First-Year Seminar Program

The First-Year Seminar program offers first-year students the opportunity to enroll in small classes with some of Yale’s most distinguished faculty members. Some seminars provide an introduction to a particular field of study; others take an interdisciplinary approach to a selected topic. Whatever the subject and method of instruction, each seminar is designed specifically with first-year students in mind and provides them an opportunity to work closely with faculty members and peers.

Approximately seventy first-year seminars across a wide range of subjects are offered every year. Enrollment in each seminar is limited to fifteen or eighteen students, depending on the nature of the course. Most seminars meet twice each week and do not, unless otherwise noted, presume any prior experience in the field. All first-year seminars carry regular Yale course credit and count toward the fulfillment of appropriate distributional and major requirements.

A list of the seminars to be offered in 2018–2019 is available in Yale College Programs of Study. Additional information about first-year seminars is on the program’s website.

Application to First-Year Seminars

Students apply online for first-year seminars and are admitted by a computerized lottery. For fall-term seminars, application takes place during First-year Orientation. For spring-term seminars, application takes place at the end of fall term.

Please note that the demand for many of the courses exceeds the supply of available spaces, and not everyone who applies to the program will be admitted. Students are permitted to apply to more than one seminar during each application cycle, but they should apply only to courses that they plan to take if admitted. For the spring-term application cycle, students who were admitted to a first-year seminar or to Directed Studies in the fall term have lower priority in the spring lottery, but they may enroll in a first-year seminar if space is available.

If you have questions about the program, please contact the Program Director, Dean George Levesque (george.levesque@yale.edu).