analysis designation.
COURSE SYLLABUS: OR 101, First-Year Seminar / 3 s.h. / Fall 2006

University Studies: Unity and Diversity / Critical Analysis

Instructor: Dr. James Armstrong and Dr. Chris Buttram, Department of English
Office Hours and Contact Information:
Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3-4; Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30
Location: LO South Lounge (Buttram); LO North Lounge (Armstrong W) and 159 (Armstrong TR)

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: DOES SCIENCE MATTER?

What is a rock, anyway? Where do apples come from? Why do drug dealers live with their mothers? Can scientific theories revolutionize our view of the world? This class assumes so. We will focus on science texts and science lectures aimed at a general audience. We will use the ideas and arguments we encounter in these to ask basic questions about what science is, and how it relates to other ways of knowing about the world, such as art and religion. We will talk about what truth means to scientists, and what constitutes evidence. We will look at literature and music and works of art which react to or challenge the scientific view of the world. Along the way we will discuss more global issues, such as what a university education is supposed to accomplish and the value of interdisciplinary inquiry.

University Studies Information for OR 101

Orientation 101, First-Year Seminar, is an elective course designed to count for Critical Analysis credit in the Unity and Diversity area of the University Studies Program. The program is designed to provide a broad base of skills and knowledge to equip students for informed, responsible citizenship in a changing world. The purpose of the Critical Analysis requirement in the University Studies program is to provide practice in identifying sound arguments and distinguishing them from fallacious ones, in the process helping to develop students’ abilities to effectively use the process of critical analysis. As a course fulfilling the objectives for the Critical Analysis requirement, then, OR 101, First-Year Seminar, includes requirements and learning activities that promote students' abilities to …

(a) Evaluate the validity and reliability of information.
(b) Analyze modes of thought, expressive works, arguments, explanations, or theories.
(c) Recognize possible inadequacies or biases in the evidence given to support arguments or conclusions.
(d) Advance and support claims.

As class requirements and activities are discussed and listed below, they will refer to objectives in the above list by letter.

Books, Supplies, Etc.

Hazard and Nadeau, Foundations for Learning
Graff and Birkenstein, They Say, I Say
Bjornerud, Autobiography of the Earth: Reading the Rocks
Pollan, Botany of Desire
Levitt and Dubner, Freakonomics
Fremling, Immortal River
Course packet of readings in poetry and art.
**Requirements and Grading**

25% Attendance and Participation
- Regular attendance at CLASP Lecture Series “Does Science Matter?” (Wednesday nights) (a, b)
- Occasional attendance at other university and/or community presentations (a, b)
- Regular class attendance and participation (a, b, c)

25% Seminar moderation (a, b, c)

25% Homework: Short written assignments, abstracts, and worksheets (a, b, c)

25% Writing: Three papers (a, b, c, d)

**Schedule of Topics**

The specific schedule of class readings, lecture topics, and seminar moderation will be announced as the semester begins. Among the activities and readings focusing on the transition to university life will be campus resources; relationships and personal wellness; learning styles; critical thinking; time management; note taking; study techniques; test taking; diversity; advising/registration; and career planning.