

Courses have culminating projects designed to integrate content knowledge with habits of the mind they will need in college. One strategy for designing culminating activities for senior seminars is for high school teachers to work jointly with local college and university faculty. This helps connect the senior seminar courses to entry level college courses and could open the door to a range of innovative practices to smooth the transition from high school to college.

Although students earn a grade in the class, the diagnostic feedback given by the teacher and peers can help students anticipate pitfalls that could occur when they begin college and work more independently. Clear and consistent feedback are hallmarks of Senior Seminar courses.

Learning Outcomes

Key Prerequisite Knowledge/Skills for Success in This Course:

Mastery Level:

- The instructor should list here the skills that the student should have mastered before entering the course. It might be prerequisite courses OR it can be skill requirements.

Familiarity Level:

- The instructor should list skills that the student should be familiar with but is not expected to have mastered. Examples might include expected level of writing skill or familiarity with lab procedures.

Outcomes of this Course

- Learning outcomes for the Senior Seminar Courses are based on Knowledge & Skills for University Success. Outcomes will include academic standards as well as habits of the mind that have been identified as critical to student success in college. The habits of the mind include critical thinking, analytic thinking and problem solving; an inquisitive nature and interest in taking advantage of what the school has to offer; willingness to accept critical feedback and to adjust based on the feedback; openness to possible failures from time to time; and the ability and desire to cope with frustrating and ambiguous learning tasks.

Other critical skills include the ability to express one's self in writing and orally in a clear and convincing fashion; to discern the relative importance and credibility of various sources of information; to draw inferences and reach conclusions independently; and to use technology as a tool to assist the learning process rather than a crutch.

Below are highlighted some of the outcomes that may make a Senior Seminar course more rigorous than other high school courses.

- ENGLISH

In English courses, reading, comprehension, writing and conducting research come together for students who are often expected to understand the work of others and respond to it. They need to see readings in a historical context and identify an author's point of view, attitudes and values.

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They need to be exposed to a variety of genres and understand how authors create mood through a variety of techniques. Finally, they need to be able to explain their understanding, construct their own arguments, agree, disagree, summarize, critique, and formulate a personal response.

Students should make it a habit to edit and rewrite their work regularly. This is both a skill and an attitude. Feedback can come from the teacher, peers, or even community members recruited for their expertise. They need to learn when writing an expository essay that they routinely need supporting evidence, quotations, citations, and other material including graphic elements to summarize their data. They need to anticipate reader bias and address these issues.

Research papers may take a larger role in this course. They don't need to be lengthy, but be more complex. Students need to learn to formulate research questions, refine them, develop a research plan, and find out what is already known about a topic. Students need to differentiate between primary and secondary sources. Plagiarism and the rules that govern the use of material created by others must be emphasized. Writing research papers offers opportunities to see real world examples of the line between citation, summary and paraphrasing. Using the Internet helps students learn to analyze source material critically and to determine credibility.

- MATHEMATICS

Students and teachers should view the content knowledge mastered in high school as simply a set of tools to serve a more sophisticated goal, the development of mathematical reasoning. The ability to think systematically and logically is perhaps the single most important skill they can gain from studying mathematics. Students need to become adept at applying appropriate mathematical principles to real-world problems because most students use their math knowledge to pursue majors in college that employ math as a tool for study, not an end in itself.

Often students today have little awareness that mathematics is an important prerequisite for study in many fields: look at the need for math in carbon dating, amortization tables, predator-prey models for example. These connections can serve as a foundation for a capstone senior seminar course that does not function on new knowledge, but looks at problems associated with archeology, biology, or economics.

Thus a mathematics seminar could be problem-based. The problems could link math and science knowledge and could use experts in the community as partners in developing challenging problems. The goal is for students to receive in-depth feedback and diagnostic information on their college readiness, both in content knowledge and habits of mind.

- SCIENCE

The most important challenge in developing a senior seminar science course is to provide opportunities for students to "think like a scientist". When they do, students use the scientific process to gain insights to problems. These skills are the foundation of what they will be expected to know and be able to do in college science courses.

The goal is to create a rigorous, coherent alternative to the traditional science sequence that enables students to meet college entrance requirements while developing habits of the mind necessary for post-secondary success.

A capstone seminar for students that have completed two to three years of science could be organized around one or two problems that require the application of biology, physics, chemistry, and mathematics. The solution would be presented for public view.

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The seminar approach, with potential for group learning & other non-traditional instruction, can provide positive, motivating experiences for those who might not otherwise see the sciences or engineering as potential college majors or careers.

- SOCIAL SCIENCES

The social science seminar will also build on skills learned in previous courses. The key cognitive skill to be developed is analytic thinking. The bedrock is solid reading skills, particularly the ability to read an article or document closely with attention to nuance. Information is gathered not as an end in itself, but in service of the scientific method as practiced in the social sciences. Distinguishing credibility of sources generally and in particular of those on the Internet is vital to successful social science study.

The seminar format allows students to collect, analyze, and present data on a social problem or issue. Students make data-based presentations and suggest solutions derived from analysis and not just opinion. These products are be put to the test of public review and comment, an excellent way for students to learn to accept criticism of their work while understanding that others may have different viewpoints than they do. This broader perspective of civic engagement helps students get more out of a college level social science course.

- SECOND LANGUAGE

A senior seminar in a second language should have an application and an interaction component where the goal is to interact with native speakers or text. Real-world feedback is critical and connections in the community give feedback to the students on how well they know a language. Connections developed over time can develop into relationships with communities in which the second language is used. Projects and experiences can be included in a college application packet to demonstrate the ability of the student to handle adult responsibilities and appreciate people from other backgrounds.

Students Who Are Successful in This Course are Prepared For the Following Courses

High School Level:

- A well articulated high school program will enable the students to enter the listed classes and will find them challenging. The student will feel prepared for these classes.

College Level:

- Schools that articulate well with their neighboring colleges and universities will be able to list courses that the student could consider taking in their freshman year.

Textbooks & Reading Materials

An overview of reading materials can be included in this section. Or if the instructor has a list of materials in another word document they can copy it into this box and save time.

If students need any special materials for the course they also can be listed here.

SENIOR SEMINAR / Books PAIRED COURSES

Conley, David T.. (22 April, 2005). *College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready*. San Francisco, CA : Jossey-Bass.

Websites

<http://cepr.uoregon.edu/cepr.uus.php>

Knowledge and Skills for University Success are available for downloading from this location.

Published Articles

Parkes, Jay and Harris, Mary. The Purposes of a Syllabus. *College Teaching*, 50, 55-61.

This article contains observations about constructing a syllabus.

Behavior Expectations & Classroom Conduct

- Note: Below are examples of commonly used statements found in syllabi. If your school staff meets and discusses standard classroom behavior practices they want reinforced, the syllabus is an excellent way to see that teachers share this unified explanation to students.

All cell phones and pagers must be turned off during class.

No iPods or CD/MP3 players can be used in class

Be in the classroom and ready to start before the bell rings.

Attend all classes. If you have to be gone you are responsible for making arrangements to complete work and obtain information about what you have missed.

Meet all deadlines.

Be respectful toward others, the equipment, and the school.

There will be no eating and drinking in class.

Bring a notebook, pencils, and calculator to class every day.

French (or Spanish or whatever language) will be spoken at all times.

Grading Policies

GRADING

Scoring rubrics play a large part in grading Senior Seminar assignments. Rubrics for labs, for writing and speaking, and for writing a research paper will define the standards expected for assignments.

Grading policy should include the components in the grade and how much weight is given to each; policies for late assignments & make-up tests; policies on incompletes and partial credit; explanation of any requirements unique to the course (journals, sketchbooks, or participation as part of the grade.)

PLAGIARISM

Overt instruction will take place so students understand the difference between summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting. Students will be taught note taking methods that can help a student avoid plagiarism. Instruction will also take place on identifying sources so students can evaluate information for credibility.

S E N I O R S E M I N A R / P R A I R E D C O U R S E S

Course Schedule

Week #/ Dates:	Major Topics	Assessment(s) (Quizzes/Exams)
Week 1/Unit 1/Date	<p>A course schedule is usually organized by week or topic, but it could be in modules.</p> <p>The schedule should include measurable, understandable tasks and assessments. Examples are in the schedule to the right, but details should be provided for the students.</p>	
	The schedule will help the students understand the course topics, why they are arranged as they are, and what the format for the course will be.	Quiz
	<p>The schedule can point out features of the course that make it a Senior Seminar. For example it may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. dates and expectations for editing and rewriting 2. time-line for increased pacing 3. which learning outcomes the unit is addressing 	Paper
	Important dates should be in the syllabus.	Oral Presentation
Supplementary Information for a Syllabus	<p>Supplementary material an instructor may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helpful tips on study strategies, or how to write and take notes. 2. Tips on how to do well on assessments. 3. Give students a sense of how much time outside of class they may need to spend to be successful in the course. 4. Provide information to help students be more effective learners, including how to plan for the semester and how to allocate time and resources. 	
How a syllabus can create connections	<p>A syllabus can help students understand why they need to learn something. The instructor can include where the knowledge and skills learned in the course can be used in future classes or careers.</p>	

S E N I O R S E M I N A R /
P A I R E D C O U R S E S

I have read the syllabus: _____
(Print Parent Name) (Parent Signature) (Date)

I have read the syllabus: _____
(Print Student Name) (Student Signature) (Date)