FIRST YEAR SEMINARS:
POLITICS, SCIENCE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Course Summary
The university seminar course Politics, Science and the Environment is an interdisciplinary course in which case studies are analyzed through a holistic approach. The class is made up of a maximum of 18 students from a wide variety of programs, with each student bringing a different perspective on current issues. Cases are covered through a process of identifying ‘What we know’, ‘What we don’t know’, and ‘Learning Issues’, presenting and discussing each peer’s research, and partaking in group processing. This course teaches students the skills to present material effectively and to work in a group to combine perspectives, skills, and knowledge. It gives first year students the opportunity to work in small groups with a professor and have class discussions as well as receive consistent feedback on an individual level, propelling the learning.

Case Example
While Coke may have begun working with local communities on small-scale projects to help increase sustainability (for example, rainwater harvesting) to offset the water use by their plants, Coca-Cola is still extracting groundwater from one of India’s most heavily groundwater-depleted regions. In a region where farmers are already facing water shortages, Coca-Cola is contributing to the problem, despite having a goal to be “net zero” users of groundwater by 2012. Coca-Cola should move their plant to an area that is less at risk of fully depleting their water sources, and to an area where farmers are less at risk of being affected by water shortages.

The Experience
What I think sets first year seminars apart from any other class is the intimacy and openness of the classroom. The small class sizes allow students to really get to know each other and grow together. The open style of case based learning allows students to work together to try and find a solution backed with strong research and credibility. – Ethan Moloney

Inquiry vs. Enquiry
Inquiry and enquiry are two nouns with similar yet different meanings. Enquire and enquiry for the general sense of looking into something. Inquire and inquiry are used to describe a formal investigation. Inquiry learning is what is used in first year seminars as we try to make the most informed solution to the case that we can.

“This is a completely different way of learning”
---Sonia Chwalek

“It’s a completely different way to learn and take from it”
---Emily Arva

“Great course, lots to learn”
---Davis Hall