

First-Year Seminar Course Syllabus

UNIV1301_019_202710

First-Year Seminar (FYS)

Texas A&M University-San Antonio | Fall 2026

Course Information

Instructor: Tiffany Waits, MBA (Professor Tiff)

Office Location: CAB 209

When to See Me: Mondays, 4:00-5:30 (Additional Availability: Some Fridays, 9:00-11:00am or by appointment)

Instructor Email: twaits@tamusa.edu.

FYS Section: UNIV1301_019_202710

Day/Time/Location: Tuesday & Thursday, 3:30-4:45 PM, MADLA RM 203

Peer Leader: Iliana

Course Description

By focusing on academic expectations, success strategies, and career exploration, this course equips first-year students with the skills needed for a successful transition to university life. Students will learn to access and utilize campus resources, develop self-awareness and personal agency, and practice habits that foster responsibility and engagement. The course also encourages active participation in the campus community as students build a foundation for their academic and personal goals.

Course Promises (Course Learning Outcomes)

This course makes a set of promises to you (assuming you fulfill the expectations on pg. 2). By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Exhibit growth in self-awareness, agency, and personal responsibility.
2. Adapt and apply appropriate academic strategies to courses and learning experiences.
3. Identify and apply strategies to effectively manage time and priorities.
4. Identify relevant academic policies, processes, and resources relevant to academic success.
5. 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 class

Attendance and Participation (100 Points)

Attendance and participation are worth 100 points of your final grade. You will earn points throughout the semester by **attending class, arriving on time, participating in discussions and activities, and engaging with course content.**

Attendance points cannot be made up for unexcused absences. Because much of the learning in this course occurs through in-class interaction, students who are absent will also miss opportunities to complete participation activities and earn associated points.

Students arriving 15 or more minutes late will be marked absent for the class session and will not earn attendance points for that day. Excessive tardiness (3+) may result in additional reductions to participation points.

Excused Absences: Students are expected to attend all class sessions. An absence may be considered excused for the following reasons:

- University-sponsored activities that require the student's participation
- Religious days as recognized by university policy
- Military service obligations
- Serious illness, medical emergencies, or hospitalization of the student
- Death or serious illness of an immediate family member
- Other circumstances required by university policy or approved by the instructor
- Whenever possible, students should notify the instructor in advance of an anticipated absence. Documentation may be requested for excused absences.
- Excused absences do not result in disciplinary action; however, attendance and participation points associated with missed class sessions generally

cannot be earned without completing an alternative assignment. The alternative assignment is at the discretion of the FYS faculty member.

- **While students may encounter circumstances that require them to miss class, accumulating more than four absences for any reason may result in removal from the course.**

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.

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 to get full credit for assignments. No matter how short or long the response is, make sure you check the 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:

With the exception of 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 at that point in time.

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.

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.

Grading Information

Grading Breakdown

- **Daily assignments, quizzes, and reflections: 200 points/20%**
 - Student Profile; 20 points
 - Focus 2 Completion + Reflection; 20 points
 - Peer Leader Meeting Summary; 20 points
 - Student Success Plan; 20 points
 - Evidence of Learning Checkpoint #1; 40 points
 - Evidence of Learning Checkpoint #2; 40 points
 - Evidence of Learning Checkpoint #3; 40 points
- **Projects: 600 points/60%**
 - My Story Presentation; 50 points
 - Passport to Success; 150 points
 - Strengths Presentations; 100 points
 - Time Management Project; 100 points
 - Career Project; 100 points
 - Final Reflection Presentation; 100 points
- **Participation: 200 points/20%**
 - Attendance and In-Class Engagement; 100 points
 - Each day is worth 4 points (the math is in your favor, trust me)
 - Peer Leader Meeting; 50 points
 - Attend Faculty Meeting; 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.

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

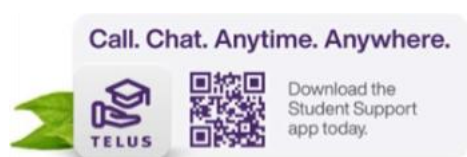
to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

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.

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:

Supports 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>).

Use of Generative AI Permitted Under Some Circumstances or With Explicit Permission

There are situations and contexts within this course where you may be asked to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to explore how they can be used. Outside of those circumstances, you should not use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any student work (assignments, activities, discussion responses, etc.) that is part of your evaluation in this course. Any student work submitted using AI tools should clearly indicate with attribution what work is the student's work and what part is generated by the AI. In such cases, no more than 25% of the student work should be generated by AI. If any part of this is confusing or uncertain, students should reach out to their instructor for clarification before submitting work for grading. Use of AI-generated content without the instructor's permission and/or proper attribution in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

First-Year Seminar Course Calendar Fall 2026			
Week	Day 1 (Tuesday)	Day 2 (Thursday)	Assignments/Projects Deadline
8/24 - 8/28	Topic: Welcome to FYS! Activities: Introductions; review course expectations and policies; team building; first-day free write in folder	Unit 1: Belonging & Adjusting Topic: Welcome to College. (You Belong Here) Activities: My College Story Discussion: "What would you make you feel like you truly belong on this campus"? Preview: Introduce the My Story Assignment	Complete Student Profile by Tuesday, September 1, 11:59PM (20 points)
8/31-9/4	Unit 1: Belonging & Adjusting Canva vs. Powerpoint, Technology 101	Peer Leader Workshop: Mental Health Activities: Talk about Mental Health	Complete My Story Presentation and post to Blackboard Discussion by Tuesday, September 8, 11:59PM (50 points)

	Part 2: Sense of Belonging Introduction: Clifton Strengths Part 2: Welcome to College. (You Belong Here) (Small group)(work time) Introduce My Story assignment;		
9/7 - 9/11 Sept 7; Labor Day (Uni is closed)	Unit 1: Belonging & Adjusting Part 1: College Expectations vs. Reality Guest Speaker (Student Counseling) Topic: Differences between high school and college, Asking for Help, Managing freedom and responsibility Activities: High School vs. College (In Class Activity) PL OFF	Unit 1: Belonging & Adjusting Part 2: College Expectations vs. Reality Topic: Freedom, Responsibility, and Asking for Help Activities: Help-Seeking Role Play (In class activity) Challenge: Real-Life College Scenario Exit Ticket	Homework: College Scenario (2 pages). Post to Blackboard by Thursday September 10, 11:59PM (50 Points) Campus Connection Map+ (1 page) posted to blackboard by Tuesday, September 15, 11:59PM (40 Points)

9/14 - 9/18	Unit 2: Student Success & Self-Awareness Topic: Managing Your Time and Freedom Class Discussion: Does your current use of time match what you say is important? Activities: Where does my time go?	Unit 2: Student Success & Self-Awareness Part 2: Managing Your Time and Freedom Class Discussion: How can know yourself help you make better decisions? Activities: Where does my time go? Complete Strengths presentations	Strength's presentations (5-6 slides) need to be posted on Blackboard by Thursday, September 21, 11:59PM (100 Points) Time Management Assignment need to be posted on Blackboard by Thursday, September 17, 11:59PM (50 Points)
9/21 - 9/25	Unit 2: Student Success & Self-Awareness Topics: Study Smarter, Not Harder Class Discussion: Which Study habit will give you the biggest improvement? Activities: Study Strategy Challenge	Unit 2: Student Success & Self-Awareness Topic: Degree Works Activities: Complete Time Management; Peer Leader Workshop: Degree Works	Homework: Seven-Day Study Plan: need to be posted on Blackboard Tuesday, September 29, 11:59PM (50 points)



9/28-10/2	Unit 2: Student Success & Self-Awareness Pre-Registration Party (Meet in the Vista room during this time)	Topic: Academic Planning Topic: Asking for Help is a Strength/Academic Planning Class Discussion: What can make students hesitate to ask for help, and how can we change that? Activities: Who Can Help Me?	Resource chart+ reflection due on Blackboard by Thursday, October 1, 11:59PM (50 points)
10/5-10/9	Unit 2: Student Success & Self-Awareness Topic: Failure, Setbacks and Resilience Class Discussion: What is the difference between experiencing failure and being a failure? Activities: Rewrite the Story(In Class Activity)	Unit 3: Future & Career Guest Speaker(Mays Center) Topic: Growth Mindset and Academic Comebacks Activities: Rewrite the Story (In-Class) Exit Ticket: PL OFF	Homework: Setback-to-Strategy Reflection (2 pages)and post to Blackboard Discussion by Thursday, October 8, 11:59PM (40 points) Presentation: (Five-Year Future Vision, 5-6 slides due by Thursday, October 15, 11:59PM (150 points)



10/12-10/16	Unit 3: Future & Career Topic: Major, Career, and Purpose Class Discussion: What matters most to you when you think about a future career? Activity: Career Possibilities (In Class)	Unit 3: Future & Career Activities: Peer Leader Workshop: Networking.	Homework: Career Exploration Mini-Research post to Blackboard by Thursday, October 29, 11:59PM.(50 points)
10/19 - 10/23	Unit 3: Future & Career Topic: Your Money, Your Future Class Discussion: How do the financial choices you make today affect your future? Activities: Build a Monthly Budget (In class)	Unit 3: Future & Career Topic: Your Personal Brand Class Discussion: What do you want people to say about you when you are not in the room? Activities: Digital Footprint Check (In Class)	Homework: Monthly Budget Challenge (Budget +paragraph) post to Blackboard by Tuesday, October 27, 11:59PM (50 Points)
10/26 - 10/30	Unit 3: Future & Career Activities: Mays Center Presentation	Unit 4: Goals & Action Topic: From Goals to Action Class Discussion: What usually gets in the way between	Homework: SMART Goal Action Plan (1 page action plan) posted to Blackboard by Tuesday, November 10, 11:59PM (50 points)

	PL OFF	setting a goal and completing it? Activities: One Goal, Five Steps.	
11/2 - 11/6	Unit 4: Goals & Action Activity: Peer Leader Workshop: Civic Engagement	Unit 4: Goals & Action Topic: What's Your Support System? Class Discussion: Is your support system strong in every area, or is there a gap you need to fill? Activities: My Success Team	Homework: My Success Team Map (Support map +paragraph) post to blackboard by Tuesday, November 17th, 11:59PM (100 points) Homework: 1. Create a support map with academic, personal, career, and campus categories. 2. Add at least two names/resources 3. Identify one gap in your support system 4. Write the first step you will take to strengthen that area
11/9 - 11/13	Unit 4: Goals & Action Topic: Mentors, Faculty, Family, and Healthy Support	Unit 4: Goals & Action Topic: Your Next Semester Game Plan Class Discussion: What is one decision you can make now that will	Peer Leader Meeting Summary posted on Blackboard by Thursday, November 12, 11:59PM (50 points)

	Activity: Support Conversation Practice Scenario Exit Ticket Preview: Final Project PL OFF	make next semester easier? Activities: Introduce Final Project + time to start planning and brainstorming;	
11/16 - 11/20	Unit 4: Goals & Action Topic: My College Journey- Reflection and Commitment Class Discussion: How has your definition of college success changed? Activities: Letter to my Future Self (In-Class)	Unit 4: Goals & Action Topic: Looking Forward: Reflection and Commitment Activities: Peer Review Presentations; Peer Leader and Instructor "Final Presentations"; FYS Celebration	Peer review handout
11/23 - 11/27	FYS Fall Break – No Class/Finish Final Projects		
11/30-12/4	Activities: Final Presentations + Passport to Success Share Out	Activities: Final Presentations + Passport to Success Share Out	Links/Uploads of presentations (Submitted on Blackboard) by Thursday, December

			3, 11:59PM (100 points)
12/7 - 12/11	FINALS		