

FYS As Locus for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

First-Year Seminars at Middlebury

Legislated Features:

All entering Middlebury students are **required** to take a first-year seminar during their **first semester** on campus. These seminars are **writing intensive** courses, limited to **15 students** each, and they are taught by **regular, full-time faculty** who also serve as the students' **academic advisers** for their first three semesters at Middlebury. Seminar **topics, which change from year to year**, are 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 survey courses**. Rather they are designed to prick students' intellectual curiosity in a particular subject, and to encourage them to pursue a focused interest in depth. Many of the seminars offer interdisciplinary perspectives; most include activities outside the classroom; all seminars help students **develop their thinking, writing, and speaking skills**.

After two years of planning and piloting, required seminars began in 1988-89.

Evolving Features:

Each year all seminars are approved or re-approved by the Curriculum Committee
All departments are required to contribute seminars every year
Faculty do not teach a seminar two years in a row; the average is every 3.5 years
Seminars have become a locus for pedagogical discussion and experimentation
Faculty development events are scheduled throughout the year
There is no system of extrinsic reward (monetary or teaching load compensation)
Course enrichment budget is \$350 per seminar
Most courses include some event outside class time
Each seminar is eligible for a resource team including a peer writing tutor, a reference librarian, an educational technologist, and a peer mentor (ACE)
Students register for their seminars over the summer
Nearly 80% of the students get their first choice seminar
Seminars meet for a class during Orientation Week
Seminar instructors advise during Orientation Week
Students are housed in Commons (dorm clusters) by seminar
All students in a seminar have the same residential Dean
Additional \$300 Commons enrichment funds per seminar
Seminar students and their instructors are invited to Commons events
Students are instructed about the "Middlebury Honor Code" in their seminar class

Kathleen Skubikowski
Assoc. Professor of English, Asst. Dean for Instruction
Director of the First-Year Seminar Program
Middlebury College
(802) 443-5878; skubikow@middlebury.edu
<http://www.middlebury.edu/administration/ctrl/>

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

The Commons System at Middlebury College

Middlebury's five residential Commons form the backbone of student life at the College. Middlebury's unique residential system exemplifies the College's conviction that an excellent liberal arts education takes place around the clock—as easily over dinner as in the classroom. The residence halls are grouped into "living-learning communities," called Commons. The Commons combine the academic, social, and residential components of college and foster close and abiding relationships, not only among the student residents, but also among the faculty and staff who are part of their Commons.

There are five Commons on campus: [Atwater](#), [Brainerd](#), [Cook](#), [Ross](#), and [Wonnacott](#). More than 400 students, representing all four classes, live in each Commons, and each is led by a team—including a Commons Head or Co-Heads (tenured members of the faculty), a Dean (a student affairs professional), a Commons coordinator (a staff member) and a Commons Residential Adviser, or CRA (recent Middlebury graduates who live in the residence halls)—that advises and supports student residents and guides the cultural and intellectual life of the community.

The faculty head is responsible for setting the academic and social tone of the Commons and for programming activities (lectures, field trips, parties, and other events) that involve students, faculty, and staff. The dean administers the daily operations of the Commons and handles all residential issues, as well as academic and personal advising.

A substantial proportion of the [first-year seminars](#) offered are Commons-based, which means that the students enrolled in a particular seminar are assigned to live in the same Commons, with supplementary programming for the course also sponsored by the Commons.

The success of these programs and the College's commitment to enhancing the facilities that support the Commons—residence halls, dining halls, and program space—mean that in the future more social and academic activities will be centered in the Commons.

Moving to a 4/2 Model

Beginning in the fall of 2008, the Commons system will follow what is being termed a 4/2 model. Students who enter a particular Commons in their first year will remain in residence in that Commons through their sophomore year, and will retain an affiliation with the Commons through their senior year. This approach addresses a number of emerging concerns at the college, including a commitment to addressing the particular needs of sophomores, as well as first-year students, and the desire among juniors and seniors to have “open draw” (theoretical access to all upper-class housing on campus). In the past, as students moved from one Commons to another throughout their 4 years at Middlebury, their files would follow them. In the new model, students will forge an even stronger bond with the Commons Heads and Deans throughout the first two years, and will return to work with those individuals in their junior and senior years, whether or not they are living in their original “neighborhood.”



for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

Ross Commons

Housing about 475 student members across five interconnected halls, Ross benefits from being one of two Commons with finished completed infrastructure integrating academic and social life. Cutting across all classes, interests, talents, and demographics, Ross students seem to be involved in a bit of everything and play prominent roles in the leadership of the commons and the college as a whole. Approximately one fifth of the faculty is associated with the Commons and can often be seen (frequently with their kids...and dogs!) at Ross events. The Ross support staff includes the Ross members of the Dining Services and a dedicated custodial team who helps us keep the Commons in top shape. Rocky (the Rhino) exemplifies all that is Ross in his role as a Commons' mascot and often makes the appearance at celebratory Ross events.

History of Ross Commons

Ross Commons traces its roots to the early 1990s, when it was created to further student-faculty relationships. It took its current form as one of the five Commons at Middlebury in 1998, under the vision of President John M. McCardell, Jr. The *Enhanced Residential Life Plan*, approved by the Board of Trustees, centered on three tenets for the future of residential life at Middlebury: decentralized dining, proximate housing for faculty heads, and continuing residence in a Commons. Completed in the fall of 2002, Ross Commons became the first fully articulated Commons with newly built dining, social and dormitory facilities.

The namesake of Ross Commons, **Eleanor Sybil Ross**, Middlebury Class of 1895, served the college as Dean of Women for nearly 30 years (29, to be exact). She was legendary on campus for her irreplaceable role in doubling the size of the Women's College of Middlebury and for the strict discipline that she insisted upon. Dean Ross set for the College and for her role in it an ideal of Victorian gentility, standards of the highest morality, of proper and exemplary conduct, but above all, high academic achievement. Retiring in 1944, Dean Ross continued to live in Middlebury until her marriage to former President John Thomas. She died in 1953.

The Ross Team

The integration of academics and social life at Middlebury has led to a team approach to supervise the Commons, with the **Dean** as a Commons' student affairs professional (Janine Clookey) and the **Commons Heads** overseeing the Commons' academic and social programming (Katy and Steve Abbott). One Commons Residential Advisor (**CRA**) is a recently graduated student who has moved into a staff position to advise and administer many day-to-day aspects of student life and is generally a fun person to hang out with (2007-08: Rebecca Guillet '06). The Commons **coordinator** is the amazing staff member who morphs everyone else's madness into method (Sue Harris).

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

The Economics of Social Issues: FYS 1041

Professor: Jessica Holmes
Office: Warner 502C
Phone: 443-3439
Email: jholmes@middlebury.edu

Technology Consultant: Mack Roark
Office: Library 214
Phone: 443-2328
Email: mroark@middlebury.edu

Reference Librarian: Brenda Ellis
Office: Library 208
Phone: 443-5497
Email: bellis@middlebury.edu

Peer Writing Tutor and ACE: Rebecca Browngoehl
Email: rbrowngo@middlebury.edu

Professor Holmes Office Hours (502C Warner)

Open-door policy: Please feel free to drop by to discuss concerns/questions about class, grades, life at Middlebury, ski conditions, whatever... To guarantee that I will be in my office, however, it is best to come to my regular office hours, which are

9-10 a.m. Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday

You should also feel free to contact me at jholmes@middlebury.edu with questions/concerns!

Course Description

This course examines current social problems from the perspective of an economist. We will use the tools of economics as a framework for understanding important social issues such as poverty, welfare reform, access to health care, pharmaceutical drug pricing, aging of the population/problems of the elderly, affordable housing, education/school choice, global warming, crime, and drug legalization.

While the text and lectures will focus on social issues at the national level, you will have the unique opportunity to explore social issues at the local level through a service-learning project.

Course Materials

The two required books for this course are Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America by Barbara Ehrenreich and the text Economic Issues and Policy by Jacqueline Murray Brux. Both are available in the Bookstore. Additional readings (from the web or handed out in class) will complement the text and class lectures.

FYS As Locus for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

Grading

Your grade will be based on writing assignments, class participation in town meetings, debates and congressional hearings, and a service-learning/digital storytelling project. The weighting will be as follows:

60% Writing Assignments (Policy Memos, Op-Ed pieces, letters to Congress, etc)

20% Class Participation

20% Service-Learning Digital Storytelling Project

Writing Assignments (60%): There will be several written assignments that ask you to analyze material discussed in lecture and/or the readings. The assignments are designed to help you think critically about a policy issue and practice concise analytical writing. The majority of assignments will require that you take a position in a current debate and use the tools of economics to argue the merits of your position. The readings will provide you with a good overview of the topic, but *most of the assignments will require you to find additional sources to supplement your argument*. Writing assignments will lose 10 points for each day they are late. Assignments will not be accepted if more than 3 days late.

Class Participation (20%): Throughout the semester, we will conduct mock debates, congressional hearings, and town meetings. You will be graded on the depth of your preparation and the quality of your contribution to the discussion.

Service Learning/Digital Storytelling Project (20%): Throughout the semester, you will be involved in a service-learning project that focuses on a social issue affecting our local community (e.g. health care accessibility, affordable housing, living wages, domestic violence, availability of foster care, juvenile crime, etc.). You will be asked to commit at least 15 hours of service to the local agency/organization that addresses the problem in Addison County (i.e. free health clinic, local homeless shelter, etc.). In addition to this hands-on service-learning experience, you will be expected to do academic research on the social issue. As a final project, you will incorporate your service experience and your academic research into a 3 minute digital story that explains how the particular social issue affects our local community. Your digital stories will be given to the local agencies for use in awareness campaigns, fundraising efforts, grant-writing, etc. Your final grade for the project will be based on a diary kept during the 15 hours of service as well as the information content, presentation and creativity of your digital story. First drafts of the digital story are due 11/20. Final stories will be presented 12/4-12/6. Diaries are due on 12/6.

Grading Scale:

<i>Overall Average</i>	<i>Final Grade</i>
93.0-100%	A
90.0-92.9%	A-
86.0-89.9%	B+
83.0-85.9%	B
80.0-82.9%	B-
76.0-79.9%	C+
73.0-75.9%	C

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

FYS As Locus for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

70.0-72.9%	C-
60.0-69.9%	D
<60%	F

Honor Code

You must sign the Honor Code on all assignments. Directly copying someone else's work, ideas or answers is an Honor Code violation with serious consequences.

Course Schedule

Week of Sept 11th: Introduction to Economics (Demand and Supply)

- Brux Chapter 1
- Nickel and Dimed

Week of Sept 18th: US Poverty/Welfare Reform

*****Demand & Supply Writing Assignment due Sept 18th (5%)***

- Brux and Cowen Chapter 6
- Nickel and Dimed
- “Welfare Reform” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 11, No. 27 8/03/01 (accessed through the library website—look under Indexes and Journals)
- “Wedded to Poverty” by Michael Tanner. *New York Times* 8/29/03 (accessed via Lexis-Nexis on library’s website—look under News Indexes)
- “Left Behind Economics” by Paul Krugman *New York Times* 7/14/2006 (accessed via Lexis-Nexis)

Week of Sept 25th: Health care

*****Library session: Sept 25th***

*****Poverty/Welfare Writing Assignment due Sept 25th (5%)***

- Brux and Cowen Chapter 11
- “Rising Health Costs” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 16, No. 13 4/7/2006 (accessed through library website—look under Indexes and Journals)
- “Death by Insurance” by Paul Krugman *New York Times* 5/1/2006 (accessed through Lexis-Nexis)

Week of Oct 2nd: Health Care continued

*****Universal Health Insurance Congressional Hearing Oct 2nd***

***** Universal Health Insurance Writing Assignment due Oct 4th (10%)***

- “Covering the Uninsured” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 12, No. 23 6/14/02
- Paul J Feldstein readings (to be handed out in class)

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

FYS As Locus for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

Week of Oct 9th: Access and Affordability of Pharmaceutical Drugs

****Reimportation of Drugs Writing Assignment due Oct 11th (10%)**

****Introduction to Digital Storytelling Oct 11th**

- “The High Price of Prescription Drugs” Paul J Feldstein (to be handed out in class)
- “Drug Company Ethics” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 13, No. 22 6/6/03

Week of Oct 16th: Break/Social Security

****Privatization of Social Security Debate-Oct 18th**

- “Social Security Reform” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 14, No. 33 9/24/2004
- Brux Chapter 13
- “Should Social Security be Privatized?” from Taking Sides (to be handed out in class)

Week of Oct 23rd: Education/School Choice

****Social Security writing assignment due Oct 23rd (10%)**

- Brux Chapters 4, 5
- “No Child Left Behind” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 15, No. 20 5/27/2005
- “Vouchers and Educational Freedom: A Debate” by Blast, Harmer and Dewey Cato Policy Analysis #269 (available at: <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-269.html>)
- “Do School Vouchers Improve Student Performance?” By Martin Carnoy *The American Prospect* 1/1/01 (available at <http://www.prospect.org/print/V12/1/carnoy-m.html>)
- “Lessons from Vermont: 132-Year-Old Voucher Program Rebuts Critics” By Libby Sternberg Cato Institute Briefing Paper No. 67 (available at <http://www.cato.org/pubs/briefs/bp67.pdf>)
- “Vouchers: Schools Need Competition” by N. Gregory Mankiw *Fortune* 6/7/99 (<http://post.economics.harvard.edu/faculty/mankiw/columns/june799.html>)
- “The Other Case Against Vouchers” by Adam Kushner *The American Prospect* 7/10/02 (available at <http://www.prospect.org/webfeatures/2002/07/kushner-a-07-10.html>)

Week of Oct 30th: Environment/ Housing

****School Choice Writing Assignment due Oct 30th (5%)**

**** Guest Speaker: Bill McKibben Oct. 30th**

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

FYS As Locus for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research

RHETORICAL CONCERNS IN A FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

By the end of the first semester, students should be able to:

1. Identify, summarize, and analyze the arguments of others; and summarize, paraphrase, and quote the ideas of others in support of their own arguments
2. Formulate topics appropriate to writing assignments
3. Find and cite appropriate sources for an assignment
4. Shape unified paragraphs and connect them to achieve flow
5. Control a five-page critical/analytical essay using more than one source
6. Use informal writing techniques (freewrites, responses, field notes, postings): writing to learn.
7. Use editing/revising techniques, including responding to advice from peer review and conferences with the instructor
8. Follow and contribute to in-class and online discussions
9. Lead a discussion or present work orally

Additional goals for FYSE 1144 (Jane Austen & Film)

1. Demonstrate understanding of film and novel genres
2. Able to handle complex topics
3. Able to compare and contrast

And they learned a little about . . .

- * Creating a digital media project
- * Regency dancing

Contact Information:

Mary Ellen Bertolini
Associate Director and Lecturer, Writing
Center for Teaching, Learning, and Research
Library, Suite 225
Middlebury College
Middlebury, Vermont 05753
mbertoli@middlebury.edu
<http://blogs.middlebury.edu/slices/>
(802) 443-3182

Mary Ellen Bertolini FYSE1144 class sites

<https://segue.middlebury.edu/sites/fyse1144a-f05>
<https://segue.middlebury.edu/sites/fyse1144a-f06>

Can Celebi: "Cry"

My media project, entitled "Cry," is based on the passage in Mansfield Park in which Fanny returns home to Portsmouth but cannot find what she expected and wants to go back to Mansfield Park. I used pictures that symbolize Fanny's sadness and Fanny's longing for Mansfield Park, and I used "Halitus" from Mercan Dede to emphasize the sadness of Fanny.

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

FYS As Locus for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

- “Climate Change” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 16, No. 4 1/27/2006
- Bill McKibben “A Deeper Shade of Green” *National Geographic* August 2006
- “Finally Feeling the Heat” Gregg Easterbrook, *New York Times* 5/24/2006
- “Climate Change Goes to the Supremes” Patrick J. Michaels, *Washington Times* 7/9/2006
- Brux Chapter 3
- Brux Chapter 10
- “Ending Homelessness” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 14, No. 23. 6/18/2004

Week of Nov 6th: Crime/Death Penalty

*****Death Penalty debate Nov 8th***

*****Death Penalty Writing Assignment due Nov 8th (5%)***

- Brux Chapter 2 pages 34-40
- “Crime and Punishment” by Miller, Benjamin and North in The Economics of Public Issues (to be handed out in class)
- “Rethinking the Death Penalty” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 10, No. 40 11/16/01
- “A Punishing Debate: Does the Death penalty deter homicide? New economic studies seek the answer to the age-old question” by D. Clement The Region (publication of the Federal Reserve Bank of MN) 6/02 (available at <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/region/02-06/debate.cfm>)

Week of Nov 13th: Legalization of Drugs

***** Drug Legalization Town Meeting Nov 15th***

*****Drug Legalization Writing Assignment Nov 15th (10%)***

- Brux and Cowen Chapter 2 pages 41-53
- “War on Drugs” *The CQ Researcher* Vol 16, No. 21 6/2/2006
- US Department of Justice Opinion on Drug Legalization: "Speaking Out Against Drug Legalization" (http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/demand/speakout/speaking_out-may03.pdf)
- "Survey: Illegal Drugs" The Economist, July 31st 2001 (http://www.economist.com/printedition/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=706591)

Week of Nov 20th: Digital Storytelling work session with Mack/Break

Week of Nov 27th: No formal class. Group Meetings to go over Digital Stories

Week of Dec 4th: Final Digital Story Presentations

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

Can's voiceover comes from Chapters 38 and 39 of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*:

Fanny was almost stunned. The smallness of the house and thinness of the walls brought everything so close to her, that, added to the fatigue of her journey, and all her recent agitation, she hardly knew how to bear it . . . She was at home. But, alas! it was not such a home, she had not such a welcome . . . It did pain her to have Mansfield forgotten; the friends who had done so much—the dear, dear friends!

There was nothing to raise her spirits in the confined and scantily furnished chamber that she was to share with Susan . . . William was gone: and the home he had left her in was, Fanny could not conceal it from herself, in almost every respect the very reverse of what she could have wished. It was the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety. Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to be . . . she could think of nothing but Mansfield, its beloved inmates, its happy ways. Everything where she now was in full contrast to it. The elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony, and perhaps, above all, the peace and tranquility of Mansfield, were brought to her remembrance every hour of the day, by the prevalence of everything opposite to them *here*.

Why Digital Storytelling?

By compressing the key elements of a piece of writing into a script for your digital story, students learn to pare words down to their essentials. By setting Austen's words to music and visual media, students better understand not only her words, but also, the art of making films. By choosing, manipulating, and juxtaposing various media, students will make better-informed choices in their writing.

How to start?

- Text from *Mansfield Park* (150-300 words continuous in the novel in one place or scattered through the novel from several places). These words should be worth getting inside of and thinking about for two weeks.
- 10-15 photographs or (1-2 minutes of video)
- Music on CD or in digital form

More information about this assignment here:

<https://segue.middlebury.edu/index.php?&login=logout&action=site&site=fyse1144af06§ion=14368&page=64350>

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008

FYS As Locus for Faculty Development: Creating Mini Learning Communities

So---given these goals, what did you learn (if anything) from the list above? How did you learn that?

FYSE 1144a Jane Austen & Film online discussion, December, 2006

Can Celebi: I want to begin with the most recent one, finding and citing appropriate sources for an assignment. After this research project I am so confident on the other unknown researches that are waiting for me in my next 3.5 years. I thought I had a weird topic and I was not expecting to find a lot of sources, but I learned by trying and trying again. Now I can research in any given subject! I mean the writing knowledge I've learned from this class is priceless. Yes I admit the workload was way too much, and I had many sleepless nights but when I look back it was worth it because I learned how to write an organized satisfactory paper. Moreover, until now I've never understood why we had to upload our papers and everything else before midnight. But now when I think a little, I realized that it helped us organize our time and do the job not in a limited time interval. After this class, I feel like I can handle every other class. Besides the workload, we had some great moment. I really enjoyed my media project. Yes, it took a lot of time and energy and everything, but . . . we have our own little movies now. And the dance night was fabulous, what can I say. And . . . now Jane Austen is an unexpected part of me. I do all this alpha male stuff: Water polo, work out, next term crew, and I can throw random quotes from Jane Austen

Tamara Leigh Hilmes: Wow, looking at this list has really made me realize how much we have learned and accomplished in this seminar. I really feel that we have achieved every single goal that is on this list over the course of the semester. Aside from learning how to write deep, well-thought out, analytical papers, I think that the most valuable thing that I have learned is how to present orally in front of the class. Before this class, I really didn't feel comfortable speaking in front of a class or group of people. After presenting several times in this class, however, I really do not mind giving oral presentations. In fact, I have found that I really enjoy crafting my words just so, and seeing the audience's reaction to what I have written. I like anticipating their reactions and playing off of them. My confidence in public speaking is at an all time high thanks to Jane Austen!

Amer Dastgir: It's actually true that we did learn every single one of those items in that list (plus a lot more in way of personal development). I definitely learned to write papers in a new way in this class . . . It not only relates to item 1 on the list but also item 4 in that the topic sentences were definitely important in unifying the paragraphs of the essay and achieving flow. Through writing so many papers and rewrites of the papers, we were definitely able to achieve most of those goals related to the writing. I daresay, we accomplished being able to control a 5-page analytical paper using multiple sources through the Emma and Persuasion papers where we were talking about so many things, it often felt unmanageable! This again links with finding and citing appropriate sources for assignments because we definitely had to do that for our latter papers. The digital media project also contributed hugely to these goals as it forced us to research those appropriate sources and also put them together in such a complex way, which I never thought I myself would ever be able to do, but somehow I managed . . . The meetings with the peer writing tutors were infinitely helpful because they gave us the direction we needed to go in, in order to develop the paper beyond the first draft. Then when we met with Mrs. B, obviously those meetings were wonderful . . . because of the meticulous attention our papers were given. so that I truly felt that once I made those changes . . . I had actually written a decent paper, and I never used to think that way about my writing before . . . And the regency dancing, well that was fantastic! Our FYSE class was doing it at the Holly Ball last night, just so you know! ;)

DaWeon Ryu: We achieved all these goals! Wow, we did learn a lot in this class, didn't we? In retrospect, I am so glad I got into this seminar and wrote/revised papers every week because they really shaped me as a writer. We achieved Goals #1, 2, 6, and 8 through posting online discussions, Goals #2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 through writing papers, and Goal #9 through participating in class discussions and giving oral presentations. I definitely learned how to compare and contrast between the novel and the film and to compare three different things in a paper. We all did an awesome job in our digital media projects, and of course, after Jane Austen dance dinner, we can call ourselves dance masters :)

Dublin, Ireland: Thursday – June 26, 2008