

CSCI 5395:904 THESIS

Spring 2026

Instructor:	Dr. Zechun Cao	Time:	F 10:00 – 11:30 AM
Office:	STEC 211N	Place:	To Be Announced
Email:	zcao@tamusa.edu	CRN:	25509

Course Website: Blackboard (<http://tamusa.blackboard.com>)

Office Hours: TR 1:30 – 3:30 PM, and by appointment.

Catalog Course Description: This course will provide an experience of undertaking and completing a piece of research, applying techniques learned throughout the program Thesis track students in MSCS program will complete a thesis and present to demonstrate the research accomplishment. Thesis track graduate students in the MSCS program must register for this course in the last two semesters of their graduate studies.

Course Objectives: Students will have the ability to:

1. Review the existing literature on the research topic and explain the rationale of the study.
2. Develop a research method with research questions based on the literature review.
3. Collect data, conduct experiments, and analyze resultant data.
4. Discuss the resultant outcomes and findings from the study and data analysis.
5. Interpret the results and conceptualize the importance of future research.

Important Dates:*

Draft due to the College of Graduate Studies **April 1st**
Edits/Suggestions Back to the Student **April 15th**
Final Draft (with all corrections made) due to the College of Graduate
Studies **April 22nd**
Thesis Defense Notification Form **2 Weeks Before Defense**
Thesis Defense Approval Form **After Defense**

• **Other Important Dates:**

Tuition & Fee Payments deadline January 13
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (No classes) January 19
First day of class January 20
Census Date February 4
Midterm grading period February 23–March 6
Spring Break (No classes) March 9–March 14
Study Day (No classes) April 3
Last day to drop with an automatic “W” April 17
Last day to drop a course or withdraw from University May 1
Last day of classes May 4
Study Day (No classes) May 5
Final Exams May 6–12
Commencement May 19

*Instructor may change this schedule during the semester.

The complete academic calendar is available at the university [academic calendar](#).

Generative AI Policy:

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.

NOTE: Guidance on citing AI: <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>.

Class Policy:

- **Class Attendance and Participation:** Regular attendance and active participation are essential to success in this course. Students are responsible for all material covered in class, and absences or lack of engagement can negatively impact performance. If attendance is recorded, students who miss more than 30 minutes of a class session will be marked absent for that day. The course is intensive and covers challenging material, making consistent preparation outside of class critical. Students are expected to spend a minimum of two hours outside of class per week for every one hour of class, including reading assigned materials before class. Participation through questions, discussions, and office-hour visits is strongly encouraged and will be positively considered when final grades are assigned.
- **Examinations:** There will be mandatory exams, including the final exam (as per university schedule). Being absent/non-submission of an exam will result in a grade of zero for that exam and may result in a fail grade in the course. The exams may be in-person or online, and proctored by the instructor. The exams may consist of conceptual multiple-choice questions, problem-solving questions, and short essay questions. The exam materials will come from lecture notes, the text, and class discussions. Questions will emphasize understanding and applications of concepts and topics covered in class.
- **Team Project:** For the team course project(s), teams may be required to submit a confidential evaluation assessing their own performance and that of their teammates. These evaluations will be taken into account when calculating individual project grades.
- **Coursework:** For coursework, including homework, assignment, project, lab, etc., the due dates will be posted through Blackboard. You must type your answers and turn in the electronic copy, no handwritten or scan of the handwritten work will be accepted. The submission must be through Blackboard. All intermediate work of the problem solution steps must be shown. This includes the use of the units of measurement, formula, the values substituted in the formulas for problem solution, as well the intermediate steps of the arithmetic computation. Considerable points will be taken off for not following these requirements. You must work independently on all the coursework. All submitted program codes will be checked by a plagiarism detection algorithm. You are encouraged to discuss concepts and ideas with your classmates but never look at another student's code or answers. Violations will result in a zero grade on the submitted work and other serious consequences.
- **Late and Makeup Policy:** Late and makeup submissions will NOT be accepted for any missed coursework or exam. Late submissions or makeups may be accepted/administered only in extraordinary circumstances, such as an excused official university activity, a severe illness, or a dire emergency. However, you must provide comprehensive and official documentation either before or within 5 days of the missed coursework or exam. All coursework has a clearly indicated due date and will receive full credit only if they are turned in by the due date. All submissions are due at 11:59 pm on their due date. Under the approval of the instructor, the late penalty for all coursework and makeup exams

applies as follows. All submissions and makeup exams that are late up to 1 day lose 10% of the maximum grade, 1 to 2 days 20% of the maximum, and 2 days to 1 week lose 30% of the maximum. Submissions more than 1 week late will not be accepted.

Course Requirements:

1. Students should check the Course Calendar, Announcements, and Messages (e-mail) systems in Blackboard on a regular basis.
2. Students should keep current with all course assignments, quizzes, and examinations.
3. If the course uses remote proctoring for exams, students must schedule their exam early in the semester.
4. Students should ask questions and communicate with the instructor either in class, online, off-line or during office hours.
5. For all classwork, exams, quizzes etc., if a student is completing it off-campus, then they are responsible for availability of internet connectivity. Extensions will not be granted for lack of availability of internet connections.
6. Students should remember that online and hybrid courses assume greater responsibility and independent learning skills by the student for their own learning outcomes.
7. For online courses, students should keep current on class recordings, if not attending the live class (either in person or online).
8. For online asynchronous courses, there will be no online class sessions. All materials will be made available through Blackboard or through online links.
9. For online synchronous courses, there will be online class sessions as indicated. Students are expected to attend the online session at the given time. If a student is unable to attend a session, instructor will make the recording of the session available for the student to view. All materials will be made available through Blackboard or through online links.

Class Conduct and Civility Code: Everyone in class is expected to follow all rules in the student handbook, as well as common courtesy during classroom lectures and discussions in class and online, including the following:

1. Attendance may be taken by an appropriate method by the instructor.
2. It is the students' responsibility to obtain and be able to use the required materials and software for this class.
3. Student must retain copies of all assignments and graded work for verification purposes and provide it to the instructor, if necessary. Keep own copies of all computer files and e-mails till final grade is received.
4. Talking while the instructor is lecturing is extremely disruptive and discourteous to the instructor and other students.
5. Using computers or phones (except for a valid urgent need) during class for a purpose not related to class is disruptive. All cell phones and gadgets should be turned OFF.
6. For any questions about the exams and assignments, a student should contact the instructor, well in advance of the day they are due, so the instructor may have enough time to provide feedback.
7. All communications will be via e-mail communications to the Texas A&M University e-mail account, and students are expected to use their school provided email account. The instructor will reply to a student e-mail messages and voice messages within 2 business days (Monday-Friday).
8. All assignment submissions must be uploaded as instructed by the due date and time. Submission window may close or marked late, even if late by one second.

Anyone violating these policies may be subject to disciplinary actions.

University Email Policy and Course Communications: All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you do not hear back within 48 hours, contact them again, as they may have a high volume of requests at the beginning of the semester.

Academic Accommodations for Persons 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 may contact DSS by phone at (210) 784–1335, visit the website at <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. Students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodation needs with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center: All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University–San Antonio may utilize the Academic Learning Center (ALC) for subject-area tutoring. The ALC provides free, course-based tutoring to enrolled students. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the *Brainfuse* online tutoring platform, which can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. Online tutoring is also available for after-hours and weekend assistance. The Academic Learning Center is located in the Central Academic Building, room 202, and can be contacted by email at tutoring@tamusa.edu or by phone at (210) 784–1307.

While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours for MATH in the ALC are listed below.

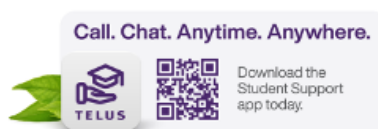
Day	Appointments	Walk-in Tutoring – No appointment needed
Mon–Thu	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
Fri	8 am – 5 pm	11 am – 4 pm

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, visit the SCC website, call 210–784–1331, or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

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. Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210–784–1331 or through the TELUS Student Support App.

The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources, including 24/7/365 support for in-the-moment distress, crisis support, 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 system. 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 and 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 at <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>. Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784–1911. For non-emergency situations, call (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.

Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC): The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing 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. The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website <https://www.tamusa.edu/student-resources/writing-center/index.html>. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

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 report via [CARE report](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click [here](#) for hours and contact information.

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 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 wide variety 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 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 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 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. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M–San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12 years old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K–3 through 6th grade. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (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, 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.

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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, 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](#) or visit the resources available on the [OSRR website](#).