

# Freshman Seminar: Composing the *Auto* in Autobiography

## Fall 2015

"If you want sweet dreams, you've got to live a sweet life." –Loyd, *Animal Dreams*

### I. General Information:

**PAL(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Room** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Co-Facilitator:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Office:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class Meets:** \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Day of the week Time of Day Location

### II. Course Description

Freshman Seminar seeks to serve as a gateway for first-year student confidence and involvement in the academic and social communities of Oxford College. By exploring the questions “Who am I?”, “Why am I here?”, “What does it matter?,” the course will provide students with information and tools that will help them along their journey to become self-authored— to know yourself, know what you know, reflect upon it, and base judgments on it (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Here, it is important to be able to articulate “what” you think and “why” you think it rather than simply demonstrating an understanding of the material and then repeating it back to your instructor. According to Fink (2003), significant learning experiences occur through the interaction of the following values: foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn; consequently, this course is constructed and implemented in such a way that the student will explore all six of these values. Additionally, in order to fully engage the students as a partner in the process of their adjustment, learning, and success, multiple opportunities for self-reflection are embedded in the course (Baxter Magolda, 1999; Engberg & Mayhew, 2007).

Through reflection, discussion, hands-on activities, service, and team-building, the PAL and Faculty/Staff Co-facilitator will navigate students through their first semester college journey. The instructors will not serve as the bearers of all knowledge; instead, individual students, classmates, and instructors will share in the evaluation of learning (Braxton, Millem, & Sullivan, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), mining and sharing attitudes, experiences, and perspectives that each individual brings with them to the course. The goal of the PALs and Faculty/Staff Co-facilitator will be to help the students engage in an integrity-filled discovery process that can be used time and time again (Keup & Petschauer, 2011).

### III. Learning Objectives

Students who actively engage in the Freshmen Seminar course will be able to:

Domain	Learning Outcome	Session/Activity
Academic	Develop a deep curiosity and employ an inquiry-driven approach in learning and life.	Session 8 & Pre-Class Exploratories
	Defend claims with evidence through the practice of reflection, critical analysis, & synthesis.	Session 7 & Reflections
	Integrate personal experience with the social, academic, & collective issues of identity.	Session 6 & 7
	Develop educational goals and identify resources to support their pursuit of these goals.	Session 2 & 9
	Enhance written and oral communication skills.	Reflections
Campus Connection	Identify, seek, and use campus resources and student programs.	Session 2
	Develop a personal connection to the campus community.	Session 1 & 2
Interpersonal	Develop nurturing relationships: student to self, student to others, and student to the world at large.	Session 4 & 5
	Cultivate a social support network.	All; Class Outing
	Foster an appreciation and empathy for others.	Session 6 & 7
Personal	Explore and examine their own values.	Session 4 & 5
	Articulate a deeper awareness of self-identity.	Session 9
	Develop a healthy tolerance for & the ability to learn from uncertainty, mistakes, & change.	Session 8
	Exhibit confidence in ethical decision-making.	Session 6 & 7
Civic Engagement	Articulate the importance of citizenship and community-building.	Session 7
	Identify ways to make positive change; be able to make a difference	Session 7 & Service Project

#### IV. Requirements and Grading

Freshman Seminar is a one-credit elective course in which a student can receive a “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory” grade. Course credit with a “satisfactory” is earned through the successful completion of all of the following:

Points in Freshman Seminar are earned based on:

- Attendance at 10 class meetings
  - (15 points per class)
- Active participation in class in all class meetings, service project, & class outing
  - (50 points maximum for overall active participation)
- Pre-class Exploratories for 9 class meetings
  - (15 points per class)
- Written reflective essays following 4 class meetings
  - (25 points maximum per entry)
- Class community service project (35 points)
- Class Outing (30 points)

*There are a total of 500 points available and students must earn 430 of these points in order to earn a “satisfactory” grade for the course. Students should keep in mind that points missed for class participation and written assignments are part of the total points.*

##### a. Attendance

All absences will result in fewer points accumulated for attendance and participation parts of your final points. Points will also be lost if you miss the Class Community Service Project or Class Outing. Excused or unexcused for these absences is not a factor – all absences count.

##### b. Active Participation in Class

- Discussion: Participation in classroom discussions is an integral part of the learning process of this class. Your participation grade will count for 50 points of your total grade for your overall level of participation in class sessions, the service project, and class outing. There are 4 levels of the active participation grade: *no participation: 0 points; minimal participation: 15 points; adequate participation which is defined as frequent and active participation: 35 points; and finally, intelligent and substantial participation that helps the class come to a deeper understanding of the content of the course: 50 points.*
- At any time throughout the semester, you may ask whether your participation is adequate. Anyone who has difficulty with talking in class should contact your PAL or Co-facilitator to work out strategies for participation *at the beginning of the course.*

Grade	Synthesizing Material	Discussion	Approach
0 points	Frequently fails pop quizzes on out-of-class materials	Rarely speaks	Frequently tardy; daydreams/plays on phone in class
15 points	Almost never mentions PCEs, Reflections, class material	Speaks, but needs to improve on continuing others' conversation (rather than interjecting new topic). Needs to dig deeper into the question	Fails to bring PCEs and/or necessary materials to class; doesn't listen carefully to others
35 points	Brings in interesting & thoughtful questions from the topic, PCE, Reflection, or class activity	Communicates well & often	Demonstrates a respect for the community of learning
50 points	Can integrate the out-of-class & in-class assignments into any discussion; Demonstrates a long/thoughtful consideration of the texts	Helps the class come to a deeper understanding of the content of the course	Is enthusiastic about the exchange of ideas in class

### c. Pre-Class Exploratory

Pre-Class Exploratories (PCE) will take the form of creative projects, brief responses to guiding questions, and the completion of worksheets. Prior to each class session (with the exception of the first class meeting), you will be required to complete a Pre-Class Exploratory on the upcoming class topic and bring that completed PCE with you to class. These assignments are meant to help you reflect and inquire on the upcoming class topic(s) so that you may come to the following class prepared to share your attitudes, experiences, and perspectives in a meaningful way that will contribute to the richness of the overall class discussion. The PCEs will be submitted at the beginning of every class and evaluated on completion by the beginning of class, evidence of your serious engagement with the topic, display of personal exploration, and a clear connection between your PCE and your contributions to class discussion on that topic.

### d. Class Community Service Project

Each class will participate in a Class Community Service project with a local community partner. A list of possible projects will be provided for the class. Based on class interest and scheduling availability, the PAL will submit the top three choices for the service project. The class will be notified of the date and time of the class project as soon as scheduling permits. This session will be outside of the normal class time, lasting up to four hours at the most, depending upon the nature of the project. Be sure to mark these dates on your calendar once they are set. You will be expected to participate with your class.

### e. Reflective Analysis Writing Assignments

The purpose of these assignments is to provide a means for synthesizing the PCE with the class discussion and activities to reframe it within your personal lens. The reflective analyses (RA) will encourage students to think about the issues that have been discussed in class and to reflect on personal reactions to these issues (i.e. what were your original thoughts on the topic? Did you learn anything new? How did the class discussion shape your opinions/views/awareness/etc?). RA writing assignments on each topic are due at the beginning of class (see *Proposed Weekly Schedule* for due dates).

**Reflective Analysis Grading Criteria:** Points will be assigned on the written Reflective Analyses based on the following criteria:

- One page response (500 words *minimum*)
- Electronic submissions must be posted to Blackboard.
- All reflective analyses are due at the beginning of the class for which they are assigned. No late entries will be accepted (i.e after the start of your Freshman Seminar class that day).
- Evaluation of written responses will be based on the quality of content, engagement with the topic, and clarity of written expression. Your submission should reflect serious thought and consideration given to the questions. See rubric below.
- Make sure that your Reflective Analysis can be identified as your work. While citing outside sources is not required, be sure to cite any sources used properly to avoid issues of plagiarism.

**Reflective Analysis Grading Rubric**

Length	1 Does not have 500 words				5 Paper is 500 words+ and turned in on time
Works Cited	1 Student does not include any thoughts from PCEs, in-class activities, etc in paper				5 Student thoughtfully synthesizes reflection with many connections to PCEs, in-class activities, etc
Engagement with the Topic	1 Reflection does not answer any of the questions asked in the prompt	2 Paper vaguely answers 1 of the questions asked in the prompt	3 Paper clearly answers 1 of the questions asked in the prompt	4 Paper answers at least 2 of the questions asked in the prompt	5 Paper fully responds/connects to all questions asked in the prompt
Reflection	1 Paper provides no personal reflection	2 Paper provides 1 personal experience/example	3 Paper provides 2 personal experiences/examples	4 Paper provides evidence of reflection; connects to either the PCE <i>or</i> the Class Discussion	5 Provides in depth reflection on the topic, synthesizing the PCE, class discussion, and personal reflection
Spelling, punctuation, capitalization	1 Paper has numerous grammatical mistakes and misspellings	2 Paper has 5-6 grammatical mistakes and misspellings	3 Paper has 3-4 grammatical mistakes and misspellings	4 Paper has 1-2 grammatical mistakes and misspellings	5 Paper has NO grammatical mistakes and misspellings

## V. Proposed Weekly Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Assignments
1	8/31 – 9/4	Introduction to Class; Why am I here?	Complete PCE Project A for next class
<i>No FS Class on 9/7 due to Labor Day (Monday classes resume on 9/14)</i>			
2	9/8 – 9/14	So much Oxford, So little Time	Complete PCE Project B for next class
3	9/15 – 9/21	What does it matter?	Complete PCE Project C for next class
4	9/22 – 9/28	The value of Values	Complete PCE Project D for next class Complete Reflection 1
5	9/29 – 10/5	The Congruency Challenge	Submit Reflection 1 <i>before class</i> . Complete PCE Project E for next class
6	10/6 – 10/9 & 10/19	Conflict with Civility	Complete PCE Project F for next class Complete Reflection 2
<i>No FS Classes on 10/12 – 10/16 due to Fall Break</i>			
7	10/20 – 10/26	Am I my brother's keeper?	Submit Reflection 2 <i>before class</i> . Complete PCE Project G for next class Complete Reflection 3
8	10/27 – 11/2	To know or not to know?	Submit Reflection 3 <i>before class</i> . Complete PCE Project H for next class
9	11/3 – 11/9	Building my blueprint to write my story	Complete Reflection 4
10	11/10 – 11/16	Course Wrap-up; Onward & upward	Submit Reflection 4 <i>before class</i> .

**Incompletes** may be given by the PAL/Co-facilitator only in special hardship cases. Incompletes will not be used for the sole purpose of extending the time for completion of course requirements.

**The Student Honor Code** is a part of this Syllabus. It can be found on the Oxford College website under the Student Honor Code.

If a student should find herself or himself in need of a **hardship withdrawal**, please consult with your PAL and Co-Facilitator as soon as possible.

### References

- Baxter Magolda, M.B. (1999). Engaging students in active learning. In G.S. Bliming & E.J. Whitt (Eds.), *Good practice in student affairs: Principles to foster student learning* (pp. 21-43). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Baxter Magolda, M. B., & King P. M. (2004). *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Braxton, J.M., Millem, J.F., & Sullivan, A.S. (2000). The influence of active learning on the college student departure process. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(5), 569-590.
- Engberg, M.E., & Mayhew, M.J. (2007). The influences of student “success” courses on student learning and democratic outcomes. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(3), 241-258.
- Fink, D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences: an integrated approach to designing college courses*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-bass.
- Keup, J. & Petschauer, J. (2011). *The first-year seminar: designing, implementing, and assessing courses to support student learning and success: Vol. 1. Designing and administering the course*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition.
- Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How college affects students, Vol. 2: A third decade of research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

*\* Whether or not you were in class for the syllabus review, you are responsible for knowing the information contained.\*\**