

University College
Section 02E
THEORY & APPLICATION OF LEARNING & CRITICAL THINKING
FIRST-YEAR SUCCESS SEMINAR

Spring, 2015

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Office Hours: M-9-3 pm, T-9-3 pm, W-9-12, R 9-12 noon, other times by appointment

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CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces students to theories of learning and critical thinking and provides a learning framework to apply them to their college and life experiences. Concepts studied include research and theory on how people learn, critical thinking, problem solving, perception, learning styles, memory, creativity, and how attitudes and values affect the learning and thinking processes. The course also shows students how to apply these theories and research findings to help develop practical skills in time management, reading, note taking, test taking, and other areas that will help them be more successful students and lifelong learners.

COURSE PURPOSE:

The First-year Success Seminar is designed to provide an opportunity for students to explore and learn from a variety of methods designed to increase academic and personal success in college. The focus of the course is on the development of practical skills and knowledge in the areas of critical thinking, reading, note taking, time management, memory skills, study techniques, communication skills, and an understanding of a variety of learning styles and how they relate to college success.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

At the completion of this course students should be able to:

- Apply creative and critical thinking skills to their college experience and everyday lives
- Identify and utilize a variety of learning styles to help create a successful college experience
- Develop and utilize skills in time management note taking, test taking, memory techniques, muscle reading, and other effective study techniques
- Effectively communicate in both written and oral form
- Use the University Library effectively
- Use the Internet and e-mail effectively
- Explore career opportunities related to college education, major and/or minor

CLASS FORMAT:

Every effort will be made to provide the best possible learning experience by blending brief lectures with discussions, field trips, group work, reading and writing assignments. This class is primarily taught as a seminar. Therefore class participation is not only expected; it is *required*.

CLASSROOM DECORUM:

Students are expected to be polite and courteous at all times. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated.

Class time should be focused on the topic at hand. **Please do not bring food or drink into the classroom.** Eat your meals and snacks before or after class.

Please turn off or silence all telephones, pagers, CD players, I-pods, Sonar detectors, nuclear missile launchers, and any other electronic devices that might in anyway disrupt class or disturb others.

STATEMENT OF STUDENT BEHAVIOR

As stated in the student handbook: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, for more information.)

There will be two major examinations in this course worth 100 points each (a mid-term at 7 weeks and a final at 14 weeks). The exams include multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The dates for these exams are noted on the tentative course schedule.

MAKE-UP EXAMS:

Both examinations should be taken on the date scheduled (see tentative course outline). If an exam is missed for an excused reason, you must arrange to take a make-up exam with the professor. If you know ahead of time that you must miss an exam for an excused reason, it may be possible to take the exam a day early. Check with the professor to see if such an arrangement can be made. If not, the exam can only be made up by making a personal appointment with the professor.

CRITICAL THINKING PAPERS/ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will attend three (3) events outside of class and write papers on them. These papers will be based on a summary of attendance at different types of university events: one (1) should cover an **athletic/sporting event** (football, volleyball, soccer, intramurals, etc.); one (1) should cover a **cultural event** (concerts, art shows, plays, etc.); and one (1) should be a **general university non-athletic event** (guest speakers, convocations, organization events, etc.). The paper due dates are spaced out during the 8-week period as indicated on the course outline. These papers are worth 10 points each (30 points).

LIBRARY ASSIGNMENT:

Each student is required to visit the library for an exercise.

CAREER AWARENESS/RESUME ASSIGNMENT:

Each student will research a career related to their academic major (undecided students will research a career and determine an appropriate major) and write a 2-3 page (typed, double-spaced) paper describing the career, what they have learned about themselves as students from this course (e.g., discovery wheel, learning style, right brain/left brain, preferred senses, etc.) and how they plan to use this information to have a successful college experience and prepare for that career. The paper will include a one-page resume based on current education, background, skills, and experience. **The student profile and resume are due Tuesday, March 24, and presentations will be made to the class on that day as well. (worth 100 pts.).**

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

Successful students attend class. Attendance will be taken every class period and you will receive 1 point for every class you attend and participate (there are a total of 10 class periods—15 points will be figured into the grading scale, so perfect attendance earns you 1 bonus point). Good attendance is essential for doing well in this course and every course you will take in college. While you can borrow someone else's notes, there is no way to gain the information from questions, discussions, group work, etc., when a class period is missed. Remember that if you miss a critical thinking paper/assignment, it cannot be made up. Also, any changes to the tentative course outline will be announced in class—another important reason to be here each time the class meets!

NOTE: Successful students come to class on time! Lateness communicates a "don't care" attitude, and also is extremely disruptive. Repeated tardiness will not be tolerated. If you cannot come to class on time, drop the course! Also, it is quite possible that you might miss a critical thinking paper/assignment if you come in late. Remember, these cannot be made-up under any circumstances.

CHEATING & PLAGIARISM:

It should go without saying that every student is expected to do his/her own work. Anyone caught cheating in any form or fashion will receive an "F" for the course and may be subjected to further disciplinary action by the university. Plagiarism (the use of others' words, phrases, and ideas in your writing without giving credit to the original author) is a form of cheating and not only violates academic ethical standards, but is against the law. Don't do it!

POLICIES ON ENROLLMENT, "X," "DP," "DF," AND WITHDRAWAL:

All university policies regarding last day for enrollment, use of "X," "DP," and "DF," and withdrawal from class will be rigidly adhered to in this course. You should check the university catalog, current semester schedule, and other official sources for specific deadlines, policies, etc. IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to see that all university procedures are properly followed.

GRADES:

Final grades will be based on: two exams worth 100 points each (200 points); a career awareness assignment worth 100 points; three critical thinking papers/assignments worth 10 points each (30 points), library quizzes (30 points), discovery wheel (10 pts), learning styles inventory (10 pts), preferred senses (5 pts) and attendance worth 15 points. Course grades will be calculated on the following scale:

A = 90-100% (360-400 points)
B = 80-89% (320-359 points)
C = 70-79% (280-319 points)

D = 60-69% (240-279 points)
F = less than 60% (239 or less points)

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 have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library
Room 132**

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.