Overview

First year seminars provide a unique learning opportunity for students at the University of Guelph. With class sizes of 9 or 18, first year students experience a close-unit interactive environment which is not often found in large university class sizes. While encouraging class participation, “Do Genes Fit our Values?” allowed us to work as a team while utilizing enquiry-based learning to help us develop skills which we can use throughout our academic careers.

Over the course of the semester, we were given eight cases. At the beginning of each of these cases, a short scenario was given. After a student volunteered to read the scenario, class discussed “what we know”. This was especially hard when the course started in September, as it was completely new to all the students. We were required to literally write out all of the information given in the scenario. Then, on the next paper, together as class, we discussed “what we don’t know”. Here, we proposed any questions or assumptions that came up from the scenario. After students have fully discussed “what we know” and “what we don’t know”, then the next stage would be the development of learning issues.

Wondering what the learning issues are? They are the research topics for each student. From the list of “what we don’t know”, we decided which question/issue to be researched, and then each student is assigned a specific topic. These learning issues are not only about scientific issues, but also have social and/or historical aspects. Unlike normal lectures given by a professor, in the first year seminar, every single student is required to get involved and participate in the class.

Why We Chose It

“To gain a different perspective on science unique from my regular classes”
-Matt

Why We Enjoy It

“It’s easier to comprehend larger amounts of information in a small classroom environment rather than in a giant lecture hall”
-Ryan

What We Gained

“This seminar allowed me to further develop my critical and creative thinking skills, and ignited my passion for learning”
-Sarah