

## **First-Year Requirements Fact Sheet and Course Descriptions (USEM and UWS)**

**University Seminar (USEM):** USEM classes are taught by faculty members in a seminar format, and introduce students to college-level intellectual analysis. Complete USEM course descriptions are available online and as well as in this packet.

**University Writing Seminar (UWS):** UWS classes are courses taught by specially trained graduate students and focus on teaching academic writing skills using a variety of reading and writing assignments. Aside from two hours per week of classroom instruction, students meet individually with their instructors for one-on-one tutorials. Complete UWS course descriptions are available online and as well as in this packet.

**Composition (COMP):** Composition is a course for new students who arrive at Brandeis and would benefit from having additional writing instruction. The course reviews the elements of an effective essay, offers opportunities for revision, and develops students' analytical skills. Each composition class has a limited number of students and is taught by a highly experienced instructor. Students who are required to take COMP have been previously notified in a separate letter sent by the Director of University Writing.

### **Required Seminar Pre-Selection Process**

All first-year students starting in the fall semester or as mid-year class students in January must take a USEM and a UWS during their first year at Brandeis.

Because these required courses have caps to keep their size small, the university has decided to enroll students in these courses through a type of lottery system. Students are requested to provide a set of ranked preferences for their USEM and UWS courses, the combined rankings from all students will then be used to determine the actual enrollments in these courses. When demand for a particular course exceeds the enrollment limit, we will enroll these students in their next ranked choice (as competition allows) until we meet the enrollment limit or have exhausted the rankings provided by the students. If demand for the course still exceeds the enrollment limit we then assign students randomly to the course. We will attempt to enroll students in one of their preferences; however, we cannot guarantee that outcome. For students who do not provide a set of preferences, or for those who do not succeed in the lottery, we will assign a USEM and UWS course. Students will have an opportunity to make adjustments, on a space-available basis, to these assignments during general summer registration.

Log on to sage and from the **Student Services Page** menu click **Academics**, then **Required Seminar Pre Selection** to access the ranking pages.

Once the lottery closes, our office will process USEM lottery enrollments before we consider student preferences for UWS classes. When ranking your USEM and UWS preferences:

- Each student should select at least 5 USEM classes that he/she is most interested in, and to rank those classes in terms of preference. (Students may indicate up to 9 ranked choices.) Students make their selections by clicking on the "Select" button in the USEM section and following the instructions as they move through the process.
- Each student should also select at least 5 UWS classes he/she is most interested in, and to also rank them according to preference. (Students may indicate up to 9 ranked choices.) Students make their selections by clicking on the "Select" button in the UWS section and following the instructions as they move through the process.
- USEM and UWS selections may be edited and adjusted until June 23 at which point Required Seminar Pre-Selection closes.
- After June 30, students can log on to sage and see the results of the pre-selection process.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How will I know the results of the required seminar lottery?**

The results of the Required Seminar lottery will be posted on your study list in sage. Students will receive email notification so they may continue to plan the rest of their course schedules in time for registration.

### **Are all the UWS sections the same?**

No. All UWS instructors must teach academic writing skills, and assign a rhetoric text, a collection of readings, and a grammar and style handbook. Within this framework, UWS instructors tend to teach texts they are most interested in, or to structure their courses around themes they think students will find interesting.

### **How much credit do I get for UWS?**

UWS is a full-credit course. It counts as one of the 32 courses required for graduation.

### **Can I be exempted from UWS?**

Students who have taken a course equivalent to UWS (such as College Writing or Freshman Writing) at another university and earned a grade of B- or better may request to have this credit applied to their first-year writing requirements. All inquiries about transfer credit should be directed to Irene Widugiris ([widugiris@brandeis.edu](mailto:widugiris@brandeis.edu), 781-736-2014); students should be sure to check with her before taking such courses. Please note that AP credit in English does not count toward fulfilling first-year writing requirements.

### **Should I take these courses in my first or second semester at Brandeis?**

Both options are viable, but most students benefit from taking USEM and UWS as early as possible, so that they can then apply what they've learned to their spring courses. Some fall courses also tend to be less crowded, which can leave more room for one-on-one instruction. Consult with your first-year advisor or the director of the university writing program if you have further questions.

### **The seminar course that I want to take is full. Why are there enrollment limits?**

In these courses we ask instructors to work closely with first-year students. USEM classes must be small enough to enable active discussion and intellectual engagement by the students with one another and the instructor. With UWS classes, the quality of the course depends partly on one-on-one tutorials, sustained attention to each person's individual writing development, and extensive comments on writing. With larger classes, instructors could not give this kind of individualized attention.

### **Can I skip taking the required seminars in my first year at Brandeis and take them later, when they would fit into my schedule better?**

No, these are first-year requirements. If you do not fulfill them during your first year, you may be placed on academic probation. Students must successfully pass the required courses before they will be allowed to graduate.