



NUTR 589 – 01W

Independent Study

COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Katharine Halfacre, PhD

Office Location: NHS 135

Office Hours: MWF 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM; Virtual (upon request)

Office Phone: 903-886-5549

University Email Address: Katharine.Halfacre@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: **Email**

Communication Response Time: 24 – 48 hours

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Materials and supplementary readings will be provided in the LMS.

Course Description

This course develops the skills, knowledge, and abilities of students pursuing research in the field of nutrition and dietetics. Students will be led various process related to scientific research under the guidance of faculty.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Build oral and written communication skills.
2. Improve skills for conducting literature research.
3. Effectively understand and critique scientific literature.

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4. Gain an understanding of the research process from the formation of research ideas to research design, IRB approval, data collection and analyses, and the dissemination of research findings.
5. Develop understanding of ethics in research and academic professions.
6. Build skills that would be valuable in the pursuit of a career in research and the pursuit of a terminal degree.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Ability to utilize D2L, word processing, presentation, and database software;
ability to utilize university email

Instructional Methods

A variety of instructional methods will be utilized in this course. There will be a significant amount of student-instructor interaction to ensure that progress and learning occurs throughout the semester.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

This graduate-level course will require students to be highly disciplined, motivated, and professional. Attendance, attentiveness, and quality of work should reflect that students are in professional preparation. Plan to dedicate about nine hours of effort each week to succeed in this course. This time will be committed to reading the course text, reviewing lecture materials, and completing assignments. Be focused, prepared, and hardworking.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

- A = 90%-100%
- B = 80%-89%
- C = 70%-79%
- D = 60%-69%
- F = 59% or Below

Total points corresponding to the final letter grades

- A = 450- 500 Points
- B = 400- 449 Points
- C = 350- 399 Points

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D = 300- 349 Points

F = Less than 300 Points

Weights of the assessments in the calculation of the final letter grade.

Grade Item	Point Value	Percentage of Final Grade
Research Journal (5)	30 points each	6% x 5 = 30%
Video Abstracts (10)	10 points each	2% x 10 = 20%
Scientific Blog (2)	50 points each	10% x 2 = 20%
Research Proposal	75 points	15%
3-Minute Thesis	75 points	15%
TOTAL	500 points	100%

Assessments

Research Journal

Students will periodically provide updates on their research progress. This will include annotated bibliographies and self-reflections, among other elements. Specific details will be provided in the LMS.

Video Abstracts

Students will prepare 3-5 minute video abstracts for instructor-assigned scientific articles. When possible, the instructor will match scientific articles to each student's research interest. Specific details will be provided in the LMS.

Scientific Blog

Students will prepare blog entries summarizing all the knowledge on specific nutritional topics. Specific details will be provided in the LMS.

Research Proposal

This assignment submission should completely integrate all required components into a coherent, well-organized whole, and relevant connections between individual components (when applicable). The proposal should be clear, insightful, and follow the appropriate order. ***Please note**— feedback provided to you throughout the semester must be included within the final revision. Failure to adhere to this standard will significantly affect your earned score. As a way of demonstrating your understanding of existing literature and the research design process, you will design a research project proposal using qualitative or quantitative methods. You will not be collecting and analyzing data in this course, but your plan should have enough detail for you to

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continue the study if you wanted. **THIS PROJECT CANNOT BE A REPLICATION OF YOUR HHPK 597 CAP-ASSIGNMENT!**

Introduction & Literature Review

Think of the introduction as a big funnel: You should identify a broad topical area, specify a particular focus area within that topic, and then present your purpose statement and research question in a specific form. Your introduction should draw the reader into the importance of your topic and research question. You should use the literature review as a way to familiarize the reader with the research questions, findings, and a discussion that informs and impacts your study. Specific details will be provided in the LMS.

Research Methods Plan

The research plan explains how you propose to find an answer to your research question. Think about the design of a research project that you particularly liked from the literature. What kinds of questions did they ask? What *type* and *quality* of data would you need in order to address your research question? (For example, “We know that repetitive traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) cause damage to short term memory in HS football players, but we don’t have an enough data on the effectiveness of grading systems and rest on preventing future TBIs. This study proposes to examine...”). Specific details will be provided in the LMS.

3-Minute Thesis

Students will prepare a quality 3-minute research proposal to be delivered orally. This will overlap with the Research Proposal Assignment. Specific details will be provided in the LMS.

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

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

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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.

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

Students can expect a response to contact (email preferred) within 48 hours. Generally, the instructor will attempt to respond to contact as soon as possible. Assignments will be graded and posted in a timely manner. Office hours are posted and appointments should be scheduled during those times.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Your engagement with course content is essential for success. If you experience an illness, emergency, or anything else that prevents you from participating in the course, please reach out as soon as possible. Late work will only be accepted with a valid, documented excuse.

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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 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](#) webpage and [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>

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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.

Web url:

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

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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

AI Use in Courses

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).

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

Department or Accrediting Agency Required Content

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

subject to change

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NUTR 589 Planned Schedule		
Week	Topic	Assignments (Due Date)
1	Syllabus Introduction	Syllabus Acknowledgment (8/23)
2	Research Resources	Video Abstract 1 (8/30)
3	Research Ideas	Video Abstract 2 (9/6)
4	Research Expectations	Video Abstract 3 (9/13) Research Journal 1 (9/13)
5	Ch. 4: Writing Strategies and Ethical Considerations	Research Blog 1 (9/20)
6	Ch. 5: The Introduction	Video Abstract 4 (9/27) Research Journal 2 (9/27)
7	Ch. 6: The Purpose Statement	Video Abstract 5 (10/4)
Fall Break		
8	Ch. 7 Research Questions and Hypotheses	Research Journal 3 (10/18) Research Proposal Draft (10/18)
9	Ch. 8 Quantitative Methods	Video Abstract 6 (10/25)
10	Ch. 8 Quantitative Methods	Video Abstract 7 (11/1) Research Journal 4 (11/1)
11	Ch. 9 Qualitative Methods	Video Abstract 8 (11/8) Research Blog 2 (11/8)
12	Ch. 9 Qualitative Methods	Video Abstract 9 (11/15) Research Proposal Draft (11/15)

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13	Ch. 10 Mixed Methods Procedures	Video Abstract 10 (11/22) Research Journal 5 (11/22)
14	Research Proposal Revisions	
15	Ch. 10 Mixed Methods	Research Proposal (12/6)
FINALS	Finals Week	3-Minute Thesis (12/11)

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