

**Course Syllabus**  
**UNIV 1301 018**  
**First Year Seminar (FYS)**  
**Texas A&M University-San Antonio | Fall 2024**

**Instructor:** Davida Smyth

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**Drop-in Hours:** TBD

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**FYS Section:** UNIV 1301 018

**Day/Time/Location:** Madla 203

**Peer Leader:** Abriana

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**Course Description (from the A&M-SA Course Catalog)**

This course is designed to assist first-year students in adjusting to university expectations through enhancing quantitative reasoning skills and acquiring essential skills for academic success.

**Course Overview**

This course is designed to assist first-year students in adjusting to university expectations, acquiring essential academic success skills, and exploring different career paths. The course focuses on accessing university resources and developing self-awareness, agency, and personal responsibility. Students will also become active members of the campus community.

*In this project-based seminar, we focus on the development of the toilet and its impact on sanitation and public health from the earliest biblical accounts to the present day and beyond. Class discussions will draw on news articles, blogs, and selections from scientific papers that will examine the impact of human activity on Texas water bodies and ecosystems. We will approach access to toilets as a social justice issue both as a public health threat as well as a threat to public safety, particularly that of women around the world. Students will learn about how toilet design and use differ across our globe according to cultural, economic, and political differences. Lastly, students will learn about current developments in improving sanitation and toilet access and how intrepid and creative individuals are developing ways to make money from poop.*

*Assignments will include weekly reflective blogs, activities, and a collaborative project to map and describe public toilets across San Antonio. At the end of the course, we will assess how this course has affected your perception of how toilets have impacted humans from the perspectives of public health, social justice, aesthetics, and design.*

*Most importantly, this is one-half of a learning community. We'll partner classes with Introduction to Philosophy taught by Dr. Harris Betchol. We'll be drawing connections and making reflections in both classes.*

**Text (provided by A&M-SA):**

Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender. By Olga Gershenson (Editor), Barbara Penner (Editor)

We will use hypothes.is for all our online readings

<https://hypothes.is/groups/qDdpXeDp/fys-toiletschangedworld>

**Course Promises**

This course makes a set of promises to you (assuming you fulfill the expectations below). By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Exhibit growth in self-awareness, agency, and personal responsibility
2. [To develop close reading, visual literacy, discussion, research and writing, quantitative reasoning, and synthesis skills by engaging with a range of critical and creative works.](#)
3. Adapt and apply appropriate academic strategies to courses and learning experiences
4. Identify and apply strategies to effectively manage time and priorities
5. Identify relevant academic policies, processes, and resources relevant to your academic success
6. Develop goal-setting strategies to enhance academic and career readiness.
7. [To develop advising relationships with faculty, peer mentors, and the Center for Student Success.](#)
8. [To participate in the learning communities of the first-year seminar/workshop, the college, and the university, so as to develop a sense of belonging and engagement.](#)
9. [To recognize the various beneficial and deleterious impacts of the toilet on humans, and the environment over the course of human history and onwards into our futures.](#)
10. [To recognize the impact of toilets and sanitation systems and access to toilets as a social justice issue.](#)
11. [Work as a team to develop a project to support toilet access in Texas](#)

**Course Expectations**

This course will only fulfill these promises if you promise the following in return:

**Attend classes.** This course will rely largely on class content and discussion. For this format to succeed, you must be present AND on time. You will earn an absence if you arrive 15 or more minutes after class has started. Excessive tardiness will also be penalized. You will receive points for attendance and many in and out of class assignments will be contingent on information from class. To earn full participation points, you must attend class and actively participate. You may miss up to four classes. Five absences may result in you being dropped from the course. If you need to miss more than 4 days due to extracurricular activities, communication must be provided (by your organization's coach or advisor/sponsor).

**To be attentive and participate in class.** I expect all students to actively participate during class both verbally and nonverbally. Participation does not simply mean speaking, although that is essential. I realize there are a variety of ways students can participate (e.g., following discussions with your eyes and ears, asking questions, sharing, reading, writing, individual reflection, presenting, and collaborating). I hope that you will strive to stretch yourselves beyond your preferred ways of learning and your comfort

zone. I encourage you to contribute thoughtful comments and questions, as well as to listen carefully to your peers' contributions and respectfully respond to others' comments. The success of our mutual learning from each other depends upon preparation and active participation in all aspects of the course.

**To complete required assignments promptly.** Assignments provide you with both informal and formal opportunities to articulate your responses to the issues and topics we will discuss. You will get the most out of the course if you turn in your work on time. Extensions require at least a full day's advance notice prior to due dates and approval from me. You must follow basic grammar rules to get full credit for assignments. No matter how short or long the response, make sure you check for grammar and standards of academic writing. All responses are a reflection of you and are intended to prepare you for academic and professional writing.

**Late Work Policy:** Except for the final project, you can request an extension on all assignments. I will give you 3 extra days to complete assignments that you request an extension. Assignments are closed on Blackboard after the extension deadline and will no longer be accepted.

**Email:** Folks please use Blackboard messages to contact me. I get so many emails @tamusa that I sometimes/often miss ones from students - so please email me on blackboard 😊

### **Assignments and Evaluations**

To be successful in this course you are expected to complete all assignments on time. Assignments must be submitted to the correct location to be considered on time. Assignments will be graded based on quantity and quality with rubrics for each assignment provided in Blackboard.

### **Office Hours**

You are welcome to come to office hours regularly to discuss anything you like related to the course content, internships, problems with courses, etc. If you want to review assignments or readings and would like to use office hours to work through the challenges, we will work through them together but do this prior to the due date. You'll most often find me in the lab.

### **Grade Breakdown**

- My Story Google Site Page & 5-minute Presentation - 50 Points
- Peer Leader 1:1 Meeting + Brief Summary of Meeting - 50 Points
- Attendance & Class Participation - 100 Points
  - 10 points off for each day missed after 4 absences
- In-Class Activities, Reflections, Assignments, & Readings (x total – 1 gets dropped) - 200 Points
- Toilet Access Project 400 Points
- Mid-semester Assignment 50 Points
- Final "Quiz" 50 Points

**Grading Scale:**

900 – 1000 points = A

800 – 899 points = B

700 – 799 points = C

600 – 699 points = D

0 – 599 points = F

**Extra Credit Opportunities**

Throughout the semester, there will be many ways to earn extra credit. These opportunities range from attending a campus event, meeting with a professor during office hours, or getting help from a tutor at the Academic Learning Center or the Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC). I will add 5 points to your Participation Grade if you take part in an extra credit opportunity + write a short reflection (1 paragraph) about your experience.

**Assessment:**

- Weekly homework assignments (ePortfolio, data analysis, presentations, readings, and assigned video viewings).
- Semester-long team project to develop a map of public restrooms across San Antonio.
- Extra credit Opportunities: The Midterm and Final evaluations will be in a table quiz format. Extra credit points will be awarded to the teams from first to last place.

**IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at [dss@tamusa.edu](mailto:dss@tamusa.edu). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing [tutoring@tamusa.edu](mailto:tutoring@tamusa.edu), calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional

difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit [tamusa.edu/studentcounseling](https://tamusa.edu/studentcounseling)

*Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option '2').*

Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources including support for in-the-moment distress, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental well-being.

Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff, and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, or email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about the Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>.

Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as ePortfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on "Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center" to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information

about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/>.

**Meeting Basic Needs:** Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE referral (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities/file-a-report.html>) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources.

**Military Affairs:** Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcome and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any questions involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at [military.va@tamusa.edu](mailto:military.va@tamusa.edu) or (210)784-1397.

**Religious Observances:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their traditions. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or coursework requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

**The Six-Drop Rule:** Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

**Statement of Harassment and Discrimination:** Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any

such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu), 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that is related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status ([titleix@tamusa.edu](mailto:titleix@tamusa.edu); 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

#### *Students' Rights*

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition, and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.

4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

### *Students' Responsibilities*

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and the administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>) or visit the resources available in the OSRR website (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academic-integrity.html>).

### Option 3 – Broader Use of Generative AI Permitted Within Guidelines

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, is permitted in this course for students who wish to use them. To adhere to our scholarly values, students must cite any AI-generated material that informed their work (this includes in-text citations and/or use of quotations, and in your reference list). Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.



**Detailed Course Outline: All Dates and Activities Need to be Finalized.**

Week/Date	Lecture Topic	Assignments
<p><b>Week 1</b></p> <p>8/26/2024 – 8/28/2024</p>	<p><b>Aug 26th:</b> Course Overview - Getting to know you and me. We’re going to take a whole class session to get to know one another. We’ll discuss the course and what I hope you will all get from taking it. Bring questions and suggestions and be ready to interact with one another and me!</p> <p><b>Aug 28th:</b> The history of sanitation - Today we begin our journey back through time to the earliest mentions of the toilet up to the present day.</p>	<p>Ind 1: Due 9/4/24 Ind 2: Due 9/4/24</p> <p>“Clifton Strengths”</p>
<p><b>Week 2</b></p> <p>9/02/2024 - No class Labor Day</p> <p>9/04/2024</p>	<p><b>Sept 2nd:</b> Labor Day Holiday</p> <p><b>Sept 4th:</b> The history of sanitation</p>	
<p><b>Week 3</b></p> <p>9/09/2024 - 9/11/2024</p>	<p><b>Sept 09<sup>th</sup>:</b> <a href="#">Workshop #1 - Resource Hunt (Scavenger Hunt)</a></p> <p><b>Sept 11th:</b> The history of sanitation continued</p>	<p>Ind 3: Due 9/16/24</p>
<p><b>Week 4</b></p> <p>9/16/2024 - 9/18/2024</p>	<p><b>Sept 16th:</b> Present Day Toilets - The easiest way to start is to consider your own at home, at work, here in college and in the places you go to every day.</p> <p><b>Sept 18th:</b> <a href="#">Workshop #2 - PROWL Program</a></p>	<p>Ind 4: Due 9/23/34</p>

<p><b>Week 5</b></p> <p>9/23/2024 - 9/25/2024</p>	<p><b>Sept 23rd:</b> Setting up the project - preliminary research</p> <p><b>Sept 25th:</b> Starting your research - how to do research, how to document, how to communicate with team members. Community agreement.</p>	<p>Ind 5: Due 9/30/24 Team 1: Due 9/30/24</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b></p> <p>09/30/2024 - 10/02/2024</p>	<p><b>Sept 30th:</b> Toilets around the world 1</p> <p><b>Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>:</b> <b>Workshop #3- Community Building</b></p>	<p>Ind 6: Due 10/07/24</p> <p>“Living wage analysis”</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b></p> <p>10/07/2024 - 10/09/2024</p>	<p><b>Advising and Mays Center Visit</b></p> <p>Davida will be in Europe</p> <p><b>Oct 9th: Pre-Registration Party</b></p>	
<p><b>Week 8</b></p> <p>10/14/2024 - 10/16/2024</p>	<p><b>Oct 14th:</b> How do sanitation systems and toilets work</p> <p><b>Oct 16th: Workshop #4 – Imposter Syndrome</b></p>	<p>Ind 7: Due 10/21/24 Ind 8: Due 10/21/24</p>
<p><b>Week 9</b></p> <p>10/21/2024 - 10/23/2024</p>	<p><b>Oct 21st:</b> What happens when they don’t</p> <p><b>Oct 23rd:</b> Midterm activity – 2 hours long</p>	<p>Team 2: Due 10/28/24</p>
<p><b>Week 10</b></p> <p>10/28/2024 - 10/30/2024</p>	<p><b>Oct 28th:</b> Here in America - we’re going to discuss how right here in Texas, many people do not have access to toilets for different reasons.</p> <p><b>Oct 30th: Workshop #5 – Self-Awareness and Reflection</b></p>	<p>Ind 9: Due 11/04/24</p>
<p><b>Week 11</b></p> <p>11/04/2024 - 11/06/2024</p>	<p><b>Nov 4th:</b> Activity - we’re going to analyze data on toilet availability in the US using the census data.</p> <p><b>Nov 6th:</b> Gender equity and social justice across the world</p>	<p>Ind 10: Due 11/11/24 Ind 11: Due 11/11/24</p>
<p><b>Week 12</b></p>	<p><b>Nov 11th:</b> The future of the toilet</p> <p><b>Nov 13th:</b> The future of the toilet continued</p>	<p>Ind 12: Due 11/18/24 Team 3: Due 11/18/24</p>

11/11/2024 - 11/13/2024		
<b>Week 13</b>  11/18/2024 - 11/20/2024	<b>Nov 18th:</b> Toilet Access Project Week  <b>Nov 20th:</b> <a href="#">Workshop #6 – Civil and Social Discourse</a>	Ind 13: Due 11/25/24 Team 4: Due 11/25/24
<b>Week 14</b>  11/25/2024 - 11/27/2024	<b>Nov 25th:</b> Toilet Access Project Week  <b>Nov 27th:</b> No classes - Thanksgiving	Ind 14: Due 12/02/24 Team 5 + 6: Due 12/02/24
<b>Week 15</b>  12/02/2024 - 12/04/2024	<b>Dec 2:</b> Semester Project Student Presentations  <b>Dec 4:</b> Semester Project Student Presentations	We're done!