

Section 1

What is Odyssey?

History

Course Foundation

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Course Goals, Requirements, and Curriculum

Information about First Year Students

What's in a Name? The Story Behind OSU Odyssey

You might have wondered where the name “OSU Odyssey” came from and why it was selected? As the story goes, in the spring of 1997 the members of the Retention Work Group were discussing possible names for the then-called “first year experience campus cultures course.” We asked for input on some names we had brainstormed; “OSU Experience,” “Freshman Forum,” “How to Do OSU”. None of them seemed just right. During these discussions, we started thinking about our first year students, who they are, and what their expectations of a university will be. We noted that most of these students would be in the Class of 2001. Thinking of the year 2001 immediately took us to remembering about when we first saw the movie, “2001: A Space Odyssey,” and its wonderful imagery. This led us to thinking about the word “odyssey.” As we found in the dictionary, an “odyssey” is a long wandering or series of travels with many adventures and a positive outcome. What a great description of a student’s experiences at a university and beyond! And so, “OSU Odyssey” became the name.

“OSU Odyssey” is a perfect name for the course for another reason as well. As you know, “The Odyssey” is the epic tale attributed to Homer, which describes ten years of wanderings of Odysseus upon returning home after the siege of Troy. The word “mentor” actually comes from “The Odyssey.” Odysseus asked his friend, Mentor, who was a wise woman teacher, to look after his son while he left on a journey. Mentor guided, protected, supported, and loved the child until his father returned. Thus, we come to think of mentors as those who guide and nurture the growth of others.

In helping our new students in making their transition to OSU a little bit easier, you will be serving a very important mentor role. Being a mentor does not mean that you have to know all of the answers. In fact, according to the Tao mentoring process, “to be a good teacher, one must be a good student. To be a good student one must learn well what he or she will teach.” Just by being open, honest, patient, encouraging, nonjudgmental, and trusting with your students, you will succeed in being a wonderful mentor to the students in your class.

I believe the following story describes the mentoring relationship well. A father asked his 3-year old son to come to the edge of the pool and jump. The boy said, “No, I am scared.” The father again encouraged him to come. The boy came to the edge but did not jump. The father said, “I will protect you. It is fun.” And the boy jumped and screamed with incredible joy.

Thank you for helping our new students take that first jump!

Huang, C.A. & Lynch, J. (1995). “Mentoring; The Tao of Giving and Receiving Wisdom.” New York: Harper Collins.

The Foundation of the OSU Odyssey Program

The Well-Oriented Student:

- ∧ Has healthy/constructive relationships with instructors.
 - Student interacts confidently with instructors
 - Student expresses needs clearly
 - Junior-senior learner relationship
- ∧ Has healthy/constructive relationships with self and other students.
 - Responds to challenges positively
 - Has friends
- ∧ Has career/academic direction, or is engaged on the process of discovering that direction.
- ∧ Has vocational/co-curricular involvement.
- ∧ Has a sense of belonging/membership.
- ∧ Cares about and has pride in the university.
- ∧ Is aware of and can access resources on campus.
- ∧ Understands the shared values of the academic community and accepts the responsibilities of living within those values.
- ∧ Is academically successful (either self-defined OR consistent with prior/predicted performance).
- ∧ Is a participant (not just in attendance) in the intellectual pursuit.
- ∧ Is able to make good decisions about health, personal safety, and well being.
- ∧ Has a sense of independence.

What does the university need to do to orient students effectively?

- ∧ Provide a meaningful academic experience for students.
- ∧ Focus on serving the needs of students.
- ∧ Create an environment that provides foundational elements for academic success.
- ∧ Transmit a sense of community and ethic of care.
 - Students receive full membership at point of entry.
 - Members understand the importance of a new member and take responsibility for welcoming new members.
- ∧ Articulate and participate in a successful orientation program.
- ∧ Exercise care for learning, growth, and development of students and all community members.
- ∧ Take responsibility to exceed student expectations for the university experience.

Three Tier Approach to New Student Transition

OSU START

A summer orientation that involves registration and advising, and includes programs for the parents/family members of new students.

OSU CONNECT

Fall new student orientation that involves social, educational, cultural and recreational activities before the start of classes.

OSU ODYSSEY

Extended orientation course offered to new students that covers understanding higher education, transition issues, academic competencies, social integration, and various campus resources.

ROLE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDENT PEER LEADER

Three Purposes of a Student Peer Leader:

1. Administration/teaching of class.
2. Facilitation of the peer perspective of OSU.
3. Community building within the class.

Student Peer Leaders as Resources:

- Informal student culture - peer leaders are students themselves and have a good understanding of the student culture at OSU.
- Actual procedures - students often have questions/concerns about specific procedures (e.g., registration, dropping a class, signing up for an ASOSU task force) related to being a student at OSU. Peer leaders are familiar with how one actually goes about these procedures.
- Debates about student issues - peer leaders can offer the "student perspective" regarding issues that come up in class.
- Can meet with students outside of class - peer leaders can assist in organizing out-of-class connections with students.

Possible Roles:

- *Representative* or advocate for the student point of view.
- *Expert* on specific topics.
- *Mediator* between students or students/faculty.

Coach or mentor to students.

EXPECTATIONS OF AN ALS 111/112 OSU ODYSSEY INSTRUCTOR

- 1) Be enrolled for the appropriate credits of ALS 410 Internship. Attend scheduled meetings for ALS 410. The instructor for ALS 410 is Marcus Langford.
- 2) Organize your course according to the purpose and goals of ALS 111/112. You can accomplish this either by using or adapting the sample course syllabi included in this Resource Notebook or designing your own course syllabus.
- 3) Attend each class meeting. When the going gets tough, the tough keep attending.
- 4) Become acquainted with each student in the class, address them by name, and help create a sense of community.
- 5) Create an active learning environment in which students are familiar with one another and build a sense of community. Provide opportunities throughout the term for students to interact, both in and out of class. Small group discussions, team or group activities, and student participation are encouraged.
- 6) Utilize responses to students' writing activities, discussions, or one-on-one meetings to refer them to appropriate offices on campus for assistance in academic or personal matters. Establishing e-mail contact with students may facilitate this.
- 7) Utilize videos, guest speakers, resource visits, or Backstage OSU tours/activities in your class. Contact Marcus Langford by e-mail at Marcus.Langford@oregonstate.edu or call 737-9811 for assistance if you need it.
- 8) Provide a self-evaluation of your performance as an instructor. Forms will be distributed toward the end of the term.
- 9) Near the end of the term distribute student course evaluations and return completed forms to Marcus Langford, Student Orientation and Retention, 150 Kerr Administration.

COURSE GOALS, REQUIREMENTS, AND CURRICULUM

Purpose of the Course:

The overall purpose of OSU Odyssey is to assist students in making their transition to Oregon State University. More specifically, the purposes are:

1. To welcome students as members of OSU's community of scholars and to introduce them to the rights and responsibilities of being a student at OSU.
2. To facilitate students' learning of skills needed to succeed at OSU and to take an active role in the learning process.

Desired Learner Outcomes:

1. Foster a sense of classroom community.
2. Explore the purpose, value and expectations of higher education.
3. Know what it means to belong to the OSU community of scholars and the larger community around us.
4. Understand how students learn and develop skills necessary to achieve success.
5. Explore social, emotional, physical and spiritual elements of personal development and how they contribute to student success.
6. Connect the present academic experience to future personal and career goals.

Critical Course Content:

1. COMMUNITY BUILDING
 - A. A key to helping students make a successful transition is providing classroom community building, while engaging in activities that will bring about expected learner outcomes.
2. UNDERSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION
 - A. Exploring the purpose, value and expectations of higher education by:
 1. Understanding the difference between high school and college.
 2. Understanding higher education in America.
 3. Understanding the purpose of general education and a liberal arts curriculum.
 4. Connecting with members of the community of scholars (professor, advisor, GTA, staff).
 5. Realizing the purpose of experiential learning (research, internships, international study, campus involvement, campus employment).
3. BELONGING TO A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS
 - A. Knowing what it means to belong to the OSU community of scholars and the larger, local, national and international community around us by:
 1. Understanding the OSU mission and organizational structure.
 2. Connecting to OSU history and traditions.
 3. Understanding the rights and responsibilities of OSU students.
 4. Embracing OSU as a diverse community of scholars.
 5. Understanding the importance of utilizing services on campus.
 6. Looking beyond OSU – opportunities locally, nationally, and internationally to enhance and apply knowledge.

4. Academic Success – Learning How To Learn
 - A. Understanding how students learn and develop skills necessary to achieve academic success.
 - B. Understanding learning styles and how different styles affect learning.
 - C. Learning study suggestions, time and behavior management.
 - D. Accessing information: library, computing services, advising services.

5. SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT
 - A. Exploring social, emotional, physical, and civic elements of personal development and how they contribute to student success by:
 1. Understanding key elements of self that can lead to a holistic self-understanding.
 2. Understanding student development.
 3. Managing stress and developing coping skills.
 4. Understanding how outside influences affect student learning/success.
 5. Promoting healthy living and wellness.
 6. Understanding civic responsibilities and service learning.

6. LIFE PLANNING
 - A. Connecting the present academic experience to future personal and career goals by:
 1. Encouraging long range plans, goals, and decisions.
 2. Understanding the relationship of OSU experiences to career goals and personal success.
 3. Understanding issues in career exploration and planning.
 4. Encouraging responsible money management.

Course Activities

These learning outcomes can be achieved in a number of ways. Course activities are included for each of the topic areas to assist you in your planning and implementing of the course.

Grading/Credit

ALS 111 OSU Odyssey carries one credit hour and is graded Pass/No Credit (P/N). Each instructor must publish the requirements for achieving a Pass in the course syllabus (see sample syllabi). Whereas attendance cannot be used as the sole means of determining the course grade, assignments should be structured so that students cannot pass without attending most, if not all, classes.

Remember When You Were a First-Year Student?

At some point in time, all of us were first-year students ourselves. Somehow we all managed to successfully make the transition to college; although there may have been many bumps, hills, and detours along the way.

Please take a few minutes and think about your first year in college:

- What year was it?
- Who was the President of the United States or the leader of your country of origin/residence?
- What was a major world event that year?
- What were the popular fashions or fads of that year?
- Did you live on or off campus?
- Do you remember your roommate?
- Do you remember your academic advisor? If so, what was that person like?
- Did you have a major? Did you eventually graduate in the same field?
- Do you remember any of your professors? What were the characteristics of the professor you liked the most? What were the characteristics of the professor you liked the least?
- Do you remember any particular text or book you read that year?
- What do you think was the most defining moment or event of your first college year?
- If you could write a headline for a retrospective story about your first year in college, what would it be?

As you think about these questions related to your own first year in college, think about the first-year students we will be welcoming this fall. Their first year in college will be in 2006. For students who are 18 years of age (average age of our incoming first-year students), they were born in 1987. This was the first generation to be born into Nintendo, Compact Discs, and MTV. They have no meaningful recollection of the Reagan Era and probably did not know he had ever been shot. They have also had cable. Jay Leno has always been on the Tonight Show.

Astonishingly, they have no idea when or why Jordache jeans were cool! (Note—this was not meant to make you feel old, but to get you thinking about the world these students know.) In getting to know these students and help them learn about each other, you might ask them what they thought was the most significant world event in the past year, what their favorite book is, or what headline they would give to their first week of campus.

Characteristics of First-Year Students

- **Developmental Issues** (A. Chickering)

“Understanding what our First-Year Students are experiencing”

- Sense of autonomy
- Development of self-identity
- Development of purpose
- Development of competencies
- Development of relationships
- Managing Emotions
- Establishing a sense of safety and belonging

- **Personal and Social Issues** (John Gardner)

“Understanding the issues our First-Year Students are facing”

- Transition issues-starting out
- Expectations of college vs. Reality
- Reasons for attending college
- Time and its management
- Alcohol
- Sexuality
- Nutrition
- Sleep
- Health and wellness
- Relationships
- Money
- Difference between high school/community college and college

- **Intellectual Development** (William Perry)

“Understanding where a first-year student is speaking from”

Dualism: Knowledge is truth. Faculty have the correct answers.

- Exposure to multiple answers and different perspectives.

Multiplicity: Knowledge is a matter of opinion. Faculty are no longer the ultimate authority.

- Challenge students to support their ideas and opinions.
- Challenge students to listen to each other.

Relativism: Knowledge is contextual and influenced by many perspectives, assumptions and methods of inquire.

- Opportunities to explore, test, make temporary commitments.
- Problem solving.

Commitment in Relativism: Making a commitment to looking at diverse points of view to find answers.

Creating Climates for Learning

Factors that contribute to successful learning environments for first-year students:

1. Create opportunities to understand the difference between high school and college. Offer support for successful transitions.
2. Demonstrate and create opportunities to learn how to learn.
3. Provide and encourage opportunities that develop competencies for academic success.
4. Create opportunities to learn about campus resources.
5. Create an active and compelling learning environment for your students.
6. Set high expectations (challenging) and offer high support.
7. Build community in your class. Develop a sense of mattering.
8. Foster involvement and encourage social and academic integration.
9. Provide frequent, ongoing and helpful feedback on your student's performance.
10. Create opportunities to interact with faculty and returning students. Help first-year students identify mentors.

Calendar for the First-Year Student

This first-year student timeline helps one to take a closer look at what first-year students are facing and the issues they must confront at different stages:

SEPTEMBER

Concerns:

- Saying goodbye to family and friends and homesickness
- Campus familiarization, initial adjustment to campus environments
- Value crisis! Students are confronted with questions of conscience and must decide how to react to value conflict areas such as alcohol, drugs, race, religion, sexuality, difference, and social experiences/expectations
- Time management
- Anxiety about roommates, professors, classes
- Long distance boyfriends/girlfriends
- Testing new-found freedom by experimenting with alcohol, drugs, sexual relationships, etc.
- Nervousness about making friends and fitting in

Suggestions on What Might be Helpful:

- Discussions on how to separate from family and friends
- Campus tours and talks
- Time management seminar
- Money budgeting programs
- Values exploration exercises
- Social activities where students can get to know each other and possibly establish a friendship
- Alcohol/drug/sexual assault education programs

OCTOBER

Concerns:

- Freshman begin to realize life at college is not what they thought it would be, or what their parents/high school counselors/TV shows/movies lead them to believe it would be.
- Student might question: "Do I fit in here?"
- Midterms! Test anxiety about expectations of testing in college
- Consequences of decision-making experienced
- Being sick alone for the first time – no one is there to take the students temperature or make them soup!
- Relationships from friends at home/ significant others at home might begin to suffer due to separation

Suggestions on What Might be Helpful:

- Mid-term preparation seminars and study techniques handouts
- Stress management discussions and workshops. Attend a yoga class together or participate in relaxation exercises
- Check-in with students either one on one (email is great for this!) or as a class
- Explain and/or tour resources available to students such as the Student Health Center, Math Lab, Writing Center, University Counseling and Psychological Services, etc.

NOVEMBER

Concerns:

- Academic pressure is beginning to mount due to earlier procrastination.
- Anxiety increases as a student thinks ‘I should be adjusted to college by now. Why am I not?’
- Students have given up on attempts to make friends. They feel everyone has found friends by now and could feel isolated if they did not make any yet
- Changing weather. Lots of rain!
- Restless for vacation.
- Nervous about going back home for the first time. How will my parents treat me? What will have happened to high school friends?
- New boyfriend/girlfriend
- Stress about looking ahead to next term
- More or less roommate stress. They know each other better now and don’t feel the need to “stay nice”
- Some feelings of discouragement related to academics: “I don’t understand! I got A’s and B’s in high school!”

Suggestions on What Might be Helpful:

- More discussion on time management. Students now see why they need it!
- Tutoring options explored
- Fun study breaks
- Suggest a visit to their academic advisor
- Current student panel: What was it like the first time you went home? What was your first set of finals like in college? Advice and tips?
- Community building exercises in the classroom to try and foster friendships
- Bring in a psychologist to talk about SAD. (Seasonal Affective Disorder)
- Workshops on developing healthy relationships

DECEMBER

Concerns:

- Finals week approaches. And by the way, what exactly does Dead Week mean?
- Extracurricular time strain with seasonal parties and end of semester get-togethers
- Pre-holiday depression for some especially those who have family concerns or for those who aren’t able to go home
- Financial strain due to buying holiday gifts, a plane ticket home, etc.
- Realization that they have made it through the first term! Joy!
- Wonder if their major is right for them or panic about not yet having a major

Suggestions on What Might be Helpful:

- More test preparation/study technique and test anxiety information
- Class discussion on what dead week means and what finals weeks is like
- Career exploration programs or make a visit to the Career Center
- Celebrate! Have a social event/party to enjoy the accomplishments of the term
- Study breaks