

OLLI Seminar Syllabus Template

Four-week template with notes for adapting to 1–6 week seminars

How to use this template:

Replace bracketed text with your seminar details. Delete sections that do not apply. Keep the syllabus brief, clear, and participant-friendly.

Seminar Title

Title: [Insert Seminar Title]

Moderator Information

Moderator	[Insert Moderator Name]
Email	[Insert Preferred Contact Email]
Phone	[Optional]
Best way to contact me	[Email / phone / before or after class / other]

Seminar Details

Dates	[Insert Start Date] – [Insert End Date]
Meeting Day	[Insert Day of Week]
Time	[Insert Start Time] – [Insert End Time]
Location	[Insert Building and Room / Zoom Link / Hybrid Information]
Number of Sessions	4
Session Length	2 hours

Seminar Description

[Insert a brief paragraph describing the seminar. This may match or expand slightly on the catalog description. Include the main topic, why it is interesting or timely, and what participants can expect to explore.]

Example description:

In this four-week seminar, we will explore [main topic] through presentations, discussion, examples, and shared reflection. Participants will consider [key themes or questions] and connect the material to current events, personal experience, historical context, or broader community issues.

Seminar Goals

By the end of this seminar, participants will have had the opportunity to:

- Understand the major themes, questions, or ideas connected to [topic].
- Explore examples, stories, readings, images, or case studies related to the subject.
- Participate in thoughtful discussion with other lifelong learners.
- Reflect on how the seminar topic connects to broader issues, experiences, or interests.
- Identify resources for continued learning after the seminar ends.

Format and Participation

This seminar will include a combination of:

- Moderator presentation
- Group discussion
- Questions and answers
- Short activities or reflection prompts
- Optional readings, videos, or handouts

Participation is encouraged but not required. Participants are welcome to listen, ask questions, share relevant experiences, and engage at their own comfort level.

Materials

Required materials: [Insert required book, article, handout, website, or “No required materials.”]

Optional materials: [Insert optional readings, videos, websites, podcasts, or resources for further exploration.]

Materials provided by the moderator: [Slides / handouts / resource list / discussion questions / weekly summaries / other]

Preparation Before the First Session

[Insert any preparation instructions.]

- No preparation is needed before the first session.
- Please read [title or pages] before the first session.
- Please bring [book, notebook, device, article, printed material, etc.].
- Please watch [video title/link] before the first session.
- Please think about the following question before class: [insert question].

Weekly Schedule

Use the sections below to show participants the focus of each week. Keep each week concise and easy to scan.

Week 1: [Insert Topic or Theme]

Focus	[Briefly describe the focus of this week.]
Participants will explore	[List 2–4 key ideas, questions, examples, or themes.]
Preparation before class	[Insert reading, video, reflection question, or “No preparation needed.”]
Optional follow-up	[Insert optional resource or “None.”]

Week 2: [Insert Topic or Theme]

Focus	[Briefly describe the focus of this week.]
Participants will explore	[List 2–4 key ideas, questions, examples, or themes.]
Preparation before class	[Insert reading, video, reflection question, or “No preparation needed.”]
Optional follow-up	[Insert optional resource or “None.”]

Week 3: [Insert Topic or Theme]

Focus	[Briefly describe the focus of this week.]
Participants will explore	[List 2–4 key ideas, questions, examples, or themes.]
Preparation before class	[Insert reading, video, reflection question, or “No preparation needed.”]
Optional follow-up	[Insert optional resource or “None.”]

Week 4: [Insert Topic or Theme]

Focus	[Briefly describe the focus of this week.]
Participants will explore	[List 2–4 key ideas, questions, examples, or themes.]
Preparation before class	[Insert reading, video, reflection question, or “No preparation needed.”]
Optional follow-up	[Insert optional resource or “None.”]

Closing or Final Reflection

[Insert how the seminar will conclude. Examples: final discussion, resource sharing, reflection question, summary of key takeaways, next steps for continued learning.]

Suggested Two-Hour Session Flow

Moderators may adapt this structure as needed. The purpose is to help you pace the session and balance presentation, discussion, engagement, and closure.

Time	Purpose	Examples
0–10 minutes	Welcome and opening	Greet participants, review goals, preview the session.
10–35 minutes	First content segment	Introduce key ideas, context, images, story, short lecture, or demonstration.
35–50 minutes	Discussion or activity	Invite reflection, questions, pair discussion, group prompt, or guided analysis.
50–60 minutes	Transition or short break	Pause, reset, answer questions, or prepare for the next segment.
60–90 minutes	Second content segment	Build on the first segment with examples, case studies, media, or deeper explanation.
90–110 minutes	Participant engagement	Discussion, application, group question, worksheet, reflection, or shared examples.
110–120 minutes	Closing	Summarize key points, preview next week, clarify preparation, and thank participants.

Communication

The moderator may send seminar-related messages before or during the seminar. These messages may include reminders, preparation instructions, materials, links, or follow-up resources.

Roster privacy reminder:

Participant email addresses should be used only for communication directly related to this seminar. When emailing the class, use BCC and copy UDOLLI staff according to program guidance.

Discussion Guidelines

To support a positive learning environment, participants are encouraged to:

- Listen respectfully.
- Allow others time to speak.
- Ask questions in the spirit of learning.

- Share experiences when relevant, while allowing space for others.
- Disagree respectfully when different viewpoints arise.
- Keep discussion connected to the seminar topic.

Accessibility and Materials

If materials are shared, they should be provided in a format intended to be clear and readable. Participants who need assistance accessing materials should contact [insert moderator name or OLLI office contact].

Continued Learning

Participants interested in exploring the topic further may find the following resources helpful:

- [Book / article / website / video / podcast]
- [Book / article / website / video / podcast]
- [Book / article / website / video / podcast]

Notes for Adapting This Template

This template is built for a four-week seminar, but it can be shortened or expanded for any OLLI seminar from one to six weeks.

Seminar Length	How to Modify the Template
1 week	Use a shorter version. Keep the title, moderator information, date/time/location, brief description, goals or guiding questions, preparation instructions, a basic session outline, and optional resources. Replace the weekly schedule with one section titled “Session Plan” or “Seminar Outline.”
2 weeks	Use only Week 1 and Week 2. Consider Week 1 as the introduction, background, or first major theme, and Week 2 as deeper exploration, discussion, application, or final reflection.
3 weeks	Use three weekly sections. A useful arc is Week 1: foundation; Week 2: major themes, examples, or case studies; Week 3: synthesis, discussion, implications, or continued learning.
4 weeks	Use the full version of this template. Four weeks allows enough time for a clear beginning, development of ideas, participant discussion, and a meaningful closing session.
5 weeks	Add a Week 5 section. Use the fifth week for additional case studies, participant discussion, a guest speaker, a deeper dive, current events, or final synthesis.
6 weeks	Add Week 5 and Week 6 sections. A common arc is: overview, background, theme/case study, second theme/case study, current issues or application, then synthesis and continued learning resources.

Quick Editing Checklist for Moderators

- **Keep it brief:** A one- or two-page syllabus is often enough for a shorter OLLI seminar.
- **Use plain language:** Write for clarity rather than formality.
- **Name the weekly focus:** Participants appreciate knowing the purpose of each session.
- **Clarify preparation:** Say clearly whether readings or materials are required, optional, or not needed.
- **Check accessibility:** Use readable font sizes, clear headings, descriptive links, and accessible PDFs when sharing materials.
- **Update as needed:** If the seminar plan changes, send participants a brief update rather than leaving them uncertain.