

Course Syllabus
UNV 100: The First-Year Seminar
Fall 2006

Course Description

The first year of college is the foundation on which the rest of the college experience is built. It is important for students to get off to a good start, academically and socially, and to refine skills, adjust attitudes, and set goals. *UNV 100: The First-Year Seminar* is specifically designed to assist students with making a successful transition into the university.

Many colleges and universities offer introduction to college courses. Some of these courses are offered within academic departments and introduce students to the expectations of a major and career. Others are an extension of orientation that exposes students to various aspects of college life. At UMass Dartmouth, UNV 100 combines the objectives of an extended orientation with personal goal setting and assistance in developing tools for academic success. The course uses a seminar format that relies on interactions between students and the instructor, students and guest lecturers, and students themselves.

Goals of the Course

Through the Seminar, students are provided important strategies, timely information, and creative ideas to assist them in adjusting responsibly to the personal, social, and academic expectations of college life. Students share responsibility for the classroom learning process with fellow students and the instructor. Through this course, students should:

1. Understand the culture of higher education
2. Set realistic future goals and personal expectations
3. Develop college survival skills
4. Enhance personal growth and educational development
5. Establish priorities for academic success
6. Learn and demonstrate effective interpersonal skills
7. Learn and demonstrate effective time management skills

Teaching/Learning Philosophy

UNV 100 supports the academic mission of the university by challenging students to move beyond their comfort zone and to reflect on information, experiences, and perspectives related to their college experience. This course is most successful when everyone actively participates in class discussions with a spirit of openness and honesty.

Students are expected to approach this course with the intent of developing their skills as learners, researchers, and aspiring leaders. The course will be presented in an interactive format in which students are expected to share responsibility for the classroom teaching/learning process. Additionally, as a community of learners, students are expected to assist with creating a respectful environment as characterized in the mission and vision of UMass Dartmouth, particularly the university's position on cultural diversity and inclusion. All students will:

- Practice personal and academic integrity
- Respect the dignity of others
- Respect the personal rights, property, and opinions of others, and
- Demonstrate concern for others

Course Organization

UNV 100 meets in 50-minute sessions twice a week for the first 6 weeks and weekly for 4 subsequent weeks during the fall semester—when students first form college study habits and make both social and academic contacts. This course accounts for one credit in each student's academic load but does not earn credit towards graduation.

Guest lecturers representing campus support programs and academic offices participate in class sessions. Students actively engage in exploring aspects of campus life and academic performance.

The structure of the course encourages first-year students to interact and support each other as they create a sense of community. Students share their transition into the university in a small class with a relaxed atmosphere. The outcome should be a more meaningful and memorable college experience.

Common Course Requirements

- ***Reflective Journal***

Students will be asked to choose one or more of the “personal journal questions” at the end of each chapter, and write reflectively about the reading assignments. Students may also be asked to write reflectively on experiences related to the various topics discussed in class, including their attendance at social/cultural co-curricular activities. Journal entries should be 2 pages. However, both the consistency and the quality of journal entries will be evaluated. We assure you that the information you put in your journal will remain confidential. It is for our mutual benefit. Late submissions will be accepted and will receive a lower grade. In completing journal entries, we also want to know how the course is benefiting you, and how we can redirect the class in order to meet your personal and academic needs. Reflective Journal entries are due on at the following sessions: 2, 4, 6, 8, and 12.

- ***Personal Essay: This is My Life***

Part One: In the first part of this assignment, you will write a 5-page paper identifying the significant events, people and influences which have shaped you as a person. The contents of your personal essay may be drawn from your first memories until today. This paper should be double-spaced, and will be evaluated on quality, organization, coherence, and freedom from mechanical errors. This paper is due at session 5.

Part Two: In the second part of this assignment, you will write a 5-page paper describing the prospects for your life after college to age seventy. Where will you live? What career will you have? Will you have your own family? How will you have fun? How will you serve the community in which you live? This paper should be double-spaced, and will be evaluated on quality, organization, coherence, and freedom from mechanical errors. This paper is due at Session 10.

- ***Qualitative Interviews***

Each student will interview a faculty member who is teaching in the area of his or her major or highest interest. You will be looking for an advisor/mentor who can guide your course of study throughout your academic experience. A list of questions will be provided to assist students in completing the interview process. Students will submit written summaries of the answers to these questions followed by a brief summary reflecting on what they learned. The following list of questions can serve as a guideline for the interview process:

What is your current position and responsibility at the university?
What factors influenced you in deciding to teach at the college level?
When you entered college as an undergraduate student, what were your educational objectives? What were your career objectives?
How has your career goals changed since graduating from college?
How long have you been teaching at the college level?
Who influenced you to become a college professor?
What difficulties, if any, have you experienced in reaching your career objectives?
Do you enjoy teaching in a college environment? Why? Or Why not?
If you could change your professional career, what would you do? Why?
Please discuss you future career plans.

- ***Oral Communication Skills:***

Seminar instructors have been encouraged to make their class as lively and as interactive as possible. Students should have the opportunity to participate frequently in individual and group presentations as well as class discussions.

- ***Use of Required Texts***

Your College Experience: Strategies for Success by Gardner & Jewler (1997) is the required text for UNV 100. This textbook is representative of many of the custom- published seminar textbooks, designed for first-year students and used in colleges and universities across the country. Your College Experience provides insights, advice, and practical strategies to assist students in making the most of their college experience.

Use of a weekly calendar:

Students are required to have a calendar, either paper or electronic, that can be used throughout the course. The calendar is necessary in an effort to assist students in mastering the principles of effective time management.

- ***Attendance Policy & Class Participation***

Students are expected to complete all assigned work on time, to attend class regularly, and to participate in class discussions and activities. Absence from more than 10% of scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and the instructor may choose to exact a grade penalty for such absences. In each course section, students who have demonstrated perfect class attendance will be allowed to participate in a drawing for a book on some aspect of campus life.

- ***Attendance at Social/Cultural Events***

To assist students in becoming integrated into the university and involved in campus life, it is expected that they will attend at least 2 social/cultural on-campus activities that contribute to their personal and educational development. Students must submit a completed Campus Event Form (included as the last page of this syllabus) for each activity. Events may include athletic competitions, cultural or social activities, art exhibit, music or theatrical performance, club or fraternity/sorority events. The Campus Event Forms will be due at Session 11 when we discuss “communicating across cultures.”

- ***Grading***

Grading will be pass-fail, with the final grade based on participation and completion of all course requirements. We expect you to take this course as seriously as any other credited course. Evaluation for this course will be determined placing the following values on assignments given: 20% Reflective Journal Entries, 20% Personal Essay I, 20% Personal Essay II, 20% Class Participation, 20% Qualitative Interviewing. ***Note: Victor recommends attendance/participation be weighted higher.***

- ***Study Skills Assessment***

Because effective time management is a critical college survival skill, a considerable amount of time will be devoted to helping students to master the principles of effective time management. A questionnaire will be administered to students at the beginning and at the end of the seminar to assess their ability to organize schoolwork by setting priorities and managing time efficiently.

Content Areas

Within the content and structure of each session, instructors are expected to integrate discussions on the importance of campus involvement, university resources, and career development. The Class Schedule and Assignments provided below highlight the areas that will receive considerable attention throughout the course:

