



First-Year Seminars

2023-2024 Faculty Handbook

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Calendar of Important Dates

Note: Additional Core Events dates will be announced as details become available.

Fall 2023

July 19 (Wed)	22-23 FYS Syllabus Workshop (10am-2:30pm, Zoom)
August 21 (Mon)	Fall FYS Instructor Workshop
August 29 (Tue)	<i>First Day of Fall Semester Classes</i>
September TBA	FYS Faculty meeting #1
Friday, September 15	Core Event: Tania El Khoury (11:45am-12:40pm; Thorne Hall)
October 9-10 (Mon-Tue)	Fall Break (No Classes)
October 9-22	Mid-Semester Progress Reports Submission Period
Late October TBA	FYS Faculty meeting #2
November 22-24 (Wed-Fri)	Thanksgiving Break (No Classes)
December 4 (Mon)	<i>Last Day of Fall Semester Classes</i>
December 6 (Wed) TENTATIVE	Spring FYS Faculty Workshop
December 19 (Tuesday)	Grades Due at Noon

Spring 2024

January 22 (Mon)	<i>First Day of Spring Semester Classes</i>
February 1	Writing Portfolio Moodle Site Open
February 19 (Mon)	Presidents' Day (no classes)
Early February TBA	FYS Faculty meeting #1
February 6 (Tues)	Core Event: Robin Wall Kimmerer (Online)
March 1 (Wed)	Writing Portfolios due at 5pm PT
March 4 (Mon)	Core Event: Dr. Earyn McGee
March 4-24	Mid-Semester Progress Reports Submission Period
March 11-15	Spring break (no classes)
Early April TBA	FYS Faculty Meeting #2
April 23 (Tue)	Founder's Day (no classes)
April 30 (Tue)	<i>Last Day of Spring Semester Classes</i>
May 20 (Mon)	Non-Senior Grades Due at Noon

1. Introduction & History

Occidental's approach to the liberal arts is embodied in its **Core Program**, an interdisciplinary set of requirements that all students complete. Core courses provide the intellectual foundation for Oxy's commitment to its Mission of equity, excellence, community and service. The Core Program's signature component is the **First-Year Seminars (FYS)** Program, which consists of a diverse selection of courses focused on introducing students to college-level academic discourse in the form of critical thinking, writing, reading and discussion. These seminars are small in size and limited only to first-year students.

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) program is the latest in a series of first-year curricula dating back to a required "History of Civilization" course that was first implemented in 1947. In its original form, the History of Civilization regularly brought the entire first-year class together in Thorne Hall to hear lectures delivered by faculty members representing a wide variety of disciplines. This curriculum changed multiple times over the decades, reflecting the significant changes the Occidental underwent in the 1970s and 1980s.

In Fall 1994, the college introduced the Cultural Studies Program. In its first incarnation, students could choose from five "colloquia," each with a distinct topic and taught by an interdisciplinary team of faculty. These colloquia were linked with small seminars, earning students a total of 8 units in the fall semester and an additional 4 units in the spring. Maintaining teams of faculty committed to regularly co-teaching these colloquia and seminars proved to be unsustainable and in Fall 1998 the program transitioned to a format focused on 4-unit seminars focused on a variety of topics. In 2021, the Cultural Studies Program moniker was retired, replaced by the First-Year Seminar program.

All first-year students are required to take a First-Year Seminar in both semesters of the first year at the College as part of the Core Program requirements for graduation. (Transfer students are not required to and cannot take First-Year Seminars.) Each semester approximately 35 seminars are offered that are each designed and taught by faculty members from almost all of Occidental's academic departments and programs. While the instructor chooses the topic of each seminar, the seminars serve a critical role in the College's first-stage writing requirement and follow the curricular requirements detailed in the pages that follow.

While most First-Year Seminars (FYS) are 4-unit courses capped at 15 or 16 students, aspects of the colloquium format continue to live on through the regular offering of special "immersive" programs. These immersive programs are typically team-taught and consist of a FYS course linked with at least one other 4-unit course. In many cases, these courses also have a community-based learning component.

2. FYS Curriculum Guidelines & Requirements

Both Fall and Spring

- **Writing Guide:** All FYS students are required to purchase the *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*, Fifth edition, by Kate L. Turabian, et al. (Chicago University Press, 2019). Desk copies will be made available to all FYS instructors. Please make every effort to use the Turabian book in your writing instruction.
- **Writing Assignment Prompts:**
 - ✓ Students should be given access to assignments in written form, which helps to ensure an equitable learning environment for all students in the course and is a central principle in universal design for learning.
 - ✓ If you choose to have students design their own assignment, the task should be in response to an assignment you have planned in alignment with your course learning goals (e.g., "write a 3-4-page paper using a text from this segment of our course"). This assignment will also need to be in written form.
 - ✓ Assignment prompts should be posted on Moodle or another class management system.
 - ✓ Assignment prompts should include an explanation of the task, a description of how the assignment will be evaluated, and a clear statement of deadlines.
 - ✓ Assignment prompts need to include a 1-2 sentence summary of the assignment. Students will need to include this summary of the assignment prompt in their RIE.
 - ✓ Please take time to discuss all writing assignments in class when distributed, and reserve time to answer questions about the assignments.
- **Draft & Revision Sequence:** At least one formal writing assignment should require students to submit a draft, which will receive feedback from the instructor, followed by a revision for final grading. Please build adequate time for a draft-revision sequence (typically two-three weeks) into your course plan. *Note: the draft and revision together count as ONE assignment.
- **Peer Review:** At least one writing assignment should ask students to engage in peer review. Please provide students with clear guidelines and instructions to support their peer review process (there are many sample peer review assignments available through the CTE and Writing Resources for Faculty Moodle sites).
- **Use of Portfolio Rubric in assessment:** Please try to use the Portfolio Rubric as you design your own feedback and assessment of student writing in your FYS course(s) to better align students' writing outcomes in the FYS course with the writing outcomes of the First-Stage Writing Proficiency assessment.

Fall Seminars – Additional Writing Requirements and Guidelines

- **20 (double-spaced) pages of writing from each student**, distributed across formal (graded) and informal (low-stakes) writing assignments.
- **Revised for 2023-24** Structure the course to include **3 formal (graded) writing assignments** (at least one of these must be a draft-revision sequence: see above).
- At least 1 of the 3 formal writing assignments must be a **thesis-driven expository essay** that meets the criteria of the writing portfolio rubric (see the definition & criteria below on page 9).
- Other writing in the course can include informal or low-stakes writing assignments (e.g., reflections, responses, etc.).
- FYS faculty should keep in mind the requirements of the First-Stage Writing Proficiency Portfolio and design writing assignments that provide students with opportunities to write essays that meet the submission requirements.

Spring Seminars – Additional Writing Requirements and Guidelines

- **20 (double-spaced) pages of writing** from each student, distributed across formal (graded) and informal (low-stakes) writing assignments.
- **At least one shorter formal expository essay** must be assigned and graded before February 15th. *Note: assigning and returning an essay to students early in the spring semester will give them the opportunity to submit this paper as one of the three in their First-Stage Writing Portfolio. It is vital that instructors assign and grade at least one paper by this February deadline.*
- A **research essay assignment (10-12 double-spaced pages)** should be distributed before spring break and staged to allow students opportunities to work on the process of writing a longer essay (i.e., research question; proposal; preliminary thesis; annotated bibliography or exploratory essay; draft component, revision, etc.).

3. S/U Grading Mode, Mid-semester Progress Reports, and SEANs

All FYS Courses Are Graded Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory (S/U)

In order to facilitate a focus on the learning outcomes and especially the writing process, First-Year Seminars are graded using the S/U grading mode. A grade of S (Satisfactory) is to be regarded as the equivalent of a D or better. A grade of U (Unsatisfactory) indicates that a student did not earn the minimum required grade to earn credit in a course.

A grade of S is required in both the fall and spring semester in order for a student to complete their First-Stage Writing Requirement. Students who receive a U in their Fall FYS should *not* submit a writing portfolio.

Students can not drop or withdraw from an FYS course unless switching to a different seminar early in the semester. The only other way a student can withdraw from an FYS is if they withdraw from all of their courses.

Completion Policy (New Policy for 2023-24)

All FYS instructors should include the following policy (adapted as needed) in their syllabus and integrate it into their grading criteria:

In order to receive a grade of S (“Satisfactory”) in this course, students must complete and turn in all components of each of the major writing assignments (as designated by your instructor on the syllabus). This work must be completed according to the specifications provided by the professor and as outlined in the assignment handout, syllabus, course Moodle page, assessment rubric, or other materials provided.

Mid-Semester Progress Reports

FYS Instructors are asked to submit a Mid-Semester Progress Report for each of their students. The progress reports, which may be submitted during the official two-week submission period (see Calendar at the beginning of this document), are designed to give students and their advisers an update as to how they are performing in their courses.

Student Early Alert Notifications (SEANs)

The [Student Early Alert Notification \(SEAN\) system](#) is an online tool that assists faculty members in communicating with students when they have concerns related to academic performance. When a faculty member submits a SEAN using the online form, an email alert is sent to 1) the student, 2) the Advising Center and student's faculty advisor, and 3) key people in Academic and Student Affairs. For students who participate in an intercollegiate sport, their coach will also receive the initial SEAN alert. The Advising Center reaches out to all students who have received a SEAN to offer support.

4. The Writing Program

4A. Introduction to Occidental's Writing Requirements

(Excerpted from the 2023-2024 *College Catalog*)

At Occidental College, we believe that regardless of the specific academic path students choose, it is necessary to be able to write well. To encourage academic excellence—one of the cornerstones of Occidental's mission—across disciplines, we have a Two-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement of all students. The writing requirements provide students with opportunities to improve both their writing

processes and products, as they gain knowledge of writing as part of a liberal arts education and within a specific discipline. Completion of this Two-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement is a college degree requirement.

The First-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement is designed to introduce students to college-level writing expectations, as they learn to enter a scholarly conversation, enhance their abilities in writing expository essays, develop skills in expressing critical analysis, and communicate knowledge to an audience using specific rhetorical conventions. The First-Stage Writing requirement aims to prepare students for more complex writing tasks within an academic discipline. Thus, it is expected that students will complete the First-Stage Writing requirement before they complete the Second-Stage in their major. (See the *College Catalog* for more Information about the Two-Stage Writing Proficiency Requirement.)

For all students who enter Oxy as first-time first-year students, the First-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement will be determined through their performance in both First-Year Seminars (FYS) and through an evaluation of a writing portfolio, which includes essays written in the fall and spring FYS. Information about the writing portfolio will be sent to all first-year students at the start of fall semester. Students who receive an assessment of “Completed” on their portfolio and who pass both First-Year Seminars have completed the First-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement. Students who receive an assessment determination of “Not Completed,” or who receive a grade of “U” in one First-Year Seminar, will be required to take and pass with a grade of “C” or higher WRD 201: The Art of Essay Writing.

4B. FYS Writing Goals & Outcomes

The First-Year Seminars, while providing opportunities to introduce students to Oxy’s range of departments and disciplinary forms of knowledge, also function as the first-year writing experience for students.

There are writing-specific FYS student learning goals and outcomes that we ask you to include on your syllabus (along with any other learning goals and outcomes you have). Please keep these goals and outcomes in mind as you design your writing assignments and plan your writing pedagogy for the course:

Goal 1: Effective College-Level Writing. Students will demonstrate proficiency in expository essay writing as they gain and refine their knowledge of the conventions of academic discourse.

Outcome 1.1: Students will develop writing that responds with insight and originality to the criteria and requirements of the assignment, demonstrating their understanding of the course materials and topics through the use of specific examples and evidence from scholarly sources.

Outcome 1.2: Students will develop writing using features appropriate for college-level expository papers including: thesis or main idea, clarity of focus, organization, and conventions of grammar, style, mechanics, and usage.

4C. The First-Stage Writing Requirement and Portfolio Assessment

The First-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement is assessed through a Portfolio of student writing from the fall and spring FYS courses, and the criteria for assessment aligns with the above writing goals and outcomes. To ensure an equitable process in the submission and assessment of student portfolios, **it is imperative that FYS instructors foreground writing pedagogy in their course plans and design writing assignments that will enable students to meet the Portfolio submission requirements**, as outlined below. Information about the college-wide Writing Proficiency requirements and the First-Stage Writing portfolio can also be found at:

<https://www.oxy.edu/academics/writing-program-requirements>.

Students are required to submit these documents as their portfolio materials:

1. Reflective Introduction Essay (aka: RIE)
2. Three essays from a First-Year Seminar (any three essays from fall or spring)

The Portfolio must be submitted by the student **no later than March 1st at 5:00 p.m. (electronically through Moodle) and meet the below criteria**. Please review the Portfolio Guide, which includes the below criteria, with your students in the first week of class (and frequently throughout the semester):

- At least one of the three essays submitted from the FYS courses must be thesis-driven, with features of conventional expository essays. The features of expository essays are:
 1. A clear and concise thesis statement that occurs in the first paragraph (the Introduction) of the essay;
 2. Body paragraphs that include all of the necessary “parts”: topic claim, evidential support for the thesis, and development/analysis of the ideas and evidence used;
 3. Clear and logical organization of paragraphs and ideas; clear and logical transitions between the Introduction, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusion;
 4. A conclusion that does not merely restate the thesis, but instead revisits it in light of the evidence provided.
- At least two of the three essays submitted from the FYS courses must demonstrate use and integration of evidence from credible sources (ie., materials assigned in the FYS course or discovered through research).
- Total word count for the final Portfolio of documents, which includes the three essays and the Reflective Introductory Essay: 5,000-7,500 words.
- Formatting: 12 pt. conventional font, double-spaced, word count at the top of each essay.

- **Submission format:** all materials must be formatted as one PDF document with the RIE first.

As noted above, the criteria used to evaluate the Portfolios aligns with the FYS writing-specific learning goals and outcomes and includes:

- ☐ Writing Knowledge: Self Reflection and Process (as demonstrated in the Reflective Introduction Essay/RIE)
- ☐ Focus: Responsive to the Assignment and the clarity & strength of the Thesis-Argument
- ☐ Organization: Cohesion of Ideas and Paragraph Structure
- ☐ Evidence and Development: Use of Sources and Development of Ideas
- ☐ Writing Features and Presentation: Grammar, Mechanics, Citation

Portfolios will be submitted through a Moodle website, which students will be able to access on February 1st until 5:00pm on the March 1st deadline. After the assessment process is completed (by the first day of advising week in spring term), students and their academic advisers will be able to see their final assessment determination in Degree Works and GAR (Grades & Academic Record).

Students will receive complete information about the First-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement and instructions for the First-Stage Writing Proficiency Portfolio in early fall semester and reminders until the submission due date of March 1st at 5:00 p.m. The Writing Center will also hold several info sessions to guide students through the portfolio instructions and answer their questions. The [Writing Program & Requirements website](#) also contains **all of the information about the Portfolio, including the Portfolio Guide, a sample RIE, and an FAQ. We recommend that FYS faculty familiarize themselves with this website, share a link to the website on the syllabus, and review the website at least once with students during the semester.**

All faculty also have access to the same information about the First-Stage Writing Proficiency requirement and instructions about the First-Stage Writing Proficiency Portfolio through the College Catalog. A copy of the Portfolio guidelines and instructions for students, including the Assessment Rubric used to evaluate Portfolios, is also included in this FYS Faculty Guidebook.

4D. FYS Writing Instruction: Quick Tips

Along with information provided at the FYS faculty development workshops about how to incorporate writing pedagogy into your FYS course, here is a short list of writing activities or approaches you might consider:

- Sequence assignments so that they focus on specific writing tasks and build upon one another.
- Hold peer review sessions and provide students with guided instruction for “how to” peer review.

- Assign informal or low-stakes writing assignments to give students opportunities to work on their writing practice and process.
- Share sample writing to illustrate your writing expectations, pedagogy, and the features of expository essays.
- Hold required student conferences at any point during the writing process: prewriting, drafting, or grading conferences.
- Discuss assignment rubrics in class (especially the Portfolio rubric); students can also be included in developing or using grading rubrics for their assignments.
- Discuss plagiarism so all students have knowledge of how and why to cite sources. *Note: separate information will be distributed about ChatGPT and AI.
- Teach students the citation style you want them to use for the essays in your class and help them use that style consistently.
- Use the Turabian book, *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*, to supplement your writing instruction and as a reference resource for students.
- Consult the resources on the Oxy Writing Center website and on the Moodle site "Writing Resources for Faculty."

4E. Preparing Students to Turn in the Writing Portfolio

- Review the Portfolio Guide with students several times during the semester, starting in Week 1.
- Ask students to put the word count for their essays on the first page when they turn them in to you (as students are required to put the word count for their essays when submitting the portfolio).
- Consider using the time in one of the writing conferences to discuss the essays from your class the student may want to include in their Portfolio. *Note for spring FYS instructors: you are not required to read and provide feedback on student portfolios – only an essay they may include from your class. Please direct them to the Writing Center for a holistic discussion of their Portfolio essays.
- Assign a practice RIE and return these to students with feedback.
- Use at least some of the Portfolio Rubric criteria when assessing students' writing in your course. The goal is to align the FYS Writing Goals & Outcomes (which are reflected in the Portfolio Rubric criteria) with your feedback and grades (specifically on writing).
- Encourage your students to attend the Portfolio Info sessions and other writing workshops offered by the Writing Center.

5. Other Requirements and Expectations

Because the First-Year Seminar is an introduction to academic habits and practices, and often the first course in which an Occidental student develops a significant relationship with a professor, we ask faculty to address a number of issues in addition to the specific writing skills and subject matter of the course.

- **Academic Ethics:** Please become familiar with Occidental's Shared Academic Integrity Commitment at: <http://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics>. It's important that you mention them in your syllabus and that you discuss plagiarism in some detail with your students when giving writing assignments. Many will not have much familiarity with conventional academic standards of ethics.
- **Students with Disabilities:** Occidental complies with ADA guidelines and provides various kinds of accommodation for students with documented disabilities. Such students should be registered with the Dean of Students' office, which will provide specific accommodation information to their instructors.
- **[Student Early Alert Notification \(SEAN\)](#):** If a student is having academic issues in your seminar (for example, missing classes, failing to hand in papers, etc.), we encourage you to reach out to them directly to express your concern. If they are unresponsive, or if the issues continue, please submit a SEAN report through myOxy (under the "Academic Info and Advising tab," in "Advising Links"). Please be observant: the FYS instructor is frequently the "first responder" to student problems.
- **Informal advising:** Students may ask you for informal advice ranging from course selection to dealing with personal problems, and you may be able to help them. Please feel free to contact the Core office for advice on these situations.
- **Parents:** Remember that information about a student's performance in your class is protected by FERPA and college policy. If a parent contacts you asking for such information, please direct him or her to the Core Director or Director of Advising. Representatives of the college are not permitted to discuss the educational records of students with any third parties unless a waiver signed by the student is on file in the Registrar's office.
- **Uncover the "Hidden Curriculum":** We encourage instructors to think about the implications of the fact that their students are taking First-Year Seminars in their very first semester in college. Please recognize that students arrive at Occidental College with varying degrees of cultural capital and familiarity with the norms, expectations and unwritten rules of our academic community (often referred to as "the hidden curriculum"). We strongly recommend that FYS faculty endeavor to make their expectations as explicit as possible, even about things you might not typically think to give instructions about in other courses you teach. Examples include discussing the importance of attending office hours, explaining what office hours are, providing students with suggestions for time management, clarifying what term they should use to refer to you (e.g. "Professor" or "Doctor" or something else)

and explicitly setting rules and norms for classroom behavior (use of electronic devices, whether food or drink can be consumed, how to address other students, et cetera).

6. Professional Development Opportunities & Responsibilities

Workshops: The Core Program provides and strongly recommends orientation/training workshops for new and veteran instructors of First-Year Seminars, covering topics like assignment design, techniques for evaluating writing, in-class writing exercises, and integrating content and skills instruction.

The first is a Syllabus Workshop, typically held over Zoom in late July. This is followed by an in-person workshop in late August. Both of these workshops are open to all faculty members who will be teaching a FYS course in the coming year.

A workshop specifically for faculty teaching spring semester FYS courses is offered in December. The dates for these workshops can be found in the calendar at the beginning of this document.

Portfolio Assessment Committee (PAC)

FYS instructors are expected to participate in the Portfolio assessment process by serving as assessors on the PAC (with compensation). Throughout the academic year, we will convene three or four meetings of the PAC, led by the Writing Programs Director, to focus on preparing the committee to read and assess student Portfolios (including an introductory meeting in the fall, at least one “norming” session in the fall, a check-in before Portfolios are due in the spring, and a debrief after spring term classes end). We aim to have a large PAC membership to reduce the number of Portfolios read by each assessor. The Core Program Director will send out more information about your role in the PAC at the start of the fall term.

FYS Faculty Meetings: The Core Office also arranges regular FYS faculty meetings for each semester’s staff for the presentation of information, discussion of teaching techniques and sharing feedback. It is highly recommended that each faculty member attend these meetings. Since some instructors are prevented from attending these meetings due to schedule conflicts, important announcements will also be sent out via email.

Mailing Lists: Faculty teaching FYS seminars are added to either the fall semester (**fcore-g@oxy.edu**) or spring semester (**score-g@oxy.edu**) mailing lists. These lists are used by the Core Program office to communicate important information and updates throughout the year.

7. Core Program Events and Summer Reading

Core Program Events

There are typically from one to three Core Program Events in each semester, usually scheduled in the FYS timeslot with the expectation that all first-year students will attend them. While these events were previously tied to a theme that changed annually, the Core Program has chosen program events based on the four cornerstones of Occidental's Mission: Excellence, Equity, Community and Service. Core Program events will be announced via email and posted on the Core Program webpage: <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/core-program/core-program-events>

Summer Reading

Starting in 2021, the First-Year summer reading merged with the Community Book Program. This year's common summer reading is *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

New students are provided with an electronic copy of the book and are asked to read it prior to the end of summer. The Core Program will provide electronic copies of this book to FYS instructors at no cost.

Instructors are strongly encouraged to try to connect and incorporate ideas from the common summer reading and Core Program Events in their seminars as much as they can. The hope is that FYS instructors can take advantage of these opportunities to enhance the shared academic experience the first-year seminars can provide.

8. Resources and Support

8A. Course Budget and Other Funds

Core Program Funds

Each First-Year Seminar has funding of up to \$200 in support of activities that further the learning objectives and/or encourage interaction between the instructor and students. Please retain all *original* receipts for full compensation. All funding requests should be directed to the Core Program Assistant and all forms and documentation should be turned into the Core Office as soon as possible, and *no later than 5 weeks after the expenditure (in order to comply with Business Office policies)*.

Remsen Bird Funds

In addition to the Core funds, each FYS has a \$200 allotment of Remsen Bird funds which can be used for speakers brought from off-campus. Please contact the Core Program Assistant for details on requesting these funds.

LA Encounters Fund

Additional funding may be available for activities and projects that bring FYS students off campus to locations around Los Angeles. For more information, please see:

<http://www.oxy.edu/core-program/la-encounters>

8B. Copies, Scanning, and Office Support

The Core Program Assistant can help faculty with scanning, printing, copying and other tasks. When requesting copies, please remember to include the number of copies needed as well as your intended pick-up date.

8C. Writing

Additional Pedagogical Resources for Faculty

FYS instructors will be provided with an instructor's edition of the Turabian et al book, *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers* (Fifth edition). In addition, the Core Program will provide interested instructors with copies of John Bean's *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*, a useful compendium of tips for teaching writing, and Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, a short book that helps students identify the key rhetorical moves of academic writing and practical advice to implement these strategies as they develop their own arguments. If you are interested in getting a copy of *Engaging Ideas* or *They Say/I Say*, please contact the Core Office.

Faculty also have access to the Moodle site "Writing Resources for Faculty," which contains handouts to use in designing in-class writing workshops and writing-specific pedagogical materials, sample syllabi and assignments, and more.

We also strongly recommend that faculty attend the FYS workshops and pay close attention to emails sent from the Core Program office and the Writing Program Director. The Core Directors are available to meet to discuss any matter related to your FYS; the Writing Program Director can meet with you to discuss any writing-specific matter (including requirements and the student portfolios). Feel free to reach out to us anytime!

On-Campus Writing Support Resources for Students

The Writing Center offers peer writing tutoring Sunday-Thursday (check the WC website for details about hours). Students can also schedule an appointment to work with a faculty writing specialist from the Writing and Rhetoric department (hours vary M-F). Please note: as of the date of the finalization of this handbook, the WC hours for fall 2022 have not yet been set. The Writing Center website will be updated before the first week of the fall semester.

The Writing Center website also includes numerous handouts and materials students can consult to improve their writing process and products (many of these materials are also in the Faculty Writing Resources Moodle).

For more information see the Writing Center website: <https://www.oxy.edu/writing-center> or contact the Writing Center Director, Julie Prebel (jprebel@oxy.edu).

8D. Information Literacy, Research, and Library Services

Instructors are encouraged to schedule library and research workshops for their seminars with Samantha Hilton (Librarian for First-Year Experience and Student Success; hiltons@oxy.edu).

Students who need help finding and navigating library resources may schedule appointments with librarians and disciplinary specialists by using the “Schedule a Research Consultation” link on <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/library>.

8E. Center for Teaching Excellence

The College’s [Center for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#) provides materials and assistance to faculty related to pedagogy, assignment design, syllabus creation, and more. Many useful resources are available on the CTE Moodle page: <https://moodle.oxy.edu/course/view.php?id=9480>

Prof. Carmel Levitan (levitan@oxy.edu) is the current CTE Director and is available for consultation and advice.

Appendix A: FYS-specific Required Syllabus Language

- Dates of all Core Program Events
- Completion Policy (adapt as needed):

In order to receive a grade of S (“Satisfactory”) in this course, students must complete and turn in all components of each of the major writing assignments (as designated by your instructor on the syllabus). This work must be completed according to the specifications provided by the professor and as outlined in the assignment handout, syllabus, course Moodle page, assessment rubric, or other materials provided.

- Learning Goals and Outcomes, including the below Writing LGOs:

Goal 1: Effective College-Level Writing. Students will demonstrate proficiency in expository essay writing as they gain and refine their knowledge of the conventions of academic discourse.

Outcome 1.1: Students will develop writing that responds with insight and originality to the criteria and requirements of the assignment, demonstrating their understanding of the course materials and topics through the use of specific examples and evidence from scholarly sources.

Outcome 1.2: Students will develop writing using features appropriate for college-level expository papers including: thesis or main idea, clarity of focus, organization, and conventions of grammar, style, mechanics, and usage.

- Writing Center statement:

The Writing Center (located on the Ground Floor of the Academic Commons) offers students from all disciplines two types of support to work on their writing: peer-to-peer, drop-in and appointment-based consultations with knowledgeable Writing Advisers, Sunday through Thursday, and appointments with Faculty Writing Specialists from the Writing and Rhetoric department. Information about the Writing Center and its open hours, including a link to the appointment system, is on the WC website:

<https://www.oxy.edu/writing-center>

- Portfolio Information: Include a link to the [Writing Program & Requirements website](#), and provide a brief outline of the requirements of the Writing Portfolio (including March 1st due date, requirement of a PDF with the RIE + 3 FYS essays, and any other information you believe is useful to highlight about the Portfolio submission & review process).

- Reserve Book Statement (if applicable):

The textbook for this course is available on reserve in Academic Commons. You can check out the book for up to 4 hours at a time. In-library use only. Brought to you by Associated Students of Occidental College.

- Disability Services Statement:

Students with documented disabilities who are registered with Disability Services are required to present their accommodation letter to the instructor at the beginning of each semester or as soon as possible thereafter. Any student who experiences physical or mental impairments may contact Disability Services at (323) 259-2969 to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>.

- Credit Hour Policy:

This First-Year Seminar is a 4-unit course. It is expected that students in this class will be devoting at least twelve (12) hours a week (including in-class time) on average for a total of 160 hours of work in the semester.

- Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience Statement:

Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL website:

<https://www.oxy.edu/office-religious-spiritual-life>.

- Title IX Statement:

In the event that you choose to write or speak about having experienced sexual or interpersonal violence, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual harassment, federal and state education laws require that, as your instructor and a designated Responsible Employee, I notify the Title IX office. They will contact you to let you know about accommodations and support services at Oxy and reporting options both on and off-campus.

If you do not want the Title IX Office notified, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, you can speak confidentially with the following people on campus:

- Project SAFE Survivor Advocate (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu)

The sexual misconduct policy, along with additional resources, can be found at:

<https://www.oxy.edu/civil-rights-title-ix/sexual-respect-title-ix/policies-procedures>

Appendix B: FYS Mission, Objectives, and Learning Outcomes

The following mission statement, semester emphases, and course objectives were drafted by the Core Steering Committee in the 2020-2021 academic year and approved by the faculty. They apply to all First-Year Seminar courses.

Mission

The mission of the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program is to prepare all first-year students for success at Occidental College. In FYS courses, students engage in shared intellectual experiences that develop effective college-level writing and enhance critical thinking. FYS courses also assist students with the transition to college and include an introduction to scholarly inquiry.

Semester Emphases

- Fall: In addition to the primary goals of all FYS courses to develop effective college-level writing and enhance critical thinking, Fall FYS courses pay attention to and provide assistance with navigating the transition to college life; the writing focus in this semester is thesis-driven essays.
- Spring: In addition to the primary goals of all FYS courses to develop effective college-level writing and enhance critical thinking, Spring FYS courses center scholarly inquiry and research that includes an introduction to information literacy; the writing focus in this semester is the production of a long (10-12 pages) research paper.

Course Objectives

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

1. Effective College-Level Writing. Students will demonstrate proficiency in expository essay writing as they gain and refine their knowledge of the conventions of academic discourse.
2. Critical Thinking. Students will be provided with opportunities to develop, strengthen, and demonstrate their ability to think critically and engage in academic discourse.
3. Scholarly Inquiry. Students will demonstrate understanding of the practices of scholarly inquiry by identifying research questions; collecting, evaluating, and interpreting evidence; and communicating the findings.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

4. Transition to College. Students will become familiar with the norms of college academic life and demonstrate knowledge of the curricular and co-curricular resources available to promote their academic success.

5. Information Literacy. Students will be introduced to the concept of information literacy and be expected to understand how to find and evaluate academic sources. They will also learn about scholarly citation methods and purposes, and become aware of the importance of academic honesty.

Learning Outcomes

- Effective College-Level Writing Outcome 1.1: Students will develop writing that responds with insight and originality to the criteria and requirements of the assignment, demonstrating their understanding of the course materials and topics through the use of specific examples and evidence from scholarly sources.
- Effective College-Level Writing Outcome 1.2: Students will develop writing using features appropriate for college-level expository papers including: thesis or main idea, clarity of focus, organization, and conventions of grammar, style, mechanics, and usage.
- Critical Thinking Outcome 2.1: Students will have the ability to clearly and accurately represent the precise question, problem, or issue under discussion.
- Critical Thinking Outcome 2.2: Students will have the ability to identify assumptions, implications, and practical consequences of the question, problem or issue under discussion.
- Scholarly Inquiry Outcome 3.1: Students will gain experience in crafting research questions, locating and evaluating sources, deploying evidence and situating their scholarly inquiry within scholarly conversations.
- Scholarly Inquiry Outcome 3.2: Students will construct well-reasoned conclusions or solutions with regard to the question, problem or issue under discussion, and test these conclusions or solutions against relevant criteria and standards.
- Transition to College Outcome 4.1: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge about academic and co-curricular resources and support services.
- Transition to College Outcome 4.2: Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge about academic support services that aid in the transition to college from high school.
- Information Literacy 5.1: Students will be able to identify their information needs and match them with appropriate search strategies and tools.