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Course Description
First-Year Seminar is a two-semester course sequence required of all full-time first-year students. As the central component of a learning community, 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 First-Year Seminar objective is to advance the six intellectual and practical skills defined by the Texas Core Curriculum:

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

Student Learning Outcomes
- Reflect and integrate learning from learning community 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 learning community discipline(s) in a public forum.

The First-Year Learning Communities Program (FYLCP) provides students with the framework to achieve these objectives by combining the foundational science courses of biology and chemistry with the first year writing or
communication course (if you have one) and seminar discussion course in an integrated first-year science experience. The following learning outcomes apply to science learning communities.

Science Learning Community Specific Learning Outcomes

- Take personal responsibility and become a self-directed college learner.
- Effectively read and comprehend scientific articles, reports, and books.
- Evaluate the scientific accuracy of claims made in literature relating to science.
- Apply scientific principles to make decisions.
- Understand scientific methodology.
- Understand the assumptions and limitations of science.
- Collaborate effectively as both an effective leader and follower.
- Communicate on controversial topics related to science.
- Relate science to other ways of knowing.
- Understand the nature of scientific research.
- Apply concepts of biology and chemistry to new situations.
- Understand the role and purpose of different forms of science literature.
- Effectively use library research tools to research on science topics.
- Communicate about science topics verbally, in writing, and via multimedia presentation.
- Understand and apply the conventions of science discourse.
- Get along with others.
- Develop awareness of one's present and future role in the science community.
- Understand the role of science in greater sociopolitical world context.
- Understand the role of mathematics in science.
- Be able to use mathematics such as graphs and statistics to support scientific hypotheses.
- Develop interpersonal communication skills.
- Use online learning technology effectively.
- Be successful.

This course uses both Blackboard and two face-to-face class meetings per week. Be sure to check Blackboard daily for assignments, discussions, and other important announcements.

Course Materials

Seminar is a discussion course focused on the readings and information gained in your large lecture course/s. You will work with the books from your other learning community courses. Additional readings may also be supplied to you as handouts, online postings, or from your textbooks for discussion in seminar. As in your lecture classes it is vitally important that you keep up with readings that are assigned in all courses. If you do not keep up with readings it will affect your ability to participate in seminar discussions and will lower your participation grade. Daily computer access is required.

Course Evaluation

- **Attendance:** 20%- Active participation is absolutely vital to this class and **attendance is mandatory.** Your knowledge and opinion is valued and appreciated at every class meeting. While this syllabus gives an outline of the course, most of the detailed information needed to understand and complete the assignments will be conveyed through in-class discussions. If you are not present and engaged in these discussions, you will be lost. Much of your grade in this course is derived from your work with team members. Failure to attend class will negatively affect your whole team as well as your own grade. Be advised students can and do fail seminar, usually because they have an attendance problem and don’t know what is going on in class. They miss assignments and have low attendance and participation grades. To graduate from this university you must pass 2 semesters of seminar. Passing two semesters of first-year seminar may be counted in place of professional skills for BIMS or BIOL majors. See catalog to determine if you qualify.

- Attendance is taken many times during the semester via a sign-in sheet or any time work is turned in with your name on it, either hard copy or online.
  - Please initial the sign-in sheet if used or make sure your first name, last name, and class section number are on all work turned in to me. It must be legible.
  - I will randomly choose 10 attendance days worth 100 points each.
  - **It is up to the student to pay close attention at all times to know when and how attendance is counted since any exercise may become an attendance grade. In other words, if you are late to class, miss a sign-in sheet, leave class early, or fail to put your name legibly on your work you will be counted absent.**
I will drop the 2 lowest attendance grades. This means you may miss two classes and still have a 100 for attendance.

These two free absences are to cover minor illnesses, car trouble, funeral attendance and other issues you are likely to encounter during the semester, therefore do not contact me or bring “excuses”. The only excuses for missed classes are official university sponsored events. Let me know in advance in person and via follow-up email if you miss class for official university sponsored activities, such as if you are an athlete.

If you will be out for an extended period of time due to a very serious illness or other major issue, contact the Office of Student Engagement and Success. Only they can verify your problem and request accommodation from your professors, who may or may not give you additional accommodations. See student handbook and university catalog FMI about absences.

- Participation: 10%- This course is designed to be effective when students actively engage and contribute to the success of the class, therefore a participation score of 0 to 100 will be given based on your contribution to the class. An A is not difficult to attain if you come to class, bring in any requested material, are prepared for discussion, and actively engage in a positive way. **However, simply showing up will not earn you full points.** Your participation in discussions, team work, etc. will determine your participation grade. Obviously if you have an attendance problem, you can expect this score to be correspondingly low, but factors such as excessive off topic talking, sleeping, inappropriate internet use (social media, texting, email, games, chat) and other inappropriate behaviors will lower your participation grade. Being a good citizen of the university and learning community is required.

- Reflective Assignments: 40%- Two reflective portfolio assignments will comprise 40% of your course grade. Consider these assignments to be like your “exams” and the Integrated Research Experience discussed below to be like your final exam. 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 three assignments are as follows. More information will be given in class. **Begin collecting digital evidence of how you are improving as a scholar and a professional immediately.**
  - Midterm Reflection- Academic Portfolio- Prove how you are adapting academically with documents, pictures and words- 20%
  - End of Semester Reflection Reflective Portfolio- Prove how you have improved as a professional in pictures and words. Describe the steps you must take to keep improving.- 20%

- Integrated Research Experience- Composition/Communication/Seminar Scientific Poster Presentation- 30%

First year seminar I is a true academic seminar class, where in conjunction with your learning community composition or communication class (if you have one) you will work as a research team with classmates to become subject matter experts on a current topic of science, in an area of mutual interest. Through collaborative library research, a writing sequence designed for science students, and regular discussions in seminar, you will ultimately produce and present a scientific poster presentation to learning community faculty, students, and other invited guests. This is a shared tetrad interdisciplinary assignment combining your writing, communication, discussion, presentation, biology, chemistry, and other interdisciplinary skills.

The assignment consists of the following graded components:

- Writing Process:
  - Team contract/Teamwork (2%)
  - Summarized Bibliography (4%)
  - Draft presentations (4%)

- Final Presentations (20%)*
  - In class and at First-Year Symposium

*Final presentation grade for the assignment will be included as part of your final grade for all Learning Community classes (see each instructor syllabus for details). By the end of the first year, students will have the skills and confidence needed to present complex information clearly at any academic conference. You will present your topic at First-Year Symposium.
Important Dates

- Wednesday Aug 4- First Day of Classes- Save evidence of your academic and professional development throughout the semester to use in reflective portfolios.
- Friday, Sept 2- Syllabus Quiz due on Blackboard by 11pm, Blackboard Profile Created by 11pm
- Friday, Sept 9- Research Team Contract due on Blackboard by 11pm
- Wed or Thur Sept 28 or 29- Team Reflective Assignment presentation in class
- Friday, Oct 7- Individual Midterm Reflective Assignment - Online Academic Portfolio due on Blackboard by 11pm
- Friday, Oct 14- Team Summarized Bibliography due by 11pm
- Friday, Oct 28- Draft of Poster in PowerPoint Format due to blackboard by 11:59pm. Present these drafts next week.
- Friday, Nov 11- Last day to drop a class.
- Wed-Thur, Nov 16/17 – Final Team Poster Presentation. Your team will sign up for a presentation time on one of these days.
- Tue-Wed, Nov 22-Nov 23- Reading Days (these are unusual and unlikely to occur again)
- Thursday, Nov 24- Thanksgiving- Eat/Watch Football/Go Shopping
- Tue-Wed, Nov 29-30- First-Year Symposium Poster Presentation to campus community.
- Wed, Nov 30- Final Reflective Assignment- End of Semester Reflective Portfolio due before 11pm. Prove how you have improved as a science professional. Turn this in early any time between Nov 21 and midnight on Nov 29 and receive 5 bonus points.

I require few assignments, so note that if you fail to turn in any assignment you drop one to two full letter grades!

If you drop other learning community classes during the semester, you must still complete all assignments, or contact me via email and in person for alternate assignments.

Expectations

Conduct yourself as a professional college student and aspiring science professional at all times.
- My class is a safe place for all. Avoid derogatory comments toward any individual or group.
- Have an open mind.
- Your participation is appreciated and expected, but make sure that you have the floor before speaking! Only one person should speak at a time during discussions.
- Acknowledge the previous speaker before offering a comment or rebuttal.
- Silence all electronic devices during a meeting.
- Use portable devices maturely to add to the discussion, but do not allow them to distract you.
- Absolutely do not check e-mail, text messages, play games, surf the web off-topic, or send or receive non-emergency communications of any kind via any electronic device or social media application unless it is part of the class discussion.

Electronic Communication Policy

The best way to contact me is email. I am available electronically Monday through Friday 8-5 pm when I am not in class or other meetings. I strive to respond as soon as possible during business hours. I may respond at other times, but please don’t expect me to always be available immediately. Please tell me what class you are in for a faster response. I am available to chat via Blackboard or for phone calls during office hours, but students physically in my office take precedence. I do not accept friend requests on Facebook or other social networking sites while you are taking classes from me but feel free to friend me later. Your writing in e-mail should be very
concise and to the point, but should also be professional. E-mail is not the same as instant messaging or text messaging and should have appropriate grammar, punctuation, and capitalization throughout, even if you are using a handheld device. Emails should have a greeting such as “Dear Dr. X,” and of course your own signature so the recipient knows whom it is from.

**Starfish**

Starfish is a software communication program used to connect you to your “Success Network” of instructors, advisors, and other academic support programs on campus. If you receive an email from starfish@tamucc.edu, this means I have raised a Starfish “communication” item useful for connecting you to campus resources and course progress guidance. Starfish “communication” items include:

- Flags: Early Alerts regarding Course Effort/Progress
- Kudos: Commendation for Course Effort/Progress
- Referrals: Recommended utilization of services: tutoring, mentoring, coaching, advising, etc.
- To-dos: Assigned tasks, such as “Meet with me”

Acting on these messages in a timely manner is vital to your success as a student at TAMUCC.

**Academic Honesty**

Islanders 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, fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism. Students are expected to read and follow the University Code of Conduct. They are expected to conduct themselves according to the Islander Pledge. It is the student’s responsibility to uphold these standards by reporting any dishonest behavior in themselves or others. While collaboration and teamwork are often encouraged, a student must know when an assignment requires individual effort or is collaborative. If any doubt exists, ask the instructor. As an Islander Alumnus I must uphold the reputation of this institution.

**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 contact the Disability Services Office at (361) 825-5816 or visit CCH 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.

**Academic Advising**

The College of Science and Engineering requires that students meet with an academic advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major or career emphasis. The academic advisor will set up a degree plan and assign the student a faculty mentor. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Center for Instruction, Room 350, (361) 825-5777.

**Dropping a Class**

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Consult the university calendar for the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Grade Appeal Process**

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 class may be submitted, in writing, to the Chair of the Department of Undergraduate Studies. For complete details, please visit: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/Rules_Procedures.

I am thrilled that you chose Texas A&M University- Corpus Christi and Science & Engineering Learning Communities. Work hard and you will succeed as thousands before you have. Go Islanders!