**Communication at its Best**

**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**
This course will focus on improving your verbal, non verbal, and written communication skills. You will take part in different types of communication experiences which are designed to develop your understanding and use of interpersonal communication. You will learn how to effectively express yourself using oral communication and writing through reading and thinking. Part of our class work will include discussions, and I’m very interested in what you’ll have to say. Please plan on being an avid participant. Remember that quite often, there is more than one way to look at a situation.

**Objectives**
We will learn what communication is, how it works as a process, and different forms of it. Many of the everyday things we take for granted can actually be explained by understanding what it means to “communicate.” We will also explore how to make decisions more effectively and work well in small groups.
Requirements
You will be responsible for all readings, homework, projects, papers, exams, and other in-class assignments. Your work must be typed, using the APA format.

Evaluations
A grade will be given for each assignment, project, presentation, homework, and exam. Homework and other assignments (including summer reading essays) are worth 25% of your final grade, a rhetorical criticism paper including a presentation is worth 25% of your grade, exams are worth another 25%, and your final is worth the remaining 25%. Class participation, or lack of it, may enhance or lower your final grade.

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
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 course fulfills two categories. The first is experiential learning, since we work on various activities in class. The second is interdisciplinary studies, since we are studying different forms of communication and how this process works.

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.

Attendance Policy
Students should attend all classes. If you miss three classes, your final grade will be lowered by ten points. Missing four classes will result in an automatic failure. Punctuality is also important. Two lates are equivalent to an absence (for example, 2 lates=1 absence, 4 lates=2 absences, 6 lates=3 absences, which is an automatic failure for the course). Leaving early follows the same guidelines. 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.

Makeup Policy
There will be no makeups, so please make sure you come to class on the day of an exam, and hand in your assignments on their due dates. I will not accept late work. If for some reason you cannot be in class the day an assignment is due, make sure I get it anyway either before or on that day. Give it to a classmate, fax it, e-mail it, send it by messenger.....it doesn’t matter how you do it, just get it to me. Keep in mind that EXAMS CANNOT BE MADE UP. If you are absent on the day we have one, you will receive a zero for it. If you are not in class on a day that we have class, you are considered ABSENT. Please remember that there is no such thing as an
“excused absence.” Even with a note, you were obviously absent. Contact a classmate or me for any assignments if you miss class. Your absence is not an excuse for not having completed work the next time we meet. If you cannot attend class the day an assignment is due and you e-mail it to me, make sure it reaches my inbox NO LATER than the start time of our class. Please remember to schedule your doctor appointments, court appearances, advisor meetings, and anything else AROUND class, not instead of it.

**Academic Integrity**
If you plagiarize, the penalties can become quite severe, and I become very unhappy. You’re here for an education, so don’t cheat yourself out of one. Make sure you read Ramapo College’s Academic Integrity Policy in the college catalog. If you are caught plagiarizing, and chances are good that I will figure it out, the result will be an automatic failure for the course, which will go on record with the university. Violators will be sent to the Provost.

All members of the 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.

**Procedure/Responsibilities**

The Office of the Provost has responsibility for the oversight and enforcement of the Academic Integrity Policy and for making the policy an institutional priority. The Office of the Provost 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. They are also urged to report alleged violations of the policy to the Vice Provost. Students have the responsibility to understand the Academic Integrity Policy and to comply with the policy in their academic work.

**Criteria**
There are four (4) 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 authorization from the instructor;
- 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 or endnote 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 George T. Potter Library Website: 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, transcript, or other academic record, or entering any computer system or College office or building for that purpose

- stealing, buying, selling, giving way, or otherwise obtaining all or part of any unadministered test or paper or entering any computer system or 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:

- citing information not taken from the source indicated
- citing 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
- submitting as one’s own 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

Reporting Violations
To ensure due process, any member of the Ramapo community who is aware of violations of the College’s academic integrity policy is expected to report the incident to the Office of the Provost. Faculty members who choose to resolve the matter themselves are urged also to report the incident to the Office of the Provost, since the incident may be a repeat offense, or there may be a subsequent grade appeal. More details on Ramapo College’s academic integrity policy can be found here: http://www.ramapo.edu/catalog-2014-2015/academic-policies/

Electronic Medium
Cell phones and other electronic media are to be turned OFF before entering the classroom, not on "vibrate." If yours makes noise, or if you’re reading/sending text messages during class, your final grade will be lowered by ten points for each instance. If I see your cell phone out, you will place it on my desk until the end of class. If our classroom doesn’t have a clock, please wear a watch so you can check the time. Cell phones should be out of sight, not on your desk or your lap. The same policy applies to laptops. Notes should be taken with a pen and paper.
Instructor’s Material


***Please bring your book, notebook, and pen with you to each class.

Class Meetings
Our class will meet in the B Building on Tuesdays and Fridays in room 218 from 2:00-3:30pm throughout the Fall 2014 semester.

Course Enrichment Component
Each course will include a minimum of five (5) hours of unmonitored appropriate experience outside of the classroom. This assignment will be graded and counts as a homework assignment. You will attend a public event, which we will discuss in class. Your written assignment, for which I will provide specific guidelines, will include your observation and evaluation of the speaker’s communication skills based on the communication concepts learned in our class.

Students with disabilities
If you need course adaptation or accommodations because of a documented disability, please let me know. I will also need a copy of the documentation.

Contacting me
This is not difficult to do. If you need to speak to me privately, I am usually available before and after class. If this doesn’t work, I can arrange to meet with you at a mutually convenient time. You are also welcome to e-mail me. The address is: SDinerst@ramapo.edu. In accordance with College policy, I will use your Ramapo College email address (@ramapo.edu) to communicate with you about all course-related matters.
Course Calendar

9/2  convocation (Bradley Center Arena)

9/5  course introduction
     essay topic and discussion based on summer reading

9/9  ch 1

9/12 typed draft of first essay is due
     peer editing

9/16 APA formatting

9/19 essay review

9/23 ESSAY DUE
     ch 3

9/26 ch 4

9/30 library visit

10/3 review
     second essay topic is given based on summer reading

10/7 TEST

10/10 typed draft of second essay is due
     peer editing

10/14 ch 5

10/17 ESSAY DUE
     academic advising visit

10/21 ch 6

10/24 review

10/28 TEST
10/31   ch 13
11/4    ch 14
11/7    ch 15
11/11   ch 16
11/14   CEC ESSAY DUE
        review
11/18   TEST
11/21   work on projects
11/25   no class
11/28   school is closed
12/2    RHETORICAL CRITICISMS AND PRESENTATIONS DUE
12/5    cont. presentations
12/9    cont. presentations
12/12   course wrap up

***additional assignments will be incorporated into this outline

***info is subject to change