

Guidelines for Level of Attention to Capabilities in First Year Seminars and Intermediate Seminars¹

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Introduction

In order to ensure that all courses developed as General Education Seminars pursue in a systematic way the capabilities development goals envisioned in the General Education plan approved by the Faculty Council, instructors in the seminars should follow these guidelines with regard to minimal levels of attention devoted to each of the capability areas. Individual instructors are encouraged to develop classroom assignments and activities that will contribute to the development of several capabilities at the same time, and to elaborate beyond the minimal levels in the context of their particular disciplines, course goals, and pedagogical experience.

A common goal of both levels of seminars is to help prepare students for the Writing Proficiency Requirement. Thus, careful reading, clear writing, and critical thinking are essential components of every seminar, as is the production of a 5-page analytical paper.

Please note that all 7 capabilities are required in First Year Seminars. Intermediate Seminars must address careful reading, clear writing, and critical thinking; additional capabilities are optional. Students are expected to attempt to pass the WPR upon successful completion of the Intermediate Seminar.

1. Careful Reading

A. First Year

- Devote part or all of at least one or two class sessions to explicit discussion of effective reading strategies; experiment with in-class exercises designed to help demystify "careful reading" at the college level. (Do not assume students already know how to find "main arguments," for example or to read purposefully; rather, devise in-class ways of showing them how to do it successfully.)
- Require some kind of ungraded writing in response to specific reading assignments, either using assigned discussion questions, the "double-entry reading journal" method, or other strategies.

¹ Participants in general education faculty development seminars in Spring 1999 and June 1999 helped to develop the guidelines described here concerning the level of attention to the various capabilities that should be included in the seminars. These guidelines derive in part from the General Education Seminars Committee's "Recommendations for Capabilities Development and Assessment of Student Learning, for Next Round of Gen Ed Pilots (5/12/99)." They also derive from the "Summary of Learning Objectives and Pedagogical Guidelines" developed for the earlier CAS Collegiate Seminars. The faculty and staff involved in development of these guidelines included Kristine Alster, Pam Annas, Elsa Auerbach, Bob Bertone, Dick Cluster, Estelle Disch, Roma Farion, Roger Feinstein, Keitha Fine, Joan Garity, Irv Gershenberg, Hannah Gilman, Judith Goleman, Joey Horsley, Jean Humez, Susan Irvings, Cynthia Jahn, Ann Jenkins, Peter Langer, Anne McCauley, Elaine Morse, Tom O'Grady, Victoria Palmer-Erbs, Heléna Ragoné, Nate Raymond, Judith Ring, Rachel Rubin, Lois Rudnick, Mark Schlesinger, Mary Shaner, Tim Sieber, Louise Smith, Woody Smith, Bob Swartz, Bryan Williams, Hubert Walters, Raul Ybarra, and Vivian Zamel.

- B. Intermediate
Same as First Year

2. Clear Writing

A. First Year

- In-class instruction and discussion of writing.
- Informal practice in writing including such things as journals, quizzes, written self-assessments, one-minute papers, comments on other students' papers, ungraded assignments building to graded assignments and electronic communication.
- Require **at least two graded papers**. **At least one of these should be five pages in length** (the minimum size of papers that can be included in a Writing Proficiency Requirement Portfolio) and should **ask students to analyze** some topic or respond to an analytical question, using two or more readings. Faculty should be prepared to certify a 5-page paper for inclusion in the WRP portfolio, assuming that the student has successfully completed the assignment.
- Require a **teacher-guided revision process for at least two papers**, with the objective of helping students see the real value of rethinking as they rewrite. (Distinguish between real rethinking in "revision" and mere "correction of mistakes.")
- In writing, students should be able to cite evidence appropriately, accurately represent and attribute complex ideas, and apply theoretical material to other situations.

B. Intermediate

- In-class instruction and discussion of writing.
- Informal practice in writing including such things as journals, quizzes, written self-assessments, one-minute papers, comments on other students' papers, ungraded assignments building to graded assignments, and electronic communication.
- **At least four (4) graded expository written assignments** of between 2 and 10 pages in length for a total of at least 15 typed pages. (One of the four may be a semester-long journal or a final essay-exam, in which case the minimum typed work may be lowered to 12 pages.) At least one of the papers should be **an essay of 5 pages or more, requiring analytical discussion** of two or more texts (similar in scope to the Writing Proficiency Examination or Portfolio Essay.) Faculty should be prepared to certify a 5-page paper for inclusion in the WRP portfolio, assuming that the student has successfully completed the assignment.
- Detailed commentary and feedback on graded writing, including some form of **teacher-guided revision on at least two papers** with the objective of helping students see the real value of rethinking as they rewrite. (Distinguish between real rethinking in "revision" and mere "correction of mistakes.")
- In writing, students should be able to cite evidence appropriately, accurately represent and attribute complex ideas, and apply theoretical material to other situations. They should also be able to integrate a range of sources within an essay, work with how sources relate to or contradict one another, evaluate sources, critique theory, and position one's ideas in relation to others' ideas.

3. Critical Thinking

A. First Year

- Devote part or all of at least one or two class sessions to explicit discussion of "critical thinking" as it is defined for the purposes of your course. (Note that the Critical Thinking guidelines offer a number of different ways of defining critical thinking in the context of your discipline and course. See a separate handout on definitions of the capabilities)
- In writing or speaking, students should be able to cite evidence appropriately, accurately represent and attribute complex ideas, and apply theoretical material to other situations. They should also begin to assess the credibility of sources. For example, in connection with preparing students to do a library research project or a debate on a particular social issue, you might focus on what is involved in assessing the reliability and accuracy of information; what is involved in making "well supported inferences". Give students opportunities to practice developing the skills needed to perform these intellectual tasks in connection to their reading, writing, research, speaking, and other work in the course.

B. Intermediate

- In writing or speaking, students should be able to cite evidence appropriately, accurately represent and attribute complex ideas, and apply theoretical material to other situations. They should also be able to integrate a range of sources within an essay, work with how sources relate to or contradict one another, evaluate sources, critique theory, and position one's ideas in relation to others' ideas.

4. Information Technology/Information Literacy

A. First Year

- Include at least one assignment that requires students to locate and evaluate a variety of different kinds of sources in the Healey Library, including on-line sources. (For example, you might ask students to locate information using microfilm, reference works, and a particular disciplinary database; to find books in the stacks; or to analyze critically the value of information located on World Wide Web sites.)
- Use of e-mail for communication with you and others in the class is strongly encouraged.

B. Intermediate

Same as First Year

5. Team Work

A. First Year

- Include some use of small groups to do assigned tasks during class from time to time. (For example, require small groups to discuss the reading using assigned questions, and have them report back to the whole group.)
- If possible, assign at least one team project that involves students working together on a concrete and interesting project.
- Please note that one goal of team work is to help students get to know each other and to feel more connected to UMB. We highly recommend the use of pedagogical

strategies that encourage students to learn each others' names and that require them to interact in various ways.

- B. Intermediate
Same as First Year

6. Speaking/Listening

A. First Year

- Include at least one short, planned oral presentation opportunity per student.
- Devote at least part of one class to a discussion of what makes a good oral presentation.
- Suggested modes of oral practice include debates, panel discussions, group discussions and presentations, presentation of research findings or analysis of course readings, and role-playing exercises.

B. Intermediate

- At least one prepared oral presentation per student credited toward the final grade.
- Devote at least part of one class to a discussion of what makes a good oral presentation.
- Suggested modes of oral practice include debates, panel discussions, group discussions and presentations, presentation of research findings or analysis of course readings, and role-playing exercises.

7. Self-Assessment (of Student Learning)

A. First Year

- Require at least one ungraded self-assessment writing exercise, based on a selection of assignments completed during the semester.

B. Intermediate

- Require at least one ungraded self-assessment writing exercise, based on a selection of assignments completed during the semester.
- We strongly recommend the use of course portfolios as a primary basis for self-assessment.

Faculty who would like help thinking through ways to address these capabilities in the context of their particular courses may contact the Seminars Coordinators: Estelle Disch (estelle.disch@umb.edu) regarding First Year Seminars or Judith Zeitlin (judith.zeitlin@umb.edu) regarding Intermediate Seminars. Note that Neal Bruss (neal.bruss@umb.edu) will become FYS Coordinator on January 1, 2010.