

Categorizing ‘Academic First-Year Seminars on Various Topics across Sections’ : a new Typology and Teacher Support Tool developed at the University of Liège (ULiège)

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EFYE 2025 – Leuven

May 26

Communication plan



A variety of First-Year Seminars (FYS)



Defining Academic FYS on various topics across sections (AFYSTS)



Creating a corpus



Objective 1 : An original typology of AFYSVTS



Objective 2 : A teacher support tool



Perspectives

First-Year Seminars (FYS)

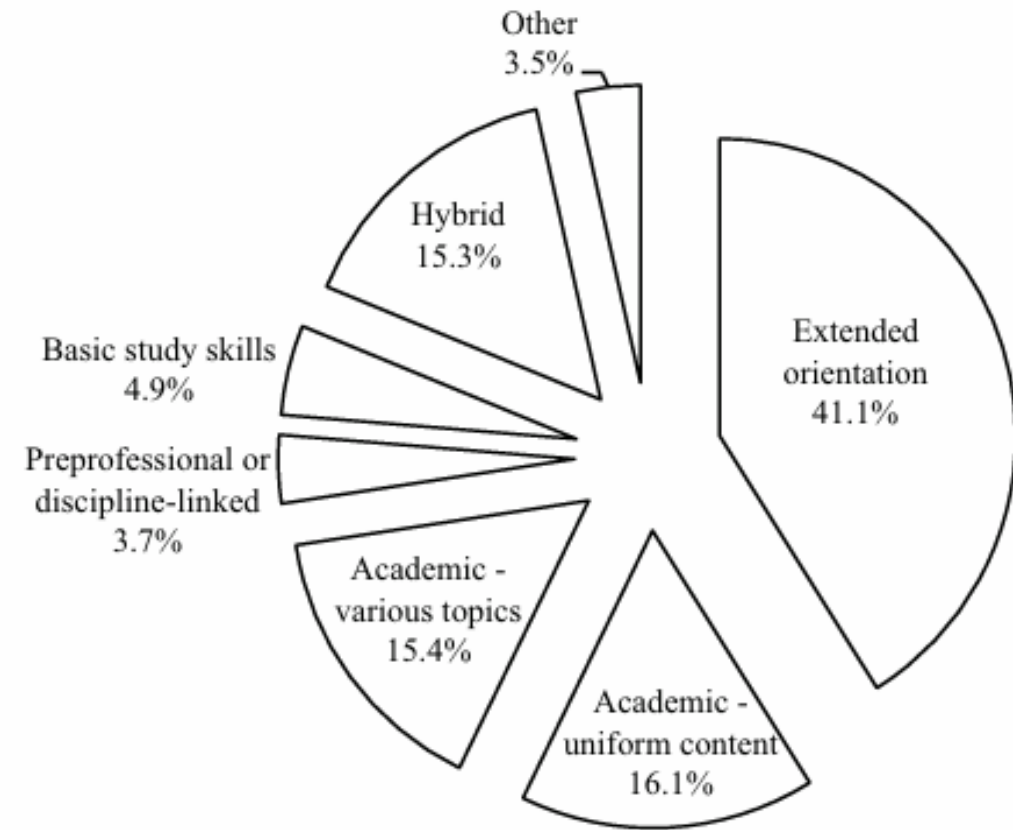
- By definition, a small discussion-based course
- In which students and their instructors exchange ideas and information (Hunter & Linder, 2005)
- facilitate learning and are a strong emphasis on creating community
- provide a logical structure for encouraging and cause, in an almost intrusive way, the active participation of students in learning and in the life of the institution
- Summative assessment and credits
- FYS are aimed at small groups (+/- 16 to 24 students)

85-95% of institutions offered a FYS
to their first-year students
(Greenfield, Keup & Gardner, 2013)

FYS typology

(Gianoutsos, 2015; Keup & Petschauer, 2011; Hunter & Linder 2005; Barefoot, 1992)

- Extended Orientation Seminar
- Academic Seminar
 - Uniform Content
 - Variable Topics across Sections
- Basic Study Skills Course
- Pre-Professional Course
- Hybrid



First-year seminar type with the highest total student enrollment (n = 862)
2009 National Survey of First-Year Seminars (Padgett & Keup, 2011)

Focusing on Academic FYS ?

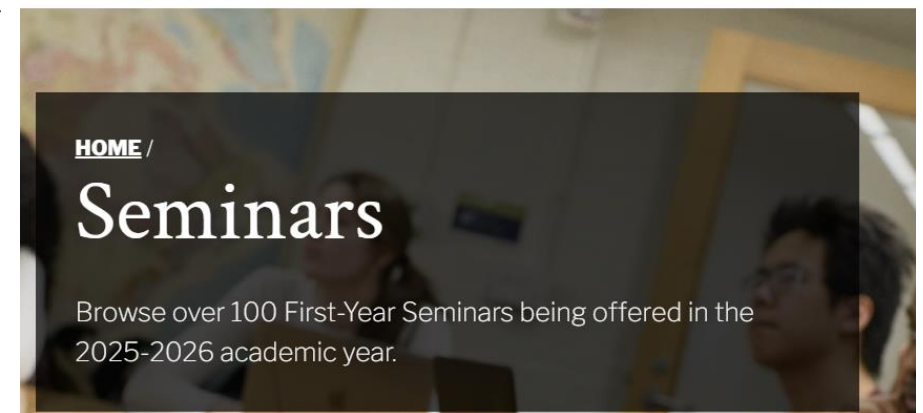
- Academic First-Year Seminars (AFYS) have become more popular than other types of seminars over the years (Tobolowsky & Associates, 2008)
- This popularity can be seen in the many FYS catalogues offered by American universities

→ The FYSs listed in university catalogues align with the definition of academic FYSs, particularly those labeled 'Academic FYS – Variable Topics across sections'

→ The uses of the term "Academic Seminar" do not seem to have stabilised across all universities



[About](#) [Seminars](#)



A composite definition of AFYSVTS

According to the scholars supporting the terminology (Gianoutsos, 2015; Keup Petschauer, 2011; Hunter & Linder 2005; Barefoot, 1992), we offer a composite definition of AFYSVTS with the following criteria :

- Seminars are “theme-based courses whose primary focus is on academic theme/discipline”...
- “but will often include academic skills components” (Greenfield, Keup and Gardner, 2013, p.93)...
- whose “topics can vary from section to section”...
- and that are “fashioned most often on faculty members’ individual areas of academic or personal interest and expertise” (Hunter & Linder, 2005, p.280).

Benefits of Academic Seminar on Various Topics across Sections (AFYSVTS)

- Introduce freshmen to the challenges and requirements of university studies (Keup & Petschauer, 2011)
- Help them understand academic culture and introduce them to the context in which they are expected to adopt it (Tobolowsky & Associates, 2005)
- Are likely to develop academic skills such as critical thinking and place greater emphasis on writing skills (Saunders & Romm, 2008)

Compiling a large corpus of (A)FYS

Objectives :

- To figure out the AFYS more concretely
- To understand the forms they can take in universities

- Reading FYS titles and descriptions from American universities selected in order of appearance in search engines
- Census of 1002 different AFYS from 57 American universities
- In a spreadsheet
 - 1) Seminars linked to the courses of study involved in this project at ULiège (modern languages and literature and political science)
 - 2) All seminars offered by selected universities

Compiling a large corpus of (A)FYS

According to ULiège organization

Academic		Faculty		Study					
Website link	year	University	Field	School	program	Title/Topic		Description	
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Lien	Année de mise en œuvre FYS aux UL	Université/College	Domaine d'étude	Faculté (Belgique)	Filière principal (Belgique)	Filière secondaire (Belgique)	Catégories de thèmes (Original vs Classique)	Intitulé	Objectif(s), Méthodes, Contenu, Questionnement (pour attirer, pas les questions = thèmes), Supports
https://manhattan.edu/academics/schools-and-departments/school-of-liberal-arts/majors-and-minors/first-year-seminar.php	2023-2024	Manhattan College	Sciences Humaines	Philosophies et lettres	Modernes		Pop	Roots Literature - Salem to Sabrina : Witchy Women, Witchcraft and the Witch Hunt in Literature, Film and modern Politics (ENG 151)	modern legal and political discourse, examining their implications for women, people of color, and the queer/trans community today. Some of the works we study remind us that women having power-supernatural or otherwise-remains a strange and scary thought despite all the progress we believe we have made to build a more equal society. Some of these works offer more radical and optimistic accounts of what women, people of color, queer/trans folx, etc., can do when they take back power they have historically been denied. We will also study works of philosophy, legal theory, and journalism, learning to craft our own creative and analytical responses
https://manhattan.edu/academics/schools-and-departments/school-of-liberal-arts/majors-and-minors/first-year-seminar.php	2023-2024	Manhattan College	Sciences Humaines	Philosophies et lettres	Philosophie		Académique général	Roots of Modern Age : Philosophy (PHIL 152)	In this course, we use film and television as a starting point for philosophical discussion and material for philosophical analysis. You will be introduced not only to important classic and contemporary philosophical theories, but you will learn how to do philosophy. You will learn how to recognize philosophical issues as they arise in film, text, and life, how to extract an argument from a text or a film and critically evaluate it in a rigorous way, and how to clearly and effectively communicate philosophical ideas in writing.
https://manhattan.edu/academics/schools-and-departments/school-of-liberal-arts/majors-and-minors/first-year-seminar.php	2023-2024	Manhattan College	Sciences Humaines	Philosophies et lettres	Philosophie	Histoire	Académique spécifique	Roots of Modern Age : Philosophy : Materialism & Its Discontents (PHIL 152)	Many modern philosophers are "materialists." This course examines the nature of philosophical materialism, traces its roots to earlier traditions, and considers important attempts to oppose this trend. Topics include: What is the nature of reality? What is knowledge, and can it be gained? Is the mind the brain or a spiritual entity? Does God exist? Do we have free will? What am I? How should we treat others? Is morality relative or absolute? What is the foundation of political authority? What kind of society should we create?
https://manhattan.edu/academics/schools-and-departments/school-of-liberal-arts/majors-and-minors/first-year-seminar.php	2023-2024	Manhattan College	Sciences Humaines	Droit	Sciences politiques	Psychologie	Académique spécifique	Roots Psychology FYS - Not All Wounds are visible : The Psychological Effects of War Trauma (PSYC 153)	The goal of a Roots: Psychology course is to provide you with an explanation and critical examination of the field of psychology, which concerns itself with the scientific study of the brain, mind and behavior. Students in this class will examine the logic and methods of psychological research and engage in analysis of contemporary social issues from the perspective of the discipline of psychology. Our specific course theme is war trauma, a phenomenon that has received greater attention in the aftermath of American military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. We will examine the many reactions to trauma - which include resilience, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) & posttraumatic growth - as well as psychological theories and empirical research that attempts to make sense of these reactions. The course uses psychology research articles, memoirs (David Morris' 'The Evil Hours'), journalistic non-fiction (David Finkel's 'Thank you for your Service'), films (Joshua Oppenheimer's 'The Look of Silence'), and magazine articles.
https://manhattan.edu/academics/schools-and-departments/school-of-liberal-arts/majors-and-minors/first-year-seminar.php	2023-2024	Manhattan College	Sciences Humaines	Droit	Sciences politiques		Société/Actu	Roots Sociology - Ethics of the Criminal Justice System	The vision of the Ethics of the Criminal Justice core course is to connect students with contemporary criminal justice issues from a social justice perspective. The students are encouraged to question historically held beliefs based on ethical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations. This includes an in-depth analysis on how criminal definitions are formed, the impact powerholders' discretion has on citizens, and the current state of crime, law enforcement, and corrections in contemporary American society. Using timely and empirically based texts and multimedia from a range of sources, students learn academic, peer-reviewed style writing, quantitative and qualitative based critical readings, and acquire proficiency in digital platforms like Voyant, podcasting and Padlet. By using an interdisciplinary approach to understanding criminal justice problems, solutions, and unresolved issues, students are able to develop an ethical perspective central to the Lasallian Mission more broadly.
									Running' is a leisure activity for an estimated 47 million Americans (according to Sports and Fitness Industry Association, 2017), a competitive sport practiced worldwide in multiple forms, and one of the most ancient sports known to history. This FSEM will explore what running and holding an identity of 'runner' or 'not a runner' means today. How is running positioned today in American society? Other cultures? What does it mean to be a runner, a member of a running community? How does running 'look' different across gender, race, and age lines? Using Jones and McPawen's conceptual model of Multiple Dimensions of

Two main objectives

Corpus conception

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graph TD; A[Corpus conception] --> B[Typology of AFYSVTS]; A --> C[Teacher support tool];
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Typology of AFYSVTS

(I) Present a **typology of AFYSVTS** directly derived from the analysis and categorisation work carried out by our team after the systematic constitution of the corpus

Teacher support tool

Categories of AFYSTS

For the collection of seminars, themes and descriptions were read by 3 researchers. Coding schemes corresponding to AFYSVTS subcategories emerged from this first reading. The following categories emerged from discussions between researchers :

a) Academic themes

- General academic themes
- Specific academic themes

b) Pop culture topics

c) Social issues / current affairs

d) Focusing on school and personal transition

Each seminar has been tagged by these 3 researchers according to its main thematic entry point using these five AFYSVTS categories.

This categorisation process involved reaching an agreement and consensus among the researchers.

Categories of AFYSTS

a) **Academic themes**

- **General academic themes**
- Specific academic themes

b) Pop culture topics

c) Social issues / current affairs

d) Focusing on school and personal transition

Categories of AFYSTS

a) Academic themes

- **General academic themes**

- seminar with academic topic explicitly related to some academic or disciplinary fields of study
- whose thematic/disciplinary scope is large

Philosophical Questions

Biodiversity

Structural Biology

Asian Studies FYS

A Tour of Biological
Anthropology

Categories of AFYSTS

a) Academic themes

- General academic themes
- **Specific academic themes**
 - seminar with academic topic explicitly/implicitly related to an academic or disciplinary object of study
 - with a narrow focus on more specific topic or theme

Shakespeare's the
Tragedy Of King
Lear and The Tempest

The Secrets Of Stradivarius
or What Makes the Violin
Sound Beautiful ?

Language and Reality
in Postclassical Science and
Postmodern Literature

Where are you from?
Ancestry in the Age of
Genomics

Revolution, America in
1776 and France in 1789

Categories of AFYSTS

a) Academic themes

b) Pop culture topics

- whose subject entry is a pop culture topic, that appeals to many people
- the main subject refers to films, series, music, games, sports, etc.

What does Mona Lisa Have
to Smile about Anyway?

Gaming the Middle Ages

Star Wars

Game of Thrones and the
Logic of Political Survival

Salem to Sabrina : Witchy Women,
Witchcraft and the Witch Hunt in
Literature, Film and modern Politics

Categories of AFYSTS

a) Academic themes

b) Pop culture topics

c) Social issues / current affairs

- a theme that deals with a social or current issue: LGBT, gender, climate change, war, AI, etc.

Philosophy and Climate Change

Media in our Life

Science in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

Queers behind bars :
representation of LGBTQ+
in prison narratives

Rethinking Identity & Utopia : Race,
Class & Gender in the 21st century

Categories of AFYSTS

- a) Academic themes
- b) Pop culture topics
- c) Social issues / current affairs
- d) Focusing on school and personal transition**
 - The highlights specific aspects of students' transition from secondary school to university

Who succeeds in College ?

FYS College of Information
Sciences and Technology

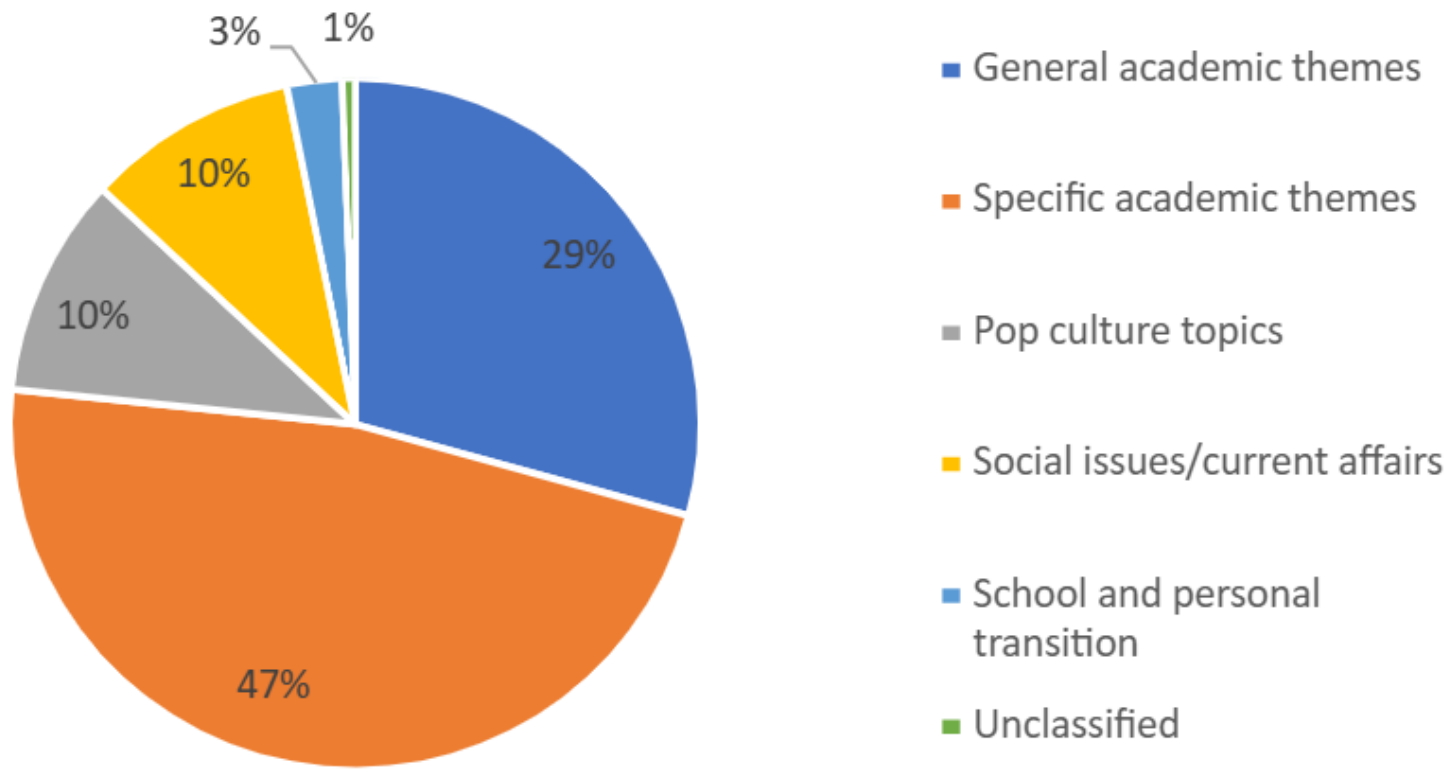
Welcome to College: The
Novel

In our Own backyard :
Discovering the Wonders
of th Hudson Valley

The Twenty-First Century Researcher

Categories of AFYSVTS : quantitative vision

Proportion of FYS categories in the corpus (n = 1002)



- Largest proportion of specific academic themes
- More than 75% of themes have a purely academic entry
- Pop themes less represented than expected

Two main objectives

Corpus conception

```
graph TD; A[Corpus conception] --> B[Original typology of AFYSTS]; A --> C[Teacher support tool];
```

Original typology of AFYSTS

(1) Present **an original typology of AFYSTS** directly derived from the analysis and categorisation work carried out by our team after the systematic constitution of the corpus

Teacher support tool

(2) Present **the use of this corpus as a teacher support tool** developed in the context of the FYS implementation project at the University of Liège

Teacher Support Tool

The corpus is used as a support teacher tool as a bank of examples (Delserieys & Martin, 2016)

- Help teachers who wish to create their seminar to visualize what AFYS are
 - FYS aren't part of university life in French-speaking Belgium
 - Blurred representation of seminars for most teachers
- Source of inspiration for teachers :
 - To find a seminar topic
 - To choose a title for their seminar
 - To write their seminar description

Teacher Support Tool

As it is in a spreadsheet, the corpus is relatively easy to handle

- Teachers can select the seminars relevant to them by selecting or sorting them in the table according to :
 - A discipline (biology, medicine, psychology, ...)
 - A category of AFYSTS (academic, pop, current affairs, transition)

E	F	G	H
Faculté (Belgique)	Filière principale (Belgique)	Filière secondaire (Belgique)	Catégories de thèmes (Original vs Classique)
Sciences sociales	Anthropologie		
Sciences sociales	Anthropologie		
Sciences sociales	Anthropologie	Sciences politiques	Académique général

Filière principale (Belgique)

Trier

Par couleur :

Filtrer

Par couleur :

Choisir

Rechercher

- ☐ Business/management
- ☒ Chimie
- ☐ Classiques
- ☐ Criminologie
- ☒ Droit
- ☐ Economie
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Général

☒ Appliquer automatiquement

Teacher Support Tool

- The methods and objectives of each AFYS description are highlight using colour codes
 - **Methods** & **Objectives**

Roots Sociology - Ethics of the Criminal Justice System	The vision of the Ethics of the Criminal Justice core course is to connect students with contemporary criminal justice issues from a social justice perspective. The students are encouraged to question historically held beliefs based on ethical, philosophical, and theoretical foundations. This includes an in-depth analysis on how criminal definitions are formed, the impact powerholders' discretion has on citizens, and the current state of crime, law enforcement, and corrections in contemporary American society. Using timely and empirically abase texts and multimedia from a range of sources, students learn academic, peer-reviewed style writing, quantitative and qualitative based critical readings, and acquire proficiency in digital platforms like Voyant, podcasting and Padlet. By using an interdisciplinary approach to understanding criminal justice problems, solutions, and unresolved issues, students are able to develop an ethical perspective central to the Lasallian Mission more broadly.
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→ The tool inspires teachers in their choice of topic but also **encourages them to reconsider other pedagogical components.**

Teacher Support Tool

This corpus has been successfully used in a pilot project aimed at implementing and supporting AFYSVTS at the ULiège, here is some feedbacks from participating teachers :

*It's **interesting to see what's being done, particularly for** certain seminars that are a bit more **pop culture**. So you think, oh yes, we can go that far. (T3)*

*It enabled me **to see what existed and what I wanted...** I'd say perhaps... to make it clear that the way I wanted to approach the subject did in fact correspond to the spirit of this kind of exercise. (T4)*

→ The corpus helps teachers to visualize seminars

Teacher Support Tool

This corpus has been successfully used in a pilot project aimed at implementing and supporting AFYSVTS at the ULiège, here is some feedbacks from teachers :

*[...] it prompted me to try and **produce an original title.** (T8)*

*I thought it was a very impressive collection of data, er... but **it was too much.** (T1)*

*I think it allowed me **to define my own path** because I wanted to be somewhere in between... I didn't want to do something completely, just completely playful but not something that you could just as easily do as a normal course.(T5)*

→ The corpus is a source of inspiration for teachers to create a seminar

Perspectives

Objective 1 : Orginal Typology Of AFYSTS	Objective 2 :Teaching Support Tool
- Update the corpus - Enhance the granularity of the categories	- Search for seminars in other fields to expand the bank of examples for teachers in other faculties/schools. - Establish relevant selections of examples to facilitate the representation of FYS

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AFYS in ULiège (2024-2025)

Modern Languages and Literature

Topics	AFYSTS category
Esprits disciplinés, ou discipline de l'esprit ?	Academic – General
#Kafka – à la découverte d'une figure mythique	Pop
Au-delà des mots : la lecture comme outil de pensée	Academic – Specific
Langue et idéologie : déconstruire les stéréotypes de genre	Academic – Specific

AFYS in ULiège (2024-2025)

Political Science

Topics	AFYSTS category
La sentence est irrévocable : Négocions une majorité politique en Belgique	Pop
Comment est-ce qu'on connaît ce que l'on connaît ?	Academic – General
Jeux et enjeux internationaux	Academic – General
Tous les coups sont permis : les coulisses du pouvoir des institutions européennes	Academic – Specific
De Léopold II, Roi des Belges à Black lives matter	Current affairs