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2010 First Year Seminar
Instructor Examples

A collection of the strategies of and examples from instructors of 2010 First Year Seminars

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Center for Instructional and Professional Development
CIPD
FIRST DAY STRATEGIES FOR FIRST YEAR SEMINARS

- How can I engage first year students the first day of my seminar?
- How will I introduce them to what college is and the expectation higher levels of thinking?
- What I can do before the course begins to learn about my students and how will I use this information on the first day?
My first day went well. My objectives were to introduce students to the syllabus and to each other. We played "truth, truth, lie" and students joked with each other and most seemed pretty comfortable. We talked a little about the challenges of college -- Some students said it was going well, but a few said that they thought it was really hard already. My other objective was to get them interested in the class, so we spent the last 15 minutes trying to define evil -- some students have strong opinions already, so that sparked an interesting conversation.

My peer mentor also came and introduced herself. A number of students had already met her and already knew each other (I have a number of sets of roomies) so that helped too.

I told them about the Facebook page I have for the class and a number signed up already. I did forget to go over a couple of things on the syllabus (but I emailed them about it.

All in all, a good first day, I think.

Rachel N. Baum, Ph.D.
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Hebrew Studies & Jewish Studies
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201
414-229-5156
rbaum@uwm.edu

FS Instructor: Tony Ciccone
Seminar: What's So Funny? Historical and Contemporary Notions of Comedy and Laughter
Freshman Seminar 393 – 192 (Fall 2010) Monday & Wednesday, 11 – 12:15, Curtin 219

Pre-course assignment
What is comedy? What does it mean to have a sense of humor? Why do you think people laugh? Don’t look up any answers to these questions. I’m interested in your current understanding of these things.

What types of comedy do you enjoy? What are your favorite shows and comedians?

Email to Ciccone@uwm.edu by Monday, September 6.

First Day
Freshman Seminar 2010 Day 1 9/8/10
1. Introductions
   Meet the people on each side and find out:
   What attracted them to this course…
   What they’d like to learn in this course …
   What kinds of comedy they like.

2. Intro to course
   Finish these sentences in as many ways as you can: (based on pre-course assignment)
   Comedy is …
   We laugh when…
3. What’s so funny? This question really asks at least four other questions:
   What are you laughing at/reacting to?
      Eg. The situation, the presentation, the characters, etc.
   Why are you laughing?
      Eg. A cognitive, emotional, psychological response that expresses
         an inner state
   What does it mean to find/make someone or something funny?
      The purpose of comedy and laughter for society, the individual, humankind
   How do laughter, comedy, and humor intersect?

4. Goals of the course (see syllabus also)
   Develop ways to describe and understand examples of comedy
   Develop your own explanations of comedy and laughter, using personal experience, class
   discussion, readings, examples, analysis
   Reflect on what it means to develop an understanding of a concept, especially in the
   Humanities.

5. Let’s get started: our first examples The Five-Minute University and Who’s on first?
   We’re going to pretend that it’s the year 2210. Until very recently, we had thought that all
   electronic or digitized media had been erased by a reversal of the earth’s magnetic poles. Lately,
   however, it appears that some items did survive and we’ve been uncovering them one by one.
   There are some that are labeled “comedy.” How can we use what we find to explain what
   people in the 20th and 21st centuries thought was funny and what they considered comedy to be?
   We’ll start by asking ourselves the same question after each newly “discovered” example:
       “Now what could we say comedy was back then?”

   Watch the following skit, labeled comedy, and answer the following questions:
   1. What do you see here? Describe the piece in terms of content, characters, and structure.
   2. What do you think you know about this “document?”
   3. What don’t you know about it? What questions would you ask about it?
   4. What do you think the “document” tells us about what people considered comedy at that
      time? What did they laugh at?

6. Syllabus (briefly; the three large sections)
7. Assignments for next class
8. Some logistics:
   In class: participation in discussion. **Note-taking.**

   One page writing assignments: designed to help you prepare and to stimulate discussion (and to
   give me an idea of where you are with the concepts). Due that day in class; can’t be handed in
   late.

   Three 3-page papers: first two must be rewritten. **Submit in a pocket folder with your name
   on it.** Due no later than 4:30 that day.

   Presentation (w/ one other student) of a comedy you think we should study

   Texts and reading materials: see syllabus

   Performances: Comedy Sportz (Friday, September 24)
**FS Instructor: Brad Block**

On the first night of class (9/2) we created our tents, distributed syllabi plus a number of exercises for the future, answered lots of questions about campus and the Eastside as well as emphasized the importance of using syllabi for time management strategies. My major objective was to get the students to begin knowing each other since a lot of what we do is duo and/or team-oriented. I always think it is important that my UWM frosh know that I was once a UWM freshman myself, that I'm aware of challenges still posed to our newcomers and have some ideas on how to address them. So, I bring out the regalia: a button from my high school reunion, a photo of Brad as a senior at UWM (fairly hippie-like), the UWM Post from Strike Week, UWM Mock Trial's first trophy and our Y2K National Division Championship Trophy.

My mentor, Cassie, arrived to introduce herself to those who did not meet her at the two 9/1 mentor sessions. I think 9/2 was productive but I regret a bit that the next class is all the way to 9/9 due to Labor Day. This is another group of people who I think will get to like each other and help each other adapt.

Brad B.

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**FS Instructor: Liana J. Odrcic, PhD and Senior Lecturer - Department of English**

Here is the "This is not Grade 13" exercise I gave students on the first day of class. Students were asked to write for 10 minutes in response to these questions. I asked them to be detailed and specific.

1. Who are you? Where do you come from, and what matters to you in your life?

2. Why are you here at UWM? In other words, why are you choosing to attend college right now instead of pursuing other alternatives at this point in your life?

3. In what ways do you believe that a college education will be valuable or important to you? How will pursuing a college degree affect your life?

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Students' answers to these questions were interesting--I can share them in aggregate at our next FS meeting!

A few quick additional things:

* I took my students for a session at the Student Success Center (formally First-Year Center);
* I realize that I need to be using more media in my class, more often (more on that at our next mtg)
* I am curious to see what my freshmen do with the course Facebook page

In any event, sorry again for the tardiness of this, and I look forward to seeing you both soon!

Liana

Liana J. Odrcic, PhD and Senior Lecturer
Department of English
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Curtin Hall, Rm 503
414.229.6022
ljo@uwm.edu
FS Instructor: Ann Mattis

I have attached some learning objectives from the first two days, as well as two corresponding handouts I gave to the students on Day 1 and Day 2.

We have begun the seminar with a unit on analyzing ads and commercials. Overall, I think the classes went well. Being freshmen, they were pretty overwhelmed: timid and reticent at first. I think my engaged lecture on Visual Culture on the first day may have gone over some people’s heads. If I teach this course or unit again, I will try and simplify the Day 1 handout and focus more on examples. I might also divide them into groups that dealt with different illuminating scenarios about visual culture.

On Day 1 and 2, the commercials and ads sparked lively discussion and some interesting analysis. I like beginning with ads and commercials because freshmen tend to be astute readers of advertising (whether they know it or not). The ads and commercials are also often funny, so the exercises seem like a good way to build community at the beginning of the semester.

I hope the attached materials are clear. Let me know if you would like anything else!

Thanks,
Ann
Society gets vengeful when its norms are violated." Laura Kipnis

FREEWRITING:
5-7 minutes:
Why do you think images are more likely to violate societal norms than words?

5-7 minutes:
What kinds of images or spectacles provoke controversy? (Don’t just say sex and violence – we will put them into larger categories later on). What social norms do they violate? What are people afraid of?

GROUPWORK:
1) SHARE IDEAS. What norms or controversies did you have in common? What were different?

2) GROUP IDEAS. Put together your answers generated from the second freewriting exercise. Come up with a logical way of grouping your ideas. You may consider grouping them according to kinds of controversies or social norms.
   When you are finished, go to the board and list your answers and groupings. If other groups have already listed the same (or similar category) add your groups’ items to the already existing list.
Think about Kipnis’s statement “Society gets vengeful when its norms are violated” in relation to the images you viewed for today online.

**In your group, discuss what norms are being violated in your assigned visual text.**

GROUP 1
“Fountain” Duchamp

GROUP 2
“Olympia” Manet

GROUP 3
“Piss Christ” Serrano

GROUP 4
Madonna on the cover of “Like a Virgin”

GROUP 5
“Two Men Dancing” Mapelthorpe

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**FS Instructor: Mariann Maris**  
**Milwaukee Area Academic Alliance in English**

The first three class meetings for Baseball, Reading, and Culture, placed an emphasis on the theme for this course - How to Develop a Critical Thinking Habit of Mind. On the second day of class, students got a hard copy memo from me to them. The memo explained that their reading, writing, and speaking activities will involve their critical thinking skills and ask them to explain how they think critically - in other words reflect about a critical thinking habit of mind. In addition, Matt Russell, introduced the ePortfolio and they have since uploaded some photos and video into their ePortfolios.

The third class meeting, a hard copy handout about what it means to think critically and develop a critical thinking habit of mind. Students apply these skills to their analysis of a poem they have been analyzing, Write a Poem about Baseball and God.

In addition, they posted a photo of themselves now and a photo of themselves in first grade or kindergarten to the discussion feature of D2L and then they wrote about themselves in each of the photos. The purpose of this discussion post is to have them get a better understanding of who they are and to have confidence in themselves. Also, it gives them an opportunity to upload a photo into D2L.

The students in this class are interesting and intelligent. So far, it's been a fun class. Their first out-of-class writing assignment is due in the D2L Dropbox next week.

Mariann

**Mariann Maris**  
**Milwaukee Area Academic Alliance in English**  
**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee**  
**Curtin Hall, Room 592**  
**414.229.4152**
I'm teaching EN192:001 Urban Legends and the Supernatural. On our first class day my purpose(s) were to:
1) get to know the students, and introduce them to their mentor for those who hadn't met her yet
2) introduce them to the content of the course
3) go over the syllabus and work of the course
4) facilitate the transition between high school reading and writing and college-level reading and writing.

The first two objectives we accomplished as we went around the room introducing ourselves, because each student was asked to share a story of some kind (including the mentor). We immediately discovered that both urban legends and memorates (personal stories of encounters with the supernatural, like ghosts) were abundant in the class, and that almost everyone had something to share. This also helped introduce them to the concept of "fieldwork" as a part of Folklore studies, as we went over the syllabus and the final project. They are being asked to talk to people, family, friends, and people in the dorms and on campus to collect stories like those they just heard in class that morning as part of their final project. I also stressed that we are not "ghost hunters" that we were not asking students to spend the night in a creepy house, but rather to make talking to people, and hearing their experiences and stories, a part of scholarly inquiry.

While going over the syllabus I also gave them rubrics for both the weekly reading-response papers and the final project, so that they would have clear guidelines about what they were being asked to do throughout the semester (and how it would be graded).

I had requested a media cart with projector, and showed them all how to access our D2L course site for the readings. We spent some time looking over the site and I asked them to look at one of the readings that I displayed on the screen. I asked them how this was different than the kinds of reading they were being asked to do. This lead to a discussion about "textbook" reading, and of the purposes of that kind of reading (e.g., that they read textbooks specifically looking for "things that would be on the test" as one student put it). We then talked about how reading original scholarship, rather than the "digested" form found in textbooks, was going to be different and what kinds of "reading" this might require. The mentor, Amanda Balistreri, also spoke to her experiences adjusting to these kinds of readings and to some of the reading strategies that helped her manage these kinds of texts.

That took us to the end of class, and I reminded students that they were reading an article for Monday morning. Several students stayed behind after class to ask questions, and to tell stories that they hadn't had a chance to tell in class. The energy was positive and it seemed like it was a good beginning to the course. During the first few weeks I intend to continue to make how we read scholarly texts a theme of discussions. Part of the purpose here is also because their reading habits, such as only reading for what the author is "saying" rather than trying to see what the author is "doing" (analyzing, critiquing, questioning), also determines the kinds of discussion or conversations students can have about a text. Part of the class must be, then, teaching students how to have discussions about scholarly texts, which is part and parcel of reading them.

Randy Pausch, the "the Last Lecture," talks about the "head fake." I like to think of my Freshman Seminar as a head fake-- while students believe they are studying urban legends and ghost stories, they will really be studying college level reading, writing, research, and discussion strategies as a part of acculturating them into the culture of the University.

-Adam

Adam Andrews
andrewsa@uwm.edu
Coordinator, English 102
English Department
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
First Day Strategies

1. **Introductions: Symbols, Metaphors, and Images**

   **Benefits:**
   - All students’ input/voices are heard and valued
   - Students recognize a variety of perspectives
   - Students connect their prior knowledge, experiences, and perspectives to the subject
   - Students begin to associate a name with each student
   - Students’ anonymity is reduced; eye contact occurs
   - Students recognize that knowledge is constructed
   - The role of the instructor as deliverer of content is challenged
   - Students’ experience learning as active
   - Course norms are ‘seeded’ (seminar)
   - Students encounter a variety of Learning activities that reflect differences in student learning styles
   - Opportunities for metacognition (students learning about themselves as learners and using this knowledge) can be cultivated

   **Instructions:**
   1. Select images, quotes, titles, etc. that reflect the 3x the number of students in the class.
   2. Display the question on the board or screen that students will answer using one of the items.
   3. Arrange class seating in a manner allowing for the most eye contact as is possible.
   4. Display all items in a manner in which students can view each item (Gallery style).
   5. Instruct students that we will introduce ourselves using one of the items on display that they will select. Invite students to review all items and make one selection based on the question you’ve displayed on the board or screen, and take their seat with their selected item.
   6. Invite students to introduce themselves (with prescribed information) and then share their item and reason for selecting it. (Allow students to contribute at their own pace vs. going around circle).
   7. Make notes using a roster of each student’s selection.
   8. When everyone has been introduced, ask students if they noticed any reoccurring themes, new or unique ideas, or ideas that surprised them.
   9. Collect all items.
2. Evocative Visuals: Mona Lisa Smile

Benefits:
- All students’ input/voices are heard and valued
- Students recognize a variety of perspectives
- Students connect their prior knowledge, experiences, and perspectives to the subject
- Students begin to associate a name with each student
- Students’ anonymity is reduced; eye contact occurs
- Students recognize that knowledge is constructed
- The role of the instructor as deliverer of content is challenged and replaced as facilitator
- Students’ experience learning as active
- Course norms are ‘seeded’ (seminar)
- Students encounter a variety of Learning activities that reflect differences in student learning styles
- Opportunities for metacognition (students learning about themselves as learners and using this knowledge) can be cultivated

Instructions:
1. Present an image, sound, problem, or statement (or multiple).
   Example 1: Mona Lisa Smile: Day 1 Video clip
   Process
   View Day 2 Video Clip
   Compare Day 1 and Day 2. What has changed? Why?

   Example 2: Physics problem (handout)

2. Ask students, What is happening? What is this? What do you see?

3. Challenge students’ thinking by pushing them to support their opinions. Play devil’s advocate.

4. Link evocative visual (item) to the overall course themes and big ideas, course syllabus and content, and disciplinary field.

5. Conclude with a formative assessment technique. What did they learn from each other? What question would they like to ask next session?

6. Assign a related homework assignment.
3. Associational Brainstorming: Post-It Notes

**Benefits:**
- All students’ input/voices are heard and valued
- Students recognize a variety of perspectives
- Students connect their prior knowledge, experiences, and perspectives to the subject
- Students recognize that knowledge is constructed
- Students identify connections between ideas
- The role of the instructor as deliverer of content is challenged
- Students’ experience learning as active
- Course norms are ‘seeded’ (seminar)
- Students encounter a variety of Learning activities that reflect differences in student learning styles - Visual and kinesthetic vs. auditory are primary modes.
- Opportunities for metacognition (students learning about themselves as learners and using this knowledge) can be cultivated

**Instructions:**
Select a major course concept or topic and write it in large letters in the center of the board with a circle around it.

1. Give each student 10-12 post-it notes and felt tipped marker
2. Instruct students to think about the subject and record 1-2 words per note.
3. Students each take their notes and randomly post them onto the board in silence.
4. Students pause to read all notes posted while standing.
5. Students remain at board. Once read, students invited to move notes into clusters of ideas.
6. Students encouraged to silently move notes around making connections between ideas.
7. Invite students to comment on the process - how did it feel to be silent? How did it feel to have your word moved around, misunderstood, reclustered?
8. Process the content: What ideas are missing?
4. Yes, AND! (Collaborative Creative Brainstorming)  
Making the Familiar Unfamiliar

Benefits:
- All students’ input/voices are heard and valued
- Students recognize a variety of perspectives
- Student listen to each other’s ideas
- Students build upon one another’s ideas
- Students refrain from negative and judgmental comments while brainstorming
- Students’ anonymity is reduced; eye contact occurs
- Students begin to think outside of the box and to view old ideas in new ways
- Students recognize that knowledge is constructed
- The role of the instructor as deliverer of content is challenged
- Students’ experience learning as active
- Course norms are ‘seeded’ (seminar)
- Students encounter a variety of Learning activities that reflect differences in student learning styles
- Opportunities for metacognition (students learning about themselves as learners and using this knowledge) can be cultivated

Instructions:
1. Record one-two word ideas on 4 x 6 index cards and display around the room
2. Instruct each student to select one “idea”
   Example: I’m going to create an assignment in my class in which I use “X” to....
3. Students stand and approach one another in a ‘mingling’ manner.
4. Groups of two - three maximum form a small group while standing.
5. Each person describes their seminar topic, and enthusiastically and convincingly shares that they will use the item on their card to create an assignment for their FS this fall.that will....
6. One group member responds enthusiastically with, “Yes, AND...you could....”, and builds upon the first person’s idea.
7. Second person shares their item, and each person responds with, YES, AND...! and builds upon the original idea.
8. When each person’s idea has been built upon, each member seeks out another partner to share their item and play, Yes, AND....