

OBERLIN COLLEGE

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR PROGRAM

The First-Year Seminar Program (**FYSP**) invites incoming students to begin their Oberlin educational experience in a small seminar setting. The topics and academic approaches of seminars are diverse, but all are designed to help students hone their critical thinking, discussion, and writing skills. First-year seminars introduce students to resources for learning at Oberlin by engaging our libraries, art museum, writing center, career development center, the cities of Oberlin and Cleveland, and more. First-year seminars allow students to get to know a faculty member well and to reflect upon the personal value and social relevance of a liberal arts education.

SAMPLE FYSP COURSES

“In This Here Place, We Flesh”:

Underground Railroad and Sanctuary Spaces

Exploring sanctuary for enslaved people who moved through Oberlin on the journey to freedom, and for Africans who attended Oberlin from the 19th century forward; exploring the underground railroad in literature and art.

It’s Never Aliens: Understanding Astronomy in the News

Developing critical reading of astronomy in the news to understand the science behind the headlines.

Designer Babies and Other Possibilities

Exploring biotechnological advances in medicine and agriculture, focusing on cloning and genetic manipulation of animals and plants.

What’s for Dinner? The Science of Healthy Eating

Analyzing the strengths and limitations of different types of nutritional research to evaluate newly emerging dietary claims.

Speak, Memories: Life, Art, and Literary Self-Representation

Considering memoirs, graphic memoirs, confessions, slave narratives, essays, and other genres in which people turn their lives into art (or claim to).

Know Your Place: Civic Humanism and Community Engagement

Working reciprocally within communities and engaging the humanities as a vehicle for active citizenship.

Disability

Exploring how stories of disability change when people with disabilities hold the pen, the paintbrush, the microphone, or the senate floor.

Materials at the Museum

Focusing on the substances of art—pigments, stone, metal, glass, ceramics, or plastics—and introducing ideas from chemistry, materials science, art history, and conservation.

Deconstructing Technology

Exploring the people, science, and industries involved in the making of cell phones, computers, and other technologies; assessing technology's impact on the environment and society at large.

Russian Modernism, Aesthetic Utopia

Exploring relationships among poetry, prose, drama, visual art, dance, music, and cinema that characterized the aesthetic utopia known as Russian modernism.

Conceptions of Self in East and West

Examining the nature of human existence from the ancient and modern West, and from East Asia; sensitively comparing these diverse visions of human life.

Nature and the Environment in East Asian Culture

Exploring concepts of nature influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and traditional aesthetics in the context of environmentalism and sustainability.

Silence=Death: Rhetorics of HIV/AIDS

Exploring contested intersections of science, culture, and politics. Engaging remotely with a class at the American University of Nigeria.

Writing Religion and Gender Across Cultures

Considering the religious lives of women (including trans* women) from Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Vodou communities in the United States and internationally.

Heroes and Villains

Exploring in our local region the ways in which history, culture, belief systems, and time shape our understanding of heroism and villainy.

Well-being

Problem-solving through team-based design projects meeting needs in the community.

Language in Motion

Exploring embodied knowledge by interweaving guided movement and writing exercises to translate corporeal experiences into words.

The Sixth Extinction

Exploring biodiversity through readings and multiple weekend trips to sites of local conservation.