



EAST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

BGS 405 – Capstone: Designing Your Life SPRING 2026: BGS 405.01W & 405.02W

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Bethany Ferrall, MS (she, her, hers)

Office Location: Online

Office Hours: By Virtual Appointment

Phone: 803-447-1702 (Text preferred)

University Email Address: Bethany.N.Ferrall@etamu.edu (preferred)

Preferred Form of Communication: E-mail

Communication Response Time: 24 hours

(Grading of assignments is typically not completed in 24 hours or less)

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Materials

Textbook Required: Burnett, B., & Evans, D. (2016). *Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*. Knopf. ISBN: 9781101875322

Supplemental Materials

Links and files will be provided in the document sharing tab within the course.

Course Description

This course is intended to be taken at the end of a student's college career and uses design thinking to address the 'wicked problem' of designing your life and career. The course employs a design thinking approach to help students from any major develop a constructive and effective approach to finding and designing their vocation after A&M Commerce and prepares students to articulate their marketable skills to future employers. Topics include the integration of work and worldviews, the realities of engaging the workplace, and practices that support vocation formation throughout your life. The capstone assignment is the creation of an action plan following your East Texas A&M graduation and draws upon skills, knowledge, and key assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes

Completion of this course provides the student with the knowledge to:

1. Understand Design Thinking and appropriate mindsets/dispositions and how it differs from traditional thinking

2. Understand the principles of design thinking, and be able to explain how they can use this technique to better understand the challenges their work faces due to technological disruption
3. Design a plan that will guide their career and academic decision making
4. Evaluate how to design their lives in the changing landscape of work
5. Uncover the importance of skill development throughout their well-designed lives and the need to continue lifelong learning
6. Use design thinking to demonstrate a growth mindset that is an essential foundation for life design.
7. Practice the skills of self-management & wayfinding to chart a personal life & career path.
8. Integrate educational and career planning strategies to design a successful post-East Texas A&M University life
9. Apply proven story-telling techniques to persuade and influence others

Regular and Substantive Course Interaction

As a general guide, students enrolled in a three semester hour course should spend one hour engaged in instructional activities and two to three hours on out-of-class work per week in a semester. Educational activities in this course are designed to ensure regular and substantive interaction between students and faculty.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COURSE

Instructional Methods

This course is an online course. To be successful in this course, all content and course modules should be read and reviewed. All assignments and quizzes (both graded and not graded) must be completed by the due date specified. Please contact the instructor by email for any assistance or support.

CWID and Password

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.

Technology-Related Issues

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 ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Students will need reliable computer and internet access for this course. Students must be able to effectively use myLeo email, myLeo Online D2L, and Microsoft Office.

Learning Management System (LMS) – D2L

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

- View the [Learning Management System Requirements Webpage](#).
- Learn more on the [LMS Browser Support Webpage](#).

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 on the [Brightspace Support Webpage](#).

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement

This is an online course; therefore, expect most communication to be online as well. If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your instructor. Correspondence will always be through university email (your “myLeo” mail) and announcements in myLeo online (D2L). You will not RECEIVE email through D2L, so be sure to check your ETAMU email for communication. The instructor will make every effort to respond to emails within 24 provided the correspondence follows the requirements listed below. Students are encouraged to check university email daily.

Include the Following in Emails with Instructor:

- Course name and subject in the subject line (ex. EDCB 517 – Posttest)
- Salutation (Good afternoon, Dr. Jackson)
- Proper email etiquette (no “text” emails – use proper grammar and punctuation)
- Student name and CWID after the body of the email (possibly add to student signature on email)

CID Studio

The CID Studio is in D2L and available to all CID students. The CID Studio contains modules intended to support and inform students on their educational journey.

[CID Studio Link](#) – Please contact your advisor if you need access.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY 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.

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 online in the [Student Guidebook](#).

Students should also consult the [Rules of Netiquette Webpage](#) for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum.

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy, please view the [Attendance Webpage](#) and the [Class Attendance Policy](#)

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all 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](#)

CID Policy on Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes cheating, complicity in cheating, multiple submissions (or substantial portions) of the same work for credit without authorization, submitting another's work, plagiarism, submitting algorithmically (AI) plagiarized work, and other acts that may reasonably be called academic dishonesty.

- Students who commit academic dishonesty will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment in the course and be issued a Written Warning that is reported to the CID Assistant Dean's office and listed in a database.
- If the student does NOT have a previous Written Warning for academic dishonesty reported in CID courses and has additional attempts available for the assignment, the student may resubmit the assignment (this applies to CBE courses only).
- If the student has a Written Warning of academic dishonesty reported in CID courses, the student may NOT resubmit the assignment, and the instructor will follow the procedure detailed in [Policy 13.99.99.R0.03](#) for Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty and report the incident to the Provost Office.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

East Texas A&M University 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).

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

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
East Texas A&M University
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

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University 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 East Texas A&M University 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 ETAMU 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.

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

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health – Counseling Services

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, 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

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



Grading

The following items will be used to calculate the final grade in the course.

Assignment	Point Value
Participation	10
Life Design Activities	20
Career Research Activities	20
Odyssey Plan & Presentation	20
Career Capstone Project	30
Total points	100

Grading Scale

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Participation (10%): Your active, informed participation is essential for doing well in this course and designing your life. Essentially, your perspective is essential to the conversation. Therefore, your preparation and participation in each week's assignments is important, specifically, completing assigned readings before the class and completing weekly journal prompts. For full participation credit, students should complete the initial introduction post, mid semester check in post, the wrap up discussion post in week 16, and complete thoughtful journal entries (weekly prompts in D2L).

Life Design Activities (20%): Students will complete a variety of life design activities throughout the semester – detailed instructions and worksheets are available in D2L.

- **Worldview/Workview (10%):** Students will create a Worldview and a Workview. Students will be challenged to recognize that connecting the dots between who you are, what you do, and what you believe, increases coherence and meaning making.
- **Energy Management Worksheet (10%):** Students will experience a shift in mindset from time management to energy management. There is a worksheet and exercise to be completed to evaluate energy and determine themes for actionable change.

Career Research Activities (20%): Research is an invaluable step in the career development process. To determine if a profession is right for you, begin by learning about it and how it fits YOU. You are strongly encouraged to utilize your career coach and the resources available in the career center for guidance. If you are unsure who your career coach is, email the instructor. **Details for each assignment are in D2L.**

- **Complete My Next Move/O*Net Profiler Assessments (10%)** This information will not only help you succeed in this class, but will also serve as a tool to get to know yourself, verbalizing your strengths and weaknesses, and help you make informed career decisions.
- **Complete an informational interview & reflection (10%):** Identify someone in a career of interest to you or pursuing a version of life that interests you. This could be someone who has built a life around a value you admire (service, family, travel) and you will ask them how they "got" there. Or, you can choose to interview someone in your current or future line of work to learn more about what working in that field "looks" like. You may use your personal network, LinkedIn, or contact your professor to locate this person. This should be brainstormed and scheduled during the fifth week of the semester, after you have completed your MyNext Move assessment and not before. **It is very important that you schedule this appointment in advance so you have time to complete the interview.**

Odyssey Plan & Presentation (20%): Students will create three alternative five-year plans using the worksheets provided in class. Students will be required to provide each alternative a descriptive six-word title and write down three questions that arise out of each version of the student. On the worksheet, students will complete a gauge on the dashboard – ranking each alternative for resources, likability, confidence, and coherence. Once you complete the

worksheet, you will record and submit a 3-5 minute video presentation to D2L explaining your odyssey plan. To get full credit, you must submit the completed PDF and submit a link to your video uploaded to YouTube. Do not upload a video, it will be too large to download – you must share a YouTube link.

Career Capstone Project (30%): The Career Capstone Project is a comprehensive presentation that synthesizes key insights from your Life Design Odyssey Plan, Career Research Activities, and Life Design Activities, **showcasing your next steps and future plans**. You will reflect on the course content and connect your learnings to the principles from *Designing Your Life*. This project can be presented as a presentation with voiceover or a video, and creativity is highly encouraged. Your submission should demonstrate thorough research, personal reflection, and a clear, organized plan for your post-graduation journey. The project is due on May 4 by 11:59pm and will be evaluated based on clarity, depth, personal insight, and presentation quality. The assignment has a rubric with it, please follow it carefully to ensure your highest possible grade on the assignment.

Please note: The Odyssey Plan & Career Capstone Project are required assignments, and you will not receive a passing grade for the course if you do not submit and receive a C or above on these two assignments.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Any changes to the following course outline will be announced in advance. Readings must be completed **before** the class for which they are assigned. Assignment due dates will be posted in D2L and will be due each Sunday by 11:59pm at the end of the assigned week, unless otherwise noted in D2L. **Due dates are subject to change and will be updated in D2L.**

	First Day of Class: January 13, 2025	DUE DATE
Week #1	Course introduction, syllabus review, set course norms & expectations Purchase Textbook (Designing Your Life) Read: Syllabus, Week 1 Announcement Watch: Introduction Video Due: Journal #1: Introduction Discussion Post	1/15/26
Week #2	Design Thinking Introduction Read: Burnett & Evans Introduction & Chapter 1 Watch: 5 steps to designing the life you want Due: Journal #2	1/18/26
Week #3	Worldview and Workview Read: Burnett & Evans Chapters 2 & 3 How to Create Your Workview Watch: Bill Burnett on The Worldview What is a worldview? What is a workview? Due: Worldview/Workview Assignment	1/25/26
Week #4	Navigating Dysfunctional Beliefs and 'Wicked Problems' Read: What is an Informational Interview Watch: Don't believe everything you think Due: Journal #3	2/1/26
Week #5	Wayfinding and Brainstorming Read: Burnett & Evans Chapters 3 & 4 Watch: Brainstorming – the Yes AND Due: Brainstorm ideas of who you would like to use for your informational interview and reach out to that person to schedule an appointment.	2/8/26
Week #6	Discovering you BEFORE Designing Your Life Career Assessments Introduction to ONETOnline & Big Five Personality Read: Your personality types & suggested careers from the completed assessments Watch: Videos about your preferred careers on CandidCareer . Due: My Next Move/O*Net Profiler/Big 5 Personality Assessments	2/15/26
Week #7	Prototyping and Odyssey Plans Read: Burnett & Evans Chapters 5 & 6 Watch: What is an Odyssey Plan & how do I create one? (Videos 1-2) Due: Journal #4: Midpoint Check In Discussion Post.	2/22/26

Week #8	Odyssey Plan Presentations Read: Reframing the 5 Year Plan Watch: What is an Odyssey Plan & how do I create one? (Videos 3-8) Due: Odyssey Plan and Presentation Journal #5	3/1/26
Week #9	Energy Management Flow Read: David Farmer's "Flow" & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi Due: Journal #6	3/8/26
	Spring Break	
Week #10	Résumés Cover Letters Job Search Graduate School Read: Burnett & Evans Chapter 7 & 8 Watch: Persuasive Resume Writing Due: Energy Management Worksheet Journal #7	3/22/26
Week #11	The Interview Process Read or Watch: Interview Best Practices Due: Journal #8	3/29/26
Week #12	Positive Psychology and Decision Making Read: Career Capstone Assignment/Rubric to create your project topic submission Watch: Overcoming Rejection, When People Hurt You & Life Isn't Fair Due: Capstone Project Topic	4/5/26
Week #13	Designing Your Personal Branding w/ LinkedIn + Elevator Pitch Read: Burnett & Evans Chapters 9 & 10 Watch: Online Presence & Portfolios Due: Journal #9	4/12/26
Week #14	Building Your Team Value of Networking Read: Burnett & Evans Chapter 11 & Conclusion Watch: Networking Curriculum Due: Completed Informational Interview	4/19/26
Week #15	How to Exceed Expectations in the workplace Navigating Your New Job Read or Watch: Success in the First 90 Days Due: Career Capstone Project	5/2/26
Week #16	Designing a Life You Love...The Next Chapter Due: Journal #10: What's next? / I like, I wish, I wonder.	5/3/26

This should be the VERY last assignment you complete when you are done with all of the other assignments and journal entries.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email me at bethany.n.ferrall@etamu.edu to discuss your concerns or to request an appointment.

Please note: All assignments in this course are required. If you make the decision not to turn in assignments for this course, the professor reserves the right to modify your grade accordingly and as they see fit based on the quality of work submitted. If you do not turn in or get a passing grade on the Career Capstone project or complete the Odyssey Plan assignment, you will not receive a passing grade for this course.