FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

General Description
The First-year Seminar, required of all first-year students [except international students who must first take SPI 101-102], engages 15-18 students in a course of study that pursues a topic chosen by a faculty member, typically from a disciplinary perspective. These seminars are designed to introduce students to academic discourse, to be both reading- and writing-intensive, and to promote analysis and understanding that are contextualized—historically, culturally, and socially. The topics of study vary and reflect the creative and intellectual diversity of the faculty. First-year Seminars are structured to achieve the student learning outcomes associated with the stated general education goals of the College. The seminars are intended to fulfill the first developmental goals associated with “Knowing the World”: “Students will learn about different disciplines, their objects of study, and their approaches to knowledge, thereby establishing a broad foundation of knowledge upon which to build understanding and engagement.”

Goals
The purpose of the First-year Seminar is to:
1. Invite students to experience and value higher education and its academic expectations
2. Cultivate intellectual curiosity as well as creative and critical thinking
3. Introduce disciplinary ways of knowing and their permeable boundaries
4. Develop a sense of the historical development of ideas
5. Cultivate the written, oral, research, communication, and information literacy skills necessary for a productive and educated life (the ability to gather and assess relevant information and use appropriate technology to do so).

Outcomes
Students will meet the goals of the First-year Seminar by:
1. Reading texts and showing competence in comprehension, analysis, reflection, and critique
2. Dealing critically with complex texts and using language successfully as a tool for both thought and expression
3. Addressing issues and ideas by situating them within their appropriate contexts and applying appropriate concepts in interpreting and understanding texts
4. Producing written and oral work that show competence in standard written English and demonstrate the ability to construct and support a thesis; and conducting at least one substantive project that will evidence information literacy skills
5. Participating in co-curricular and extra-curricular learning such as Experience events, lectures, panels, or other activities.

Course Characteristics
- Regardless of topic, the course should be based upon close reading of texts, a range of writing about that reading experience, and understanding through contexts—social, historical, political, and/or economic (among others). These academic reading and writing skills will reinforce what students will be learning through the English composition requirement.
- Each seminar should incorporate a variety of pedagogical approaches including but not limited to lectures, discussions, presentations, and workshops.
• Seminars should be designed with multiple opportunities for students to write, in both informal and formal contexts. Examples of informal, low-stakes writing include: response papers, journals, and free writing. Formal writing assignments include multi-draft papers that require students to construct a cogent thesis and develop their argument by providing textual support and writing in coherent, standard written English. Formal writing assignments should receive repeated feedback from instructors. Sequenced assignments—assignments that critically engage previous readings/assignments—are encouraged.

• Reading assignments should train students in comprehension and analysis, and instructors should explicitly address the process of academic reading.

• Instructors are encouraged to integrate, via integrated or co-curricular assignments, learning opportunities provided by units like the Library, Information Technology Services, the Academic Learning Center, the Writing Center, Student Affairs, etc., as part of the students’ successful transition to Albright College.

• Instructors are strongly encouraged to integrate into class assignments the learning opportunities offered through Experience events and to consider developing such events on their own. Preliminary ideas for the goals (and not content) of first-year Experience events include: 1) the liberal arts; 2) disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity; 3) difference, diversity, otherness, and critical self-reflection; 4) ways of knowing—research, fact checking, data collection, experimentation, and contextualization, etc., and distinguishing between truth, belief, opinion, and ideology; 5) various modes of artistic and cultural expression and creativity; and 6) cultural and artistic figures, achievements, and characteristics across historical period and geography.

• First Year Seminar faculty must have taught, full-time, at Albright for one complete academic year.

• The First Year Seminar cannot be used to satisfy the requirements for the major.