

## First Year Seminar 089 Prospectus Form – Revised 2/16/2009

Semester/year the First Year Seminar (FYS) will be offered: Fall 2009

Date submitted: 5/12/2009

Submitting department(s): PHILOSOPHY

FYS Title: The Impact of Plato's *Symposium* on Western Thought

Instructor's name: J. H. Leshar

Rank: Professor

Instructor's e-mail:

### A) Faculty bio:

Provide a short paragraph with a description of yourself, including academic interests and personal information. This information will be used to promote your seminar, so feel free to brag a bit and be interesting. Please limit your bio to no more than 100 words.

J. H. Leshar is the author of four books and more than fifty articles on aspects of ancient Greek philosophy. He has held research appointments at Harvard, Princeton, and the Center for Hellenic Studies. He has also received multiple citations for excellence in teaching and was named a Distinguished Scholar-Teacher in 2003. Major publications include: *Xenophanes of Colophon; Fragments* (Toronto, 1992); *The Greek Philosophers: Greek Texts with Notes and Commentary* (Bristol/Duckworth, 1998); *Plato's Symposium: Issues in Interpretation and Reception* (co-edited with Debra Nails and Frisbee Sheffield), (Harvard U. P., 2006); and *Essays on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* (2009).

### B) Seminar description:

Provide a description that summarizes the seminar's content and goals using terms that will be familiar to high school students or that are defined within the description. We will use this description in various materials that describe your seminar. Please limit your seminar description to no more than 150 words.

The goal of this course is to gain a detailed understanding of a philosophical and literary classic, Plato's *Symposium*, and the ways in which it influenced the work of later writers and artists. The first part of the course will be devoted to gaining a detailed understanding of the *Symposium*. In the second part we will explore the ways in which the *Symposium* influenced Renaissance artists and writers through the publication of Marsilio Ficino's *Commentary on the Symposium on Love*. In the third part we will explore the importance of the Platonic view of love and beauty for modern writers such as Keats, Shelley, Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, T.S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf. In the second and third parts of the course student papers will provide the starting points for our discussions.

### C) First Year Seminar criteria:

FYS are expected to address five criteria. Each criterion is more or less relevant depending upon the seminar's subject matter, but instructors should be aware of the broader goals of our FYS program. To that end, please describe how the proposed FYS addresses the five criteria listed

below. For more information on the FYS program and specific resources related to these criteria, browse the Faculty tab on the FYS web site (<http://www.unc.edu/fys>).

1. FYS should be issue-oriented and advanced, covering a wide range of knowledge, and/or engaging specific issues or advanced, cutting-edge topics. However, FYS are not introductory surveys, and they cannot stipulate a prerequisite skill or course as a condition for enrollment. How will the proposed FYS meet this difficult criterion?

This course will explore the formation of the Western concept of love beginning with Plato and Aristotle, continuing with early Christian appropriations of Plato's concept of *eros* or 'passionate desire', and concluding with modern explorations of the concept of 'Platonic love'.

2. FYS should be methodologically self-conscious in the sense of focusing on how scholars pose problems, discover solutions, resolve controversies, and evaluate knowledge. How will this criterion be met?

This course will focus on the emergence of a philosophical approach to the study of human desire and contrast philosophical analysis with treatments of the same topic in literature and the arts.

3. FYS should involve active learning, encourage self-directed inquiry and enable students to take responsibility for producing knowledge. Describe the expected student participation and any plans for out-of-classroom or off-campus activities.

Each student will be expected to write, re-write, and then present to the class a substantial research paper on one of a prepared list of topics. Students will also be encouraged to develop skills in discussion and critical analysis.

4. FYS should attempt to refine students' communication skills. How will the proposed FYS encourage communication?

As above, each student will be expected to write, re-write, and then present to the class a substantial research paper on one of a prepared list of topics. Students will also be encouraged to develop skills in discussion and critical analysis.

5. FYS are the only undergraduate courses that do not require final exams, and instructors are encouraged to use multiple testing strategies and gradable components to accommodate students' diverse learning styles and varied cognitive stages. All FYS should have a minimum of three graded assignments, with at least one assignment graded and returned to students before the 8-week deadline for dropping a course. If class participation is graded, it is recommended that it not constitute more than 10% of the final grade. How will grades be assigned in this FYS?

There will be three grading opportunities: an exam on Plato's Symposium (at the end of week 6), a substantial research paper on a pre-assigned topic, and a comprehensive final exam.

#### **D) General Education requirements:**

All FYS are expected to meet some General Education requirements. Please answer the following questions, which are applicable to all General Education courses:

- Does the course require at least 10 pages of writing or the equivalent in intellectual labor?  
Yes

- For science, math, and performance courses, where little writing is typically assigned, does the course require the intellectual equivalent of at least 10 pages of writing outside of class?
- Does the course involve regular discussions? **Yes**
- For science and math courses, where regular discussions may not be appropriate, does the course require students to apply their acquired knowledge to challenging problems?

### E) Approaches:

Please answer the relevant questions if the proposed FYS fulfills an Approach. Proportion of course content is estimated by counting the number of class sessions or weekly themes devoted to the subjects considered. A FYS can fulfill only one Approach.

Physical and Life Sciences (PL):

- Does the course focus on scientific content and scientific method?

Social and Behavioral Sciences, non-historical (SS)

- Does the course focus on the scientific study of individual or collective behavior?
- Does the course draw on established quantitative and/or qualitative methods of analysis?

Social and Behavioral Sciences, historical analysis (HS)

- Does the course focus on the past and change over time, rather than the contemporary world?
- Does the course place human behavior in social or cultural contexts?

Visual and Performing Arts (VP)

- Does the course emphasize aesthetic content (e.g., art, architecture, music, drama, design, performance studies, film) that is nonliterary?
- Does at least 2/3 of the course content involve analysis of, or creative expression within, the visual and performing arts?

Philosophical and Moral Reasoning (PH)

- Does the course address the social dimensions of philosophical reasoning? **Yes**
- If yes, does at least 1/5 of the course content address questions of morality and values? **Yes**
- Does the course focus on understanding and critically assessing the truth, adequacy, defensibility, or value of the ideas being explored? **Yes**

Literary Arts

- Does at least 2/3 of the course content involve the reading/analysis/creation of literary texts? **Yes**
- If the course covers literature in foreign languages, the syllabus should indicate the language of instruction.

### F) Connections:

Please answer the relevant questions if the proposed FYS fulfills one or more Connections. Please note that proportion of course content is estimated by counting the number of class sessions or

weekly themes devoted to the subjects considered.

U.S. Diversity

- On what form(s) of diversity does the course focus?

The course focuses on diverse conceptions of love or passionate desire, from the ancient Greeks to major works of modern Western literature.

- Does the course give systematic attention to multiple social groups (at least two U.S. subcultures)? **No**

Global Issues

- Does the course feature transnational or transregional relationships, issues, or dynamics?

Yes, the course focuses on evolving conceptions of love from ancient to modern societies.

- Does at least 2/3 of the course content focus on transnational content? **Yes**

The World before 1750

- Would the course meet the criteria for the Historical Analysis category? (This is required.)
- Does at least 2/3 of the course content focus on the period before 1750?

**Yes**

North Atlantic World

- How does the course introduce students to the history, geography, or culture of North America or Europe?

**Yes**

- Does at least 2/3 of the course content focus on a North Atlantic region?

**Yes**

Beyond the North Atlantic

- How does the course introduce students to the history, geography, or culture of a particular region outside the North Atlantic?

**The first third of the course focuses on ancient Greek philosophical text and the middle third of the course focuses on the literature of Renaissance Europe.**

- Does at least 2/3 of the course content focus on a region or regions beyond the North Atlantic? **Yes**

Experiential Education:

- If the course is proposed under the rubric of undergraduate research, is original student research at the heart of the course?
- How does the research process influence the allocation of instructional time?
- If the course is proposed for EE under one of the other rubrics (field work, service-learning, engaged creative process), does the course meet the minimum hours requirement specific to the category?

- Field Work (at least 30 hours)
- Service Learning (at least 30 hours)
- Performing Arts (at least 30 hours)

**G) Syllabus:** Please provide a digital copy of a syllabus for this course.