



SWK 531: Research Methods for Practice

COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Gracie Brownell

Office Location: Henderson Bldg, 3rd Floor

Office Hours: Mondays 10am-12pm & Tuesdays 9:30-11am; 12pm-1pm & 3:45-4:45pm or by appointment (via Zoom)

Office Phone:

Office Fax:

University Email Address: gracie.brownell@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: **email**

Communication Response Time: Within 2 business days

COURSE INFORMATION

MATERIALS – TEXTBOOKS, READINGS, SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

Textbook(s) Required:

Grinnell, R.M, Jr. (2021). *Foundations of Research Methods for Social Workers: A Critical Thinking Approach*. Pair Bond Publications

American Psychological Association. (2019). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Software Required:

- D2L (in MyLeo)
- Microsoft Office

Access at: Student Instructions to Sign Up Free for Microsoft Office

Optional Texts and/or Materials:

All MSW students must purchase the following study materials to **prepare for the Graduate Comprehensive Exam** they will take in their final semester. You must pass the exam to receive your degree. It is never too early to begin studying for the exam.

Comprehensive Study Guide (Masters, Clinical, Adv. Generalist) Version 9.0. Social Work Examination Services.

To purchase access: <https://swes.net/all-products/#~:text=Masters%2C%20Clinical%2C%20Adv.%20Generalist>

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The scientific method in social work practice is presented. The methods of empirical research for knowledge building, the role of research in theory construction, research designs and data analysis, and methods of practice and program evaluation are introduced. Students learn to apply qualitative and quantitative research methods to the problems of social work practice.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) requires a competency-based approach to identify and assess what students demonstrate in practice. In social work, this approach involves assessing students' ability to demonstrate the competencies identified in the educational policy. Listed below are the competencies and associated knowledge, skills, values and/or cognitive and affective processes that comprise the expected outcomes for this course.

	Activity/Assessment	Dimension
Competency 4: Engage in Practice Informed Research and Research Informed Practice		
Use practical experience and theory to inform scientific inquiry and research	Literature Review Article Analysis: Quantitative Study Qualitative Study Single System Design	Knowledge, skills, cognitive affective processes
Apply critical thinking to engage in analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods and research findings	Ethical Reaction Paper	Values Cognitive Affective Processes
Use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery	Literature Review	Knowledge, skills and cognitive/affective processes
Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities		
Select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of outcomes	Knowledge Tests #1; #2 and #3	Knowledge, skills Individuals, Families Groups, Organizations and Communities
Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes	Ethics Reaction Paper Article Analysis: Quantitative Study Qualitative Study Single System Design	Knowledge, skills, values and cognitive affective processes Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
Critically analyze, monitor,	Article Analysis:	Knowledge, skills and

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and evaluate intervention and program processes and outcomes	Quantitative Study Qualitative Study Single System Design	cognitive and affective processes Individual, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities
Apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness at the micro, mezzo and macro levels a	Article Analysis: Quantitative Qualitative Single System Design	Knowledge, skills and cognitive and effective processes Individual, Families, Groups, Organizations and Communities

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

MINIMAL TECHNICAL SKILLS NEEDED

In this course, you will utilize the Learning Management Systems (LMS) D2L for instructional and learning opportunities, submitting assignments, participating in online synchronous and asynchronous discussions, accessing resources, and completing quizzes/tests. Additionally, you will need the knowledge and skills to use Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook Email. If you have any issues with using the various systems or software, you must contact support services and notify the Instructor of the technical issue.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This course will be delivered via synchronous and asynchronous sessions via D2L. It will consist of live class sessions, pre-recorded lectures, group engagement activities, and various assignments, including experiential learning and practical application of the content areas. In addition, small lectures, discussion activities, and workshops may provide instruction during this course.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES OR TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN THE COURSE

As a student in this course, you are responsible for engaging in active learning and reaching out to the Instructor if problems or challenges interfere with optimal learning. Communication is vital when engaged in a fully online, virtual environment.

Expectations for success include:

1. Always demonstrate professional behavior, including respect for the Instructor and peers; being open to feedback and guidance throughout this class and the program.
2. Adhered to the School of Social Work and University student code of conduct and NASW Code of Ethics.
3. Begin reading the assigned text and supplemental readings as soon as possible, focusing on completing all readings prior to engagement with the Instructor or peers.
4. Prepare to engage in live class sessions, discussions, and other activities so you can be a contributor as well as a receiver of knowledge and skills.

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5. Actively participate in engagement activities, including live virtual class sessions, online discussions, and interactive learning opportunities -as this is vital for learning and success in both this course and the program.
6. Work ahead when possible. Completing assignments ahead of the due date so you are prepared to submit on the due date.
7. Sign in to the D2L course shell multiple times weekly to access updated announcements or posted resources.
8. Check your university email daily. This is the university, department, and Instructor's official method of communication.
9. Be open and focused on the "process" and not the "product," as earning this degree requires time, effort, work, growth in knowledge, skills, and abilities, along with personal and professional attributes.

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 = 451- 500 Points

B = 401- 450 Points

C = 351- 400 Points

D = 301- 350 Points

F = 300 & > Points

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

Example:

Assignments 20%

Discussions 20%

Midterm Exam 30%

Final Exam 30%

TOTAL 100%

Evaluation for the course grade is according to the following formula:

Assessments	Weights for Final Grade
Worksheets (10 pts. each)	15%

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Core Assignments • Ethics Reaction Paper (50 pts.) • Article Analysis (2 @ 25 pts.) • Using AI for Research Analysis in Social Work (100 pts)	50%
Exams (3 @ 50 pts.)	35 %
TOTAL	100%

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Assignment 1: Contemporary Literature Review: Using AI for Research Analysis

Students will explore how AI tools can enhance their ability to analyze published social work research. They will engage in AI-Assisted literature review, critical analysis, and synthesis of findings to inform evidence-based practice. This assignment is designed to help students engage critically with AI technology while refining their research skills.

Instructions:

1. Select a Research Topic

- Choose a social work-related topic of interest (e.g., child welfare, mental health interventions, homelessness, substance abuse, or policy advocacy). You must receive approval of your topic from the instructor no later than the due date posted in the course syllabus.

2. Gather Published Research

- Identify at least five peer-reviewed journal articles related to the selected topic. Use academic databases through the University Library.

3. Use AI for Literature Review Assistance

- Utilize an AI tool (such as Microsoft Copilot or another AI-powered research assistants) to summarize key points from each article.
- Compare AI-generated summaries with your own understanding to assess accuracy and depth.

4. Analyze Themes and Trends

- Use AI to identify common themes, patterns, and gaps across the selected articles.
- Critically assess whether AI highlights meaningful connections between research findings.

5. Evaluate Bias and Limitations

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- Assess how AI interprets the studies—does it overlook certain perspectives or biases present in social work research and practice?
- Reflect on how [your] human analysis complements AI-driven insights.

6. Application to Social Work Practice

- Discuss how AI-assisted research analysis could be integrated into real-world social work practice.
- Identify ethical considerations when relying on AI for decision-making.

7. Write an APA formatted Report (1500-2000 words). Include a cover page and reference page (not included in the 1500-2000 words)

- Summarize the research findings and AI-assisted insights.
- Discuss the advantages and limitations of using AI in analyzing social work research.
- Provide recommendations for responsible AI integration in social work practice.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Depth of research analysis (30%)
- Effective use of AI tools (15%)
- Critical reflection on AI limitations (20%)
- Application to social work practice (20%)
- Clarity and organization of the report (10%)
- AI companion Reflection (5%)

Behavior A: Apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs

Dimensions: Knowledge, Values

Level of Practice(s): Level of Practice: Individuals, Families, Groups, Communities

Assignment 2: Article Analysis

Competency 4: Engage in Practice-Informed Research and Research-Informed Practice

Competency 9: Evaluate Practice with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Students will select a peer-reviewed article that uses either a quantitative, qualitative, or single-system design. They will then create a structured analysis that breaks down the study's methodology, evaluates its rigor, and reflects its relevance to social work practice. **Students will complete two article review assignments, with each covering a different system design (25

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pts each). The following outline must be followed.

1. Article Selection

- Choose a peer-reviewed research article published within the last 10 years. **
(Students will complete two of these assignments and each article must use a different research design)
- The article must clearly use one of the following designs:
- Quantitative (e.g., experimental, survey-based)
- Qualitative (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory)
- Single-system design (e.g., AB, ABA, multiple baseline)

2. Research Method Breakdown

Create a structured analysis that includes:

- Research Question(s): What is the study trying to find out?
- Design Type: Identify and define the research design used.
- Sampling: Who participated? How were they selected?
- Data Collection Methods: What tools or techniques were used?
- Data Analysis: How was the data interpreted?
- Findings: What were the key results?
- Limitations: What are the study's weaknesses or gaps?

3. Critical Reflection

- How does this design support or limit the study's goals?
- What ethical considerations are relevant?
- How could this research inform social work practice or policy?

**Students MUST Submit a PDF of the chosen article with key sections highlighted (research question(s); methodology description; sampling details and findings)

Behaviors: Competency 4

- A. Apply research findings to inform and improve practice, policy, and programs; and
- B. Identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.

Dimensions: Knowledge, Skills, Cognitive Affective Processes, Values

Level of Practice(s): Individuals, Families, Groups, Communities, Organizations

Behaviors: Competency 9

- A. Select and use culturally responsive methods for evaluation of outcomes; and
- B. Critically analyze outcomes and apply evaluation findings to improve practice effectiveness with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

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Dimensions: Knowledge, Skills, Cognitive Affective Processes, Values

Level of Practice(s): Individuals, Families, Groups, Communities, Organizations

Assignment 3: Ethics Reaction Paper (Pregnancy Project)

Students will watch the movie The Pregnancy Project through the “eyes of a social worker” and write a two-page reaction paper that addresses the three overriding ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report: Respect for Persons, Beneficence, and Justice.

Students will use the outline below as a guide when addressing each ethical principle.

- Identify the participants in this experiment?
- Provide thoughts regarding the experiment and how it met and/or violated the following ethical principles. (Do not write in 1st person – write as if you are explaining the criteria in the context of the movie to an audience).
- **Ethical Dilemma:** Is Gaby and her instructor(s) justified in subjecting the participants to the psychological and emotional discomfort incurred? Did the outcome justify the means?

1. Respect for Persons

People should be treated as autonomous individuals, capable of making informed decisions when provided with information to do so. This principle also recognizes that, due to some circumstances such as age or disability, some people have diminished autonomy. Therefore, it requires additional protection in research. The extent of his protection should depend on the risk of harm and the likelihood of benefit.

2. Beneficence

The principle of beneficence is reflected in two general rules: (1) do no harm and (2) maximize benefits while minimizing risks. Researchers need to weigh the potential risks and benefits of the research, including the benefits extended directly to participants. Participants should not be asked to subject themselves to potential harm when they are unlikely to receive any direct benefit from their participation.

3. Justice

It is unfair to expect one group to take most of the risk when a different group will likely realize the benefit. For instance, in the [Tuskegee Study](#), the burden of research fell on poor, rural, African families. Whereas the disease knew no boundaries, including geography, color, or income. In this study, one group assumed all the risk, whereas the entire society would benefit from any knowledge about the disease that emerged from the study.

Behavior B: Identify ethical, culturally informed, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive strategies that address inherent biases for use in quantitative and qualitative research methods to advance the purposes of social work.

Dimensions: Knowledge, Skills, Cognitive and Affective Processes, Values

Level of Practice(s): Individuals, Families, Groups, Communities

Rubric: Ethics Reaction Paper: Pregnancy Project

Categories	Points
Identified Participants Correctly	3
Identified Ethical Principles w/Examples	30
Addressed Ethical Dilemma	7.5
Writing Quality (Grammar, Spelling, Sentence Structure)	7.5
Adhered to Page Limit	2
Total	50

ASSESSMENTS

Weekly Unit Worksheets *provided throughout the semester.*

Students will complete worksheets that introduce them to research terms, concepts, and the basics of descriptive and inferential statistics (10 pts each)

Ethics Reaction Paper (core assignment)

*Each student will watch the movie: The Pregnancy Project, which will be scheduled in class and write a reaction paper using an outline provided by the instructor (50 pts) **NOTE: There is no make up for this assignment and no re-do option. IT MUST be completed within the timeframe specified in the course schedule so as to not compromise the integrity of the assignment.** Grading Rubric [Appendix A](#)*

Dissecting Desing in Social Work Research (core assignment)

Each student will complete two analyses of a quantitative, qualitative, or single-system design empirical study. Must use a different design for each analysis. Instructions and grading rubric can be located (2 article analysis 25 pts each = 50 pts) in [Appendix B](#)

Using AI for Research Analysis in Social Work (core assignment)

Students will explore how AI tools can enhance their ability to analyze published social work research. They will engage in AI-Assisted literature review, critical analysis and synthesis of findings to inform evidence-based practice. This assignment is designed to help students engage critically with AI technology while refining their research skills. (100 pts) Grading Rubric [Appendix C](#)

EXAMS

Exam #1 will cover the concepts and information presented in weeks 1-5 (50 pts)

Exam #2 will cover the concepts and information presented in weeks 6 -10 (50 pts)

Exam #3 will cover the concepts and information presented in weeks 11–13 (50 pts)

Due Date Policy

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Expectations for assignments is that they are submitted on due date indicated on syllabus in in D2L. Each assignment is built on content that precedes it and it is important to stay on track and follow the schedule. If you are unable to submit your assignment on time, please notify me to obtain an alternative date. *Please know that if you do not submit your assignments by the scheduled due date, you will not receive feedback or a grade on schedule with students who do submit on due date. You will not receive an opportunity to redo an assignment to gain additional points if assignments are not submitted by due dates.*

Course Outline/Calendar

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

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

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

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.

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.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

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>

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR COURSE

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@etamu.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](#).

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COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

INTERACTION WITH INSTRUCTOR STATEMENT

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. Students are encouraged to check university email daily.

INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING IN EMAILS WITH INSTRUCTOR:

- Course name and subject in the subject line
 - 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)
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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](#).

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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 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@etamu.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Services](#)

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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 or go to https://studentsupport.telushealth.com/us/about#download_app to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



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As an Institutional Member of the National Association of Schools of Music, East Texas State A&M University supports the Association's commitment to student health and wellness. The following web address provides links to information for resources related to physical and mental well-being, as well as assists in offering preventative measures that students can take to avoid serious and/or chronic conditions: [Musician Health and Safety - East Texas A&M University](#)

DEPARTMENT AND ACCREDITING AGENCY STATEMENT:

School of Music Mission Statement:

The School of Music at East Texas A&M University promotes excellence in music through the rigorous study of music history, literature, theory, composition, pedagogy, and the preparation of music performance in applied study and ensembles to meet the highest standards of aesthetic expression.

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