

General Introductory Information

What is MUSE?

MUSE stands for *Metropolitan University Scholar's Experience*. MUSE seminars are one facet of the First Year Experience which also includes the Peer Mentor Program and a series of Student Success Programs geared to first year students. MUSE activities are open to all incoming students beginning their first year of college.

What is a MUSE seminar?

MUSE seminars are intended to help a new student's transition to becoming a college level student. The MUSE seminars are one way SJSU has promoted as a way to enhance our undergraduate program and help our students transition to college level study and university life. All MUSE seminars qualify for an area of Core GE (B1, B2, C1, C2, D1, or E). MUSE classes emphasize critical thinking, writing, and acquisition of college level information competency and study skills. The MUSE Program provides an opportunity for students to become immediately engaged in the intellectual and social activities of university life.

How does a new MUSE seminar get approved?

- Submit a course proposal (due early November)
- Develop your course materials (green sheet and GE checklist) (by early January)
- Submit materials to MUSE Coordinator and revise as necessary
- Review course materials with your assigned peer group (January meeting)
- Revise course materials as necessary for peer group approval (February)
- Submit materials to alternate peer group (March)
- Final approval by GEAP and Undergraduate Studies (April)

Courses that were approved for MUSE after 2006, only need to have their peer group's approval by early March.

Are seminars geared towards first year students a new idea?

Many universities have similar programs to help first year students adjust to university life. The MUSE program started in 2002.

MUSE seminars with small class size (18 students maximum) allow for a greater amount of student contact with a professor and classmates. Students who take a MUSE class develop the academic skill set necessary for college intellectual life, thus making them better students who feel more comfortable in the university environment. They show significantly better retention and higher GPAs than students who do not participate in MUSE.

Who is coordinating the MUSE activities?

- Nancy Eldred, Coordinator of the MUSE Program (408) 924-2708
- Andrew Wood, Director of the Peer Mentor Program (408) 924.5378

Who is eligible to take a MUSE seminar?

MUSE is offered to incoming freshmen who graduated from high school the previous spring. Seminars are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. There are no prerequisites for most seminars (A few Area C courses require eligibility for English 1A). Students cannot take more than one MUSE seminar for University credit.

How many first-year students are served by the MUSE Seminar Program?

In Fall 2008, the MUSE program served 1252 students in 73 courses.

Faculty Involvement in MUSE

Why would a professor want to teach a MUSE seminar?

Faculty who enjoy working closely with students in a small seminar format to help them become better students and scholars will want to teach a MUSE seminar. Faculty can develop a new course in GE Area E (Human Understanding and Development) or adapt a current core GE course in GE Areas B1, B2, C1, C2, D1, or E to include the MUSE learning objectives.

While a student-faculty ratio (SFR) of 18-1 will certainly sound enticing to many faculty members, a MUSE seminar will not be for everyone. In general, faculty find they are more supportive with their MUSE students than with students in their other classes. The intent of the seminars is to help the students bond to the university and to engage actively in learning what it means to be a true university-level student and scholar. Seminars might also serve the purpose of helping some of our new students identify their area of study. MUSE faculty are also encouraged to participate in some additional campus activities (for example, on-campus athletic and cultural events and BBQs).

Who may teach a MUSE seminar?

Any Unit 3 faculty member who is eager to work closely with a small group of freshmen to help them become university scholars may teach a MUSE seminar. In particular, we invite tenure track/tenured faculty and long standing lecturers to teach in MUSE. Of course, faculty will need to be sure their Department Chair and College Dean supports their participation. We encourage you to talk to your Chair about your participation as soon as possible. You'll also need to be available to attend the MUSE Faculty Development Workshop in January of each year. This meeting is usually held just before classes start for the Spring semester.

What instructor qualifications exist under the GE guidelines?

- An understanding and appreciation of SJSU and the SJSU GE program.
- A doctorate (preferred but not required).
- College-level teaching experience or advanced (graduate) training in the subject matter of the seminar.
- A professional commitment to the learning needs of a diverse student body.

Is teaching a MUSE seminar for you?

Yes - if you are willing to work closely with 18 first-year students to help them -

- transition to university-level study
- develop a passion for learning
- get a strong start on achieving the competencies of a scholar
- feel at home at SJSU

Yes - if you want to provide an interactive, exciting, challenging and supportive learning environment for a small group of first year students.

Yes - if you want to be part of the strong group of SJSU faculty working together to create a positive university experience for our first-year students.

Yes - if you are looking for a creative, challenging, fun, and rewarding opportunity to work with other faculty in creating a community of students with the skills and excitement to further develop into university scholars.

How many MUSE seminars may a faculty member teach?

Usually faculty teach only one seminar section. Faculty can teach two seminars if their Chair and Dean approve and if it meets the MUSE program needs.

Can my existing GE course be listed as a MUSE seminar?

Yes, GE courses in Areas B1, B2, C1, C2, D1, and E can be modified to include the MUSE goals.

How do I signup to teach a MUSE seminar?

If you are interested in teaching a MUSE seminar you will need to fill out the seminar Proposal Form available on the MUSE Faculty Resources page of the MUSE website. This is due in early November of each year.

Students & MUSE Seminars

Why would a student want to take a MUSE seminar?

MUSE seminars are designed to get students excited about scholarly inquiry and help them develop skills needed to become university level scholars. MUSE seminars also provide students an opportunity to get to know a professor, meet and work closely with fellow students, and to become acclimated to university-level study and to SJSU. Discovery, research, critical thinking, written work, attention to the rich cultural diversity of the campus, and active discussion should be key parts of each seminar. The student-faculty ratio for classes will be 18-1. Faculty are expected to have "high contact" with the students, acting as mentors, facilitators, and role model scholars.

We anticipate that parents and other family members will encourage their new college student to take a MUSE seminar because of the high faculty contact, the intellectual nature of the seminars and the goal of getting the students used to academic life so that they are more successful as students. Students who take a MUSE class have higher GPAs and are more likely to graduate in a timely manner.

Do MUSE seminars qualify for GE?

Yes. The seminars are to be designed to qualify in one of the following areas: B1 (physical science), B2 (life science), C1 (arts), C2 (letters), D1 (human behavior), or E (human understanding and development). Seminars are approved by MUSE faculty working in small Peer Review Groups to review the goals, student learning objectives and content of the seminars.

Mechanics of a MUSE Seminar

How many units is a MUSE seminar?

Most MUSE seminars are 3 units.

How often and when do MUSE seminars meet?

Seminars usually meet 2 times per week, rather than in one 3-hour block. Students (and sometimes faculty) will also need to be available at other times during the semester for MUSE workshops and activities.

What are the grading standards for a MUSE seminar?

Faculty will use whatever grading system they deem appropriate for their seminar. Given the purpose of the MUSE seminars, writing, research and participation in class activities typically make up at least 40% of the grade.

MUSE & the SJSU Curriculum

What are the goals and learning outcomes for the MUSE seminars besides those specified for the particular GE Area?

Goals:

- To establish a strong foundation for becoming a university level student and scholar.
- To become acclimated to both the intellectual and social activities of university life.

Learning Outcomes:

- To understand the learning process and their responsibility and role in it.
- To know what it means to be a member of a metropolitan university community.

Faculty will indicate how these items are covered and assessed in their MUSE seminar (as well as the GE goals and learning outcomes) as part of the seminar approval process. GE Checklists for each GE Area are available in the forms and documents section for faculty. Templates for green sheets can also be located there.

What is the Peer Mentor Program?

Students interested in becoming Peer Mentors apply in the fall and undergo a rigorous selection process. Training of new peer mentors begins each Spring when the selected students take a required upper division 3-unit class on mentoring and leadership skills. In late Spring, each Peer Mentor chooses a MUSE class to mentor. Peer Mentors continue their training in the form of weekly supervision meetings and professional development workshops offered by university experts (including advanced topic-discussions with DRC and library, among others).

Mentors are paid during the semester they are mentoring and are expected to participate in other MUSE programs. Regular evaluations of the mentors are performed. Dr. Andrew Wood, Director of the Peer Mentor Program, teaches the mentoring class in Spring and teaching the weekly supervision meetings in the Fall.

Information for students interested in becoming a Peer Mentor can be found in the peer mentor program section of this web site.

Miscellaneous

Why do MUSE faculty attend the January MUSE Faculty Development workshop?

As part of a First Year Experience, we want to be sure that all faculty participants are prepared to help students get the most out of the experience and that the MUSE faculty feel that they are a key part of this program. The success of the MUSE program will depend on faculty working together to help students transition to university life and working as a community focused on maximizing student success. One facet of the January meeting is the initial review of new course materials by peer groups.

MUSE seminars are somewhat different from other seminars, including other GE seminars. These seminars will require a high degree of interactivity in the classroom, a focus on improvement of critical thinking skills, working closely with students to help them succeed in the seminar and become a university student and scholar. Many faculty interested in teaching a MUSE seminar have little experience teaching Freshmen and/or GE seminars. The second facet of the January meeting is a Faculty Development workshop regarding topics such as active learning, and teaching a first year experience course. The January meeting also presents information on the Peer Mentor Program and various campus resources for students and faculty.

Where Can I Get More Information about MUSE?

Contact Nancy Eldred, Coordinator of the MUSE Program, 408/924.2708 or (Nancy.Eldred@sjsu.edu).

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