



US 597W CREATING A PRODUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2026

AUGUST 31, 2026, THROUGH OCTOBER 18, 2026 (7-WEEK SUBTERM)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Elsa Villarreal, Ph.D.

Office Location: Frank Young Education North, Room 203

Office Hours: As Needed Upon Request

Office Phone: 281-773-8446 (Instructor's Cell Phone)

University Email Address: Elsa.Villarreal@etamu.edu

Preferred Form of Communication: email, text

Communication Response Time: 24 hours on weekdays, 48 hours on weekends

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

No textbook is required for this course. This course is an ACUE supported course conducted online/asynchronously.

Course Description

This ACUE supported class will guide course-takers on how to prioritize evidence-based teaching practices that promote student engagement and learning. In addition to highlighting practices that can be used by instructional staff, this offering adds practices, videos, and resources that faculty, non-instructional staff, and campus leaders can learn and implement allowing them to contribute and foster a productive learning environment.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, course-takers will be able to:

1. Establish course expectations and relevance
2. Create policies and community norms
3. Provide early, targeted assistance to promote student success
4. Increase intrinsic motivation
5. Use effective questioning strategies

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Consider this a mini course in which you will dedicate at least 2-3 hours per week engaging with the material, implementing teaching practices with your students and your colleagues, and composing a written reflection. Each module provides you with various research-based practices designed to increase a sense of belonging across your campus community. Among these, you will select and implement the practice(s) that best suits your goals and your position. The ACUE course is also community-based, and you will have many opportunities to learn from and share ideas with your colleagues about the practices you are learning. Your facilitator will guide you through the modules; help to create an environment where questions, conversation, and learning are valued; and provide you with ideas and feedback.

Module Components

The following table provides a description of the module components.

Module Component	Description
Introduction	Piques your interest and gets you thinking about and relating to the module topics
Opening Questionnaire	Designed to activate prior knowledge, this survey helps you connect your classroom experiences to the practices you will learn more about in this module.
Learning Objectives	State what you will learn as well as the practices you can choose to implement
Pause and Plan I	The learning objectives will help guide you in selecting a practice to implement later in the module.
Demonstrations	Show the effective practices recommended in the module being implemented by instructors, staff, and leaders from across the country in authentic settings
Expert Insights	Delve deeper into some of the module's practices with further explanations, supporting research, and commentary by nationally recognized experts in the field
Common Challenges & Misconceptions	Provide research-based clarifications and suggestions for addressing common challenges and misconceptions
Observe & Analyze	Showcases instructors, staff, and leaders using practices with different levels of proficiency and provides an opportunity to discuss the module practices more deeply with your colleagues
Pause and Plan II	The learning objectives will help guide you in selecting a practice to implement later in the module.
Practice & Reflect I	Serves as the culminating activity where you implement a research-based practice that you learned about in the module and then reflect upon it
Practice & Reflect II	Provides an opportunity to think about what you learned, what you implemented, and what you may implement in the future
Note to Future Self	Provides an opportunity to write a note about the key concepts, ideas, or practices you would like to remember from the module
Implementation Resources	Provide step-by-step guidance, course resources, and examples designed to help you implement module practices
References	Provides a list of faculty and experts featured in the module and a list of sources used to develop the module content

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Complete the following to earn an ACUE badge for each module:

- Engage with module content.
- Implement or plan to implement an inclusive practice.
- Write a reflection of the experience.
- Complete the Practice & Reflect II survey.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods

COMPLETE THE “START HERE” MODULE

- Complete the Enrollment Survey. (Note: You must complete the Enrollment Survey to unlock your first modules.)
- **Create your profile** by following the directions provided.
- Meet your cohort and your facilitator by joining the **Introduce Yourself** forum on the course home page. Click on the **Introduce Yourself** link at the top of the module components list. Here you can join in your first cohort discussion forum, meet the other course-takers in your cohort, and become acquainted with some of the features of Canvas.
- Watch a short video that will walk you through **ACUE’s Learning Design** for Fostering a Culture of Belonging and watch a **Course Introduction** video.

ENGAGE

- Begin with the module’s **Introduction** video that previews the learning objectives and motivates you to learn more and answer the questions provided that are designed to surface your prior knowledge and deepen your thinking about the practices you’ll learn.
- Review the module’s **Learning Objectives** and connection to supporting research. You can also download the skeletal outline to help organize your notes for the module and a vocabulary guide for the module.

LISTEN, WATCH, & LEARN

- Study relevant practices, supporting research, and commentary by nationally recognized experts in the **Experts Insights**.
- Watch the **Course Demonstrations** to observe effective practice and student reactions in authentic classroom settings.
- For both Expert Insights and Course Demonstrations, select the path that most closely aligns with your role on campus. The video resources have been divided into Core and Explore. We encourage you to watch the videos noted as Core for your role and to explore the other videos available, according to your interests.
- Consult and download the **Implementation Resources**, to aid in the implementation of effective practices and help you to learn more about the topics.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

DEEPEN THINKING

- Learn about **Common Challenges & Misconceptions** others are likely to encounter as they implement the practices.
- **Observe & Analyze** presents three videos that recreate the practices in action. View two of the three videos and engage in the discussion forum.
- In the discussion forums:
 - To post an idea, click the **Reply** button above the discussion board.
 - To comment on another post, click the **Reply** button at the bottom left of the post.
 - To agree with a post by the facilitator or another course-taker, click the **Like** button at the bottom left of the post.

PRACTICE & REFLECT

- **Select and implement** at least one practice from the module that you feel will increase a sense of belonging for others.
- **Reflect** on your experience by posting a written reflection that explains the practice you implemented, shares the impact it had on others, and shares your plans for next steps. The requirements for each reflection assignment are included in the Practice & Reflect assignment space.
 - An ACUE reader scores your reflection and provides comments based on the rubric. Your reflection will be marked as complete if it meets the rubric criteria. If your reflection requires additional information, your reader will note what should be added, and you can resubmit your reflection in the assignment space.
 - After you have submitted your reflection assignment, complete Practice & Reflect II to consider what you learned in the module, and which practices you implemented or plan to implement.
 - Completion of both Practice & Reflect I and II is required to earn a badge for the module.

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

Although this course takes place online, community building is an important component for meeting our course outcomes. To ensure a productive and collegial learning experience for all course-takers, we need everyone to do their best to engage in the following behaviors:

- **Actively participate.** The course experience is more enriching when it includes a greater number of diverse voices and perspectives.
- **Read and respond to the discussion threads.** Research shows that learning is enhanced when online discussion participants read each other's posts, provide meaningful feedback, offer encouragement, and share relevant resources.
- **Demonstrate respect for differences.** We all come to the table with different experiences and viewpoints. To get the most out of this learning opportunity, show respect for differences by seeking to understand, asking questions, clarifying understanding, and/or respectfully explaining your own perspective.
- **Be timely.** To ensure a full group discussion in the discussion forums, it is imperative that you post no later than the deadlines as listed in each module.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

- **Be specific.** We encourage you to offer specific evidence from the videos or your own course experiences when posting to the discussion forums.
- **Use an appropriate tone and language.** In online environments without verbal or physical cues, humor and sarcasm can be mistaken as cold or insulting. Please pay special attention to your tone and language use before submitting discussion posts.
- **Be generous.** Be generous with your knowledge, insights, and time. Your weekly posts are not merely requirements for participation; they are your contributions to our learning community.
- **Respect confidentiality.** Some of the topics/issues we discuss may be sensitive and/or personal. While it is okay to talk about the things that you are learning with your colleagues, please do not share what other participants post without their explicit permission.

GRADING

Total percentages corresponding to the final letter grades:

S = SUCCESSFUL, 60% MASTERY OF COURSE ACTIVITIES

U = UNSUCCESSFUL, BELOW 60% (COURSE WITHDRAW IS RECOMMENDED)

Module Components (6 modules)	Assignment	Points
Submit Introduction and View Learning Objectives	6 @ 10 points each	60
Expert Insights (view at least 2 videos per module)	Viewed 2 videos per module @ 20 points each	240
Demonstrations (view at least 2 videos per module)	Viewed 2 videos per module @ 20 points each	240
View Implementation Resources	6 @ 10 points each	60
View Common Challenges and Misconceptions	6 @ 10 points each	60
Observe & Analyze (with discussion)	6 @ 25 points each	150
Practice & Reflect Assignment and Survey	6 @ 100 points each	600
View Note to Future Self	6 @ 5 points each	30
End of Course Summary Discussion and Survey	1 @ 100 points	100
	Total Possible Points	1540
	924-1540 points: 60%-100%=Satisfactory	
	0-1539 points: 0-59%=Unsatisfactory	

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Assessments

Discussions

ACUE's courses include discussion boards and other opportunities to share ideas with colleagues.

Maintaining appropriate etiquette for online forms of communication—or netiquette—is crucial to ensuring that these discussion forums offer a rich learning experience for all participants.

Participants in the course and community are asked to kindly follow six norms for proper netiquette:

- **Actively participate.** The course experience is more enriching when it includes a greater number of voices and perspectives. By actively participating, course-takers have an opportunity to engage in discussions that further their understanding of different practices and prepare them to effectively implement module techniques in their own classrooms.
- **Read and respond to the discussion threads.** The course is designed to be taken in cohorts because research shows that learning is enhanced by engaging in meaningful discussions. A discussion does not take place by solely reading and responding to the initial prompts, but rather by reading other course taker's posts and providing feedback, offering encouragement, and sharing relevant resources.
- **Embrace the diversity among course-takers.** Our participants belong to a community of learners that benefit from the exchange of diverse perspectives and experiences. We expect that all course-takers are respectful of these differences.
- **Be timely.** Research shows that discussions are most beneficial when people respond to one another in a timely manner. We ask that you do your best to stay on the same schedule as your cohort to maximize learning for all course-takers.
- **Be specific.** We encourage you to offer specific evidence from the videos or your own classroom experiences when posting to the discussion forums. Citing evidence whenever possible not only allows you to effectively support your ideas but also helps paint a picture for your readers, who may have different perspectives or who have had different experiences.
- **Use an appropriate tone and language.** Without nonverbal cues, humor and sarcasm can be mistaken as cold or insulting. Please pay special attention to your use of tone and language before submitting posts in the discussion areas.

Reflections

As the culminating activity of each module, you will be asked to implement a practice or plan to implement a practice presented in the module and then engage in a written reflection. After submitting the written reflection, you will complete a survey about the module experiences. You will be asked to think about what you learned during the module, what

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

you implemented, and what you will implement in the future. The reflection assignment directions, examples, checklists, and rubrics are available in the course

Summary Discussion

At the end of the course, your cohort will participate in a summary discussion, which allows you additional time to learn from your cohort colleagues. This is the ideal time to share your teaching practices, discuss how your students responded to the teaching practices, and solicit feedback from your colleagues. The content in the course is enhanced greatly by the interactions you have with your cohort colleagues.

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](#).

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

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)
-

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

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

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

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

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.

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.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.



The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

COURSE CALENDAR

AUGUST 31, 2026, THROUGH OCTOBER 18, 2026 (7-WEEK SUBTERM)

DATE/MODULE	DUE DATE (BY 11:59 PM)
WEEK 1, MODULE 1 Starting Strong (LE1)	Sep. 6
WEEK 2, MODULE 2 Fostering a Productive Learning Environment (LE2)	Sep. 13
WEEK 3, MODULE 3 Advancing Achievement for All Students (LE3)	Sep. 20
WEEK 4, MODULE 4 Helping Students Persist (LE4)	Sep. 27
WEEK 5, MODULE 6 <i>(Note: We are in Week 5, but Module 5 has been omitted. We start Week 5 with Module 6)</i> Checking for Student Understanding (LE6)	Oct. 4
WEEK 6, MODULE 7 Providing Useful Feedback (LE7)	Oct. 11
WEEK 7 (MAKE UP WORK)	Last Day of Class Oct. 18

Notes:

- Census Date: Friday, September 4 – This is the last day to Drop without the course appearing on your transcript at all.
- Drop Deadline: September 29 – This is the last day to Drop the course (will appear as DQ on your transcript) if you happen to remain enrolled in other courses at the university. If Investing in Us is your only course, you have until the Withdrawal Deadline.
- Withdrawal Deadline: October 7 – This is the last day to Withdraw from the course (will appear as W on your transcript).

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.