

Generic SPARK Seminar Template (/course outline for CRF)

SPARK seminars introduce students to life at a research university. They ask students to focus on the nature of inquiry by exploring a particular topic over the course of the semester, engaging with campus and/or local resources, generating research questions, and presenting original ideas in writing and other forms of communication (visual, oral, and/or numerical).

Topics will be broad enough to be viewed from multiple perspectives, but focused enough that students can engage with the issues of the topic in some depth. They should be related to an area of research and/or interest to the instructor: part of the experience of SPARK is engaging with a faculty member who is sharing their expertise and passions with students, thereby sparking their interest in the topic and/or the spirit of inquiry and research more generally.

A sampling of topic ideas: Approaching Ethical Dilemmas; National Parks and their Conservation; Food for the Planet; What is Poetry For?; Why Stories Matter; Hip-hop as Music and Poetry; Women's Rights; History Now; Money and Politics; Poverty; Art and Social Change; Challenges of Global Engineering; Water; Dirt and Soil; Intersectional Identities in the Central Valley; America's Education System; Health Disparities in California; Political Rhetoric.

General Course Learning Outcomes are categorized by three larger Outcomes and Keyed to the GE program learning outcomes:

A. Students take an inquiry-oriented approach to the world that reflects engagement with the mission and values of our research university.

They achieve this being able to do the following:

1. They generate questions, identify problems, and formulate answers by applying appropriate theoretical, evidentiary, analytical and ethical frameworks from multiple intellectual perspectives
2. They demonstrate intellectual curiosity and an understanding of the nature of knowledge, discovery, and ambiguity and of themselves as learners, identifying their own values and talents.

B. Students become equipped with multiple tools of analysis to support accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

They achieve this by being able to do the following:

3. They can identify and use analytical tools from scientific, social scientific, or humanistic disciplines.
4. They are able to identify and evaluate sources of information.

Students communicate in a variety of ways to diverse audiences.

They achieve this by being able to do the following:

5. They use written, visual, oral and/or numerical modes of communication to explore and convey ideas, adjusting their communications depending on occasion, purpose and audience.
6. They work both independently and collaboratively.

Activity and Assessment:

- Courses will center around discussion-based session seminars that model collaborative inquiry based on shared readings and experiences.
- Additionally, each seminar ask students to engage in research by doing at least two small projects, which are assessed by the instructor. Between the two projects, students must do the following:

1. Define a research question.

The research question should be related to the section's topic, and the instructor will guide students in developing these questions.

2. Identify and engage with a campus or community resource.

For example: getting books out of library and writing annotated bibliography; lab tour or small experiment and written observations or report; vernal pools tour and write-up or graph of collected data and observation; attendance at a theatre production or concert and analytical review; visit to UCM art gallery and visual analysis; attendance at a campus lecture and response.

3. Conduct research.

Conducting research can involve finding books and articles and reading them; interviews; social or scientific observation, etc.

4. Communicate research in two ways, one of which is written.

For example: a lab report and a spreadsheet; an essay and an oral presentation; a written visual analysis and a PowerPoint presentation; a review and a performance; a written analysis and a data graph.

5. Reflect on ethical, local, and global issues related to the topic.

Students might do this by writing a written reflection at the end of the course, or by participating in a roundtable discussion in which they must contribute, for example.

Sample Syllabus for a UCM SPARK Seminar

“All the World’s a Stage”: Studying Performance

SPARK 010, Section 64

In this course, you will learn how to generate research questions related to performance, practice strategies for understanding and interpreting difficult texts and various types of performance, use composition as a tool for learning, improve your ability to write successful academic papers on any subject, and improve your oral delivery skills. To accomplish these goals, you will read and critique plays and essays about performance, watch theatrical, musical, and dance performances and films with a critical eye, and evaluate and respond to other aspects of daily life (football games, lectures, political debates, identity-forming) as performative gestures. In addition to thinking about what you might traditionally think of as “performance,” we will be writing about the way in which, as Shakespeare wrote, *all* the world is a stage.

In particular, we will focus on a number of forms of media, and the performance of identity in various facets of American life. We will identify the extent to which politics, the news, academia, sports, gender and racial identities, and writing itself are all performances. As such, these performances employ rhetoric, gesture, and persuasive power to convey their messages. You will have the opportunity to write about and argue for or against various social performances in this class, from the first months of the Clinton administration to March Madness, from a play *Downtown Merced* to your own identity as a Bobcat. And by the end of the semester, you will be perfecting your performance as a confident thinker, researcher, and writer who can effectively argue your viewpoint in the academic arena and wider world.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. You will generate questions and identify problems regarding performance by engaging with course readings and viewings.
2. By exploring performance from multiple angles, you will demonstrate intellectual curiosity and an understanding of the nature of knowledge, discovery, and ambiguity and reflecting on yourself as a learner, identifying your own values and talents.
3. You will identify and in some cases use analytical tools from the disciplines of theatre studies, literature, rhetoric, linguistics, sociology, and anthropology.
4. You will identify and evaluate sources of information about performance.
5. You will convey your research and ideas in written and oral forms, with due sensitivity to audience and context.
6. You will work both independently and collaboratively.

Required Texts:

A Pocket Manual of Style, 5th edition. By Diana Hacker. Bedford, 2008.

A Coursepack containing additional readings.

In addition, students must see one theatrical production in Downtown Merced as well as one additional performative event (sports match, concert, lecture, political debate, etc.)

Requirements:

- Paper 1: Review of a Performance: Evaluation and Persuasion 20%
After reading several theatrical and film reviews, attending a theatrical performance, and recording your observation, you will write a 3-4 page analytical review.
- Paper 2: Research Paper and Argumentative Analysis 30%
You will identify a research question, find resources (books, articles, potentially media) related to your topic, create an annotated bibliography, and then produce a draft and final version of a 5-6 page research paper.
- Oral Presentation 20%
You will share your research orally (and, if you would like, visually) with the class in a 10-minute presentation.
- Reading and viewing quizzes 15%
- Participation, including in-class group activities 15%

Weekly Schedule

Reading, viewing, and assignments are to be completed by the day they appear on the syllabus.

This class is divided into two related units: during the first half of the semester, we will be looking at various performative **media**: theatre, politics, sports, advertising, music, and movies. We will then examine performances of **identities**.

Unit A: Media

Week one: All the World's a Stage

Wed, January 7:

Discuss: William Shakespeare, from *As You Like It*

Week two: Theatre and Acting

Mon, January 12:

Discuss: "Interview with Judi Dench," "Interview with Sir Ian McKellen," from *Performing Shakespeare* by Oliver Ford Davies

This week: meet with me for individual conferences about your first paper.

Wed, January 14:

Discuss: Lee Strasberg, "A Dream of Passion"

Week three: Performing Presidential Politics

Mon, January 19:

No class: Martin Luther King Jr. observance

Wed, January 21:

Discuss: Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address"; Articles on Clinton's Inauguration

Week four: Sports as Performance

Mon, January 26:

Discuss: Michael Sokolove, "Football is a Sucker's Game"

Wed, January 28:

Discuss: Ted Kirk, for *Time*, "Where are the Women Coaches?"

Sunday, February 1: Superbowl XLIII on NBC

Week five: Advertising

Mon, February 2:

Discuss: Matthew McAllister, “Super Bowl Advertising as Commercial Celebration”

Wed, Feb 4:

Discuss: Martín Espada, “Coca Cola and Coco Frío”

“Nike’s Letter to Martín Espada,” “Martín Espada’s Reply to Nike”

Week six: Music

Mon, Feb 9:

Discuss: Steve Earle, “In Praise of Woodie Guthrie”

Bakari Kitwana, “The Challenge of Rap Music”

Wed, Feb 11:

Paper Workshops

Week seven: Movies

Mon, Feb 16:

Discuss: Reviews of Oscar nominated films, TBD

Wed, Feb 18:

Discuss: Reviews of Oscar nominated films, TBD

Sunday, February 22: The Academy Awards**Unit B: Identities****Week eight: Performing Life**

Mon, March 2:

Discuss: Erving Goffman, “Performances: Belief in the part one is playing”

Wed, March 4:

Discuss: Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”; Elizabeth Bishop, “In the Waiting Room”

Week nine: Academic Identities

Mon, March 9:

Discuss: “Doing Research” from *Rhetorical Visions*, by Wendy Hesford and Brenda Jo Brueggemann”

Wed, March 11:

Readings related to your research projects, TBD

Week ten: Nationality

Mon, March 16:

Discuss: Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence”

Excerpts from *Hamilton*

Wed, March 18:

Discuss: Barbara Kingsolver, “And Our Flag Was Still There”

Week eleven: Virtual Identities

Mon, March 23:

Discuss: EJ Westlake, “Friend me if you Facebook: Generation Y and Performative Surveillance”

Wed, March 25:

Workshops

Week twelve: Gender

Mon, March 30:

Discuss: Steven Pinker, “Gender”

Wed, April 1:

Discuss: Deborah Tannen, “Sex, Lies, and Conversation”

Week thirteen: Racial Identities

Mon, April 6:

Discuss: Martin Luther King jr, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Excerpts from Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

Wed, April 8:

Discuss: Nora Naranjo-Morse, “Ta”

Dagoberto Gilb, “You Know Him by his Labors, but not his Face”

Week fourteen: Local Identities

Mon, April 13:

Discuss: Excerpts from Cherrie Moràga, *Heroes and Saints*

Wed, April 15:

Presentation of speeches

Week fifteen: The End

Mon, April 20:

Presentation of speeches

Wed, April 22:

Final reflections

Sample Syllabi from Illinois Wesleyan University's Gateway Courses:

Gateway 100
What Is Poetry For?

Prof. Kathleen O'Gorman
Fall, 2009

Category Description

Gateway Colloquia are small, discussion-oriented classes designed to develop students' proficiency in writing academic and public discourse. Although each colloquium investigates its own issue or question, all focus on writing as a major component of intellectual inquiry. Students are expected to participate in discussion and to analyze, integrate, and evaluate competing ideas to formulate their own arguments about an issue. Topics will vary by section. Students must complete a Gateway by the end of the freshman year.

Goals

- To learn to use writing as a method of discovery.
- To learn strategies of receptive, responsive, and critical reading.
- To learn to use writing to participate in public discussion.
- To practice effective small-group discussion.
- To develop strategies for producing substantial, thoughtful writing.

What Is Poetry For?

This course is an investigation into what critics and poets have said about the uses and importance of poetry, for the individual and for society. By the end of the course the students should have developed a sense of why poetry persists, of the diversity of poetic uses, and of how emphasis on the importance of some uses over others may change over time. Note that this is not a creative writing course, but the student who has never tried to write a poem, or who has never read poems for pleasure, probably has not a sufficient curiosity about the subject to be happy in this study.

Required Text

Hall, Donald, ed. **Claims for Poetry** U of Michigan Press.

Course Requirements

1. Assigned reading in above texts and all hand-out material.
2. Completion of all writing assignments.
3. Completion of mid-term and final exams.
4. Strict compliance with attendance policy.

Gateway Colloquium: “Why Talk If We Disagree?”

Spring 2016 • Instructor: Narendra Jaggi

Textbooks:

Required: *Science and its Ways of Knowing* by John Hatton and Paul B. Plouffe
Supplemental materials will be drawn from other books, but you will not need to buy these books; you can refer to them in the Ames library.

Course Overview

In this discussion-oriented and writing-intensive course, we will try to analyze some contemporary debates that continue to divide our society. The specific topics/questions will be finalized after consulting with students in the class. But, in order that you may get a sense of the class, here are some examples of issues discussed by students when the course was last offered, eight years ago. What distinguishes science from nonscience? Should the National Science Foundation support research in homeopathic medicine? Should same-sex marriage be legalized? Should Creationism or Intelligent Design be taught in science classrooms in our high schools? Here are two other issues of great contemporary significance that we might choose to discuss this year. What should we do to address the issue of greenhouse gases and global warming? Many conservatives are claiming that nuclear energy is the new Green: Really?

The goal of these discussions is to develop and sustain a shared commitment to evidence and reason, to create a mutually respectful semantic community where we can have authentic communication even when we disagree on substantive issues and have competing ideas.

We will use iterative writing and responsive listening as tools for discovering and shaping our own ideas and to effectively communicate them to our peers. During the semester, you will generate more than 30 pages of writing, including informal writing, drafts, and revisions. You will write four formal essays or editorials of varying lengths. I will determine the topics for two of these, but the topics of the remaining two essays will be decided in a more collaborative fashion that invites input from students. These writing assignments will give you multiple opportunities to learn, practice and develop your critical thinking skills, i.e., investigation, speculation, drawing inferences, arguing logically, thinking independently, analyzing claims, and synthesizing ideas and information into coherent essays.

The guiding principle for writing in this course is captured by the following quote from Hemingway. (Really?)

Another writer, not as well known as Hemingway, said the same thing but in a much less eloquent fashion: “There is nothing called writing, only rewriting.” ~ Narendra Jaggi
Therefore, we will engage with your writing as a process that will include the following steps: creating an outline, getting feedback, draft, getting feedback, revision, getting feedback, and then submitting the final version. For your final essay however, you will NOT receive any feedback.

Our first discussion topic, which will lead to the first essay assignment, will be the question of how one might, or ought to, think and talk about the distinction between science, non-science, pseudoscience, and junk science, and how this, in turn, might or ought to inform many important personal and public choices. The primary text for this topic will be a skinny collection of twenty short essays, titled: *Science and its Ways of Knowing* by John Hatton and Paul B. Plouffe. Of these 20 essays, we will engage three

directly, and in depth, during class. The rest will serve as pertinent writings to draw upon as you deem fit for your writing assignments.

Grading Criteria

The following articulation of the grading criteria is intended to communicate to you what are widely considered to be markers of good and effective writing. So, you should read this section closely.

Your grade will be determined by the quality of your input during in-class discussions, and by the quality of two kinds of written work that you will produce during the course of the semester.

Re: In-class discussions

You will be expected to make substantive contributions, on a regular basis, to the in-class discussions. Regarding your contributions, I will ask myself a number of questions. Does your participation help move the conversation forward? There are many ways to do this: by bringing in pertinent evidence, by clarifying or sharpening the question at hand, by challenging claims, by questioning and revealing hidden assumptions, by drawing connections, by locating inconsistencies in arguments, by reframing questions, by sharing pertinent experiences, by synthesizing arguments, by dissecting claims, and so on. Are you able to disagree with your classmates and your instructor without being disagreeable? To what degree do you have the intellectual courage, and the humility, to rethink your opinions when persuasive evidence for the opposing viewpoint becomes available?

Re: Written work:

During this course, you will be expected to produce two kinds of written work: daily “meta-thoughts” and four formal essays.

“Meta-thoughts”:

During the first three weeks, after each class period, you will compose a brief reflection upon what you think transpired in the class on that day, how it affected you personally, and where you would like the discussion to go during the following class period. These will be due at 11:59 P.M. on that very evening. I call this exercise “meta-thoughts of the day”, a made-up word by which I try to convey that I want you to think about what you (and your class-mates) were thinking. Clearly, this writing will be informal in structure, but often quite substantive in content. For most students, it ends up being an intellectual diary of sorts.