Independent Seminar  
Fall 2015  
#changeyourisland

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Michelle Riley  
Email: michelle.riley@tamucc.edu  
Office: Faculty Center 118  
Phone: 361-825-2879

Office hours: W 9:00-10:00 am, TR 1:30-3:00, F 11:00-12:00 pm; or by appointment

Courses:
UCCP 1101.001 MW 2:00-2:50 pm CS 111
UCCP 1101.005 MW 12:00-12:50 pm CS 111

Course Description

Independent Seminar is a two-semester course sequence required of all full-time first-year students. As the central component of a first-year experience, Seminar helps students achieve success, academically and socially, as they make the transition to the university. Seminar provides students with opportunities for meaningful interactions with faculty and peers about substantive matters as well as timely, constructive feedback about their learning. Students are immersed in an active learning environment with a purposefully integrated and contextualized curriculum, fostering the development of transferable skills and engaging them in the academic community. In UCCP 1101, students are introduced to college-level work and responsibilities, and provided with appropriate support and resources to navigate their first semester.

Course Objectives

The objectives of First-Year Seminar are to advance the six intellectual and practical skills defined by the Texas Core Curriculum:

- Critical Thinking Skills
- Communications Skills
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills
- Teamwork
- Social Responsibility
- Personal Responsibility

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Reflect and integrate learning from current courses, including development of critical thinking skills, social and/or personal responsibility.
- Interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters through daily activities and discussions.
- Demonstrate competence of knowledge related to the course themes in a public forum.

Course Materials

Seminar is a discussion course that will focus on the assigned readings and your experiences as a First-Year Islander. Readings will be supplied to you as handouts or online postings for discussion in Seminar. It is vitally important that you keep up with readings that are assigned at all times.

It is expected that you join the Independent Seminar Facebook Group. The Facebook group is primarily used for informal communication with your peers and professors.

You will also need the following for seminar and other learning community courses:

- Regular computer access with Microsoft Office (available on campus).
- Islander email and Blackboard. Be sure to check both regularly.
- Ability to save your computer generated work and transfer it between school and home and among university computers (Laptop, USB Flash Drive, or cloud access).
- Positive attitude 😊
Course Evaluation

Attendance and Participation: (30%)
Attendance is the only way to benefit from my class. Most of your grade is based on your participation in critical activities and discussions. To learn to connect the concepts you learn this semester to your personal life, you must be present and prepared for class. Your knowledge and opinion is valued and appreciated at every class meeting. Attendance will be taken daily throughout the semester at the beginning, middle, or end of class, or via Blackboard.

Change Your Island Project (35%)
This assignment will ask you to discover how to effectively create change and then seek to change something on our campus. Several smaller assignments will make up this portion of your grade.

“Civil Disobedience” Readings and Activities (10%)  
Research Report (5%)  
Project Proposal (10%)  
Project Progress Reports (10%)

Reflective Assignments: (25%)
You will complete three reflective assignments this semester for seminar. Consider these assignments to be like your “exams.” The reflective assignments are designed to develop your metacognitive abilities. Metacognition basically means thinking about your own thinking. The more you reflect on your own experiences in college and make positive steps to improve, the better you will do. The assignments are as follows. More information will be given in class.

First Reflection (5%): Due September 11  
Midterm Reflection (10%): Due October 16  
Final Reflection (10%): Due November 30

First-Year Symposium (Change Your Island Project Presentation): (10%)
All freshmen will participate in First-Year Symposium at the end of Fall 2014 semester. First-Year Symposium is an opportunity for students to share their academic work with the campus community. You will present your research and results associated with the Change Your Island project. The symposium is scheduled for Friday, November 20.

Grading Policies

Late Work/Extensions:
I will not accept late in-class assignments– these assignments are directly related to your attendance and participation in class. Unless you receive prior instructor approval, major assignments received after their date will be marked down 10% for each day late. If there is an event that prevents you from meeting a deadline for an assignment, you can request an extension to turn in the work late without penalty. The approval of an extension is entirely at my discretion and will depend on the reason(s) for your absence or necessity for an extension as well as your attendance and progress in the course up to that point in the semester. All extensions must be confirmed by email at least 24 hours before the due date. Due dates are already posted – please note them in your calendar and plan ahead.

Communication and eCommunication Policy:
The best way to contact me is through email. You can expect to hear back from me within 24 hours Monday through Friday. I do not check my email as frequently on the weekend, so expect more delayed responses if you email late Friday or on the weekend.

I have created a Facebook group for our learning community that I expect everybody to join. I will be online during my office hours and will answer questions more frequently on Facebook. Also, the benefit of the Facebook group is that your peers can also answer your questions if they know the answers!

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that his or her final grade reflects academic evaluation which is arbitrary, prejudiced, or inappropriate in view of the standards and procedures outlined in this class syllabus, may appeal the grade given for the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the student believes the matter is not satisfactorily resolved at the student-faculty level, an appeal of the final grade in the course may be submitted, in writing, to the Director of University Core Curriculum Programs. For complete details, please visit: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/Rules_Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Seminar Coordinator.
**Dropping the Class**
If you are considering dropping this course, please discuss it with me to be sure it is the best course of action. Should you decide to drop the course, you must initiate the process by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Simply stopping attendance and participation will NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. November 6, 2014, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Classroom Policies**

**Tardiness**
You are expected to be on time. Part of your course grade reflects your attendance and participation in class, and, therefore, it is imperative that you are prepared to attend class to be successful in this course. If you are more than ten minutes late, you may be counted absent and you will miss the in-class writing assignment for the day.

**Rights, Responsibilities and Civil Discourse:**
In this course we will engage in active learning including frequent group activities and interactions. To meet these many significant learning objectives it will be necessary to establish some ground rules for class discussions so that no one individual dominates the discussion and so that the diverse opinions of others can be respected. You and your classmates will make suggestions that will ultimately be compiled into a set of rules responsibilities and guidelines for civil discourse in this class. Students are expected to read and follow the University Code of Conduct in the Student Handbook.

**Class Decorum**
During class you are expected to behave respectfully and contribute to a positive learning environment. This means that you should refrain from using technology inappropriately in class. Also, during class discussion, you are expected to be respectful of others’ opinions and open to a diversity of ideas.

**Course Communication**
All course communication is sent through your university email account (Islander account), and all course materials and announcements are posted to Blackboard. If you need assistance with these, contact the Student Computer Helpdesk at 361-825-5618.

**Academic Honesty**
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possessions of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism.

**Students with Disabilities and Veterans**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Expectations:**
In this class we are learning how to be successful both in college and in life as university educated professionals. For this reason my philosophy is to treat you as the professional that you are aspiring to be. Let this thought guide you any time that you are not sure how you should conduct yourself in seminar:

"How would I be expected to conduct myself if I were already working as a professional and if my paycheck depended on professional behavior?"