

DATA

Since Fall 2022, there have been 160 unique Freshman Seminars. We broke it down.



“We put out a call for proposals every year.”

“We accept courses that are good, so it doesn't really matter what the distribution requirement is.”

Alec Dun

Director of the Freshman Seminar Program



“Faculty from the natural sciences and engineering schools typically have less flexibility in their teaching schools, because certain sequential courses have to be taught every semester, whereas our humanities and social sciences faculty can teach more flexibly.”

Alec Dun

*Director of the Freshman
Seminar Program*



Freshman Seminars introduce the most new courses of any academic unit each term, but many of these seminars extend beyond a single semester. Out of the **232** FRS total courses offered across the six semesters, there are **101** courses that have been only offered once, **34** courses that were offered twice, and **21** that have been offered three times.



According to Dun, there is no preference for students who had not already enrolled in an FRS course in the Fall semester, and the algorithm “maximizes enrollment according to students’ prioritized lists.”

Dun believes the rumor of the algorithm prioritizing students who have yet to take a Freshman Seminar stems from an older system from around five years ago where students wrote applications for courses.



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Caption: The Freshman Seminar (FRS) program has been a cornerstone tradition for first-year students at Princeton since 1986. Initially proposed as a “Freshman Seminar program centered in the Residential Colleges,” the program was designed to offer first-year students small, seminar-style courses led by faculty members to provide an early opportunity for focused inquiry and faculty interaction. Since then, the program has expanded, now offering around 30–45 courses across an array of disciplines each semester.

In each of the six semesters from Fall 2022 to Spring 2025, FRS courses that fall into the Literature and the Arts (LA) distribution dominate the offerings, peaking in Fall 2023 with 23 courses. In other semesters, 11 to 16 LA courses were offered. The Science and Engineering with Laboratory (SEL) distribution generally maintains a low but consistent FRS presence, with one to six courses per semester. In data aggregating all 232 FRS courses, the largest segment remains the LA area, accounting for 34 percent of the total number of FRS courses. This trend indicates the program’s emphasis on courses in the humanities and social sciences for first-year students, while still offering a range of courses in other disciplines.

Tap the link in our bio for the full story. Reporting by Andy Lau and Hellen Luo. Post design by @altonhsiong. Photo credit: Ori Orbach / The Daily Princetonian.

Alt Text: Image showing a seminar room with an erased chalkboard and opened door. Text over top.

Top text, in orange: DATA

Bottom text, in white: “Since Fall 2022, there have been 160 unique Freshman Seminars. We broke it down.”