



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
SAN ANTONIO

BIOL 5310 - Graduate Scientific Scholarship--Fall 2025 Syllabus

Texas A&M University-San Antonio

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth Borda

Office Borda: Scitech 311P

Office hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 pm; Hours also available by appt.

Email: eborda@tamusa.edu

Course Description and Prerequisites: This course provides graduate students with an introduction to the graduate experience, including scientific communication, ethics, writing, citation, grant writing, and professional/interpersonal skills. Prerequisite: Graduate-level status.

Course meeting time:

Mondays & Wednesdays, 5:30-6:45 pm, hybrid
Scitech 179 or via Zoom (available in Blackboard)

Course objectives are to develop:

- Effective Interpersonal and communication skills
- Develop disciplinary knowledge
- Science communication skills
- Logical/Critical Thinking
- Understanding of the research environment
- Responsible and ethical research practices
- Ability to design and conduct a research project
- Identity, independence, and confidence as a researcher
- Skills to deal with personal differences in the research environment
- Equity and inclusion in the research environment
- Confidence in a research career

Course Resources

Adapted from *Entering Research* (2nd edition; Branchaw, Butz, & Smith, 2019; Macmillan).

All course material is to be provided in Blackboard.

Course Themes/Topics	
1	Equity & Inclusion Awareness & Skills
2	Practical Research Skills
3	Professional and Career Development Skills
4	Research Comprehension & Communication Skills
5	Research Ethics
6	Researcher Confidence & Independence
7	Researcher Identity
8	Writing strategies

Course Policy

Course Expectations: Personal and academic integrity, being open to new ideas, and sharing in a community where individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures help one another grow intellectually, socially, and personally are expected at all times throughout the course. The faculty and staff of TAMUSA are here to help; however, students must take responsibility for their own learning. Students should strive for a high level of academic performance and to be responsible, respectful, and contributing citizens within the university and outside communities. Above all, students should develop a love of learning that will last a lifetime, along with a life-long interest in maintaining emotional and physical wellness.

Active Participation: Students are expected to actively participate during class. It is recognized that students learn in a diversity of ways, thus diverse teaching strategies will be implemented as part of the course (e.g., discussion, reading, writing, individual reflection, presenting, and collaboration). There are multiple ways to demonstrate active learning engagement in this course and the intention is for students to strive beyond their preferred ways of learning and comfort zones, as dissonance can promote new learning. Students are highly encouraged to contribute thoughtful comments and questions, as well as to listen carefully to their peers' contributions and respectfully respond to others' comments. The success of mutual learning depends upon preparation and active participation in all aspects of the course.

Attendance: This is a discussion-based and community-oriented learning environment. Your attendance is very important to the functioning of this course. If you must be absent from a class due to illness or other obligations, please send the instructor an email or leave a voicemail prior to the start of class. As stated above, if you must miss a class session you are responsible for all material covered and any handouts given during that class session.

Grading: If you believe an error was made in grading please do not hesitate to bring it to my attention as soon as possible. If you find yourself struggling with this course, please talk to the instructor as soon as possible and **do not wait until the end of the semester**. You are always welcome to stop by my office or email me to make an appointment to discuss your concerns.

To be successful in this course you are expected to complete all assignments on time.

Grade Scale and Points Distribution

A = >90.0

B = 80.0 – 89.9

C = 70.0 – 79.9

D = 60.0 – 69.9

F = <59.9

Assignments	% of Grade
Article Critique	20%
Research Abstract	20%
Research Mini Proposal	20%
ePortfolio	20%
Discussion/Activity Participation	20%

Blackboard and Course Communication: All grades will be posted and be accessible through the course's Blackboard site. Students must log in regularly to both the Blackboard site and to their TAMUSA email account to keep updated on information or changes related to the class. Each student **MUST** have an active TAMUSA email account. This will be the e-mail address that is used for any communication between you and your instructor. E-mail may be sent from student-to-student, or student-to-instructor using the email feature in Blackboard's Communication area. Students who email the instructor Monday-Thursday ordinarily can expect a response within 24 hours. Students who e-mail Friday-Sunday ordinarily can expect a response by Monday morning. The preferred method of communication will always be via Telegram first (link to be provided in Blackboard), then e-mail or making a virtual appointment.

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

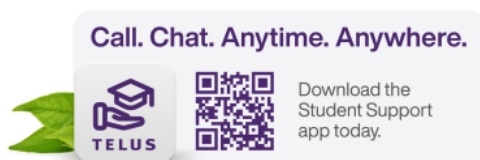
Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation 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 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 <http://tamusa.edu/studentcounseling>

Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331.

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. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (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.

Office Hours: All faculty with teaching assignments should include regularly scheduled office hours on each syllabus in addition to "by appointment." Please review your appointment letter for the number of weekly office hours you are expected to set. Regularly scheduled office hours should also be posted outside your office door (where applicable).

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 with 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 on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to 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, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

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 based on sex, 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 sex-based 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 modifications to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with 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.

Young Jaguars: can support parenting students with daycare who meet this criteria: Must be enrolled in classes at TAMUSA in the current semester. Must be Pell eligible or a single parent. They serve children ages 3 to 12-years-old. Children must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade.
youngjaguars@tamusa.edu (210) 784-2636

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 students' 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>).

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.

Important Dates: Fall 2025 Regular 16-Week Session

August 25	First day of class
September 1	Labor Day Holiday – No classes
September 10	Census Date
November 14	Last day to drop with an automatic “W”
November 25	Last day to withdraw from the University
November 26	Study Day – No classes
November 27-29	Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes
December 4	Last day of classes
December 5	Study Day – No classes
December 6-12	Final exams
December 16	Commencement

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

Detailed Schedule

Class schedule is subject to changes; Changes will be announced during class on *Blackboard*.

Week	Topics/Activities	Week	Topics/Activities
WEEK 1 Aug. 25, 27	Welcome & Introductions, Entering Research, Funding your Research Overview Mentoring best practices	WEEK 9 Oct. 20, 22	Research Ethics
WEEK 2 Sept. 1, 3	LABOR DAY - NO CLASS (Sept. 2) Asset Mapping and IDP	WEEK 10 Oct. 27, 29	ePortfolios Diversity in STEM
WEEK 3 Sept. 8, 10	Intro to Abstract / Proposal Writing Establishing your committee	WEEK 11 Nov. 3, 5	Developing your CV Networking in STEM
WEEK 4 Sept. 15, 17	Importance of Reading in Graduate School Article Organization, Comprehension, and Article Critique	WEEK 12 Nov. 10, 12	Challenges Facing Diverse Teams
WEEK 5 Sept. 22, 24	Searching Online Databases Literature Review and Publication	WEEK 13 Nov. 17, 19	Assignment / Reflection Catch up
WEEK 6 Sept. 29, Oct. 1	Research Documentation Technical Writing	WEEK 14 Nov. 24, 26	ePortfolio Peer Review STUDY DAY - NO CLASS (Nov. 26)
WEEK 7 Oct. 6, 8	Background Information, Hypotheses, and Research Questions	WEEK 15 Dec. 1, 3	Wrap-up No Class/Submit all assignments
WEEK 8 Oct. 13, 15	Research Project Outline		