

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

First-Year Seminar**Being Human: Why are we so special?**

Mondays and Thursdays 2:00-3:30 pm

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Common Course Description

Designed for first-time, full-time, first-year students, First-Year Seminar (FYS) provides a comprehensive introduction to college-level learning. Seminar courses are developed around an academic theme or topic that is based on one of Ramapo College's academic pillars. First-Year students will have the opportunity to select a seminar that best suits their interests while learning about Ramapo's academic foundation. The First-Year Seminar course helps students in their transition from high school to college life both in and out of the classroom. The common learning outcomes of FYS are: critical and creative thinking, college-level writing, oral communication, information literacy, and technological competency. FYS classes are small to emphasize open discussion and experiential learning within the context of the theme of the seminar course. Peer facilitators play an essential role in each FYS class ensuring that first-year students have guidance from a more experienced student. FYS is also the home of the Ramapo Summer Reading Program; all first-year students read the same book and discuss and write about it in their seminars. FYS encourages new students to participate in a community of learners, to strengthen their critical thinking skills, and to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

Course Description of this Section

Human beings are unique organisms, most would agree; but exactly what is unique about our species is not commonly understood by most people. This course explores how humans interact with the biological world of which they are a part and the adaptive character of our species. By exploring such topics as the biology of race, climate change, conservation issues, and the spread of disease, the special nature of human origins will become apparent, as well as our role in the natural world and our impact on the environment on which we depend.

General Education Program Course

This course fulfills the First-Year Seminar category of the general education curriculum at Ramapo College. Common to all First-Year Seminar (FYS) courses, you will develop critical thinking skills that are basic to college level study, regardless of your area of interest. You will be reading, writing, and participating in thoughtful group discussions with the aim of developing the skills of a scholar. You will learn to support your arguments using a foundation of knowledge and facts rather than simply using personal opinions and experiences. This section fulfills the interdisciplinary studies and sustainability FYS categories by incorporating knowledge from the fields of biology, physical anthropology, genetics, ecology, paleontology, and medicine and relating them to current social issues including the issue of ecological sustainability, conservation, and climate change.

Writing Intensive (WI) Course

Writing will be integrated into the life of this course. You will receive comments, direction, and support as you work on strengthening your writing skills. Your writing will be evaluated and returned in a timely fashion, allowing you to incorporate my comments into your future work. For help outside the classroom, please see me during my office hours and/or work with a writing tutor in the Center for Reading and Writing (CRW), Room: E-230, x7557, cas@ramapo.edu."

Course Goals

Students will learn about the adaptations our species (*Homo sapiens*) has acquired through our evolutionary past and how this has shaped our current unique ecology. They will understand the aspects of our biology that are special and specific to our species, as well as those which are not unique; although we may think they are. Students will see clearly how biology and evolution can relate to our daily lives, to current social issues, and to our recent history by exploring the literature on human origins and by investigating current events and careers in field related to unique aspects of our biology.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:	Research Paper	Class discussions and essays	Oral Presentation	CEC - Trip(s) / Speaker(s)	Exams
demonstrate the ability to think critically and creatively.	x	x	x		x
demonstrate proficiency in written communication.	x	x			
demonstrate proficiency in oral communication.			x		
demonstrate information literacy and technological competency.	x		x		
learn how to improve their writing and learning	x	x			
identify how experiences outside the classroom reflect on their learning of the course material		x		x	
understand the special events that have formed our species and its place in the biological world	x	x	x	x	x
relate human evolutionary history to current biological/social issues		x	x		
learn how their own career interests relate to unique aspects of how our species is adapted to its current environment	x	x	x		

Peer Facilitators

As an added resource for first-year students, each section of First-Year Seminar (FYS) will have a peer facilitator. These upper-level students will attend FYS classes and assist the instructor with the academic topics covered in this seminar. They will serve as discussion leaders on issues that pertain to your personal and social development and they will facilitate weekly discussions on the class readings. Your peer facilitator will be your mentor and will be available to you to provide guidance on navigating the different personal and social hurdles that you may encounter in your first year at Ramapo.

First-Year Academic Advising

Each First-Year Seminar course is assigned a professional Academic Advisor from the Center for Academic Advising and First-Year Experience (CAAFYE) who serves as your Academic Advisor during your first year. This advisor will attend your First-Year Seminar class for a group advisement session to review general academic advising policies and procedures. They will also be available to answer any general questions regarding college policies/practices. Students are encouraged to schedule individual appointments with their CAAFYE Advisor for assistance with course selection and the development of a personal academic plan. If you have any questions regarding Academic Advisement please call CAAFYE at (201) 684-7441 or via email at: caafye@ramapo.edu

Texts, Readings, Materials

1. Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Touchstone, 2007. Print. ISBN: 978-0-7432-9628-1
2. Hacker, Diana, and Barbara Fister. *Rules for Writers with Tabs with 2009 MLA and 2010 APA Updates*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. Print. ISBN-13: 978-0-312-66482-4.
3. A collection of selected material to be posted for students throughout the semester.

Course Requirements

Your grade is based on:

- a) Almost weekly 1-1.5 page written essays on varying topics (professor's choice) from the readings (25% of final grade), the lowest grade will be dropped. Topics will vary greatly, so be sure you know what is expected for the upcoming week.
 - You will have the opportunity to rewrite one of your essays (due 11/17) and replace the grade on the first draft, assuming that you do better on the second.
 - On one occasion, you will choose an assignment that you did poorly on, in a class other than this one, and you will redo that assignment. You will visit the professor of that course to discuss the material you are relearning, and you will write an essay describing what you have learned from this experience (due 10/6).
- b) One written term paper (6-8 pages) (20% of final grade): You will conduct outside research on a career that interests you and relate that area of expertise to some quality of human biology/ecology that we have learned about in class (Ex. A child psychologist would need to know about the development of the human brain, genetic conditions that control emotions, and the evolution of long-term child care in our species).
 - Your paper will be divided into two parts: the first, will focus on the career itself and what academics are needed to pursue the career you chose; the second part will emphasize the course material as it pertains to that field.
 - You **must** use peer-reviewed primary sources for the second part of this paper.
 - An outline and draft will be due prior to the final version of the paper and both outline and draft will be graded separately and averaged into your essay grade.
- c) Class participation: the degree to which you participate in discussion and its reflection of your understanding of the reading materials. (20% of final grade)
- d) A 50 question multiple choice midterm exam on the human biology material (10% of final grade)
- d) A two-hour, cumulative, multiple-choice and essay-style final exam during finals week (10% of final grade)
- e) A 10 minute class presentation (presented in pairs) on a **current event** of your choice related to a lecture topic (15% of final grade).

Presentations: You will present information from research you have conducted on a topic that relates human biology/ecology to current social issues (Ex. Is recent erratic weather evidence of global warming? How are we preparing to reduce climate change?). It is your responsibility to work in pairs outside the classroom on your presentation. Be sure to give yourself the time that is needed to work and coordinate your schedules together. The details of this presentation will be discussed in class.

Attendance is your responsibility. I will take attendance to have a record of who comes to class. More than two absences will result in a reduction in your participation grade. You have these first 2 absences to accommodate unforeseen emergencies, illnesses, and holidays without explanation. Do not use them frivolously; as you will not be given any excused absences during the semester. Your participation grade will begin at the percentage of classes that you have attended. For example, if you have attended 70% of the lectures, you will not receive more than 70% of your participation grade. Although college policy states that students must notify faculty within the first three weeks of the semester if they anticipate missing any classes due to religious observance, I have allotted two absences for this purpose.

GRADING

Your final grade will be calculated as shown below:

Weekly Essays	=	25%
Term paper	=	20%
Class Participation	=	20%
Presentation	=	15%
Exams (10% each)	=	20%
Total	=	100%

The following letter grades will be given for your final course grade.

Final Grade	Letter	Final Grade	Letter
Points (%)	Grade	Points (%)	Grade
93-100	A	77-79	C+
90-92	A-	74-76	C
87-89	B+	70-73	C-
84-86	B	65-69	D+
80-83	B-	60-64	D

BELOW 60% will earn you an "F" for the course

Late assignments, Make-up Exams, and Incompletes

Late assignments will be **deducted 10 points** for every 24 hour period that they are late. Under **no circumstances** will make-up exams be given. Incompletes will only be granted under extenuating circumstances that can be corroborated with some form of **proof** deemed reasonable by myself.

Course Enrichment Component

Each course will include a minimum of five (5) hours of unmonitored appropriate experience outside of the classroom.

- Students will be required to participate on 2 class field trips and to attend one scheduled lecture on campus given by an invited guest (dates to be announced).
 - We will visit a Museum in New York City (to be announced) where you will integrate your knowledge of human migration patterns and disease in an essay based on material you observed at the museum.
 - We will also visit Ramapo College's Meadowlands Environmental Center, where you will learn about the impacts of pollution and climate change on this local ecosystem. You will be expected to know this material for the final exam.
 - We will be attending a lecture on campus by Dr. Todd Disotell of New York University and the New York Consortium on Evolutionary Anthropology. Dr. Disotell will lecture to the college on the evolution of the AIDS virus.

Important Dates

- Last day for Schedule Adjustments (on the Web): September 12th
- Last day to withdraw from courses with "W" grade: October 27th
- Reading Day (no classes): December 14th
- Last day to request "I" grades: December 21st
- Residence Halls close (6pm): December 21st
- Final Exam Snow Make-Up Day: December 22nd

Weekly Class Schedule

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Required Reading
1	9/1	Intro. to course and discussion on summer reading College Skills: What's a "good" student/professor?	Loewen - all of it
2	9/5 & 8	Labor Day (no class 9/5) / What is not so special about humans?: Natural Selection, Genetic Inheritance and Evolution College Skills: How to prepare for class -organizing your time. Assignment Due: (9/8) Essay on Loewen	TBA
3	9/12 & 15	Where do humans fall on the evolutionary tree? - phylogenetics / What is a primate? College Skills: How to edit your writing. Assignment Due: (9/15) Schedule for studying.	TBA
4	9/21	Opening Convocation, Dr. Kames W. Loewen 1-2:30 pm, Bradley Center Gymnasium	Loewen
4	9/19 & 22	Why and how to we walk on two legs? - bipedalism / Convocation College Skills: How to study for an exam.	Loewen
5	9/26 & 29	Brains: our big fat heads - the hominin lineage / Information Literacy at the Library College Skills: Literature research Assignment Due: (9/26) Essay on Convocation	TBA
6	10/3 & 6	Populating the globe: Expanse of modern human populations / Modern human variation: the biology of race College Skills: Taking "good" notes. Assignment Due: redo an assignment that you did not do well on and visit your professor	TBA
7	10/10 & 13	Midterm Exam and Visit from Center for Academic Advisement / The speaking ape: Evolution of Language College Skills: Choosing your courses Assignment: Study for MIDTERM EXAM (10/10)	TBA
8	10/17 & 20	Human infant care and development / Emotions: Love and War College Skills: Participating in class. Assignment Due: (10/20) Essay on an assignment redone - what have you learned?	TBA
9	10/24 & 27	Impacts of human population growth / Humans as disease vectors: migration and disease transmission College Skills: Effective sentences. Assignment Due: (10/27) Essay on the topic you have chosen for your oral presentation	TBA
10	10/31 & 11/3	Infection and Drug Resistance / AIDS College Skills: Referencing material - what is plagiarism? Assignment Due: (11/3) Outline of research paper.	TBA
11	11/7 & 10	Geochemical cycling: Natural Resource Use / Agriculture College Skills: Visiting your professors - what's a "stupid" question? Assignment Due: (11/10) Essay on visit to Museum	TBA
12	11/14 & 17	Pollution / Loss of Biodiversity College Skills: Oral Presentations Assignment Due: (11/17) Rewrite an essay of your choice	TBA
13	11/21 & 24	Global Warming: Documentary and Discussion / Thanksgiving Recess (no class 11/24) Assignment Due: (11/21) Rough Draft of Research Paper	TBA
14	11/28 & 12/1	Presentations / Presentations	TBA
15	12/5 & 8	Climate Change / Sustainability College Skills: mastering upper level courses Assignment Due: (12/8) Final Draft of Research Paper	TBA
16	12/12 & 15	Review for Final Exam / FINAL EXAM - 12/15 2:00-4:00 pm	TBA

Preparedness and Behavior in the Classroom

Read the required materials BEFORE class, you will be required to participate in the discussion of this material in class. Only students who actively participate in the discussions can expect to do well in the course. If you are having trouble understanding the lecture material, please see me during office hours as soon as you can, do not wait until you are in a critical situation.

The classroom will be conducted in a manner which is conducive to teaching and learning. For this purpose, **the use of cell phones and any other electronic means of communication are not welcome** during class time. If you have an emergency, please leave the room quietly to deal with it.

Electronic Forms of Communication

In accordance with College policy, I will use your Ramapo College email address (@ramapo.edu) to communicate with you about all course-related matters. It is your responsibility to check your e-mail daily for this purpose. You will be held responsible for information conveyed in this manner within 24 hours of class time. I will not accept excuses for missing announcements that were sent to your Ramapo e-mail account.

Students with Disabilities

If you need course adaptation or accommodations because of a disability that has been documented with the Office of Specialized Services, please make an appointment with me. **It is your responsibility** to communicate your needs to me as soon as you are aware of them. I will expect to be contacted by OSS regarding your situation, so be sure to follow through with them on your own behalf. Do not expect me to know what you need if you have not spoken to me personally.

Policy on Academic Integrity

Students are expected to read and understand Ramapo College's academic integrity policy, which can be found in the *Ramapo College Catalog*. Members of the Ramapo College community are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. Students who violate this policy will be required to meet with the faculty member and/or will be referred to the Office of the Provost. An abbreviated version of this policy is described below.

Policy

All members of the Ramapo community are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. Since violations of academic integrity erode community confidence and undermine the pursuit of truth and knowledge at the College, academic dishonesty must be avoided.

Procedures

The Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs has the responsibility for the oversight and enforcement of the academic integrity policy and for making the policy an institutional priority. The Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs is also responsible for publishing the policy and for educating both faculty and students about the policy.

Faculty members play a crucial role in the academic integrity policy. They are responsible for educating their students about the importance of academic integrity and for communicating to students their expectations with respect to academic integrity in course work.

Students have the responsibility to understand the College academic integrity policy and to comply with the policy in all their academic work.

Criteria

There are four broad forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Cheating

Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents his or her mastery of material on a test or other academic exercise. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:

- copying from another student's work;
- allowing another student to copy his/her work;
- using unauthorized materials such as a textbook, notebook or electronic devices during an examination;
- using specifically prepared materials such as notes written on clothing or other unauthorized notes, formula lists, etc., during an examination;
- collaborating with another person during an examination by giving or receiving information without authority;
- taking a test for another person or asking or allowing another to take the student's own test.

2. **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism occurs when a person represents someone else's words, ideas, phrases, sentences, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work that includes such material, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific footnote references; additionally, verbatim statements must be acknowledged through quotation marks.

To avoid a charge of plagiarism, a student should be sure to include an acknowledgment of indebtedness:

- whenever he or she quotes another person's words directly;
- whenever he or she uses another person's ideas, opinions, or theories, even if they have been completely paraphrased in one's own words;
- whenever he or she allows another individual to contribute to the work in some significant fashion (for instance, through editing, or sharing of ideas);
- whenever he or she uses facts, statistics, or other illustrative material taken from a source, unless the information is common knowledge.

Examples of standard citation formats can be found on the [Library Website: Citation Manuals and Style Guides](#).

3. **Academic Misconduct**

Academic Misconduct includes the alteration of grades, involvement in the acquisition or distribution of unadministered tests, and the unauthorized submission of student work in more than one class. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- changing, altering, falsifying, or being the accessory to the changing, altering, or falsifying of a grade report or form or other academic record, or entering any computer system, College office or building for that purpose;
- stealing, buying, selling, giving way, or otherwise obtaining all or part of any unadministered test or entering any computer system, College office or building, for the purpose of obtaining an unadministered test;
- submitting written work (in whole or in significant part) to fulfill the requirements of more than one course without the explicit permission of both instructors;
- disregarding policies governing the use of human subjects or animals in research;
- sabotaging another student's work through actions designed to prevent the student from successfully completing an assignment;
- knowingly facilitating a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy by another person.

4. **Fabrication**

Fabrication refers to the deliberate use of invented information or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples of fabrication include, but are not limited to:

- citation of information not taken from the source indicated;
- listing of sources in a "works cited" that were not used in that project;
- altering, stealing and/or falsifying research data used in research reports, theses, or dissertations;
- submission as one's own of any academic work prepared in whole or in part by others, including the use of another's identity;
- falsifying information or signatures on registration, withdrawal, or other academic forms and records.

More on academic integrity can be found here:

http://www.ramapo.edu/catalog_11_12/academic-policies.html?col10=open#CollapsiblePanel10