



**US 497.01W Nutrition Decoded for Us
10.26.26-12.11.26 (Web)**

COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Rebecca Bridgefarmer, M.S., RDN, LD

Office Location: NHS 134

Office Hours:

- *Tuesday 9:30am-12:00pm (Virtual by appointment only)*
- *Wednesday 2:00pm-4:00pm*

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Preferred Form of Communication: e-mail

Communication Response Time: 24-48 hours

Course Information

Course Description

I'm so excited to be teaching this course and hope you're just as excited to be here! Nutrition can sometimes feel overwhelming, especially with all the information, advice, and trends we're exposed to every day. My goal for this course is to help you feel more confident navigating that information and making nutrition decisions that work for you and your lifestyle.

Over the next seven weeks, we'll explore everything from basic nutrition principles and food labels to supplements, fad diets, and the connection between nutrition and mental health. We'll also discuss realistic ways to eat well when life gets busy. This course isn't about following a perfect diet or making drastic changes. It's about learning, reflecting on your own habits, and discovering practical strategies that can support your health and well-being. I'm looking forward to spending these next seven weeks with you!

Materials: Textbooks, Readings, and Supplementary Resources

There is **no textbook to purchase**. All readings, short videos, and handouts are free and posted in each module's "Resources" submodule in myLeo Online.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

1. **Explain the basics:** Describe the roles of carbohydrates, protein, fat, fiber, vitamins, minerals, and water, and build a balanced plate using current federal guidance.
2. **Think critically about nutrition information:** Evaluate online nutrition claims, social media posts, and news headlines using a simple credibility checklist.

3. **Read food labels with confidence:** Use the Nutrition Facts label, ingredient list, and package claims to compare products and make informed choices.
4. **Make smart supplement decisions:** Distinguish supplements with strong evidence from those that are unnecessary or potentially harmful, and know when to talk with a health professional.
5. **Eat well on a busy schedule:** Apply meal planning, batch cooking, budget, and family-friendly strategies to their own weekly routine.
6. **Size up trends and fad diets:** Assess popular diets and trends for evidence, safety, and long-term sustainability.
7. **Connect food and mood:** Describe how eating patterns, the gut-brain connection, sleep, and stress relate to mental well-being.
8. **Build lasting habits:** Set, track, and reflect on at least one personal nutrition goal over the seven weeks.

Course Requirements

Instructional Methods

This is a fully online, self-paced-within-the-week course. Each weekly module opens on Monday at 8:00am. Every module has two submodules:

- **Resources:** a short instructor-led lesson, one or two readings, and a handful of fun extras such as myth-vs-fact cards, quick demos, infographics, or website links.
- **Assignments:** a short quiz and an Apply It Challenge.

Assignments, Expectations, and Tips for Success

Welcome Post (Week 1): Introduce yourself and share one food you love, one nutrition question you have always wondered about, and one small goal for the next seven weeks.

Module Quizzes (7): Each quiz has 10 multiple-choice or true/false questions drawn from that week's Resources. You get **two attempts**, and the higher score counts.

Apply It Challenges (7): Each week, you'll have the opportunity to put what you've learned into practice through a simple, real-life activity. **These challenges are not graded**, but are designed to help you explore new habits, build confidence, and find what works best for you. An optional, ungraded discussion board will be available each week where you can share your experiences, reflect on how the challenge went, ask questions, and connect with others in the course. Week 7 will not include a discussion board.

Grading

Participants must earn a minimum of 120 out of 200 points (60%) to successfully complete the course.

Final Grade	Percentage	Points
Successful (S)	90%–100%	120-200
Unsuccessful (U)	80%–89%	0-119

Assessment	Quantity	Points
Module Quizzes (7)	25	175
Welcome Post (1)	10	10
Final Reflection (1)	15	15

Course Outline / Calendar

Each module runs Monday through Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Quizzes and Apply It Challenges are due by the end of their module week.

Week	Dates	Module	The big question
1	10/26-11/1	The Basics	What does my body actually need, and what does a balanced plate look like?
2	11/2-11/8	Deciphering Online Nutrition Information	Who should I trust when everyone online is an "expert"?
3	11/9-11/15	Feel Confident with Food Labels	What is this package really telling me?
4	11/16-11/22	Supplements: Helpful, Useless, or Harmful?	Do I need that pill, powder, or gummy?
5	11/23-11/29	Eating Well When Life Is Busy	How do I feed myself and my family well with no time?
6	11/30-12/6	Nutrition Trends and Fad Diets	Is this new diet worth trying?
7	12/7-12/11	Nutrition and Mental Health	How does what I eat affect how I feel?

Module 1: The Basics

Resources: Carbs, protein, and fat without the confusion; fiber, the nutrient most adults fall short on; hydration myths (no, you do not need exactly eight glasses); a tour of the new 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines and what changed; what "ultra-processed" means and why researchers are paying attention.

Assignments:

- Welcome Post
- Quiz 1
- **Apply It: Plate Check.** Put what you've learned about balanced meals into practice! This week, take photos of two meals that you feel represent a balanced plate based on the nutrition concepts we've covered. Feel free to include why you feel it is balanced, or anything you feel that could be added to improve it even more.

Module 2: Deciphering Online Nutrition Information

Resources: Why nutrition headlines flip-flop; correlation versus causation in plain English; credentials decoded (a registered dietitian nutritionist is licensed in Texas, while "nutrition coach" can mean anything); red flags such as miracle claims, "one weird trick," and discount codes; how to fact-check a social media post or an AI chatbot answer in five minutes.

Assignments:

- Quiz 2
- **Apply It: Myth Busters.** Find one nutrition claim in your feed, on TV, or from a friend. Run it through the course credibility checklist and give it a verdict: Legit, Partly True, or Busted. Bonus points for sharing it with the class.

Module 3: Feel Confident with Food Labels

Resources: The Nutrition Facts label in 60 seconds; serving size traps; added sugars versus natural sugars; reading the ingredient list; package claims such as "natural," "keto," "clean," and the FDA's updated "healthy" definition; date labels ("best by" is not "bad after"); FDA's proposed front-of-package "Nutrition Info" box.

Assignments:

- Quiz 3

- **Apply It: Grocery Store Detective.** Pick one food your household buys often (cereal, yogurt, bread, pasta sauce, snack, etc.). Compare two or three brands on serving size, added sugars, fiber, and sodium. Which one wins, and would you switch?

Module 4: Supplements: Helpful, Useless, or Harmful?

Resources: How supplements are regulated (and why the FDA does not approve them before they are sold); when evidence supports a supplement, such as folic acid before and during pregnancy, vitamin B12 for some older adults and vegans, and vitamin D when levels are low; when it usually does not, such as most multivitamins for healthy adults; real risks, including weight-loss and "detox" products, high doses, liver injury, and drug interactions; third-party seals (USP, NSF); protein powders and gummies.

Assignments:

- Quiz 4
- **Apply It: Supplement Detective.** Find a supplement that promises something interesting, such as better sleep, more energy, improved gut health, weight loss, or healthier skin. Take a screenshot or photo of the product and investigate its claims using a reliable source, such as the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements.

Module 5: Eating Well When Life Is Busy

Resources: The 15-minute weekly meal plan; batch cooking and "cook once, eat twice"; why frozen and canned produce count; eating well on a budget; smarter drive-thru and break-room choices; packing lunches; getting kids involved (and surviving picky eaters); sheet-pan, slow-cooker, and air-fryer ideas.

Assignments:

- Quiz 5
- **Apply It: Plan, Prep, Win.** Plan three dinners for the week, make a grocery list, and prep at least one component ahead (chop vegetables, cook a grain, or make a double batch). Report what you made, about how long it took, and whether it saved you time or stress. This is a great opportunity to get some creative ideas from one another!

Module 6: Nutrition Trends and Fad Diets

Resources: How to spot a fad; a look at what the evidence says about intermittent fasting, keto, carnivore, high-protein trends, the seed oil debate, cleanses and detoxes, and raw milk; GLP-1 medications and nutrition; why the Mediterranean-style pattern keeps coming out on top; the "can I do this for life?" test.

Assignments:

- Quiz 6
- **Apply It: Diet Report Card.** Choose a diet or trend you have seen recently and grade it A–F on evidence, safety, cost, and whether you could realistically keep it up. Would you recommend it to a friend?

Module 7: Nutrition and Mental Health

Resources: The gut-brain connection; research linking Mediterranean-style eating with mood; blood sugar swings, "hanger," and energy crashes; caffeine, alcohol, and sleep; stress eating and mindful eating; recognizing when a relationship with food needs support, and where to find it.

Assignments:

- Quiz 7
- **Apply It: Food and Mood Journal.** For five days, jot down when you ate, what kind of meal it was, and how you felt (energy, mood, focus, sleep). No calories or portions needed. What patterns do you notice?
- Final Reflection

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

A smartphone camera is helpful for photo-based Apply It Challenges but is not required; written descriptions are always accepted.

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.

[Alumni access: insert instructions for how alumni obtain or reactivate a CWID and myLeo Online access.]

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, an 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

I will post a short announcement at the start of each module and respond to emails within 24–48 hours. Feedback on Apply It Challenges will be posted within one week of the due date. Questions about nutrition are always welcome. However, this course provides general education, not individual medical or nutrition advice. For personal health concerns, please talk with your physician or a registered dietitian nutritionist.

Course and University Procedures/Policies

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Health disclaimer: Course content is for general education only and is not a substitute for individualized medical or nutrition care. Check with your health care provider before making major dietary changes or starting a supplement, especially if you are pregnant, nursing, managing a health condition, or taking medications.

Respectful community: Food is personal, cultural, and tied to family and budget. Comments on classmates' food choices, bodies, or weight are not permitted. Disagree with ideas, never with people.

Privacy: Share only what you are comfortable sharing. Photos of meals or groceries should not include identifiable images of children without a parent's permission.

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 in the Student Guidebook:

<http://www.etamu.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>

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

- <http://www.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>
- <http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University 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:
<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>
- Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form:
<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

AI Use Policy

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there may be 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 instructor's 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.

In this course: You may use AI tools to brainstorm meal ideas, build a grocery list, or find a starting point for research, as long as you note how you used them. Module 2 will show you how to fact-check AI answers about nutrition. Quizzes and written reflections must be your own work and your own words.

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 Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162 Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu Website: <http://www.etamu.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

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 East Texas A&M 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:

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

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

East Texas A&M Supports Your Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, 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.etamu.edu/counsel

Employees: [Insert Employee Assistance Program (EAP) name, phone number, and website.]

Everyone, including alumni:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, available 24/7
- National Alliance for Eating Disorders Helpline: 1-866-662-1235