



HONORS UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

AG 490 01H

Fall 2025

Instructor: Dr. Pedro M. Chavarria
Course Location: TBA (Meet with Instructor at AG/ET 154)
Course Hours: TBA
Office Location: AG/ET 154
Office Hours: By appointment, schedule by e-mail
Office Phone: 903.886.5615 (E-mail preferred)
University Email Address: Pedro.Chavarria@tamuc.edu
Preferred Form of Communication: e-mail

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required: None

Recommended Text (not mandatory):

Research Methods, Statistics, and Applications. 2023. Editors: Adams, K.A. and McGuire, E.K. Sage Publications, Inc. ISBN-10: 1071817833

Title: The Wildlife Techniques Manual (2 volume set)
Author(s): Nova J. Silvy (Editor)
Edition: and/or Publication Date: 7th Edition
ISBN: 9781421401591
Publisher: The Johns Hopkins University Press

Supplemental Materials: Presented by the instructor or on myleonline.tamuc.edu

Course Description

H Honors Thesis Hours: 6 Individualized instruction/research at an advanced level in a specialized content area under the direction of a faculty member. Prerequisite Consent of head. Note May be repeated when the topic varies. This course is an independent study course for students undertaking the research and writing of an Honors thesis. An Honors thesis is a substantive piece of scholarship or creative work involving primary and/or secondary research, which serves to demonstrate mastery over the discourse, methods, and content of at least one

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academic, creative, or professional field. A thesis requires students to synthesize knowledge and skills acquired over the course of the undergraduate career (including coursework, studies abroad, service learning, internships, and undergraduate research, if applicable). All thesis projects must be designed and completed under the supervision of a faculty thesis supervisor and, at the supervisor's discretion, may be reviewed by additional faculty advisors.

Student Learning Outcomes

Expected Outcomes of Honors Thesis Work

Upon successful completion of 3 credits of AG 490, students will be able to:

- demonstrate mastery over the discourse, methods, and content of at least one academic, creative, or professional field;
- critically evaluate research articles or creative work in the field;
- critically analyze data for accuracy;
- integrate core critical abilities, including critical and/or creative thinking, as well as analytical and communication skills;
- produce an independent piece of scholarship/work that demonstrates intensive study of a specific topic, research problem, or creative method;
- and articulate cultural, philosophical, scientific, artistic, professional and/or political issues relevant to their topic, problem, or method.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

You must be proficient in navigating myleoonline.tamuc.edu, using Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, e-mailing your instructor, writing papers, and opening .pdf documents. Basic use of Google Maps / GoogleEarth installed on PC or Mac laptop.

Instructional Methods

Students are expected to arrange weekly meetings with the faculty member and to arrive on time to meetings prepared with questions related to the research or creative activity and thesis drafts as assigned. To cancel a meeting, email the instructor with as much advance notice as possible.

GRADING

Points	Letter grade	Grade Points	Interpretation
270-300 points	A	4.00	<i>denotes excellent performance.</i>
240-269 points	B	3.00	<i>denotes good performance.</i>
239-210 points	C	2.00	<i>denotes satisfactory performance.</i>
209-180 points	D	1.00	<i>denotes unsatisfactory performance.</i>
179 points or below	F	0.00	<i>denotes failing performance.</i>

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Assessments

Research (200 possible points)

The assigned grade for research will necessarily reflect the priorities and expectations of the supervising faculty member. Some suggested guidelines for assigning grades are provided below.

A: Student assumes responsibility for directing project. Demonstrates clear understanding of hypothesis tested and of experimental or creative approaches used in the field. Student keeps an accurate record of experiments neatly written in a notebook or in a digital log. Student attends regularly and arrives on time for lab or research work and meetings. (180-200 points)

B: Student has modest understanding of hypothesis tested and of experimental or creative approaches used in the field. Student keeps an accurate record of experiments neatly written in a notebook or in a digital log. Student attends regularly and arrives on time for lab or research work and meetings. (160-180 points)

C: Student has modest understanding of hypothesis tested and of experimental or creative approaches used in the field. Student is not reliable regarding hours in lab or is not reliable in maintaining an accurate record of lab work or research/creative activity. (140-160 points)

D: Student has poor understanding of research project or creative activity. Student is not reliable regarding hours in lab or is not reliable in maintaining an accurate record of lab work or research/creative activity. (120-140 points)

F: Student fails to grasp basic concepts driving research project or creative activity. Student has substantial issues regarding hours in lab or in maintaining an accurate record of lab work or research/creative activity. (120 points or below)

Thesis (100 possible points)

Information about thesis content is listed below under Thesis Requirements.

A: Student completes written or creative assignments in a timely manner and the thesis meets or exceeds expectations. (90 – 100 points)

B: Student completes written or creative assignments in a timely manner and the thesis meets expectations. (80 – 90 points)

C: Student does not complete written or creative assignments by the suggested deadlines and the thesis fails to meet expectations. (70 – 80 points)

D: Student does not complete written or creative assignments and the thesis contains significant flaws. (60 – 70 points)

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F: Student fails to complete the thesis. (60 points or lower).

Thesis Requirements

The substance and format of thesis projects may vary depending on the student's major discipline and/or field of study. The expectations for what constitutes a "high-quality" thesis project should be established through substantive discussion with the student about established standards of excellence within the thesis supervisor's discipline. Experimental Sciences and Engineering. An Honors Thesis in an experimentation-based discipline typically arises from close collaboration with a faculty member on an existing research project. Ideally, you will identify a significant aspect of that research and craft a smaller project representing your own work. The thesis should include an introduction explaining the relevance of your work to the broader field of study, a brief literature review, an explanation of methodology or experimental design that includes pertinent explanations of all technical innovations and processes, an appropriate representation of results achieved, a conclusion, and a list of works cited. On average, the thesis will be 25-30 pages.

Page limit includes figures and their legends, but not the Literature Cited. Disciplines that do not follow the "page count" model, where, for example, students conduct original scientific research, work a proof or write software, or produce a portfolio of creative works, may require thesis projects that involve the production of artifacts other than a written paper.

Attendance and Participation:

Each student is expected to communicate on a weekly basis with the faculty supervising the research project. This course meets in-person in the traditional lecture format and in the field or lab depending on the customized research project agreed upon by the student and supervising faculty member.

Your "attendance" and participation grade will be based successful submission of weekly field notes and execution of data collection in the lab or field.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

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YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>.

You will be required to download the Codific Attendance Radar App (<https://codific.com/student-attendance-radar/>) to your mobile devices for in-class attendance verification. If you do not have a mobile device, you will need to consult with the instructor with your student ID to verify your attendance in-person.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor first.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Student Success

To be successful in my class:

- Check the course daily (e-mail and myLeo D2L) and read all announcements.
- Some changes to the course content, including deadlines to assignments, may occur during the semester. These announcements will first be made in-class during lectures. Not all announcements and changes to deadlines may be posted immediately to myLeo online. It is the student's responsibility to check with the instructor, preferably by e-mail, if a class is missed.
- Read and respond to course email messages as needed; please understand that I will respond as quickly as conveniently as possible. Sometimes I will respond to messages late into the evening, but generally expect me to reply within regular business hours

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- Because it may take me a while to immediately respond to your e-mail, I recommend you build a connection with peers in your class in which you can confide and rely (i.e. “study buddy”) to keep you informed of the changes to the course schedule and material in case you miss a class.
- Complete assignments by the due dates specified; If you have extenuating circumstances that prevent you from meeting a deadline, please let me know ahead of time so I can consult with you about necessary accommodations or make-up opportunities.
- Communicate regularly with your instructor (office hours) and peers. I am very understanding of situations that may arise in the academic environment or in our personal lives which can create challenges to your performance. Please let me know what’s going on so I can provide reasonable opportunities to help you recover and/or stay on track with the course.
- Create a study and/or assignment schedule to stay on track
- If you have any concerns regarding course content, need clarification on grading, or other matters related to the course, please make an appointment with your instructor to try to resolve the issue with the instructor first. If you find that the issue at hand cannot be resolved with the instructor after first consulting with the instructor, then feel free to seek support from the Chair of the department.
- Penalty enforcement (I reserve the right to adjust your grade for violation of the minimum expectations).
- Make-up assignments will only be given if arrangements are made with the instructor before missing the scheduled assignment. A documented excuse acceptable by the university standards will be required.
- If you miss class because of medical reasons, you will need to verify your illness through the TAMUC Student Health Services office (<https://www.tamuc.edu/student-health-services/>) or Student Disability Services office (<https://www.tamuc.edu/student-disability-services/>). A confirmation note (e-mail) from staff from either office is needed to make accommodations for missed assignments.
- Otherwise, missing assignments will be counted as zeroes in the overall grade computation.

I want you all to succeed in my courses and in life beyond your graduation. Schedule a time to come and chat with me formally or informally to discuss your interest in wildlife conservation and what kind of things you are expecting to learn while a student at TAMUC. I will make the strongest effort to adapt the degree program to the needs of our students and make the learning experience fun and exciting!

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

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University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Course Policy

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

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Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty
13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

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
Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-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.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

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Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus during the semester, if needed. The instructor also reserves the right to extend credit for alternative assignments, projects, or presentations. Some elements of grading may be delegated to a teaching assistant for this course.

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