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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

- Be successful by applying the eight dimensions of wellness paradigm.
- 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 explore science.
- Communicate about science 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.

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
Learning Community 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 (not just smart phone) is required.

Theme- Science Success Through the Eight Dimensions of Wellness
Learning Community Seminar is designed to help you succeed as a student and beyond the university in your science career. We will be exploring “Science Success Through the Eight Dimensions of Wellness” theme this semester through personal exploration and discussion. You will get out of it what you put in. Luckily, we all want to live a long, healthy successful life, so I expect this will be a lively and thoughtful discussion.

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. 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.
    o 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.
    o I will 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 situation 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 further develop your metacognitive abilities and self-awareness. 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. **Immediately begin collecting digital evidence of how you are applying the eight dimensions of wellness to be a better scholar and science professional.**

  - **Midterm Reflection- Wellness Challenge Mid-Semester Portfolio** - This semester, I challenge you to be the best university student and aspiring scientist you can be. In this assignment you will use writing to prove with tangible evidence and a persuasive reflection that you are making real improvements toward your goal of science success. You will choose three or more of the eight dimensions of wellness that you would like to improve on this semester. We will learn more about the eight dimensions of wellness success paradigm in class, but for now they are intellectual, physical, social, occupational, spiritual, emotional, financial, and environmental. For this assignment you are required to **explore the intellectual wellness dimension and two or more of the other dimensions of your choice.** You will collect tangible proof of how you have improved in each wellness dimension and reflect on how this has made you more successful as a science major and aspiring scientist. - 20%

  - **End of Semester Reflection- Wellness Challenge End of Semester Portfolio** - This is a final report on your wellness. In this assignment you will use writing to prove with tangible evidence and a persuasive reflection that you made real improvements toward your goal of science success. In this portfolio you are required to emphasize the occupational wellness dimension as well as others you are working on. You must not only reflect on your journey and improvements so far but describe concrete plans for further success next semester and in life. - 20%

- **Learning Community Integrated Research Experience- Scientific Research 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 related to the eight dimensions of wellness theme. 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 that will sharpen your research, writing, communication, discussion, presentation, biology, chemistry, and other interdisciplinary skills in a personally valuable context.

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 a significant 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**

- **Friday, Sept 7** - Syllabus Quiz due. Read the syllabus and answer a few questions. Blackboard Profile Created by 11pm, Come up with at least one possible class name (PG-13, not derogatory toward anyone).
- **Tuesday, Sept 14** - Research Team Contract due on Blackboard by 11pm.
- **Wed or Thur Sept 19 or 20** - Team Reflective Assignment presentation in class. Interactively “teach” classmates about one of the 8 dimensions of wellness and how it can make you a better university science student.
- **Friday, Oct 19** - Individual Midterm Reflective Assignment - Wellness Challenge Portfolio due on Blackboard by 11pm.
- **Monday, Oct 22 or Tuesday Oct 23** - Team Annotated Bibliography due 1 hour before class. You will meet to review it in my office. Time TBD.
- **Friday, Nov 9** - Last day to drop a class. Visit me if are thinking about dropping a class.
- **Monday, Nov 12/Tuesday Nov 13** - Draft of Poster in PowerPoint Format due to blackboard one hour before class. Present these drafts in class for peer critique.
- **Wed, Nov 21** - Reading Day (no classes)
- **Monday and Tuesday Nov 19 & 20** - Online peer critique of poster.
- **Thursday, Nov 22** - Thanksgiving - Complete Final Presentations prior to holiday!
- **Tue-Wed, Nov 27/28** – Final Team Poster Presentation. Your team will sign up for a presentation time on one of these days.
- **Thur-Fri, Nov 29 & 30** - First-Year Symposium Poster Presentation to campus community.
- **Friday, Nov 30** - Final Wellness Portfolio due before 11pm. Turn this in early any time between Nov 19 and midnight on Nov 26 and receive 5 bonus points. Must type “Bonus Points” under your name on the title page to get credit.

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.
If you find yourself struggling this semester, please don’t be embarrassed and disappear. See me in office hours, call me, or email me. I can help you brainstorm a success strategy and put you in touch with the right resources.

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.

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.

Notice to Students with Disabilities

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 CCH 116.

**Notice to Student Veterans**
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.

**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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me before you decide to drop this course.* 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. **November 15** is 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/index.html](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/index.html).

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!