

The Ever-Evolving/Always Responding First Year Experience Course



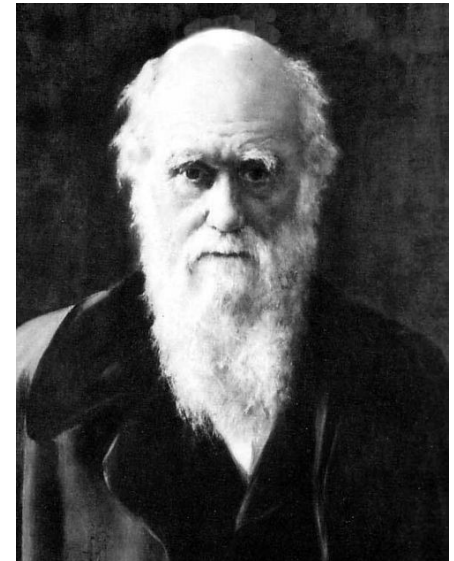
Conference on the First Year Experience –
Orlando, Florida
February 9, 2009

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Appalachian State University

The year 2009 is the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species* (24 November 1859) and the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth (12 February 1809).



1860



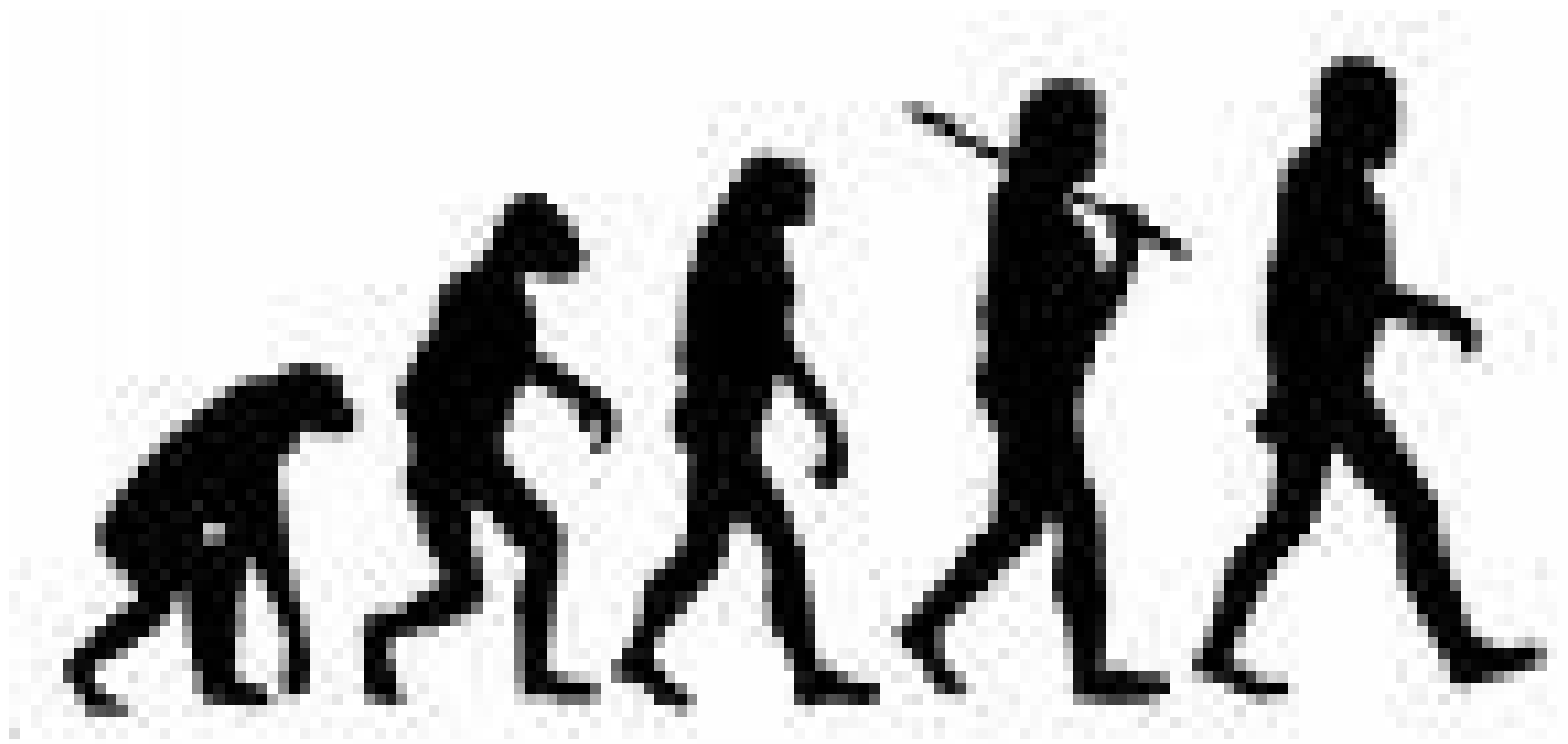
1881

Everyone and everything changes.

Freshman Seminars - An Opportunity for Supporting Student Success



How Successful is Your Course for Supporting Student Success?





1987 – 2007

Twenty years of growth and
success



Mission

To help students make a successful transition to college, discover resources offered by Appalachian, strengthen learning skills, broaden individual horizons, and move toward intellectual and individual independence.



Elements of Freshman Seminar

- 3-hour graded, graduation credit
 - Course Designators: Writing, Computing, & Cross Disciplinary
- Elective – enrolled approx. 2/3 of freshmen
- 22 - 25 students per class
- Common Textbook and Course Content
 - Syllabus; Class Budget; Evaluation; Required Readings; Group Interaction Course; Service Learning; Learning Skills; Campus Resources/Connections; Health and Wellness; Appalachian History; Liberal Arts Education; MBTI etc.



Elements of Freshman Seminar

- Extensive faculty development – 1 week paid training in May for new faculty; 1-2 day kick-off in August; 3 “all instructors” meetings during the semester; and monthly faculty support teams – taught by faculty, student development/academic affairs administrators, and community members
- Peer Leaders – training and support



Evidence of Success

- FS students retained at a 5-7% higher level; graduation rates higher
- 92% of FS students would recommend the class to other freshmen
- 93% of FS students believed that their instructor was approachable
- Campus scholarships; teaching awards; freshman advocacy awards
- National recognition and awards

Clearly, this was the right
course on the right
campus at the right
time.

So what happened?



SHIFT HAPPENED....

- New Administrative Leadership
- Ideas about a Signature Core Curriculum
- Better Prepared Students
- Increased Applicant Pool
- New Faculty with Different Experiences

First Year Seminars – An Opportunity to Support A New General Education Curriculum

Mission

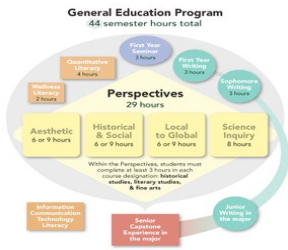
To introduce students to the rigor of academic study at the university level through interdisciplinary engagement with a variety of disciplines and perspectives, and to serve as the foundation of the University's new General Education program.

General Education Program

44 semester hours total



General Education Goals (for First Year Seminar)



Goal 1: Thinking Critically and Creatively

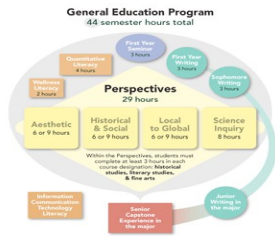
- Recognize, differentiate, and effectively employ appropriate and increasingly sophisticated strategies to collect and interpret information;
- Successfully integrate disparate concepts and information when interpreting, solving problems, evaluating, creating, and making decisions;
- Examine and evaluate how their own personal, historical, and cultural perspectives affect the discovery and generation of knowledge;

Goal 2: Communicating Effectively

- Articulate and comprehend effectively, using verbal or non-verbal communication suitable to topic, purpose, and audience;
- Use writing effectively to discover and develop ideas and to articulate positions in contexts of increasing complexity;

Goal 4: Understanding the Responsibilities of Community Membership

- Collaborate effectively with others in shared processes of inquiry and problem-solving.



ELEMENTS OF FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

- Utilize at least two different modes of inquiry
- Use engaging pedagogies and involve students in a shared process of inquiry
- Involve students in problem-based learning with a research/library component
- Help students make connections with faculty, other students, their courses, and the university through an intentional focus on community building and co-curricular involvement (e.g. service learning, cultural events, outdoor programs, etc.)
- Require the use of the Summer Reading Program book
- NOT be narrowly focused or an introduction to a specific discipline



A New Process

- Instructors submit an extensive course application
- A campus-wide faculty committee reviews the application and decides if the course meets the General Education requirements
- Faculty development is less course specific; greater focus on interdisciplinary philosophy rather than applied pedagogy



Evidence of Success

- Pilot Year Fall 2008
 - 45 sections; 866 students enrolled
 - 26 full-time faculty; 2 part-time faculty from depts.
 - 5 EPA academic/student affairs administrators
 - 7 non-affiliated instructors (adjunct; US 1150 only)



Cool Titles and Broader campus support

“Blue Ridge Parkway: Past, Present, Future” (history)

“The Brain: A User’s Guide” (psychology)

“The Study of Games” (computer science)

“Conflict and Peace: Understanding Genocide in the
20th Century” (history)

“Six Degrees of Consumerism” (communication)

“Stuff (in Appalachia): Where things come from,
Where they go” (Appalachian Studies, anthropology)

“The Power of E” (business)



Evidence of Success

Our Course

(in)decision.edu

The 2008 U S Presidential Election

What we lost, what we gained, what we learned...

“Finding our P.O.W.E.R. in another place.”

Questions?

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<http://firstyearseminar.appstate.edu>