

UNK General Studies Council
Structure for First Year Seminar / LOPER 1 Courses

This course structure was developed to meet the charge from SVCASA Bicak given to GSC in 2019 to develop a first-year experience in the General Studies Program that is “revolutionary, multidisciplinary, notably different from years 2, 3, & 4, considers the ‘big questions/problems’, and is not content-driven but instead process-oriented.”

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) will consist of: Three 1-credit hour courses taken as co-requisites in a single semester during the student’s first year.

- The three courses must be from three different prefixes with a limit on two of the three courses with prefixes from the same department. (These may be across colleges or divisions of CAS, or they all may be within the same college or division.)
- The three courses should be organized around a common issue or problem approached from the particular perspective of each individual discipline. The instructors select the problem to focus on.
- Instructors across the three courses must commit to (and demonstrate) substantial coordination and bridging activities/assignments, so that the students are provided with a genuine multidisciplinary experience. The seminar must be team-taught, not “turn-taught.” Instructors will not receive release time to develop the seminar.
 - Team teaching is defined as three instructors working purposefully, collaboratively, and cooperatively to help students learn
- Each of the three courses must meet all of the learning outcomes for LOPER 1 (see below), emphasizing the sources relevant to its discipline.
- The three courses also must include a focus on the personal and professional development of first-year students – e.g., self-motivation, effective study strategies, and time management; major and career exploration; collaboration and teamwork; and ethical and professional norms of behavior.
 - The Library, Student Affairs, and Enrollment Management will offer workshops and other materials in order to help instructors address learning outcome a in LOPER 1 (To locate and select appropriate sources of information [including information important to academic and professional success]). First-Year Seminar instructors are encouraged to include course assignments that require participation in these workshops and/or use of these materials.
 - In the near future Academic Advising and Career Development and the Library will each be sharing a list of workshops and other resources that faculty can incorporate into their courses
- The class meeting schedule may be determined by the participating departments/instructors. One model would have each course meet 3 hours/week over a 5-week block (sequential organization) with a final assignment due in Week 16 that requires synthesis; while another model would have each course meet 1 hour/week over the full semester (simultaneous organization). In either organizational model, students must receive the syllabus and requirements/information about all three sections of the class at the beginning of the semester.
- All FYS sections will use the same course number (-126).
- The First-Year Seminar options available for enrollment in a given semester will be communicated to students and advisors with a PDF document that is distributed electronically to campus in advance of the advising period and posted on the General Studies website. MyBlue also will have a course search option for LOPER 1 seminars in that semester.

FOUNDATIONAL REQUIREMENTS (LOPERs 1-4):

Program Objective: Courses are designed for students to develop core academic skills in collecting and using information, communications in speech and writing, and quantitative reasoning.

Purpose Statement/Catalog Description: The First-Year Seminar provides students with a multidisciplinary experience in which they approach an issue or problem from the perspective of three different academic disciplines.

LOPER 1 (First-Year Seminar) Learning Outcomes – By the end of their seminar, students will be able:

- a. To locate and select appropriate sources of information (including information important to academic and professional success)
- b. To discern a source's argument or purpose and audience
- c. To summarize a source's main points accurately and fairly
- d. To evaluate and use sources appropriately and responsibly, and
- e. To integrate information from multiple sources and contrasting viewpoints

Commonly asked questions

- Why 1+1+1 from 3 different departments?
 - Having the courses offered by three different departments provides obvious “face validity” to students and others that the linked courses around a common issue or problem are indeed taking a multidisciplinary approach.
 - Previous endeavors to have a single 3-credit course that is taught by a multidisciplinary team have resulted in minimal success due to a myriad of challenges, including (but not limited to) determining faculty workload and administering student evaluations of faculty.
- Why not require three different colleges, or at least two different colleges?
 - That would likely become excessively burdensome from a logistical standpoint, and it is probably untenable due to the number of faculty in CAS in relation to the number of faculty in COE & CBT (separately, or combined).
 - This does not mean that teams of faculty from across colleges are discouraged from developing and offering First-Year Seminar (LOPER 1) classes; indeed doing so would be ideal.
- How will this work for departments that house more than a single course prefix? (for example, the KSS Dept. offers courses in PE and in REC)
 - A new -126 course can be created for each prefix (e.g. PE 126, REC 126). However, courses with different prefixes that are housed within the same department cannot be offered in the same three 1-credit hour courses taken as co-requisites
- How is grading handled? What if a student fails one section of the 1+1+1?
 - The student must pass all three sections to get credit for LOPER 1. If they fail or withdraw from one part, they would need to retake the entire seminar. The same seminar must be retaken for grade replacement (this is the same as the current policy regarding Portal courses).
 - There will be one course Canvas, with separate sections for each instructor to grade their assignments. Integrated assignments are encouraged.
 - Each section will be graded separately with a D minimum required for each.
- How will course creation and approval work?
 - Departments work through their college educational policy and FS Academic Affairs process to create a 1-credit hour -126 First-Year Seminar class that can be left generic as

to the problem and the co-requisite partners. The LOPER 1 Purpose statement is also the catalog description for these courses.

- Departments that are considering offering a First-Year seminar course in the 2021-2022 academic year should develop a “generic” course syllabus and submit a new course proposal through CIM. The course topic is not necessary for the proposal. All first-year seminar courses will share the same catalog description and course objectives. Submit the first-year seminar as course number 126. Department chairs should do this as soon as possible, no later than February 21.
- During this time, faculty who want to teach a First-Year Seminar in fall 2021 should be working with colleagues in other departments to develop three 1-credit hour courses organized around a common issue or problem approached from the particular perspective of each individual discipline. The courses will be taken as co-requisites in a single semester during the student’s first year.
- First-Year Seminar course proposals that are ready can be submitted for review by the GSC for the March 4 meeting.
 - The deadline for submission is 5:00 PM on February 24
- All new First-Year Seminar courses to be offered during fall 2021 must be submitted to the GSC for review in the April 1 GSC meeting
 - The deadline for submission is 5:00 PM on March 24
- Departmental teams then will submit the 1+1+1 team-taught seminar organized around the common problem/issue for approval to the GS Council. The application to the Council should include the departmental assurance statements from all participating departments, explain how the three sections will be integrated and team-taught, and specify what policies/requirements are common across the three sections and what will be instructor-specific. One syllabus should be submitted for the proposed seminar.
 - Departmental assurance statement: If the instructors for any of the sections change, the department guarantees that the new instructor is qualified to teach the disciplinary contents for the seminar’s problem and committed to engage with the other instructors in a team-taught approach. The department also will consult with the other instructors regarding who is being added to their team.

Hypothetical Examples of FYS:

(Making no claims as to the listed departments' interest/willingness to offer these courses)

The Problem of Childhood Obesity:

- Teacher Education – Nutrition in the schools
- KSS – Physical education and active playing
- Family Studies – Family dynamics and community resources

The Problem of Racial Injustice:

- Sociology – Racism in society
- English – Voices of the racially marginalized in literature
- Management – Achieving racial equality in the workplace

The Problem of Climate Change:

- Geography – A layperson's understanding of the science of climate modeling
- Economics – Pros and cons of market-based solutions
- Art & Design – Artistic representations of (natural/climate) disasters

The Problem of Health Care:

- Psychology – Ending the stigma of mental illness
- Biology – Biological determinants of human health
- Social Work – Health care needs in an aging population

The Problem of Democracy in Decline:

- Teacher education – Teaching civics in the schools
- Political science – The varied conceptions of democracy: electoral, participatory, majoritarian...
- History – Fascism in the 1920s & 30s