



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
SAN ANTONIO

Course Syllabus

UNIV 1301.035

First Year Seminar (FYS)

Texas A&M University-San Antonio | Fall 2023

Commented [JR1]: Keep in mind that university policies and support services (near end of document) might be revised **very** close to the beginning of the fall semester. The updated language is sent out by the university in mid-late August.

Instructor: Mike Spohn, M.Ed.

Office Location: Office of First Year Experience, Patriot's Casa 2nd Floor (203 and 204)

Drop-in Hours: I hold these virtually. **Monday and Wed.:** 1:00-3:00 PM, **Tues and Thurs.** 12-3 PM, **Friday** 9-3 PM (information provided on Blackboard with the virtual link)

Instructor Email: mspohn@tamusa.edu

FYS Section: UNIV 1301.035

Day/Time/Location: Tuesday and Thursday, 8:00-9:15 AM, Classroom Hall 221

Peer Leader: Nevaeh Miller, nmiller1@tamusa.edu

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.

Text (provided by A&M-SA):

- *My First Vote* by the Brennan Center for Justice:
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/my-first-vote>

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. Demonstrate knowledge and skills in quantitative reasoning
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.

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. The 4 absences may include quarantine and/or isolation for COVID-19. 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. There are no excused or unexcused absences. The instructor will notify and contact you if you are in danger of being dropped. There is an attendance procedure that will be reviewed in class. If you are ever present and the instructor counts you as absent in error, please contact the instructor immediately. The instructor will notify you if your attendance is concerning and there is a risk of reaching more than four absences.***

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, collaboration). 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 in a timely manner. 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. It is vital that you follow basic grammar rules in order 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: It is very important that you complete work on time. Employers will ask you to complete your projects and work tasks on time. It is best to start the practice of submitting work on time and by the deadline now. The instructor will communicate when assignments are due (date and time). There is an automatic point deduction for late work:

- Assignments are due generally one week after they are given.
- Work submitted beyond the stated deadline one day late to 30 days after the deadline: 25% reduction in points.
- Work that is more than 30 days late: 50% reduction in points
- Starting in November, there are instances where it might not be possible to submit work more than 30 days late. For instance, if an assignment is given in mid-November, the latest I can take the assignment is by our last week (classes end on Dec. 5.).
- Accepting work during the week of finals (Dec. 7-13) is at my discretion and might not be possible.
- No work can be accepted and grades will close after December 13th.
- Shortly after the deadline passes for an assignment, any students who do not submit the work will receive a no-credit grade (noted as a 0). This does not mean your final grade is a 0; it simply means I did not get anything from you. Please take action to complete and submit the assignment to get partial credit.
- **I urge all students to submit assignments on time. One assignment late is not concerning. However, if you routinely don't submit work, the backlog will get substantial. It could be overwhelming and exhausting to complete large amounts of past due assignments in a short period of time (also think about your other classes and the work you will get from them). I urge everyone not to fall behind on your work. It is much less stressful to do assignments one by one and as they come. While late work is accepted, set yourself for the greatest amount of success by completing and submitting work on time!**

All policies in the syllabus concerning late work and other procedures are designed to ensure fairness. It is not fair for the instructor to create a policy for one student that he does not give to another student. Exceptions to any policy generally will not happen unless the instructor does that for each student. Please contact your instructor with questions.

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.

The majority of assignments will be completed during class. If you miss an in-class assignment, meet with your Instructor, Peer Leader, or a classmate to catch up on any work you may have missed.

Grade Breakdown

- **Daily assignments, quizzes, and reflections: 200 points/20%**
 - Clifton Strengths Reflection; 20 points
 - Motivation & Growth Mindset; 20 points
 - GPA Reflection; 20 points
 - Focus 2 Completion + Reflection; 20 points
 - Academic Investment Reflection; 20 points
 - Living Wage Analysis; 20 points
 - Resume Draft; 20 points
 - Three assignments to be announced (20 points each or 60 points total. These assignments will be discussed with you and noted when they come. The assignments will reflect currently class activities and what we are working on.

- **Projects: 600 points/60%**
 - My Story Dignification Page and Presentation; 50 points
 - Time Management project; 100 points
 - Financial literacy project; 100 points
 - Passport to Success; 150 points
 - Career Awareness and Development Project; 200 points

- **Participation: 200 points/20%**
 - Attendance and In-Class Engagement; 100 points
 - Peer Leader Meeting and Summary; 50 points
 - Faculty contact meeting; 50 points (this is where the instructor will reach out to you or engage with you in person or by messaging) to check in with you and see how you are doing this semester. The instructor will give detail on this; **while talking to your instructor in person is not required, I am hopeful we can ultimately talk or at least exchange messages. Please note: If you contact the instructor or exchange a message at some point in the semester (or set up a formal meeting – simply talking before or after class does not count) counts for this meeting.**

Grading Scale:

895– 1000 points = A

795– 899 points = B

695– 799 points = C

595– 699 points = D

0 – 594 points = F

Extra Credit Opportunities

Throughout the semester, there will be many ways to earn extra credit. The instructor will go over these and provide details and due dates. All extra credit must be submitted by December 5th.

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. 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.

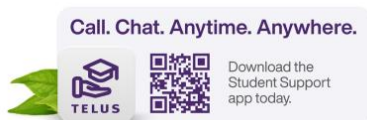
Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, 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

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 to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer to peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



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, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about 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. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend by the census date will have their financial aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester, a Care report will be submitted, and you will possibly be dropped from the class. Your financial aid may have to be recalculated and a portion of your federal aid may have to be returned to the DoE.

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 welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at 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 tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work 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, 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 are 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; 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 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>).

University Seminar 1301 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

Important Dates:

August 26	First day of class
September 2	Labor Day Holiday
November 11	Last day to drop with an automatic "W"
November 19	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
November 27	Study Day – No classes
November 28-30	Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes
December 5	Last day of classes
December 6	Study Day – No classes
December 7-13	Final exams

The complete academic calendar is available online: <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/index.html>.

This syllabus was created to give students guidance on what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. Please note the instructor for this course reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus at any point during the semester.

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Tentative Course Calendar – Please note this is subject to change, but the instructor will notify you of changes in a reasonable time.

Week	Topic/s for Week	Day 1	Day 2	Assignments and Due Dates
Week 1: 8/26-8/30	Introductions & Course Overview	Course Overview; Iceberg Lesson or Green Glass Door; introduce Blackboard & Microsoft apps on student email	Recap previous tech; Set up Digication (or other ePortfolio system) ; Introduce My Story presentation	Student Profile Survey
Week 2: 9/2-9/6 Labor Day Holiday, M 9/2	Campus Resources	No class -happy Labor Day!	CE/PROWL Intro; Campus Resource Hunt	
Week 3: 9/9-9/13 Census Date, W 9/11	Community Building	PL CE Workshop ; Passport to Success Project	My Story Presentations (share out in small groups or gallery style); volunteers to present to whole class	My Story Presentation
Week 4: 9/16-9/20	Time Management	Time Management	Time Management (Procrastination)	Time Management Project (Assignment) TBA
Week 5: 9/23-9/27	Motivation & Growth Mindset	Motivation/Growth Mindset	Motivation/Growth Mindset	Motivation and Growth Mindset Reflection
Week 6: 9/30-10/4	Degree Planning & Common Experience Workshop	Focus 2 assessment; CE workshop	Degree Works and Course Builder ; Passport to Success check-in; Introduce final project	Focus 2 + Reflection
Week 7: 10/7-10/11	Pre-Registration Party and Career Exploration	Mays Center Presentation/Pre-Registration Party	Mays Center Presentation/Pre-Registration Party	Pre-Reg/Mays Center Reflection (Assignment) TBA
Week 8: 10/14-10/18	Successful Student Habits	GPA	Clifton Strengths/How to Study	GPA Reflection

Commented [JR2]: A time management project is not optional - but faculty do not have to use the one posted on Teams

Week	Topic/s for Week	Day 1	Day 2	Assignments and Due Dates
Week 9: 10/21-10/25	Successful Student Habits	Clifton Strengths/How to Study; Passport to Success check-in	PROWL Presentation/CE Workshop	Clifton Strengths Reflection; Clifton Strengths Mini-Project (Assignment) TBA
Week 10: 10/28-11/1	Financial Literacy	Refresher on final project; Academic Investment: Paying for College	Living Wage Analysis	Academic Investment Quiz/Reflection
Week 11: 11/4-11/8	Career Readiness	Career Readiness Activity	Handshake Workshop/Resume and Cover Letter Workshop	Living Wage Analysis
Week 12: 11/11-11/15	Career Readiness	Handshake Workshop/Resume and Cover Letter Workshop (CON'T)	CE Workshop; Passport to Success check-in	Resume draft; CE Reflection (Assignment) TBA
Week 13: 11/18-11/22	Preparing for Finals Season: Mentally and Academically	Mental Health and Mindfulness	PL Career Exploration Presentation; Presentation Peer Review Instructor/PL Farewell and Words of inspiration Transfer of class control to the students for final presentations!	Complete FYS Survey; Mental Health Reflection (Assignment) TBA
Week 14: 11/25-11/29; "FYS Fall Break," no class all week!	Enjoy Thanksgiving!	No class	No class	
Week 15: 12/2-12/6	Final Projects	Career Exploration Presentations	Career Exploration Presentations	Passport to Success
<p>Last regular class day: December 4 (NW) and December 5 (TTh)</p> <p>December 7-13 Final Exams - Confirm your final exam times for all of your classes. No scheduled final for University Seminar 1301</p> <p>Best wishes for a happy holiday season and we'll see you in 2025!</p>				