First Year Seminar 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: technological competency, understanding diverse communities, oral communication, and information literacy. 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-

The college experience will be transformational for you and every new college student. In this course you will engage in discussion and assignments that compel you to think critically about the challenges you will face and overcome in the next few years. This course has been specifically designed to provide you with the writing, presentation, and strategic thinking skills you will need to be an asset to your Ramapo peers, get internships, and enter the professional community beyond campus. With readings and discussions rooted in history and the social sciences, we will explore the major issues facing college students including academic expectations, affordability, campus culture, and career prospects.
Course Goals –

1.) Students will understand the historical, cultural, and social origins of the modern American higher education system.
2.) Students will be able to formulate specific strategies to advocate for change in American colleges and universities.
3.) Students will take the class discussions and assignments and apply them to their own experiences at Ramapo College of New Jersey in the coming years.
4.) A central goal is to create student leaders who, no matter their major or interests, will approach college education with critical thinking in their work and empathy for fellow students.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Information Literacy Session</th>
<th>Oral Presentation</th>
<th>Peer Curriculum</th>
<th>Research Paper and Projects</th>
<th>Class Participation</th>
<th>Summer Reading Paper</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Develop the skills necessary to locate, evaluate, and employ information effectively.</td>
<td>1. Locate Information Effectively.</td>
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<td>2 Speak effectively in scholarly and creative contexts.</td>
<td>1. Deliver a central message that is easy to identify, vivid, and memorable.</td>
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<td>2. Use appropriate language for the subject and the audience.</td>
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<td>3. Deliver oral communications in an engaging manner.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>3 Use technology to communicate, manage, or solve problems</td>
<td>1. Use technology to communicate information.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Use technology to manage information.</td>
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<td>4 Understand diverse communities</td>
<td>1. Demonstrate understanding of the intersections</td>
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Peer Facilitators –

As an added resource for first-year students, each section of First-Year Seminar (FYS) will have one or two peer facilitators. These upper-level students will attend FYS classes and act as student leaders modeling engaged participation 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. 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 Student Success 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 required to schedule individual appointments with their assigned Academic Advisor for assistance with course selection and the development of a personal academic plan. If you have any questions regarding Academic Advisement please call the Center for Student Success at (201) 684-7441 or via email at: success@ramapo.edu

Required Course Materials (available in the Ramapo College Bookstore)–


We will also be using a number of sources for news in higher education, including the *New York Times*, *Inside Higher Ed*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Times Higher Education*, the *Huffington Post*, and *NPR* among other outlets you discover throughout the semester. There is no need to purchase subscriptions to any of these outlets. We will discuss this more throughout the semester.

**Course Requirements –**

Below, you will find a breakdown of each assignment for this course. Each assignment has been specifically tailored to help you get the most out of your first semester as a college student. Research essays are included to work on your skills at communicating complex ideas in writing to an audience. This skill will be invaluable in your future career. Presentations have been incorporated to help you communicate those same ideas verbally and visually.

With every assignment, it is my intention that you complete it while gaining a better understanding of how you can make the best of your college experience, advocate for change, and handle the challenges you and your peers will face in the coming four years.

**Class Participation – 30% of Final Grade**

For this course, class participation is defined as a student’s ability to be the **CEO of his or her own education**. This definition includes:

1.) **Attendance to Class Sessions, Participation in Class Discussions, and Seeking Assistance (20%)**: Students are expected to be at all class meetings. Each student is allowed *two absences per semester*—no questions asked. Any absence over two will result in a decrease in your class participation grade. 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. Students are expected to contribute their thoughts and informed opinions on readings and lecture material during class sessions. Seeking help when you have questions about lecture material or an assignment is essential to being the CEO of your own education. You can seek assistance via email, questions after class, or requesting an appointment during office hours. This will be factored in to your class participation grade.

2.) **Completion of Article Assignments for Class Discussion and Research (10%)**: Starting on September 13th until October 18th, you will be responsible for bringing an article to class from *Inside Higher Ed*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The New York Times*, or another approved news outlet. This will be expected for every class session until October 18th.
Each class session will have a different theme as noted on the syllabus and the articles students bring in must match this theme. You will be expected to use these articles to add to in-class discussion. I will provide general prompting questions to get you thinking about their articles and students will be expected to write very brief responses to these questions. These articles and very brief student analyses will be collected at random until the end of the semester, but you are expected to have your response with you on paper or on your laptop/tablet. In total, I will require you to turn in the articles five times between September 13th and October 18th. Each time you provide the article analysis, you will receive two points toward the ten total points.

**Summer Reading Essay – 10% of Final Grade – DUE on September 20th**

You will turn in an essay about *The Leavers*, our summer reading. The essay will answer a specific prompt, which will be announced at a later date. Per general first year seminar requirements, your essay must be at least 1,000 words in length.

**First Short Research Essay and Lightning Presentation - 20% of Final Grade**

**Short Research Essay (10%)** In sum, this paper will be 2-3 FULL pages in length and deal with a contemporary issue in higher education. In these papers, students must define the issue, provide historical context, and detail a possible solution to the challenge. Students must incorporate 3-5 carefully selected sources into this essay—a combination of assigned readings, articles used in class, and some outside research. Full details will be provided in class on September 27th. A rubric for grading the essay portion of this assignment will be provided on that day.

**Lightning Presentation (10%)** Your paper will also serve as the script for your lightning presentation, to be delivered in class on either October 22nd or 25th. Each student will need to craft an engaging visual component to their presentation—a PowerPoint or other presentation method. These presentations will range from 4-6 minutes each (the length of time it takes to read a 2-3 page paper). Full details will be provided in class on September 27th. A rubric for grading the essay portion of this assignment will be provided on that day.

**Important dates:**
- A 100-word topic proposal is due in class on October 1st.
- Lightning Presentations will take place in class on October 22nd and 25th.
- The final draft is due on October 29th.

**Group Advocacy Presentation - 20% of Final Grade – DUE on November 26th**

For this assignment, you will work in groups from November 1st to November 26th to draft an advocacy plan and presentation to address the issue of rising college costs for students. Much (if not nearly all) of the work for this project will be done during class time. In the past, these presentations have addressed issues such as: high cost of textbooks, confusing financial aid packages, expensive meal plans, and excessive student fees. Together, your group will attempt to figure out the root cause of the issues you select and come up with a proposed solution to the
problem. I intend to have these projects propose *real solutions to real problems* at Ramapo, which you can then implement to improve student life.

Each group will prepare a Group Advocacy Presentation to be presented in class on November 20th. These presentations will be 15-20 minutes in length. Each member of the group must speak during the presentation. Groups must also create an engaging presentation—visual and vocal—that most effectively communicates their ideas. A full rubric for this assignment will be provided in class on November 1st.

**Final Essay - 20% of Final Grade – DUE on December 17th**

You will complete 4-5 page paper expressing your vision for what a colleges and universities *should be*. This essay will serve as the culmination of your experience in this first-year seminar—*The American College Experience: What it Was, Is, and Should Be*. Specific details will be provided throughout the fall semester, but there will be a few key requirements. First, you must write to a specific, strong thesis. Second, you must use evidence to support your thesis. This evidence will be assigned readings, in class discussions, articles acquired for in class discussions, and other relevant sources.

This assignment will be introduced during the first week of class and revisited throughout the semester as students continue to develop their idea of what they believe college should be. It is my intention, as your instructor, to help you develop your idea of what college should be and write the best final essay you can produce.

**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 falls into the following first-year seminar category: *interdisciplinary studies*. Readings and discussions will be rooted in history and the social sciences.

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**Weekly Class Schedule**

**Week One**

*September 6: Course introduction and Discussion of Summer Reading*
  - **Reading:** Ko, *The Leavers.*
Week Two

**September 10:** Discussion of Summer Reading and Looking at the College Experience
- **Reading:** Ko, *The Leavers*.

**September 13:** Examining Contemporary Issues in College Life and A Walking Tour of Ramapo College of New Jersey
- **Reading:** For class, each student will bring an article related to college/higher education, but *the issue cannot be college affordability*. These articles must focus on a major issue in higher education, but the article may not be related to student cost (we will have already covered this). We will have a discussion on other challenges in the American college experience and look towards the first essay. You will also come to class with the article analysis sheet completed. This will be turned in at the end of the day.

Week Three

**September 17:** The Foundations of American Higher Education from a Market Perspective
- **Topic for Article Analysis:** Money in Higher Education

**September 20:** The Market Perspective and the Human Element in American Higher Education
- **Reading:** None. We will be discussing your summer readings essays and issues of humanity and ethics in colleges and universities.
- **Peer Facilitators:** Today, your Peer Facilitators will be speaking with you for 60 minutes to speak about alcohol education and bystander intervention.
- **Your summer reading essay will be due today via email by the start of class.**

Week Four

**September 24:** The Importance of Organization and Institutional Structure
- **Topic for Article Analysis:** Article About College Administration

**September 27:** Graduate School: Pros and Cons
- **Topic for Article Analysis:** Graduate School/Education
- **Today in class we will be discussing your first, brief research essay.**

Week Five

**October 1:** Issues of Professionalization and Employment
- **Topic for Article Analysis:** Careers for College Students
- **Today before the beginning of class you will need to email me a 100-word topic proposal for your first essay.**

**October 4:** College Access: Diversity and Affordability
- **Topic for Article Analysis:** Diversity in College—Admissions, Student Life, etc.
• **Peer Facilitators:** Today, our peer facilitators will be speaking about time management, note-taking skills, and test-taking strategies.


**Week Six**

*October 8:* Privatization in American Education  
• **Topic for Article Analysis:** For-Profit Colleges and Universities  

*October 11:* Molding Good Citizens: College and the World  
• **Topic for Article Analysis:** College and Its Uses for Government and the Public  

**Week Seven**

*October 15:* A Multi-Tiered, Multi-Faceted System  
• **Topic for Article Analysis:** Community Colleges  
• **Reading:** Labaree, *A Perfect Mess*, Chapter 8, “Upstairs, Downstairs”: p. 159-179.

*October 18:* The Perfect Mess at the End of the Road  
• **Topic for Article Analysis:** Wild Card—Anything you want!  

**Week Eight**

*October 22:* Lighting Presentation Day I  
• **Reading:** None. Come to class ready to listen to your classmates’ presentations and provide feedback.

*October 25:* Lighting Presentation Day II  
• **Reading:** None. Come to class ready to listen to your classmates’ presentations and provide feedback.

**Week Nine**

*October 29:* Realistic Advocacy: Working with Student Government  
• **Reading:** None. Come ready to discuss the issues you worked on for your first presentation and essay.

*Your first, brief research essay is due to me via email by the start of class.*

*November 1:* Paying the Price (for College)  
• **Peer Facilitators:** Today, our peer facilitators will be following up on academic advising.  
• **Reading:** Goldrick-Rab, *Paying the Price*, Introduction, p. 1-12.  
• **Additional Assignment:** You must come to class on this day with an additional article from InsideHighered.com that deals with college costs.
The requirements for the Group Advocacy Presentation will be detailed in class today.

Week Ten

November 5: Paying the Price, Part I

November 8: Library Research Session
- We are meeting in the George T. Potter Library today, Room L-201. Today, you will be learning where to find additional, scholarly sources to bolster your projects.

Week Eleven

November 12: Paying the Price, Part II

November 15: Paying the Price Part III

Week Twelve

November 19: Paying the Price, Part IV
- **Reading:** Goldrick-Rab, *Paying the Price*, Chapter 7, “Making the Grade” and Chapter 8, “City of Broken Dreams”: p. 164-217.

November 22: THANKSGIVING DAY…NO CLASS

Week Thirteen

November 26: Group Advocacy Presentation Day
- **Reading:** Goldrick-Rab, *Paying the Price*, Chapter 9, “Getting to Graduation” and “Chapter 10, “Making College Affordable”: p. 218-260.
- **NOTE:** In class today, each group will be doing a 15-20 minute presentation of their proposal to fix their college affordability issue.

November 29: Refocusing the Experience on the American College Student
- **Reading:** None. Come ready to debrief about your projects with another representative from the student government.
- **NOTE:** Today, you will be assigned to a group, which you will be working with for the remainder of the semester. Each group will receive a packet of reading related to a specific area of higher education—academics, admissions, student life, or advancement.
Week Fourteen

December 3: Crafting a Vision for an Institution
- Reading: Come to class with a single article related to the area your group was assigned. You will use this article as we look toward crafting a vision for the college or university the class elects to build.

December 6: Developing a Plan for Individual Units
- Reading: Come to class with a second article.

Week Fifteen

December 10: Working with Consultants
- Reading: None. Today we will have a few experts in higher education coming to class today. Each individual will be an expert in a portion of higher education which correlates to each groups’ assigned area.

December 13: Seeing What’s Next from the End of the Road
- Reading: None. Come to class ready for one final discussion about your final essays. The discussion in class on this day will be aimed at giving you one last opportunity for feedback on your essays as you look toward submitting the final draft on December 17th.

Week Sixteen

FINAL EXAM IS ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 17TH FROM 7:00-10:20PM.

Important Dates

First Day of Classes: September 5th
Last day for Class Adjustments (on the Web): September 11th
Last day to withdraw from courses with “W” grade: November 16th
Thanksgiving Recess: Nov 21st – 25th
Final Exam Week: December 17th – 22nd
Common Finals: December 22nd
Last day to request “I” grades: December 22nd
Final Exam Snow Make-Up Day: December 24th

Grading Scale and Policies –

A : 93-100  
A-: 90-92
B+: 88-89  
B+: 88-89
B: 83-87   
B+: 88-89
B-: 80-82   
B: 83-87
C+: 78-79   
C: 73-77
C-: 70-72   
D+: 68-69
D: 60-67   
F: 59 and below

Incomplete Grades— This will be given exceptional circumstances when approved by the instructor and when requested by a student who has satisfactorily completed at least two-thirds of course requirements prior to the end of a term, for reasons of illness or other emergency. When
the work is completed by the date indicated on the academic calendar, the grade assigned replaces the I. If work is not satisfactorily completed by the date indicated in the Academic Calendar, the grade is changed to F.

**Classroom Policies** – Laptop computers or handheld electronic devices (iPads, etc.) will be allowed in class. Cell phones must not be used during class.

**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.

**Electronic Forms of Communication**—In accordance with College policy, I will use your Ramapo College email address to communicate with you about all course-related matters.

**Policy on Academic Integrity** – Students are expected to read and understand Ramapo College’s Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found online in the College Catalog (https://www.ramapo.edu/catalog-2017-2018/academic-policies/). Members of the Ramapo College community are expected to be honest and forthright in their academic endeavors. Students who are suspected of violating this policy will be either required to meet with the faculty member (and in the event of a ‘responsible’ finding, reported to the Office of the Provost), or be referred directly to the Office of the Provost, which will adjudicate the matter.

**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: [https://www.ramapo.edu/library/citation-help/](https://www.ramapo.edu/library/citation-help/)

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
In order to ensure due process, any member of the community who is aware of a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy is expected to report the incident to the Vice Provost. A faculty member may choose to resolve the incident him/herself or send the case to the Vice Provost for review (see below). In either case, the faculty member reports the incident to the Vice Provost on the reporting form, which serves not only to report the incident but also to record the finding and the sanction in situations in which the faculty member chooses to resolve the case. A faculty member is encouraged to report an alleged violation of academic integrity within 30 days of the discovery of the alleged violation but must do so no later than the last day to submit grades for the term in which the alleged violation occurred. A faculty member may report an incident after that date, but only if he/she has new evidence.

More details on Ramapo College’s academic integrity policy can be found here: