



## The MIT Office of Minority Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education  
77 Massachusetts Avenue, Building 4-113  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
Phone 617.253.5010  
Fax 617.253.9899  
<http://mit.edu/ome>

### SEMINAR XL POLICIES Fall Semester 2010-2011 Academic Year

Seminar XL is an academic enrichment program for undergraduate MIT students. Participants enroll in small groups of 4-6 students in conjunction with their math, science, or other courses taken in the same term. The groups meet **twice** a week, with each session lasting **an hour and an half**. A Sem XL facilitator, who is usually a graduate student, research scientist, or undergraduate who previously earned an A in the relevant course, oversees the interactive discussion of course concepts and problem-solving methods. Sem XL is available during both Fall and Spring semesters, and Sem XL students cannot exceed the first-year credit limit in the Spring. What follows describes in detail who can join, how, and the way the Sem XL groups operate.

**ELIGIBILITY.** First-year students enrolled in any MIT courses are eligible. The program is primarily intended for freshmen and upper-class students are admitted on a space-available basis. If space allows, upper-class students can enroll as “listeners” **without** earning academic credit (see “Listener Status” below).

**SUBJECTS AVAILABLE.** All MIT subjects taken by first-year students are eligible, and some upper-class subjects may be eligible, depending upon resources. As students form groups, they determine the subjects undertaken by each. Students can only join groups concurrently with MIT subjects, e.g., must be enrolled in 8.02 to join an 8.02 Sem XL group. The minimum number of students required to start a group is four, and all groups must be formed and students properly registered by the Add Date, Friday, October 8, 2010. Groups which do not maintain the minimum number of members through the term may be canceled. See “How to Enroll in XL” below.

**ACADEMIC CREDIT POSSIBLE.** Sem XL offers three (3) units of credit for every group completed. The semester maximum is six (6) units with the successful completion of two groups. Students enrolling in more than one Sem XL group or registered for 6 units, who decide to drop from one group, need to submit a drop form to change their units. Units will be adjusted down to the appropriate number passed at the end of the term. **Academic credit is possible only for first-year students.**

**FRESHMEN CREDIT LIMIT.** For the Fall term **only**, enrollment in Seminar XL automatically raises the student’s maximum unit limit to 60, which is normally 54 without Sem XL. In the Fall term, students who enroll in two Seminar XL groups are permitted to exceed the freshman credit limit of 54 units. However, in the Spring term, students who participate in

Seminar XL cannot exceed the credit limit of 57 units. During the Spring term, if this presents a problem, interested students may participate as “listeners” (see “Listener Status” below). Students do have the option of petitioning the CAP (Committee on Academic Performance) to get credit in excess of the 57 unit limit, although this is rarely, if ever, approved.

**HOW TO ENROLL IN SEM XL.** The “Subject Number” is “SEM.XL1” in the Fall term. The “Units” can be “6” or “3” and will be adjusted to the appropriate number passed at the end. Students can only form/join groups for MIT subjects they are taking together. Interested students can still join already established groups by **October 8, 2010** at the Office of Minority Education (4-113), where they will be assigned to available groups with the least number of members. **Only OME staff** (as opposed to Sem XL facilitators or other student-workers) can assign students to groups. All Sem XL participants, for-credit or listeners, must also REGISTER OFFICIALLY through the regular registration process of the Institute (with the Registrar’s office). As with any other MIT subject, students may have to use an Add Card that may require the signature of the Sem XL Coordinator. Any students who do not submit an official registration form will not get academic credit. See also “Group Assignments” below. **The last date to add subjects to registration is October 8, 2010.**

**SEM XL START DATE.** Groups will start meeting on or after Wednesday, **September 8, 2010**, depending upon which days of the week each group is scheduled to meet. Group assignments will be communicated to students and facilitators via email.

**FRESHMAN REQUIREMENTS FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT.** To receive academic credit for a Sem XL group, a participant must satisfy the following:

- be officially enrolled “for credit” with the Registrar’s Office;
- earn a passing final grade (C or better).

Students are graded on each of the following criteria and the average determines the final grade (a minimum of 3.0 is needed to pass):

- **ATTENDANCE.** All students must attend a minimum of 80% (19 of an expected 24) of the sessions, as documented by the group facilitator. **Regardless of enrollment date or the total number of group sessions held, and without exception, students must have attended at least 19 one-and-a-half-hour sessions to receive credit. Less than 19 attended sessions will automatically earn an “F” grade for the seminar.**
- **PREPARATION.** This aspect can make the difference between extremely useful or marginally useful Sem XL sessions. The participants’ preparation not only ensures that their individual topics of interest will have a chance to be included in the group’s work, but it also will help to develop the healthy habit of assessing various areas they need to work on, and thus, enable them to stay on top of their work. To fulfill this requirement, students must come to the Sem XL sessions with work for the group in the form of problems, solutions, or questions about course concepts. The problems should not be from class assignments, such as problem sets or any other homework or project that counts towards the grade given in the subject. The Sem XL facilitator’s role is not that of a teacher or tutor and will not give lectures, but will facilitate the students’ discussion of the materials that they bring.

- **GROUP PARTICIPATION.** All students are expected to participate regularly and actively in the discussion of the materials undertaken by the group. Participation includes deciding which problems will be undertaken, suggesting alternative approaches for solving each, performing necessary calculations, asking for explanation of steps being taken, writing out the solution steps for the group at the board, asking any questions, suggesting corrections, etc. This is the **best exercise for effective learning known** and what makes Sem XL an activity useful to the participants.
- **BOARD WORK.** This is a form of participation, and a task that must be shared by all Sem XL students. All participants are expected to go to the board regularly to contribute to the written development of problems. The person at the board does not have to be the one providing the solutions, but can be primarily a record keeper for the group. When not at the board, students are expected to support, and assist if requested, the person developing the problems for the group at the board.
- **SUPPORT TO OTHER GROUP MEMBERS.** Sem XL is not intended to determine who knows more, or to identify participants who have “smart” questions or flawless solutions, but to provide answers collectively to any question by any student with the participation of the whole group. The fact that any group member can ask any question without feeling uncomfortable is what makes Sem XL a group activity for the participants and not an extension of the regular course lectures and recitation sessions. To this end, all Sem XL participants are expected to come to the sessions with an open mind and an attitude that allows, encourages, and supports the participation of all others. The seminar operates under the philosophy that the only “stupid” questions are the ones not asked when the answer is needed. Students not adhering to this philosophy will be asked to leave the group(s) permanently.

**EACH OF THE CRITERIA ABOVE IS IMPORTANT. THE FINAL GRADE IN SEM XL WILL BE THE AVERAGE OF ALL FIVE, but the minimum attendance to pass is unequivocally 80%. THE SEM XL GRADE IS NOT AFFECTED BY HOW “SMART” OR KNOWLEDGEABLE THE STUDENT IS IN THE SUBJECT UNDER STUDY, BUT IT IS A REFLECTION ON HOW S/HE WORKS WITHIN SEM XL AS A GROUP MEMBER.**

**LISTENER STATUS.** Listeners are admitted only if they cannot register “for-credit” (because of the credit limit, or their upper-class status, etc.) but the program’s expectations and rights are the same as for all other students; the only difference is that listeners cannot get credit. The important benefit of Sem XL, however, is not the credits, but the increased understanding of the subjects under study and the improved test-taking ability the group members will acquire. “Listeners” and any other students who do not perform satisfactorily as Sem XL participants can be asked to stop attending at any time in the semester. Grades for “listeners” are not sent to the Registrar’s Office; they remain in OME as part of the student’s confidential records.

**DROPPING SEM XL.** Any student thinking of dropping Sem XL at any time and for any reason should contact the Sem XL Coordinator immediately to explore possible alternatives, including receiving alternative individual tutoring. **The deadline for dropping Sem XL is the same as for any other subject: Drop Date, November 17, 2010. The student must inform the group(s) facilitator(s) and drop officially with the Registrar’s Office.**

Students who stop attending the Sem XL meetings, but do not drop Sem XL with the Registrar's Office by Drop Date, will get an "F" reported as a grade, per requirement of the Registrar's Office.

**GROUP ASSIGNMENT AND MEMBERSHIP** (See "HOW TO ENROLL IN SEM XL" above). **Only OME staff** (as opposed to XL facilitators or other student workers) can assign students to groups. To secure your space(s) in Sem XL, you must register officially with the Registrar's Office and submit your signed "Sem XL Contract" (last page of these policies) to OME by **October 8, 2010**, otherwise your space in the Sem XL group(s) may be given to someone else.

The group assignments are permanent unless special circumstances warrant a transfer (e.g., a major change in the student's schedule, dropping or adding subjects, etc.). Students needing transfers or joining groups after the sessions begin may have their choices limited to the spaces available in groups with the fewest members in order to prevent the cancellation of these groups.

However, if for any reason a student feels uncomfortable with an assigned group, s/he should immediately request the Sem XL Coordinator to seek a resolution to the problem, and all possible options will be explored. Students who do not attend at least 80% of the Sem XL sessions will get a final grade of "F" in Sem XL for that group.

**GROUP SCHEDULE AND CHANGES.** Sem XL groups are assigned a schedule designed by the student members themselves, thereby avoiding conflicts with regular classes and other important activities, such as other Sem XL groups. The assigned schedule is permanent unless any individual in the group requires a change because of special circumstances (e.g., changes in a student's academic or extracurricular schedule). Changes in schedule will be attempted, as long as **all** the members are in agreement. Any individual in the group (including the facilitator) with a valid reason can initiate the change. **The first step** is the agreement of all members in the group on an alternative time. **The second step** is the request by the group's facilitator directly to the Sem XL Coordinator, who generally approves them, if congruent with the Sem XL objectives. Only after the second step is completed can the change happen. In the event that a group cannot reach an agreement on an alternative schedule, the individual needing the change should contact the Sem XL Coordinator directly to seek individual alternatives.

**STUDENT EVALUATION OF PROGRAM SEM XL.** Students participating in Sem XL have the right and responsibility to complete evaluations of their facilitator(s) and the program management twice per semester. Forms will be provided for this purpose. See also the last paragraph in these policies.

**THESE POLICIES** differ from those for other subjects. Please **REQUEST ANY CLARIFICATION** from your facilitator(s) if you have any doubts. **THE STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM REQUIRES THESE RULES, AND ALL STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBSERVING THEM. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN DENIAL OF CREDIT, OR AN "F" GRADE.**

**THE SUCCESS OF SEM XL IS MEASURED BY HOW WELL IT SERVES THE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS.** The objective is the better understanding of the subject(s) under study, and the improvement of test-taking skills, which can only be achieved through

**consistently productive work. IF IN THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER YOU EXPERIENCE OR OBSERVE A PRACTICE WHICH YOU FEEL SHOULD BE IMPROVED, IF YOU HAVE ANY ISSUES WITH REGULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS, OR IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS, PLEASE ARRANGE TO MEET WITH THE SEM XL COORDINATOR AT PHONE EXT. 3-5010.**

**THE SEM XL CONTRACT** is an agreement between you and the Sem XL staff, and it will be voided upon your withdrawal from the program. It is a statement of mutual understanding that guarantees to each party that the other will observe the same rules. A blank contract is attached at the end of these policies. Please complete it and return it by the indicated date. You will not be admitted into Sem XL without this requirement.

Established groups will be assigned a facilitator and a classroom, and the assignment of students and facilitators to specific Sem XL study groups will be communicated via email. Students must check assignments. Individuals whose contracts are not on file by **October 8, 2010**, will be dropped from the program but not from the Registrar's Office, which individuals must do on their own. Be sure to adhere to Add/Drop Dates and procedures.

# Student Participant Seminar XL CONTRACT

## Fall Semester

### Academic Year 2010 - 2011

I have read and understood the Seminar XL Policies, which describe the expectations from participants. I commit myself to observing them and to contributing to the fulfillment of the Seminar XL objectives. To get academic credit or enroll as a listener, I understand that I must register officially with the Registrar's Office **BY THE ADD DATE OF OCTOBER 8, 2010.**

If I need to drop Seminar XL, I must notify OME and officially drop Seminar XL with the Registrar's Office by the Drop Date of **November 17, 2010**, to avoid a grade "F". I also understand that if I do not fulfill the Seminar XL requirements as delineated by its policies, or if in any way my participation is counterproductive to the goals of Seminar XL, at any time I may be asked to stop attending the Seminar XL meetings; and if that happens after Drop Date, I will receive an "F" as a final grade.

I further understand that by signing this contract I commit to staying in or completing Seminar XL and that it will be voided automatically if I drop Seminar XL by **THE DROP DATE OF NOVEMBER 17, 2010.**

<b>Student Name:</b>		<b>MIT ID#:</b>	
<b>Term Address:</b>			
<b>Cell Phone:</b>		<b>Email:</b>	

<b>Subject joined:</b>	
<b>Subject joined:</b>	

<b>Student Signature:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

#### Requested Group Members

(NOTE: complete ONLY if you have specific people that you want to be in a group with)

1. Name:	
2. Name:	
3. Name:	
4. Name:	

**TO THE STUDENT:** Return this completed and signed form immediately to OME in Room 4-113. Your "space" in the program may be given to someone else if this contract is not COMPLETE AND in our files by October 8, 2010.