First Year Seminar Guide

What is a First Year Seminar (FYS)?

First Year Seminars serve as the first course in Otterbein’s Integrative Studies (general education) program. The seminars are diverse in topic and disciplinary perspective, but share a set of goals and outcomes related to student learning and transition into the Otterbein academic community.

The seminars are taught by a wide range of faculty and are designed to provide students with an introduction to interdisciplinary learning. In other words, they’ll help you understand what Otterbein classes will be like for the next four years! Students should choose a seminar that seems interesting to them; no major requires one specific seminar. Therefore, the seminars are also a great way for students who are undecided or unsure of their major to explore different topics or areas.

What can you expect from your FYS?

- FYS courses are designed to help with your transition into Otterbein. FYS classes open the door to campus resources and life changing experiences.
- The courses are rigorous, resulting in a solid foundation for the rest of your Otterbein career.
- After completing your FYS classes, you will have a better understanding of college level work, which will benefit you in your other classes.
- FYS allows for connections; what you learn in your FYS class will relate to the rest of your time at Otterbein—both in and out of the classroom!
- Your FYS course will help you to tap into your strengths, accept diversity, engage in intellectual conversations, and develop relationships with faculty, fellow first-year students, and a peer mentor.
- You'll learn fundamental skills such as time management, decision making, and self reflection.

General Guide for selecting a FYS:

1. Review the comprehensive list of FYS offerings (see attached schedule).
2. Identify a few FYS classes that sound interesting- remember you can pick any FYS, regardless of your background knowledge or intended major.
3. Pay attention to distinguishing features such as the term offered, lab sections or extra costs for travel. Most of the courses are offered in Fall term unless otherwise noted.
4. In a survey that you will receive through your email, you will be able to preference your FYS courses based on if you really like, like or dislike the course.
5. Have fun with choosing your FYS—this is the first step of your liberal arts education!
Scientific Spotlight:

How green do I have to be? The psychology behind environmental decision-making
FYS 1010

“Being green” is a term that conveys many ideas, labels and ecological connotations. The term can be used to describe environmental behavior, such as recycling, consumer conduct, dietary choices, and resource conservation. It can also be used as a persuasive technique to guide consumer attitude, behavior and purchasing choices, which may or may not be environmentally sound. The decisions we make are based on our early influences (family), our learning experiences (schooling), our personal experiences, our cognitive abilities as well as the social relationships we form and develop. Class discussion will focus on the most predominant environmental issues faced by consumers on a daily basis, including consumer spending habits, such as clothing choices, water ethics, food production, energy choices, and recycling. The course will address environmental decision-making in issues concerning environmental justice, global justice, NIMBY, and pro-environmental behavior.

Revolutions
FYS 1022

A study of selected revolutions in physics, specifically the Copernican revolution, the theory of relativity, and quantum theory. A main focus is on developing a concrete understanding of the basic physical principles that underlie these developments. In addition, we will consider how these discoveries illuminate the nature of science, and discuss the impact they have had (and continue to have) on our conception of the natural world, on philosophy and on society generally.

Searching for Self:

Finding Voice; Making Noise
FYS 1008

In his self-help/management book, “The 8th Habit,” Steven Covey states, “the crucial challenge of our world today is to find our voice and inspire others to find theirs.” While Covey brings the concept of voice into popular culture, critical scholars in many disciplines have wrestled with the notion of voice, specifically seeking to hear and understand the voices of marginalized individuals, who have often been silenced. This course will examine power and identity. Through readings, activities and lectures, student will explore the concept of voice, and uncover how those who have been silenced have found and used their voices. The ultimate goal is for students to apply the lessons to their own experiences, discovering their own voices and the power that they have to be heard and make a difference on campus and in our society. This is an evening course in the Fall Semester or a J-Term course.

Discovering and Developing Your Strengths
FYS 1025

While most of us know the benefits of physical strengths and fitness many do not know or understand personal talents and strengths. In this course we will look at the connections between physical strengths, academics and social behaviors as well as discovering your personal strengths. We will investigate, analyze, and activate these strengths in academics, career exploration, relationships, wellness, and community engagement. Students will be challenged to explore the connection between their own personal strengths and those of others. How do these strengths currently influence our choices, behaviors and relationships and how can we use these strengths to shape our futures. This course is affiliated with the Leadership Living Learning Community. To be enrolled in the course, you must commit to participating in the LLC. See www.otterbein.edu/livinglearning for more information.
Decisions, Decisions, Decisions: Discoveries for College and Beyond
FYS 1034
This first year seminar is designed for students who are undecided or unsure about their choice of a major, and who are interested in exploring the many options available to them at Otterbein. However, we welcome anyone who finds themselves wrestling with important life decisions (major, career, personal visions or transitions.) We will begin by looking at issues of transition and life-decisions, employing the Common Book as a touch point. From there, we will move to a discussion about methods for managing transitions and personal decisions, and apply these methods to your personal transitions and decisions, including, but not limited to, choices of majors and careers. It is our hope that these discussions and activities will help you to identify and sharpen your understanding of your own interests, values, and skills.

A Philosophical Perspective:
From Socrates to Snape; From Descartes to Dumbledore: The Philosophy of Harry Potter
FYS 1004
The Harry Potter novels are enjoyable reads, but they are also full of philosophically important ideas. In this seminar we will look at the Harry Potter novels through the lens of philosophy and use those novels as a springboard for discussion of such questions as these: What is the nature and value of friendship? Is Harry really courageous? What do the Death Eaters teach us about the nature of evil? What does Prof. Trelawney's ability to foretell the future mean for our ability to act freely? Is the sort of time travel practiced by Hermione possible? Is the cultural purity pursued by the Death Eaters really such a bad thing? Is patriotism a virtue (like loyalty to one's house) or a vice (like adherence to the racist view of Voldemort)? What makes it the case that the Lord Voldemort who killed Harry's parents is the same person who returned to fight Harry so many years later given that he didn't have a body during the intervening time? What do the Horcruxes teach us about the nature of the soul? What do Quidditch and the Tri-Wizard Tournament tell us about the value of extra- and co-curricular activities as part of a college education? Do they detract from a student's education, or do they add to it? If so, how? And finally, while on the topic of education, if Hogwarts is the pinnacle of education in the wizarding world, why are there no literature, science, philosophy, or arts courses? And what does that tell us about the sort of education we should value?

The Science of Happiness
FYS 1006
This course will consider positive psychology, the science of human strengths and virtues. Rather than starting from mental illness, positive psychology begins instead at mental wellness. It uses scientific studies, validated tests, and interventions that are proven effective. In this course on positive psychology, students will learn about: (1) aspects of happiness and factors that contribute to these aspects, (2) signature strengths and values, (3) the role of cognition and emotion in happiness, and (4) the role of creativity and flow in everyday activities. Students will reflect on these principles in their own lives and will learn skills that they can use in college and beyond. In studying these topics, students will also gain an understanding of psychological research methods and the contemporary research findings on positive psychology.

People Like Us: Class and Race in the USA
FYS 1011
People Like Us is a first-year integrative studies course exploring the social process of creating and justifying inequality within human communities. Through readings, films, and active discussion, we will explore the ways our community, our country, and our world are stratified—and we will ask how such inequalities can be addressed. We will pay particular attention to the ways that socially and historically constructed differences of class and racial identity structure individuals' unequal access to education, jobs, and other
social resources. Using the example of the common book and other sources, we will talk about how groups are defined as naturally “belonging” or marked as “Other” within national and local communities.

**Learning to Lead:**

**Women’s Leadership**  
**FYS 1013**

This class will focus on the historic, current, and future challenges and opportunities associated with women seeking and fulfilling leadership roles. We will examine various perspectives on leadership and advice on how to become a leader, as well as the social, cultural and economic factors associated with women and leadership. We will also discuss the work of authors who have speculated that leadership expectations are changing in the 21st century and how such changes are likely to affect women's roles in the future. Class sessions will include speakers who work in different sectors discussing their individual views and experiences related to women and leadership roles. In addition, each student will be asked to select a current, highly visible woman leader and follow her, using whatever resources and tools are available -- news media, blogs, tweets -- over the course of the semester. This may be a leader in the field you hope to pursue in your career, or a woman playing a leadership role in an area that intrigues you. **This course is affiliated with the Leadership Living Learning Community. To be enrolled in the course, you must commit to participating in the LLC. See [www.otterbein.edu/livinglearning](http://www.otterbein.edu/livinglearning) for more information.**

**Leadership Pathways**  
**FYS 1024**

The course takes students along formative paths toward an understanding of leadership principles and practices. Students examine and experience emergent ways of seeing themselves, others, and human situations defined locally and globally—all against a background of traditional and non-traditional leadership roles and models. Through critical self-reflection, students learn pathways for joining the sides of the self, achieving common purposes, collaborating, effecting change, and accepting the responsibilities of the engaged citizen. Class sessions focus on group-learning practices. The course introduces students to the goals of the Integrative Studies program. **This course is affiliated with the Leadership Living Learning Community. To be enrolled in the course, you must commit to participating in the LLC. See [www.otterbein.edu/livinglearning](http://www.otterbein.edu/livinglearning) for more information.**

**Leadership is Everything; The Rest is Noise: Fundamental Life Skills for the Next Economy**  
**FYS 1051**

The rapid change in technology and the expanding global community put us in the position of preparing for careers and realities that don’t yet exist and cannot be predicted. The only constant in the equation is leadership. This course will explore the importance of leadership in overcoming personal and professional challenges, driving success, and making a difference in a changing society. We will use the US Army leadership model as a framework to examine leadership principles, characteristics, techniques, and styles. Students will modify and adapt these principles to forge a personal leadership ethos, develop an understanding of who they are now, and define necessary personal growth in order to be effective in times of change and uncertainty. Critical examination of current and past leaders will frame discussions about the personal strengths and flaws that contribute to the style and effectiveness of great leaders. Examining the different leaders within a leader will provide insight and spur thought on adaptive leadership.
Creativity, Language, and Culture:

The Other in World Literature, Art, and Cinema
FYS 1028
Levilson Reis

This course examines human relationships in the context of world literature, art, and cinema in which the other plays a crucial role in the way the subject constitutes an identity either socially (Jean-Paul Sartre), sexually (Simone de Beauvoir), racially (Frantz Fanon), or ethically (Emmanuel Levinas). These perspectives inform not only how the self relates to others in the real world but also how this relationship should be lived. The latter ultimately raises ethical questions: How should one approach the other? How does one respond when the other is abusive or violent? Or, what can you do for the other that would have a positive impact in his/her life? This course offers you an opportunity to engage with others in the community to enrich your learning and your life.

Arts are Alive
FYS 1033

The arts are alive in all cultures. We will explore the cultural, sociological and aesthetic aspects of the arts together this semester through listening to music, viewing visual art, discussing current economic issues related to the arts, and analyzing and critiquing the arts. Reading articles assigned and text material is required. Writing assignments are assigned throughout the semester. We will enjoy art exhibits, workshops, and performances on our campus together that will introduce you to the many opportunities in and through the arts.

The Soundtrack of your First Year
FYS 1037

Students will create an online record of their first year at Otterbein. Self-reflection will play a great role in creating this virtual mirror of student’s “freshman personas”. Musical examples will be used as part of this reflection on this time in their lives and essays will provide a virtual time capsule for students to keep forever. This class will also focus on campus resources, campus activities, and viewing yourself as part of the larger Westerville community.

Music and Ideology
FYS 1042

In this course we will examine ways in which philosophy, art, literature, and mathematics have altered the course of Western music history. Using a chronological approach, we will examine the effects of Enlightenment thought, Romanticism, ‘Sturm und Drang’, Nationalism, Symbolism, Modernism and other seminal ideas and philosophical approaches. We will end the course with an examination of key topics from mathematics and music, including temperament and the golden ratio. This course is offered in J-Term.

Art and American Identities
FYS 1049

Nearly since the establishment of the United States, “America” has also been a powerful idea - an idea that has been narrated, embellished, questioned, and complicated in art and popular culture. In this class we will study the ways that American identity and elaborations on and critiques of the American Dream are put on display in film and theatre of the 20th and 21st century. Particular attention will be paid to the ways that underrepresented or disempowered groups are represented in a range of expressions, and the ways that film, popular performance, and theatre illuminate the myriad myths, stories, and expectations coded in the seemingly simple idea of “being an American.” We will also consider what it might mean to create an artistic portrayal of American-ness as it is now.
Literature and Film Studies:

Jesus As Super Star: Jesus As Portrayed by the Film Industry  
FYS 1005  
This course focuses on an examination of the portrayal of Jesus in the film industry. Critiques of films, ranging from The Greatest Story Ever Told to Monty Python’s Life of Brian, will be derived from several different academic perspectives and will include biblical, literary, historical, performance, sociological, and theological. This course is offered in the Spring Semester.

A Thousand Cuts: Bullying, Power, and Hope  
FYS 1019  
Fat, gay, poor, or just different. As anyone who has ever survived middle and high school knows, adolescence can be a difficult and jagged experience, especially when bullying occurs. According to national surveys, 30% of U.S. students in grades 6 through 12 report that they have been involved, either as victims or bullies, in bullying, and the numbers are growing at an alarming rate, even at the university level. Bullies can also dominate the workplace, families, and cyberspace. This course will focus on narratives and films that examine some of the underlying causes of bullying, explore bullies and victims’ responses to this destructive behavior, and engage questions of individual and collective empowerment in the face of the pain and fear that bullying creates. While not all experiences of bullying bring happy endings, they can offer moments of healing, growth, and transformation. Readings will range from traditional fiction such as Jane Eyre and Alice in Wonderland to contemporary works such as Jodee Blanco’s Please Stop Laughing at Me, Ann Dee Ellis’ This Is What I Did, Gus Van Sant’s Elephant, Walking On the Moon, and the documentary, Bullies and Rats. This course is offered in the Spring Semester.

Reading for Our Lives  
FYS 1036  
Many of us grow up liking to read, but, at some point, begin to see reading as a chore, a requirement for school or an obstacle between us and other, more exciting activities. Others of us have never liked to read or struggle with it. Yet we know reading is important and often wish we could be better at it and even like it more. What would happen if we read for our lives? How might reading and our attitudes about it change if we changed our questions, approaches, and aims? This course will ask students to read a couple of books together (the common book and one other), to choose other books they would like to read from lists in pre-determined categories (going through a transition, growing up, being different, helping others), and to bring ideas to class for other books to read in categories they determine. They will read their books in book clubs, share their discoveries with other clubs and the class, and discuss how reading for one’s life differs from other kinds of reading. The class will also explore different technologies of reading: books, internet, portable reading devices, and phones.

Evolution and Identity in Science Fiction  
Since the mid-nineteenth century, Darwin’s theory of natural selection and other theories of evolution have been central to our understanding not only of the natural world, but of human nature and humanity’s place in the universe. In this class, we will examine evolutionary theories from Lamarck, Darwin, and Dawkins (and some offshoots of these theories, such as Social Darwinism, free market economics, and the meme) through the prism of science fiction and imaginative fiction. We will investigate ways that evolutionary theory informs our understanding of who we are (and who we are not) by framing how we think about identity and difference, nationalism and war, what constitutes an ideal society, and what the future might hold for humankind. This course is offered in Spring Semester.
Social Issue Spotlight

Navigating the Informational World
FYS 1003
We all are bombarded by large amounts of information that reach us in a variety of formats and through various channels: books, journals, emails, websites, streaming videos, audio podcasts, blogs, MP3, social networking sites, etc. While enjoyable, this large variety can also make us feel overwhelmed and disoriented. Especially during college, when we are being asked to navigate these complicated information networks in an efficient and timely manner, it becomes crucial to know how to access, evaluate, and select the right information, but also to be able to identify the role of information in defining us as individuals within the local and global communities that we inhabit. These skills will also prepare us for the challenges of a continuously changing job market and train us to become independent, competent, and reflective information users. This course will provide an introduction to the practice of effective and ethical information use in order to help us achieve academic and lifelong success. We will investigate various sources and types of information, ask questions about the role of information and technology in shaping our identities, and discover the best strategies for making information an integral part of our academic and professional lives.

The Politics of Equality and Inequality
FYS 1047
Equality is considered one of the basic elements necessary for democracy. Yet, especially since the recent “Great Recession” the United States has been marked by growing economic inequality. The richest 1% of Americans are increasingly wealthy and the remainder are relatively less wealthy than in the past. In this seminar we will discuss whether recent economic trends threaten democracy in the United States.

Historical Perspectives

Introduction to Modern East Asia
FYS 1046
This First Year Seminar focuses on the modern history of East Asia (China, Japan, Korea) from the eighteenth century onward. Students will learn the national histories of each of these countries and will also develop a comprehensive understanding of the broad and lasting cultural heritage of East Asian civilizations. As a First Year Seminar, our course examines Asian history through the lens of identity. Throughout the term, we will examine how personal and collective identity interacts with and informs larger political, social and cultural transformations. Aided by the course textbook, we will inquire into the nature of political power, the succession of dynasties and military regimes, the assertion of territorial and ethnic boundaries in the past and in the present, and the transformation of family structures, economies, and diplomatic relations.

Alcohol and Food in History and Culture
FUS 1045
Food and Alcohol in History and Culture is a first year seminar that examines the roles that food and alcohol play in shaping societies and culture. We will explore questions of how food and alcohol consumption shapes and reflects our individual and cultural identity as well as differences in gender, class and race. We will trace the history of food and alcohol production and consumption and reflect on how the modern food system (including science) shapes our behavior. Through exploring questions like these, we will explore the roots of contemporary issues related to cultural identity, industrialization, globalization, and sustainability.
Special Topics:

How Sports Explains Us  
FYS 1014  
This seminar will explore how sports can be used as a lens to view our rapidly changing world. Students will study their own growing up in both a local and global sports culture. The course will examine how sports are used in education and whether they reflect or help define cultural values and gender roles. **This course is offered in Spring Semester.**

Learning How to Lose and Other Hard Lessons in Life: A Short Course in Death & Dying  
FYS 1015  
This course will take the approach of a typical death education course in addressing: Confronting mortality in a death denying society, loss and the grief process, religious/philosophical/ethical issues (to some degree in the time permitted), and contemporary issues related to the topic (e.g., suicide prevention).

Baseball in the Negro Leagues  
FYS 1050  
This course will trace the story of Negro League Baseball emphasizing the social, cultural and historical circumstances which gave rise to the phenomena starting with the growth of local all-black independent teams in the 1880’s through the waning years of the leagues in the 1950’s. An interdisciplinary approach will be taken which will allow the class to possibly serve as an enticement for learners to continue in Social Science, History, African-American Studies and even Physical Education courses. Topics like the plight of the black athlete, social and civil rights, segregation, the business side of sports, evolution of the game and its equipment, breaking of the color barrier, and the reasons why the Major Leagues originally chose to disenfranchise black players will be addressed. Elements, skills, and goals pertinent to the First Year Seminar experience will be woven into course themes, assignments, and requirements. **This course is offered in Spring Semester.**

How Much for Your Song?  
FYS 1043  
The term intellectual property may make your eyes glaze over, but essentially this is about the ownership of creative work. Can a restaurant be closed down if a cover band plays Beatles songs? (Yes, it happens). Can a large corporation use a family photo for an advertising campaign without paying? (It has happened). Can the music and film industry go after Otterbein students for illegal downloads? (Yes, and they do). This course will look at the basics of copyright and other ideas of intellectual property. You will reflect on how this impacts your daily life at Otterbein. Further, you begin to form your own understanding of how creative work is made available and supported in the 21st century. **This course is offered in J-Term.**

Unique Opportunities:

Transitions through International Comparisons  
FYS 1041  
The purpose of this course is to read literary, philosophical, and religious texts that introduce and illustrate important traditions in the Western world and in other parts of the world—with an emphasis on China. The three different traditions we will consider are Confucianism, Christianity, and Existentialism. The texts include sayings, parables, stories, speeches, and an autobiographical philosophical essay. We will discuss the key ideas in those texts in order to better understand those traditions. We will also think about possible similarities and differences among those traditions. The key concepts we will discuss include the Confucian idea of 仁 (rén—including the question of how to translate this into English), the Christian idea of love (agape), and the existentialist idea of freedom. The figures we will study are Confucius, Mencius, Martin Luther King, and Victor Frankl. **This course is specifically geared towards incoming international students to Otterbein. However, American students who have an interest in global issues and working with a cohort of international students are welcomed into this course.**
Next Steps:

- Complete your online registration survey. You will be asked to preference the FYS course options within the survey. You will say if you “Really Like,” “Like,” or “Dislike” each individual course.

- At Summer Orientation, you will review your final schedule with a faculty member. You will see your course selections at that time in the form of a class schedule. That time is also available to ask questions or to make changes.

If you have questions about the First Year Experience, please visit our website at www.otterbein.edu/fye