



ENG 504-01W, CRW; GDRS 597-01W:

Graphic Narratives

COURSE SYLLABUS: Summer 1 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Rebecca Rowe | Office Location: DTH 314

Virtual Student Hours: W, 10am-12pm; & by appt.

Email Address: Rebecca.Rowe@etamu.edu (preferred form of communication)

Communication Response Time: Within 24 hours (M-F, 8am-5pm)

COURSE INFORMATION

Textbooks

- *Lumberjanes Volume 1: Beware the Kitten Holy* by ND Stevenson
- *Maus Volume 1* by Art Spiegelman
- *Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal* by G. Willow Wilson
- *New Kid* by Jerry Craft

Recommended Textbooks (links to online copies will be made available)

- *Arrival* by Shaun Tan
- *The Eleventh Hour* by Graeme Base
- *Picture This: How Pictures Work* by Molly Bang
- *Rosita y Conchita: A Rhyming Storybook in Spanish* by Eric Gonzalez and Erich Haeger
- *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud

Additional materials available on D2L and/or on the course schedule

Software Required

- We will be using D2L for all assignment submissions and course materials.
- You will need to read pdfs during the course of the semester. You are not required to print them off, but you are required to be able to look at them during class. Make sure you have something with Adobe Acrobat or another pdf reader.
- You will be required to use a generative AI chatbot for one assignment in this course. Which chatbot you use is up to you, and you will have instructions on how to choose a chatbot and how to use it ethically.

Optional Materials

- [Purdue OWL MLA](#) is a great resource to check out for citation information.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

- www.tinyurl.com/otmarchive is a website I've created with previous students' teaching materials plus additional helpful online resources from me, for those of you interested in the pedagogical elements of this course.
- <https://www.etamu.edu/library/>—the university library website.

Course Description

When people think of books with pictures in them, we almost immediately associate them with children. From the simplest board books through picture books and early readers to illustrated and graphic novels, children's and young adult literature is rife with texts that play with the combination of images and words. Because of their association with children, many people belittle graphic narratives, which is insulting to young people, their literature, and graphic narratives, all of which are more beautifully complex than that view allows. In this course, you will learn to understand and analyze these colorful texts in more complex ways, so you can bring these analysis skills into your scholarship, teaching, and wider life. After all, our world is increasingly more pictorial, so this course will help you learn to read the visual world around you.

Student Learning Outcomes:

| By the end of this course, students will be able to... | SLO Aligns with ETAMU English Graduate Program Outcomes (Paraphrased) | SLO Aligns with NACE Career Preparedness Competencies |
|---|--|---|
| analyze the complex interplay of images and words in various forms of graphic narratives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know written texts from a variety of national traditions, historical periods, or genres. • understand fundamental theoretical concepts and critical terminology. | Communication; Critical Thinking |
| contextualize individual graphic narratives within their culture, broader media ecosystems, and the appropriate scholarly conversations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulate their knowledge of a particular area of scholarly inquiry, using primary and secondary texts. • employ conventions associated with a variety of the most commonly used scholarly genres. | Communication; Critical Thinking |
| critically and ethically engage with existing scholarship and formulate original, well-supported research questions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulate their knowledge of a particular area of scholarly inquiry, using primary and secondary texts. | Career & Self-Development; Communication; Critical Thinking |

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| By the end of this course, students will be able to... | SLO Aligns with ETAMU English Graduate Program Outcomes (Paraphrased) | SLO Aligns with NACE Career Preparedness Competencies |
|---|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> employ conventions associated with a variety of the most commonly used scholarly genres. | |
| independently design and execute a research, creative, pedagogical, or digital project , employing appropriate methodologies, managing timelines, and critically assessing process and product. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> articulate fundamental theoretical concepts and critical terminology. employ conventions associated with a variety of the most commonly used scholarly genres. | Career & Self-Development; Communication; Critical Thinking |

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

The most important technical skill you need is the ability to use a word processor, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs. Unless otherwise noted in the assignment prompt, **all projects and essays must be submitted as a Word Doc, a Google Doc, or a pdf**. You will also need to be familiar with D2L and websites such as *YouTube*. If you choose to do the Creative Tract, you will also need to know how to create the specific medium you have chosen. You will be required to use an AI chatbot, but the course includes a module on how to do so ethically (meaning you need no prior knowledge in that form of technology).

Instructional Methods

This course is online and asynchronous. In the D2L shell, there is a module for each week of the course, and the description of that module will walk you through the work of the week. For weeks 1-4, that work will consist of reading the assigned material (including, occasionally, additional material written by me) and engaging with your classmates through discussion boards. Each discussion board will explain how many posts and responses are needed for that week.

Student Responsibilities

You will need to complete readings for each week, including a mixture of primary and secondary sources, in order to engage fully in the discussion boards, which will act as both your participation and most of your homework. This is a graduate course, so I expect each of you to have thoughts, ideas, and questions about our readings beyond what I tell you. I will devise discussion boards, but part of the work of this course is to develop your own way for approaching the weekly texts, both on your own and in collaboration with your classmates. You

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will also need to complete a minor creative/reflective project and a major project (which will require extra work on your part) and small engagement assignments to fully engage with our topic and our community.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS: YOUR ADVENTURE GUIDE

The structural presentation and badge formatting of this grading policy were polished with the assistance of Gemini (Google AI).

Welcome to a different kind of learning experience! This course is built on the principles of [Gameful or Gamified learning](#). Instead of fighting against a traditional grading system where you start with a perfect score and lose points for every mistake, you start here at the beginning of your journey and build your grade from the ground up by choosing your own adventure.

You are in control of your journey. You decide which quests (assignments) to pursue based on your interests, goals, and the skills you want to develop.

Experiencing Grades

Your grade in this course is determined solely by the total **Experience Points (XP)** you accumulate. Your grade is based on *engagement, labor, and completion*—not on a running average or grading curves.

Because of this, my grading and my feedback serve two entirely different purposes:

- **XP** is your reward for doing the labor and engaging with the material. If you complete an assignment fully and in the spirit it was assigned, you receive **all of the XP** that the assignment is worth.
- **Feedback** is where we discuss quality. I will use my comments and rubrics to push your writing, challenge your ideas, and help you grow as a scholar. **My critique will never lower your XP.**

This table shows what falls under XP and what falls under feedback:

| Element | How It Affects XP | How It Affects Feedback |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Your Ideas & Writing | No effect on XP. If you put in the honest intellectual labor, you get full points. | Primary Focus. This is where I will push you to refine, challenge, and strengthen your analytical voice. |
| Deadlines & Late Work | -1 XP per calendar day late. Work is due Sundays at 11:59 PM (that's a soft deadline; you're safe until I start grading the next morning). Extensions should be requested <i>before</i> the deadline via the Extension Request | I will add a brief note to your grade log to track any late-work penalties. |

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| Element | How It Affects XP | How It Affects Feedback |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | Form unless extenuating circumstances prevent you from doing so. | |
| Short Submissions | Pro-rated XP reduction. If you write 500 words of an assigned 1,000-word prompt, you can only earn up to half the XP because you only did half the work. <i>Wiggle room: plus or minus 50 words for short assignments, plus or minus 100 words for long ones.</i> | I will explain where your work fell short and what critical depth was lost due to length. |
| Missing the Point | Up to half of the XP is deducted. If you submit an essay when a podcast was required, or skip the research element of a research project, you have not engaged with the core format. The project is incomplete and receives no more than half of the possible XP. | I will provide clear guidance on what was missed and how it impacts the project's overall goal. |
| Grammar & Formatting | No effect on XP <i>unless</i> the formatting directly violates the prompt (e.g., submitting a slideshow instead of an assigned flyer). | I only comment on grammar if it directly impedes your readability, or if formatting compromises accessibility. |
| Citations | No effect on XP <i>unless</i> you: (1) plagiarize, (2) omit required sources entirely, (3) forget a Works Cited page, or (4) submit a list of raw URLs. | I am not a formatting stickler. As long as your sources are clear, honest, and retrievable, you will not receive citation critiques. |

At the end of the semester, your total XP converts directly to your final letter grade:

- **A:** 90 or more XP
- **B:** 80 to 89 XP
- **C (Passing):** 70 to 79 XP
- **D:** 60 to 69 XP
- **F:** less than 60 XP

Assessing Outcomes

While your total XP determines your final grade, you must also demonstrate balanced growth across our four **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)** to pass the course. Think of these as your academic **Skill Paths**. Just as in a game where you choose specific pathways or skills to master, these paths represent the key focus areas where you will grow this semester.

To pass the course, you need a minimum of **70 XP overall AND at least 15 XP in each of the four Skill Paths**. Meeting the 15 XP threshold across all four paths will earn you **60 XP**. You have

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complete freedom to earn your remaining XP that reaches your target grade in whichever Skill Paths you prefer!

To clearly tie assessments to those outcomes, every assignment in this course is mapped to specific Skill Paths. Some assignments award XP across multiple outcomes. You can track exactly how XP is distributed on your assignment rubrics in D2L.

| Assignment | Category | Description | Skill Path XP Breakdown |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Discussion Boards | Course Engagement | Interactive weekly community boards. | 10 XP per week (split across <i>Analyze</i> , <i>Contextualize</i> , and <i>Engage Scholarship</i> as specified in the prompt). |
| Student Hours | Community | Meet with me to discuss course concepts or goals. | 3 XP per meeting (max 3 times / 9 XP total) in <i>Contextualize</i> |
| Major Project Proposal | Major Project | Choose your Major Project path and outline your strategy. | 5 XP in <i>Project Design</i> |
| AI Picture Book Project | Course Engagement | Generate an AI picture book page and write a theoretical reflection on it. | 5 XP Total: -2 XP in <i>Analyze</i> -2 XP in <i>Contextualize</i> -1 XP in <i>Engage Scholarship</i> |
| wAyflnder Badge Assignments | Course Engagement <i>Required for AI Picture Book Project</i> | Complete the end-of-lesson assignments within the wAyflnder module: -Reflect on your first lesson about what AI is and the tools you can use. -Put your new prompting skills into practice. -Complete a reflection for each of the 5 major ethical issues around AI. | 15 XP Total split across three modules: -5 XP in <i>Contextualize</i> -5 XP in <i>Project Design</i> -5 XP in <i>Engage Scholarship</i> |
| Major Project One-on-One | Major Project | Meet individually with me during Week 5 to workshop your project. | 5 XP in <i>Project Design</i> |

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| Assignment | Category | Description | Skill Path XP Breakdown |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--|---|
| Major Project (Select One) | Major Project | Select one of the five options: | 5 XP in <i>Project Design</i> plus one of the following pathways: |
| - <i>Analytical</i> | | -Synthesize an analysis of 1-3 graphic narratives. | -10 XP in <i>Analyze</i> |
| - <i>Research</i> | | -Curate an annotated bibliography of 7-10 sources. | -5 XP in <i>Contextualize</i> & 5 XP in <i>Engage Scholarship</i> |
| - <i>Pedagogical</i> | | -Develop a syllabus/unit plan and 2 lesson plans. | -5 XP in <i>Analyze</i> & 5 XP in <i>Contextualize</i> |
| - <i>Creative</i> | | -Create a graphic narrative of your own. | -5 XP in <i>Analyze</i> & 5 XP in <i>Contextualize</i> |
| - <i>Writer's Choice</i> | | -Design a custom project in consultation with me. | -TBD based on contract |
| Graphic Narrative Review | Community | Write a review of any graphic narrative not on our syllabus. | 5 XP in <i>Analyze</i> |
| Community Engagement | Community | Read a graphic narrative with a community member and write a reflection. | 5 XP in <i>Contextualize</i> |

Figuring out Where You Are and Where You're Going

The examples in this section were inspired by a similar concept in Emily Littlejohn's syllabi.

I highly recommend that you complete all **Course Engagement** and **Major Project** assignments. Together, they grant **85 XP** (an automatic B), provided you hit your Skill Path thresholds. To get an A, you simply need to supplement these with **Community Engagement** assignments.

To help you visualize how this works, here is an example of a student's mid-semester tracking sheet:

- **Weekly Discussions (Weeks 1 & 2):** 7 XP in *Analyze*, 7 XP in *Contextualize*, 6 XP in *Engage Scholarship*
- **Major Project Proposal:** 5 XP in *Project Design*

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- **wAyfinder Badge Modules:** 5 XP in *Contextualize*, 5 XP in *Project Design*, 5 XP in *Engage Scholarship*
- **AI Picture Book Project:** 2 XP in *Analyze*, 2 XP in *Contextualize*, 1 XP in *Engage Scholarship*
- **Current Total: 45 XP** (9 *Analyze*, 14 *Contextualize*, 12 *Engage Scholarship*, 10 *Project Design*)

This student plans to complete the **Analytical Major Project** and finish all core engagement assignments:

- **Weekly Discussions (Weeks 3 & 4):** 7 XP in *Analyze*, 7 XP in *Contextualize*, 6 XP in *Engage Scholarship*
- **Major Project One-on-One:** 5 XP in *Project Design*
- **Major Project (Analytical):** 5 XP in *Project Design*, 10 XP in *Analyze*
- **Expected Remaining: 40 XP** (17 *Analyze*, 7 *Contextualize*, 6 *Engage Scholarship*, 10 *Project Design*)

With this information, they can project their final XP:

$$\text{Current XP (45) + Expected XP (40) = Total Projected XP (85).}$$

They can also make sure they're making the appropriate progress on their skill paths:

- **Analyze:** 9 (Current) + 17 (Expected) = 26 XP (15 XP target passed!)
- **Contextualize:** 14 (Current) + 7 (Expected) = 21 XP (15 XP target passed!)
- **Engage Scholarship:** 12 (Current) + 6 (Expected) = 18 XP (15 XP target passed!)
- **Project Design:** 10 (Current) + 10 (Expected) = 20 XP (15 XP target passed!)

Because this student met the 15 XP threshold on all four paths and reached 85 total XP, they secured a B in the course.

Badges

Because this course doesn't use standard grading milestones, you can track your overall progression using **Badges** in D2L. These badging milestones let you know exactly where you stand on your journey.

XP Milestone Badges: These four key badges track your direct progress toward your final letter grade:

- **Halfway Charged (35 XP):** You are halfway to passing the course! *Pro tip: Try to earn this badge by the time Week 2 assignments are graded to keep yourself on a winning pace.*
- **C-Pass (70 XP):** Milestone achieved! You have earned enough total XP to pass this course (assuming your Skill Paths are also at 15 XP).
- **B-eautiful (80 XP):** Excellent work. You have unlocked a solid "B" grade.
- **A-Mazing! (90 XP):** Legendary Status! You have unlocked an "A" in this course.

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Skill Path Mastery Badges: These achievements are awarded automatically as you level up each of your four core skills (*Analyze, Contextualize, Engage Scholarship, and Project Design*):

- **First Step (awarded at 1 XP in a Skill Path)** *"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." (Laozi)* You have successfully taken your first steps toward strengthening this skill!
- **Pathfinder (awarded at 15 XP in a Skill Path)** *Successful skill building "is no more than the natural consequence of consistently applying basic fundamentals." (Jim Rohn)* Achievement unlocked! You have mastered the core fundamentals on this path, proving you can confidently find your way.
- **Summit Seeker (awarded at 20+ XP in a Skill Path)** *"Mastery is a function of time and intense focus applied to a particular field of knowledge." (Robert Greene)* Master Explorer status! Your focused training and dedication have led you beyond the baseline requirements and all the way to the peak.

To give you an idea of how these badges would work, in the above student example, the student would have earned the Half-Way Charged badge and the First Step badge in all four pathways by midterm. They would then earn the C-Pass and B-beautiful badges, the Pathfinder badge in all four pathways, and the Summit Seeker badge in Analyze, Contextualize, and Project Design by the end of the semester for a total of 14 badges.

CLASS SCHEDULE

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

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 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

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

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

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@etamu.edu.

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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 ETAMU 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.

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

As an instructor, communication is key with me. I am happy to be flexible with most things in this course if it will help you succeed, but I'm not a mind reader. You have to tell me what you need so that I can help you. If you need to contact me, send me an **email**. Generally, I will respond to emails sent between 8am and 5pm, Monday-Friday, within 24 hours of receiving them. If you have an urgent question about an assignment that's due on Sunday, you might want to start working on it by Friday so you have a chance to ask me before the weekend. If you forget and get started late, just let me know you need more time in the Extension Request Form. If I plan to be away from my computer for more than a couple of days, I will let you know in advance. I will also update the online grades as quickly as I can. With summer courses, I aim for no more than three days, but it may take me longer, especially with longer projects. You will receive written feedback for every project, so make sure you check for it. I often use rubrics, so if it looks like I didn't leave any comments, look for the rubric.

Additional Course Policies

Policy on Humanity

My courses and teaching are designed around two core concepts: adaptability and empathy:

- I recognize that you have considerable knowledge about many things coming into this class. I start by exploring what you already know so that I can help you take your skills and refine and strengthen them. I also want you to be able to take what you learn in my class forward with you. So, I design my courses around skills that I can teach you that you can then apply elsewhere as you move through your education and life.
- I know that you do not begin and end with this class, and I approach each student first and foremost as a human being who, if we're being honest, may have more important things going on in their lives than this class. **Your health—physical, mental, emotional,**

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spiritual, financial—is more important than anything we will do or discuss, and I want you to prioritize them. That means a few things:

- If you need help, accommodation, an extension, or anything else to perform as well as you can while also maintaining your health, please let me know.
- As a fellow human being, I respect you. By respect, I mean that I will always do my best to see you as a whole human being whose life experiences have created a person who acts in certain ways and who deserves to be treated like a human being. All I ask is that just as I respect you as a human being, you treat me and your peers with that kind of respect. We may at times cover new or difficult material and we all may have different opinions about it. I ask that you keep an open mind and be respectful with me, your classmates, and our material.

Ultimately, my goal is to discover where you are on your personal learning journey and help you move along that journey in whatever way I can. Most importantly, **I am here to help you, not harm you.** If there is ever anything I can do to help you with that, please let me know!

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.

University Policies

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 University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

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

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text beyond individual words. As an educator, I also acknowledge that college should be a space to learn technology like AI before you need to use it in your professional or personal life. However, AI can also obscure or hamper learning, especially in a class like this one, which focuses on teaching you how to generate your own content. To access the benefits of teaching you how to use AI ethically while mitigating the ethical concerns thereof, I have created a wAyfinder module and badge. The module will teach you how to use AI ethically, and you will earn the badge when you have completed the final assignment in the module. **Once you have earned the badge, you may use AI only where and how it is indicated in assignment prompts.** You will not be allowed to use AI on all assignments, and you will not be able to use AI in the same way on all assignments, so make sure to read the assignment prompt carefully. **If you do not earn the badge, you are not allowed to use generative AI tools for any assignment in this course,** and any such use of AI will be treated as an academic integrity issue.

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@etamu.edu
Website: [Office of Student Disability 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.

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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

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.



<http://telusproduction.com/app/5108.html>

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