



# COMM 3309 - Special Topics in Comm: Storytelling in Fantasy Films: Lord of the Rings-The Hobbit-RELLIS

Fall 2025 Syllabus, Section 186, CRN 17522

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## Instructor Information

**Thomas Robert Brown, M.A.**

Instructional Associate Professor of Visual Communication

Email: [thomas.brown@tamiu.edu](mailto:thomas.brown@tamiu.edu)

Office: AIC 353

Office Hours:

2-5 p.m. Tuesdays/Thursdays

or virtually by appointment

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## Times and Location

Does Not Meet Face-to-Face

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## Course Description

Examines different communications topics including research underpinnings and everyday applications. May be repeated for credit when topic changes.

Psychology & Communication Department, College of Arts & Sciences

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## Additional Course Information

*Course runs from Aug. 25 to Dec. 2 with Final Exam on Friday, Dec. 5.*

This film studies course explores the role of storytelling (narrative development) in fantasy films, with a focus on *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* films. Fantasy storytelling covers the worldbuilding, character archetypes, Hero's Journey mythic structure, etc., which take place in the subgenres of fantasy: Romantic, epic, dramatic, comedy/parody, adventure, mythic, fairytales, futuristic, coming of age/children, crime/mystery, steampunk, and holiday magic. We will also look into the biographies of director Peter Jackson and novel author Professor J.R.R. Tolkien.

**ADDITIONAL COURSE RESOURCES:** You will need a computer or laptop for this course with some type of word-processing software like Microsoft Word to complete the three writing assignments. With your TAMIU email, Microsoft Word is included; you can access it by logging into your TAMIU email account, clicking the App Launcher Menu button (a series of 3x3 dots in a square) and then select Word from the options. It's also a good idea to back up all of your work for the course to your One Drive, also included with your TAMIU email. Select that same App Launcher Menu button and then select OneDrive (the one with the cloud icon)—if you're familiar with Google Drive, it works similar.

Students will need access to watch the extended editions of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* films. If you don't own them, you can temporarily subscribe to a streaming service (It looks like they're currently available on HBO Max streaming.). I will attempt to offer online movie watch parties for those who cannot watch them otherwise (NOTE: This may involve some time on weekends.). I own them all on my Fandango at Home account. We may also watch the animated film *The War of the Rohirrim* if time allows. I have requested permission from TAMIU for us to watch *The Real Middle-Earth* documentary film (narrated by Sir Ian Holm) about Tolkien through Kanopy.

**COURSE STRUCTURE:** Students are expected to log into Blackboard regularly, read course materials each week, follow each Blackboard Module in the order it's presented within the timeframe for each module, starting with the PowerPoints/lectures, then proceeding to online discussions (if present),



then proceeding to a weekly activity (if present) and then finally to each week's main assignment. Writing assignments are turned in via Blackboard Turnitin, unless otherwise noted. Activities are turned in via Blackboard Dropbox, unless otherwise noted.

To get the most out of this course, it's best for students to complete things in the order they're presented. Each reaching assignment prepares students for the PowerPoints/lectures, which hopefully make the reading assignments more clear (through examples, visuals, and context) and further the ideas established in the readings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/COURSE MESSAGES/EMAILS: The instructor will frequently use announcement during the regular course week (Mondays-Fridays), or otherwise, as needed.

The instructor and students may also communicate via course discussions. Students may post to general discussion topics to ask questions (not graded) about activities, assignments, etc.

If a student is in need of a faster response, I recommend they email me directly at [thomas.brown@tamiu.edu](mailto:thomas.brown@tamiu.edu) rather than use course messages. I check my emails more frequently than Blackboard.

I do my best to respond to your messages as soon as possible, but my schedule and yours may not match up in some respects. Please be patient, especially if you email over the weekend (late Friday through Sunday) or during early morning hours.

PARTICIPATION: Class online participation is graded, encouraged, and expected. However, participation does not mean being disruptive or rude in class. Please be considerate of your classmates and instructor. These online interactions may include discussion forums, peer reviews, and/or lecture responses.

#### —COURSE ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW—

WRITTEN WORK: All out-of-class assignments must be typed unless stated otherwise. Please staple papers having multiple pages before coming to class. Some assignments may be submitted electronically through our class Blackboard. All online assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. on the day indicated on your class schedule, unless otherwise noted in the syllabus schedule and/or on Blackboard. The instructor will post a Blackboard announcement for any due date adjustments.

Assignments that do not adhere to the assignment guidelines will be rejected. For example, handwritten papers will not be accepted. It is the student's responsibility to submit assignments as directed, either online or in class. NO assignments will be accepted via e-mail. Please use Turnitin on Blackboard for writing assignments or Blackboard Dropbox for activities.

This course includes three written assignments that make up a significant portion of the grade:

- Writing Assignment 1: Peter Jackson & Tolkien: A Content Analysis Write 500-550 words of research in MLA style about director Peter Jackson and author Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, their connections to mythology, and how the Hero's Journey applies to their stories. Cite examples from the films and offer analysis. Upload the final draft to Turnitin. Please see the rubric and complete assignment instructions on Blackboard. This paper will be a single draft. Bibliography and three sources minimum required.
- Writing Assignment 2: Tolkien Film Reflection Write (500-550 words) of reflection in MLA style regarding any single Tolkien film. You can choose a single film from *The Lord of the Rings* live-action films (2001-2003) by director Peter Jackson, a single film from *The Hobbit* live-action films (2012-2014) by director Peter Jackson, the animated *War of the Rohirrim* (2024) film, the animated *The Lord of the Rings* (1978) film, the animated *The Hobbit* (1977) film, or the animated *Return of the King* (1980) film. Write a brief synopsis (no more than a small paragraph) of what this story was about, then expand on your own thoughts about what you liked about it, what it meant to you on a psychological and/or emotional level. Were there relatable fairytale- or mythology-style morals? Upload the final draft to Turnitin. Please see the rubric and complete assignment instructions on Blackboard. This paper will be a single draft. Bibliography and three sources minimum required.
- Writing Assignment 3: Fantasy Film In-Depth Analysis Write 700-900 words of analysis in MLA style regarding a non-Tolkien fantasy cinema film, which centers around a heroic protagonist, which we did not go over (in depth) in class. Take that chosen film and analyze it using everything we've learned in class about the fantasy genre and the Hero's Journey. In a small section, identify the key character archetypes at play in the film. For the main part of the paper, go over this film's connections to the Hero's Journey, as well as other things we learned in the course about the fantasy genre. Be sure to have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Upload the final draft to Turnitin. Please see the rubric and complete assignment instructions on Blackboard. This paper will have a rough draft and a final draft. There will also be a peer review for this writing assignment. Bibliography and five sources minimum required.

EXAM: There will be one exam. The Final Exam will be comprehensive, covering all lectures, PowerPoints, Activities, and Quizzes and/or Lecture Responses (if applicable) from the course. The exam will be given online through Blackboard; students must be proctored using one of the available proctoring services. Respondus Monitor, which links through Blackboard, will be used for this course. Students will need to pay for proctoring software. In terms of price, the \$15 individual student license for a full-year is probably the best deal as the license allows the student to use the service for all classes at TAMIU.

Respondus Monitor (\$15 fee) Requirement



This course requires the use of LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (webcam) for online exams. The webcam can be built into your computer or can be the type that plugs in with a USB cable.

There is a short video on Blackboard to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (the webcam feature). A student Quick Start Guide (PDF) is also available.

#### Download Instructions

Click the *Student Support* top-middle tab located in Blackboard. Scroll down to the *Instructional Technologies* section, and click on the Respondus LockDown Browser icon. Download is free.

#### Once Installed

- Open LockDown Browser
- Log into Blackboard Learn
- Navigate to the test and begin

Note: You won't be able to access tests with a standard web browser. If this is tried, an error message will indicate that the test requires the use of LockDown Browser. Simply start LockDown Browser and navigate back to the exam to continue.

#### Cost for Respondus Monitor

There is a \$15 fee for the webcam feature that's used with LockDown Browser (sometimes referred to as Respondus Monitor). This is a one-time fee, valid for 12 months (365 days) for all courses or exams that use Respondus Monitor. You will be prompted to make the purchase the first time an exam requires the use of LockDown Browser's webcam feature. Payment can be made with PayPal, Visa or Mastercard.

#### To pay for Respondus Monitor:

1. Start Respondus LockDown Browser.
2. Navigate to your test.
3. Complete the set-up process, which includes a payment screen for entering credit card information.
4. Payment and entering credit card information is only necessary one-time per course.

#### Guidelines

When taking an online exam that requires LockDown Browser and a webcam, remember the following guidelines:

- Select a location where you won't be interrupted
- Before starting the test, know how much time is available for it, and also that you've allotted sufficient time to complete it
- Turn off all other devices (e.g. tablets, phones, second computers)
- Clear your area of all external materials — books, papers, other devices
- Remain at your computer for the duration of the test
- To produce a good webcam video, do the following:
  - Avoid wearing baseball caps or hats with brims
  - Ensure your computer or tablet is on a firm surface (a desk or table) — not on your lap, a bed, or other surface that might move
  - If using a built-in webcam, avoid tilting the screen after the webcam setup is complete
  - Take the exam in a well-lit room and avoid backlighting, such as sitting with your back to a window
- LockDown Browser will prevent you from accessing other websites or applications; you will be unable to exit the test until all questions are completed and submitted.

#### Getting Help

Several resources are available if you encounter problems with LockDown Browser:

- The Windows and Mac versions of LockDown Browser have a "Help Center" button located on the toolbar. Use the "System & Network Check" to troubleshoot issues.
- If you have problems downloading, installing, or taking a test with Respondus LockDown Browser, email the TAMIU eLearning Team at [elarning@tamiu.edu](mailto:elarning@tamiu.edu).

**Webcam Checkout for Personal Computer** If students are unable to use personal or borrowed computers and equipment, students may stop by the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services office to check out webcams (with built-in microphones). The office is located at Killam Library 259 (down the hall from the HelpDesk) and is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Checkout for a webcam is on a first-come, first-service basis. Speak with an eLearning staff member to checkout a camera. Students will sign an Equipment Loaner Agreement, making them responsible for the care of the camera. Webcams checked out must be returned within five business days of the checkout date.



**READING ASSIGNMENTS:** Reading assignments for the course are to be completed before the online lecture for which they are assigned. The reading assignments will prepare you for the content of the lectures, as well as for the exams.

**MAKE-UP WORK:** Make-ups for course assignments are at the discretion of the instructor and must be discussed and scheduled. Make-up exams may be in essay format. You must contact the instructor within one week of the missed exam for instructions on how to complete your make-up. There is NO make-up option for a Final Exam.

Obviously, the best plan is to turn assignments in on time (the deadline) so they may be graded in a reasonable amount of time to give students necessary feedback. Assignments that are received late will have reduced grades for each class day past the deadline (see Late assignments or speeches, below). Late work MUST be made up within a week of the due date. Depending on the circumstances, the point loss will be decided upon by the instructor. Typically, the following rules will affect point deduction for late assignments, though the instructor may take special situations into consideration:

- For each class period an assignment is late, the work will take a 20-percent grade reduction.
- Students are required to contact the instructor about make-up work. The instructor will NOT make an effort to contact a student about make-up work. A student's ability to turn in late work will be decided at the discretion of the instructor. Reasons for the lateness of the work will be taken into account.

**BLACKBOARD GRADE BOOK:** This is a great tool for your reference while in the course. I will do my best to keep it fairly updated with course information and resources. It may also be used as a place to ask questions, which I will try to monitor and respond to at my first availability. I strongly suggest everyone keep a running record of their grades as assignments/evaluations are returned. I also recommend keeping a copy of all of your papers/assignments that are returned to you up until final grades are posted.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** Late assignments, will receive a grade reduction of 20% (two letter grades lost) for every class day they are late. If you do not have a verifiable and accepted excuse, the late assignment grade reduction will be applied. A "verifiable excuse" is determined on a case-by-case situation by the instructor but normally includes things such as a doctor's excuse, military service, etc., in accordance with the policies of the College of Arts and Sciences (see below).

**EXPECTATIONS:** Your overall class participation grade is determined by the discretion of the instructor. These points are factored based on attendance (not factored for online courses) and the following list of expectations:

- Adoption of an "I can do" attitude
- Being punctual and prepared for each class
- Positive participation in class discussions as well as professional behavior in all communication with other students and the instructor
- Being attentive and respectful during lecture and any student presentations
- Compliance with all Academic Policies & Requirements of Texas A&M International University and the College of Arts and Sciences (see below)

**COMMON COURTESY:** Please use common courtesy during classes. For many, getting up in front of a group of people for presentations can be extremely stressful. It is vital that the classroom atmosphere be kept light and enjoyable for all. Discourteous behavior will be penalized in participation points (see Expectations, above).

- If you are late to class or leave during class, do not interrupt fellow students if they are giving a presentation. In such an event, you will be asked to leave and participation points may be removed. Please look and listen outside the classroom door to check before entering.
- Do not chew gum if you are presenting in front of the class.
- DO NOT interrupt a fellow student during their presentation. If you have questions, wait until the end of their allotted time (or for a question-and-answers session, if applicable).
- Vulgar language and inappropriate statements have no place in the classroom.
- In the interest of diversity, please remember that campus society includes a variety of cultures. Students are expected to respect other students' cultural background. In other words, treat others as you would like to be treated.

**YOUR GRADE DISCUSSIONS:** If a student wishes to discuss their grade, please make a virtual appointment with the instructor. The instructor will not discuss grades of any form during class or lab time, or in front of other students. The student must work with the instructor to schedule a time when both are available.

**OTHER:** If a student wishes to discuss their grade, please make an appointment with the instructor. The instructor will not discuss grades of any form during class or lab time, or in front of other students. The student must work with the instructor to schedule a time when both are available.

**PRONOUNS:** Please let me know how you would like to be addressed in terms of gender pronouns and identity. You may email me or talk to me in private before or after class. I use the he, him, and his pronouns for myself and you can call me "Professor Brown."

**INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY:**



Mr. Thomas R. Brown, who publishes as "T. Rob Brown," is a photographer and writer who began his career in 1993. In addition to more than 20 years as a full-time daily newspaper photojournalist, where he served as photographer, writer, editor, copyeditor, and page designer for numerous daily Midwest newspapers, he also served as a freelance writer for Marvel Comics and Star Wars on four published books from 2009 to 2012, including the Origins award-winning *Marvel Heroic Roleplaying: Civil War*, *Marvel Heroic Roleplaying: Civil War: Young Avengers and Runaways*, *Star Wars: Galaxy of Intrigue*, and Silver Ennie-winning *Star Wars: Clone Wars Campaign Guide*.

Twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Brown earned more than 40 national, regional, and state awards for photography and writing during his journalism career. Following a return to schooling to pursue his master's degree in 2014, Brown began freelancing for *The Kansas City Star* as a photographer. He continues to work on his fantasy and science fiction novels, screenplays, and photography books. Currently, he is working on *Literally Breathtaking*—a photography book about Cusco and Machu Picchu, Peru, along with Chile's Santiago region.

He completed a feature-length fantasy film script and a 22-page fantasy comic book script. He is working on a 100,000-word fantasy novel. The three are part of his "Ballad of the Broodslayers" series, which includes the first book: "Rise of the Broodslayers" and several short stories.

Brown earned his bachelor's (1993) from Missouri Southern State University in Joplin and his master's (2015) from Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas. He is originally from the Kansas City, Missouri, area.

He began teaching at Texas A&M International University in Fall 2017.

**COURSE COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES (Netiquette):** There are course expectations concerning etiquette or how we should treat each other online. We must consider these values as we communicate with one another. Visit Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' web page on Netiquette (<http://www.tamui.edu/distance/students/netiquette.shtml/>) for further instruction.

**ACCOMMODATIONS/ACCESSIBILITY POLICY:** Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodation for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Director of Student Counseling and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodation. For more information, contact the online Office of Disability Services for Students (DSS), via phone at 956.326.3086, or by visiting the staff at the Student Center, Room 118. A link to the Disabilities Services for Students site has also been included under the "Resources" tab inside the course.

**STUDENT SUPPORT RESOURCES:** The University wishes to have all students succeed in their courses. To provide support to our students, an array of services in the areas of technology support, academic support, student support, and accessibility support may be found at the University. For more information, visit the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services page on University Resources and Support Services.

**COMPUTER/TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:** In order to be successful in this course, in terms of its technology requirements, students will need access to a computer with Internet access sufficient to watch online videos. Students should have access to a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word, for their writing assignments and activities. Students may optionally use Adobe Acrobat for the other writing assignments. All writing and activity assignments should be turned in as either .DOC, .DOCX, or as .PDF.

**Additional Hardware.** For this class, you will need the following additional hardware: Webcam (for the Final Exam). Recently purchased laptops may have these built-in web cameras. If you do not have this equipment, it is recommended to purchase a stand-alone webcam, a microphone, or a webcam with a built-in microphone from your local electronic store or any online store.

**NOTE:** Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services may check out available webcams to students on a first-come, first-served basis. To check out a webcam, please stop by Killam Library, Room 259, and request an available webcam.

TAMUI Students may access online versions of Microsoft Word and PowerPoint software through their Dusty Office 365 account at <https://dusty.tamui.edu/>. This site also provides students with access to download the Microsoft suite for educational use. See instructions for downloading the Microsoft Office suite.

**Note:** Students, if you do not own the required hardware or software or do not have access to the Internet, it might be challenging for you to make progress in this class. However, my goal is to assist you in finding solutions and guide you appropriately. Most of the required materials can either be found free of charge at TAMUI's library, classrooms, and available computer labs. Visit Media Services' web page on the availability of on-campus computer labs. In addition, you may also purchase any of these hardware items at any electronics store.

**Learning Management System (Blackboard):** Students are provided with an orientation (\*eLearning (Blackboard) Student Orientation\*) and access to guides on how to use the Blackboard LMS. Guides may be available at Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' Student eLearning Tutorial Videos page or by contacting the eLearning team at [elearning@tamui.edu](mailto:elearning@tamui.edu).

**Minimum Technical Skills Expected:** When participating in distance education courses, it is vital to consider the technology involved in order to have a successful course. Students in distance education should have knowledge of basic computer and Internet skills, as mentioned on the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' webpage.



An understanding of how computers process data is useful, as is an understanding of file types, and a minimal knowledge of computer graphics requirements. Some of this will be covered in the course.

**Technical Support Services:** Because of the nature of distance education courses, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) computing and information services are vital to the success of online students. This webpage covers contact information for Distance Education Services (Blackboard Support), the OIT Help Desk, and Email support: Technical Support Services.

**Web Conferences/Synchronous sessions:** If you need to discuss your grades or get help from the instructor and you cannot meet during my office hours, you may schedule a virtual meeting. These virtual meetings will be held through Blackboard Collaborate. You must request a meeting via email (thomas.brown@tamiu.edu) at least 24 business hours in advance and offer suggested times when you are available. I will do my best to accommodate your schedule, within reason, and I will email you a link to the Collaborate virtual meeting. Meetings should be scheduled for Mondays through Fridays.

**AI POLICY:** The TAMIU Honor Council will treat cases of AI-generated language in papers, projects, exams and assignments as plagiarism unless such use of AI text has been expressly approved by the faculty member in the course syllabus (please review the University Plagiarism Policy later in this syllabus). By copying and pasting AI-generated text into a university-level assignment for a grade without approval, students are using text not written by them in order to progress their university career. Students may not use unapproved AI-generated text in University coursework; such usage will be reported as plagiarism to the TAMIU Honor Council, investigated as such, and subject to grade penalty. This violation includes the usage of AI software, such as ChatGPT, to generate your work for you.

Approved usage of AI for this course: You MAY use AI software, such as Grammarly, to help check the language quality of your written assignments. If you do use the approved AI options in your coursework, please put a notation at the bottom of your written paper. Other AI usages may be approved in a case-by-case situation, but you must speak to the course instructor PRIOR to using the AI in the course. The instructor is fully aware that some usage of AI can be a tool to help expedite work, decrease workload, and help improve the quality of the final work. Generative AI is not allowed – students must write their papers themselves. Any usage of AI outside of the professor's permission constitutes a violation of the TAMIU Honor Code and will be reported to the Honor Council.

**GRADING SCALE/SCHEMA:** In determining the final course grade, the following scale is used in point value.

- 900+ = A
- 800-899 = B
- 700-799 = C
- 600-699 = D
- 599 or below = F

**RUBRICS:** Rubrics are available online in the course content in the Resources course module. Note: For the most part, I use the standard WIN Rubric for writing assignments.

**COURSE EVALUATION:** At the end of this course, students are encouraged to complete a course evaluation that will be distributed to them via email and through a course link on Blackboard.

**Turnitin Policy Or Other Types of Assignments in Other Systems:** Students may turn in Turnitin or Drop Box assignments in DOC, DOCX, or PDF formats. Do NOT use Pages format.

**PROCTORING:** Please see the section titled "Exam:" up above. This course's Final Exam will be through Respondus LockDown Browser with Monitor (webcam required).

**Accessibility and Privacy Statements on Course Technologies:** At Texas A&M International University, we believe that all students should have equal technology opportunities in the classroom. These technologies/sites may also require user data, such as the creation of a username and password. You may find the accessibility and privacy policies of the technologies used in this class on the following pages: Accessibility Statements and Privacy Statements.

In this class, we will utilize: Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Blackboard, Google Chrome browser, and possibly Adobe Acrobat.

**SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE:** While information and assurances are provided in this course syllabus, it should be understood that content may change in keeping with new research and literature and that events beyond the control of the instructor could occur. Students will be informed of any substantive occurrences that will produce syllabus changes.

## Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:



- Students will be able to identify, analyze, and propose mythic story structure for entertainment media.
- Students will review current trends and issues in fantasy genre storytelling and learn how to avoid and improve upon these.
- Students will be able to demonstrate proper writing structure, grammar, spelling, style, and content suitable for entertainment writing.
- Students will be able to use storytelling techniques for a variety of entertainment media.
- Students will have an understanding of the role of mythology and mythic structure in storytelling for cinema.

## Important Dates

Visit the Academic Calendar (tamiu.edu) (<https://www.tamiu.edu/academiccalendar/>) page to view the term's important dates.

## Textbooks

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers, 25th Anniversary Edition	Christopher Vogler	9781615933150
Optional	Writing the Fantasy Film: Heroes and Sable Jak Journeys in Alternate Realities		9780941188968
Optional	The Hero with a Thousand Faces	Joseph Campbell	9781577315933
Optional	Ultimate Hero's Journey	Soloponte	9781548628246
Optional	Stealing Fire From the Gods	Bonnet	9780941188654

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## Other Course Materials

To go to the bookstore, click here (<https://www.bkstr.com/texasaminternationalstore/home/>).

Students will need access to watch Middle-earth films, especially *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy directed by Peter Jackson. If you don't own the films, you can temporarily subscribe to HBO Max. I will attempt to offer movie watch parties online for those who cannot watch them otherwise.

### FILMS:

Middle-earth films:

Jackson, Peter, director. *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. 2001.

Jackson, Peter, director. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. 2002.

Jackson, Peter, director. *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*. 2003.

Jackson, Peter, director. *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. 2012.

Jackson, Peter, director. *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*. 2013.

Jackson, Peter, director. *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*. 2014.

Baskshi, Ralph, director. *The Lord of the Rings*. 1978.

Bass, Jules, and Rankin Jr., Arthur, directors. *The Hobbit*. 1977.

Bass, Jules, and Rankin Jr., Arthur, directors. *The Return of the King*. 1980.

Other fantasy films we may refer to from time to time during the course (not listed in any particular order):

Howard, Ron, director. *Willow*. 1988.

Fleming, Victor, director. *The Wizard of Oz*. 1939.

Del Toro, Guillermo, director. *Pan's Labyrinth*. 2006.

Reiner, Rob, director. *The Princess Bride*. 1987.

Henson, Jim, director. *Labyrinth*. 1986.

Henson, Jim, and Oz, Frank, directors. *The Dark Crystal*. 1982.

Scott, Ridley, director. *Legend*. 1985.

Miyazaki, Hayao, director. *Spirited Away*. 2001.

Miyazaki, Hayao, director. *Princess Mononoke*. 1997.

Petersen, Wolfgang, director. *The NeverEnding Story*. 1984.

Columbus, Chris, director. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. 2001. (and other Harry Potter films)

Mulcahy, Russell, director. *Highlander*. 1986.

Raimi, Sam, director. *Army of Darkness*. 1993.

Boorman, John, director. *Excalibur*. 1981.

Robbins, Matthew, director. *Dragonslayer*. 1981.

Gilliam, Terry, director. *Time Bandits*. 1981.

Cohen, Rob, director. *Dragonheart*. 1996.

Milius, John, director. *Conan the Barbarian*. 1982.

Donner, Richard, director. *Ladyhawke*. 1985.

Davis, Desmond, director. *Clash of the Titans*. 1981.

Coscarelli, Don, director. *The Beastmaster*. 1982.

Stuart, Mel, director. *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. 1971.

Verbinski, Gore, director. *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*. 2003.

Burton, Tim, director. *Sleepy Hollow*. 1999.

Adamson, Andrew, director. *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. 2005.

Chu, Jon M., director. *Wicked*. 2024.

## Grading Criteria

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	90-100
B	80-89.9





C	70-79.9
D	60-69.9
F	Below 60

## Open Boilerplate

PRIMARY ASSIGNMENTS (Required to pass course)	600 points total
Writing Assignment 1: Content Analysis of Peter Jackson and J.R.R. Tolkien	100 points
Writing Assignment 2: Tolkien Film Reflection	100 points
Writing Assignment 3: Non-Tolkien Fantasy Film Analysis	300 points
(Rough Draft, Peer Review, Final Draft)	(50, 20, 230)
Final Exam	100 points
SECONDARY ASSIGNMENTS	400 points total
Activities 1-3	40 points each (120 total)
Syllabus Quiz	30 points
Quizzes 1-5	40 points each (200 total)
Discussions (5)	10 points each (50 total)
TOTAL	1,000 points

## Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week of	Agenda/Topic	Reading(s)	Due
8/25	First Day of Class Welcome to Middle-earth VIDEO: Instructor Introduction & Introduction to Course Review Syllabus Browse the Old Archives of Minas Tirith Introduction to Fantasy and its Subgenres	Syllabus Online reading on Fantasy Subgenres Watch The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring (Extended Edition) Online reading for Fantasy Films for next week	Syllabus Quiz (Due Friday, Aug. 29) Discussion 1: Introduction (Due Friday, Aug. 29) Pick Your Middle-earth Faction (Due Friday, Aug. 29)
9/1	Fantasy Films Overview Film Terminology	Watch The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (Extended Edition) The Writer's Journey pages 3-22 for next week	Quiz 1 (Due Friday, Sept. 5)
9/8	A Practical Guide to the Hero's Journey TUESDAY (9-9) Last day to drop a course without record THURSDAY (9-11) National Remembrance Day and Patriot Day	Watch The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King (Extended Edition) Tolkien biography document in Blackboard content for next week	Activity 1: Frodo's Journey (Due Friday, Sept. 12)
9/15	Professor JRR Tolkien, a biography Tolkien Timeline A "brief" overview of Middle-earth WEDNESDAY (9-17) CONSTITUTION DAY Begin Writing Assignment 1	Watch The Real Middle-earth (check Blackboard for details--this may be a different documentary on Tolkien) The Writer's Journey pages 25-64 for next week	Discussion 2: Reflection on The Lord of the Rings trilogy (Due Friday, Sept. 19)
9/22	Monomyths Parts 1-3	Watch The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (Extended Edition) The Writers' Journey pages 99-116 for next week	Quiz 2 (Due Friday, Sept. 26)
9/29	Fantasy Character Archetypes TUESDAY (9-30) Fall 2025 graduation application and payment deadline	Watch The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (Extended Edition) The Writer's Journey pages 119-136 for next week	Activity 2 (Due Friday, Oct. 3) Writing Assignment 1 (Due Friday, Oct. 3)



10/6	The Ordinary World Begin Writing Assignment 2 SUNDAY (10-12) Midterm Grades DUE	Watch The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (Extended Edition)	Discussion 3: Reflection on The Hobbit trilogy (Due Friday, Oct. 10)
10/13	Departure Parts 1-2	The Writer's Journey pages 139-157 for next week	Quiz 3 (Due Friday, Oct. 17)
10/20	Initiation Part 1	The Writer's Journey pages 159-181 for next week	Activity 3 (Due Friday, Oct. 24) Writing Assignment 2 (Due Friday, Oct. 24) Discussion: Topics due for Writing Assignment 3 (Due Friday, Oct. 24)
10/27	Initiation Part 2 Begin Writing Assignment 3 (Rough Draft Due Friday, Nov. 14, Peer Review Due Monday, Nov. 17, Final Draft Due Tuesday, Nov. 25)	Watch Middle-earth film TBD The Writer's Journey pages 183-216 for next week	Discussion 4: Fairytales and Mythology in fantasy films (Due Thursday, Oct. 30)
11/3	Initiation Part 3 Registration for Wintermester and Spring 2026 opens	Watch Middle-earth film or documentary TBD The Writer's Journey pages 219-246 for next week	Quiz 4 (Due Friday, Nov. 7)
11/10	The Return - Part 1	Watch the Pilot Episode of The Rings of Power on Amazon Prime The Writer's Journey pages 249-263 for next week	Discussion 5: The Rings of Power and the Future of Middle-earth stories (Due Friday, Nov. 14) Writing Assignment 3: Rough Draft (Due Friday, Nov. 14) Writing Assignment 3: Peer Review (begins Saturday, Nov. 15)
11/17	The Return - Part 2 COURSE EVALUATIONS BEGIN THURSDAY (11-20) Last Day to Drop with a W SUNDAY (11-23): COURSE EVALUATIONS END	Watch Middle-earth film or documentary TBD	Writing Assignment 3: Peer Review (Due Monday, Nov. 17) Quiz 5 (Due Friday, Nov. 21)
11/24	Revise Writing Assignment 3 (based on instructor and peer review) to create Final Draft WEDNESDAY (11-26) Reading day, no classes NOV 27-29 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS	Prepare for Final Exam Review	Writing Assignment 3: Final Draft (Due Tuesday, Nov. 25)
12/1	REVIEW: Final Exam Review EXAM: Online Final Exam (Dec. 5)	Prepare for Final Exam	FINAL EXAM ONLINE (Friday, Dec. 5)
12/8	DEC 10: Pre-Commencement Ceremonies DEC 10: Final Grades for Graduating Candidates by noon DEC 11: Fall 2024 Commencement DEC 12: Final Grades by noon DEC 16: Final Grades posted on Uconnect for students to view		

## University/College Policies

Please see the University Policies below.

### COVID-19 Related Policies

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please refer to the Student Handbook, Appendix A (Attendance Rule) for instructions.

## Required Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class in person (or virtually, if the class is online) and to complete all assignments. If you cannot attend class, it is your responsibility to communicate absences with your professors. The faculty member will decide if your excuse is valid and thus may provide lecture materials of the class. According to University policy, acceptable reasons for an absence, which cannot affect a student's grade, include:

- Participation in an authorized University activity.
- Death or major illness in a student's immediate family.
- Illness of a dependent family member.
- Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student's presence.
- Religious holy day.
- Illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class.
- Required participation in military duties.
- Mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school which cannot be rescheduled.

Students are responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to faculty members within seven calendar days of their absence and return to class. They must substantiate the reason for the absence. If the absence is excused, faculty members must either provide students with the opportunity to make up the exam or other work missed, or provide a satisfactory alternative to complete the exam or other work missed within 30 calendar days from the date of absence. Students who miss class due to a University-sponsored activity are responsible for identifying their absences to their instructors with as much advance notice as possible.

## Classroom Behavior (applies to online or Face-to-Face Classes)

TAMU encourages classroom discussion and academic debate as an essential intellectual activity. It is essential that students learn to express and defend their beliefs, but it is also essential that they learn to listen and respond respectfully to others whose beliefs they may not share. The University will always tolerate different, unorthodox, and unpopular points of view, but it will not tolerate condescending or insulting remarks. When students verbally abuse or ridicule and intimidate others whose views they do not agree with, they subvert the free exchange of ideas that should characterize a university classroom. If their actions are deemed by the professor to be disruptive, they will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action (please refer to Student Handbook Article 4).

## TAMU Honor Code: Plagiarism and Cheating

As a TAMU student, you are bound by the TAMU Honor Code to conduct yourself ethically in all your activities as a TAMU student and to report violations of the Honor Code. Please read carefully the Student Handbook Article 7 and Article 10 available at <https://www.tamtu.edu/scce/studenthandbook.shtml> (<https://www.tamtu.edu/scce/studenthandbook.shtml>).

We are committed to strict enforcement of the Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code tend to involve claiming work that is not one's own, most commonly plagiarism in written assignments and any form of cheating on exams and other types of assignments.

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own. It occurs when you:

1. Borrow someone else's facts, ideas, or opinions and put them entirely in your own words. You must acknowledge that these thoughts are not your own by immediately citing the source in your paper. Failure to do this is plagiarism.
2. Borrow someone else's words (short phrases, clauses, or sentences), you must enclose the copied words in quotation marks as well as citing the source. Failure to do this is plagiarism.
3. Present someone else's paper or exam (stolen, borrowed, or bought) as your own. You have committed a clearly intentional form of intellectual theft and have put your academic future in jeopardy. This is the worst form of plagiarism.

Here is another explanation from the 2020, seventh edition of the Manual of The American Psychological Association (APA):

"Plagiarism is the act of presenting the words, idea, or images of another as your own; it denies authors or creators of content the credit they are due. Whether deliberate or unintentional, plagiarism violates ethical standards in scholarship" (p. 254). This same principle applies to the illicit use of AI.

**Plagiarism:** Researchers do not claim the words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due. Quotations marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase another author (i.e., summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words), you need to credit the source in the text. The key element of this principle is that authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own words. This can extend to ideas as well as written words. If authors model a study after one done by someone else, the originating author should be given credit. If the rationale for a study was suggested in the discussion section of someone else's article, the person should be given credit. Given the free exchange of ideas, which is very important for the health of intellectual discourse, authors may not know where an idea for a study originated. If authors do know, however, they should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communications (p. 11). For guidance on proper documentation, consult the Academic Success Center or a recommended guide to documentation and research such as the

Manual of the APA or the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. If you still have doubts concerning proper documentation, seek advice from your instructor prior to submitting a final draft.

TAMIU has penalties for plagiarism and cheating.

- **Penalties for Plagiarism:** Should a faculty member discover that a student has committed plagiarism, the student should receive a grade of 'F' in that course and the matter will be referred to the Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. The faculty member, however, may elect to give freshmen and sophomore students a "zero" for the assignment and to allow them to revise the assignment up to a grade of "F" (50%) if they believe that the student plagiarized out of ignorance or carelessness and not out of an attempt to deceive in order to earn an unmerited grade; the instructor must still report the offense to the Honor Council. This option should not be available to juniors, seniors, or graduate students, who cannot reasonably claim ignorance of documentation rules as an excuse. For repeat offenders in undergraduate courses or for an offender in any graduate course, the penalty for plagiarism is likely to include suspension or expulsion from the university.
  - *Caution:* Be very careful what you upload to Turnitin or send to your professor for evaluation. Whatever you upload for evaluation will be considered your final, approved draft. If it is plagiarized, you will be held responsible. The excuse that "it was only a draft" will not be accepted.
  - *Caution:* Also, do not share your electronic files with others. If you do, you are responsible for the possible consequences. If another student takes your file of a paper and changes the name to his or her name and submits it and you also submit the paper, we will hold both of you responsible for plagiarism. It is impossible for us to know with certainty who wrote the paper and who stole it. And, of course, we cannot know if there was collusion between you and the other student in the matter.
- **Penalties for Cheating:** Should a faculty member discover a student cheating on an exam or quiz or other class project, the student should receive a "zero" for the assignment and not be allowed to make the assignment up. The incident should be reported to the chair of the department and to the Honor Council. If the cheating is extensive, however, or if the assignment constitutes a major grade for the course (e.g., a final exam), or if the student has cheated in the past, the student should receive an "F" in the course, and the matter should be referred to the Honor Council. Additional penalties, including suspension or expulsion from the university may be imposed. Under no circumstances should a student who deserves an "F" in the course be allowed to withdraw from the course with a "W."
  - *Caution:* Chat groups that start off as "study groups" can easily devolve into "cheating groups." Be very careful not to join or remain any chat group if it begins to discuss specific information about exams or assignments that are meant to require individual work. If you are a member of such a group and it begins to cheat, you will be held responsible along with all the other members of the group. The TAMIU Honor Code requires that you report any such instances of cheating.
- **Student Right of Appeal:** Faculty will notify students immediately via the student's TAMIU e-mail account that they have submitted plagiarized work. Students have the right to appeal a faculty member's charge of academic dishonesty by notifying the TAMIU Honor Council of their intent to appeal as long as the notification of appeal comes within 10 business days of the faculty member's e-mail message to the student and/or the Office of Student Conduct and Community Engagement. The Student Handbook provides more details.

## Use of Work in Two or More Courses

You may not submit work completed in one course for a grade in a second course unless you receive explicit permission to do so by the instructor of the second course. In general, you should get credit for a work product only once.

## AI Policies

Your instructor will provide you with their personal policy on the use of AI in the classroom setting and associated coursework.

## TAMIU E-Mail and SafeZone

Personal Announcements sent to students through TAMIU E-mail (tamiu.edu or dusty email) are the official means of communicating course and university business with students and faculty –not the U.S. Mail and no other e-mail addresses. Students and faculty must check their TAMIU e-mail accounts regularly, if not daily. Not having seen an important TAMIU e-mail or message from a faculty member, chair, or dean is not accepted as an excuse for failure to take important action.

Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to download the SafeZone app, which is a free mobile app for all University faculty, staff, and students. SafeZone allows you to: report safety concerns (24/7), get connected with mental health professionals, activate location sharing with authorities, and anonymously report incidents. Go to <https://www.tamiu.edu/adminis/police/safezone/index.shtml> for more information.

## Copyright Restrictions

The Copyright Act of 1976 grants to copyright owners the exclusive right to reproduce their works and distribute copies of their work. Works that receive copyright protection include published works such as a textbook. Copying a textbook without permission from the owner of the copyright may constitute copyright infringement. Civil and criminal penalties may be assessed for copyright infringement. Civil penalties include damages up to \$100,000; criminal penalties include a fine up to \$250,000 and imprisonment. Copyright laws do not allow students and professors to make photocopies of copyrighted materials, but you may copy a limited portion of a work, such as article from a journal or a chapter from a book for your own personal academic use or, in the case of a professor, for personal, limited classroom use. In general, the extent of your copying should not suggest that the purpose or the effect of your copying is to avoid paying for the materials. And, of course, you may not sell these copies for a profit.

Thus, students who copy textbooks to avoid buying them or professors who provide photocopies of textbooks to enable students to save money are violating the law.

## Students with Disabilities

Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal education opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Office of Student Counseling and Disability Services located in Student Center 126. This office will contact the faculty member to recommend specific, reasonable accommodations. Faculty are prohibited from making accommodations based solely on communications from students. They may make accommodations only when provided documentation by the Student Counseling and Disability Services office.

## Student Attendance and Leave of Absence (LOA) Policy

As part of our efforts to assist and encourage all students towards graduation, TAMIU provides LOA's for students, including pregnant/parenting students, in accordance with the Attendance Rule (Section 3.07) and the Student LOA Rule (Section 3.08), which includes the "Leave of Absence Request" form. Both rules can be found in the TAMIU Student Handbook (URL: <http://www.tamiau.edu/studentaffairs/StudentHandbook1.shtml> (<http://www.tamiau.edu/studentaffairs/StudentHandbook1.shtml/>)).

## Pregnant and Parenting Students

Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, harassment based on sex, including harassment because of pregnancy or related conditions, is prohibited. A pregnant/parenting student must be granted an absence for as long as the student's physician deems the absence medically necessary. It is a violation of Title IX to ask for documentation relative to the pregnant/parenting student's status beyond what would be required for other medical conditions. If a student would like to file a complaint for discrimination due to his or her pregnant/parenting status, please contact the TAMIU Title IX Coordinator (Lorissa M. Cortez, 5201 University Boulevard, KLM 159B, Laredo, TX 78041, [TitleIX@tamiau.edu](mailto:TitleIX@tamiau.edu), 956.326.2857) and/or the Office of Civil Rights (Dallas Office, U.S. Department of Education, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620, Dallas, TX 75201-6810, 214.661.9600). You can also report it on TAMIU's anonymous electronic reporting site: <https://www.tamiau.edu/reportit> (<https://www.tamiau.edu/reportit/>).

TAMIU advises a pregnant/parenting student to notify their professor once the student is aware that accommodations for such will be necessary. It is recommended that the student and professor develop a reasonable plan for the student's completion of missed coursework or assignments. The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (Lorissa M. Cortez, [lorissam.cortez@tamiau.edu](mailto:lorissam.cortez@tamiau.edu)) can assist the student and professor in working out the reasonable accommodations. For other questions or concerns regarding Title IX compliance related to pregnant/parenting students at the University, contact the Title IX Coordinator. In the event that a student will need a leave of absence for a substantial period of time, TAMIU urges the student to consider a Leave of Absence (LOA) as outlined in the TAMIU Student Handbook. As part of our efforts to assist and encourage all students towards graduation, TAMIU provides LOA's for students, including pregnant/parenting students, in accordance with the Attendance Rule and the Student LOA Rule. Both rules can be found in the TAMIU Student Handbook (<https://www.tamiau.edu/scce/studenthandbook.shtml> (<https://www.tamiau.edu/scce/studenthandbook.shtml/>)).

## Anti-Discrimination/Title IX

TAMIU does not discriminate or permit harassment against any individual on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, educational programs, or employment. If you would like to file a complaint relative to Title IX or any civil rights violation, please contact the TAMIU Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity/Title IX Coordinator, Lorissa M. Cortez, 5201 University Boulevard, Killam Library 159B, Laredo, TX 78041, [TitleIX@tamiau.edu](mailto:TitleIX@tamiau.edu), 956.326.2857, via the anonymous electronic reporting website, ReportIt, at <https://www.tamiau.edu/reportit> (<https://www.tamiau.edu/reportit/>), and/or the Office of Civil Rights (Dallas Office), U.S. Department of Education, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620, Dallas, TX 75201-6810, 214.661.9600.

## Incompletes

Students who are unable to complete a course should withdraw from the course before the final date for withdrawal and receive a "W." To qualify for an "incomplete" and thus have the opportunity to complete the course at a later date, a student must meet the following criteria:

1. The student must have completed 90% of the course work assigned before the final date for withdrawing from a course with a "W", and the student must be passing the course;
2. The student cannot complete the course because an accident, an illness, or a traumatic personal or family event occurred after the final date for withdrawal from a course;
3. The student must sign an "Incomplete Grade Contract" and secure signatures of approval from the professor and the college dean.
4. The student must agree to complete the missing course work before the end of the next long semester; failure to meet this deadline will cause the "I" to automatically be converted to an "F"; extensions to this deadline may be granted by the dean of the college. This is the general policy regarding the circumstances under which an "incomplete" may be granted, but under exceptional circumstances, a student may receive an incomplete who does not meet all of the criteria above if the faculty member, department chair, and dean recommend it.

## WIN Contracts

The Department of Biology and Chemistry does not permit WIN contracts. For other departments within the college, WIN Contracts are offered only under exceptional circumstances and are limited to graduating seniors. Only courses offered by full-time TAMIU faculty or TAMIU instructors are eligible to be contracted for the WIN requirement. However, a WIN contract for a course taught by an adjunct may be approved, with special permission from the department chair and dean. Students must seek approval before beginning any work for the WIN Contract. No student will contract more than one course per semester. Summer WIN Contracts must continue through both summer sessions.

## Student Responsibility for Dropping a Course

It is the responsibility of the student to drop the course before the final date for withdrawal from a course. Faculty members, in fact, may not drop a student from a course without getting the approval of their department chair and dean.

## Independent Study Course

Independent Study (IS) courses are offered only under exceptional circumstances. Required courses intended to build academic skills may not be taken as IS (e.g., clinical supervision and internships). No student will take more than one IS course per semester. Moreover, IS courses are limited to seniors and graduate students. Summer IS course must continue through both summer sessions.

## Grade Changes & Appeals

Faculty are authorized to change final grades only when they have committed a computational error or an error in recording a grade, and they must receive the approval of their department chairs and the dean to change the grade. As part of that approval, they must attach a detailed explanation of the reason for the mistake. Only in rare cases would another reason be entertained as legitimate for a grade change. A student who is unhappy with his or her grade on an assignment must discuss the situation with the faculty member teaching the course. If students believe that they have been graded unfairly, they have the right to appeal the grade using a grade appeal process in the Student Handbook and in the Faculty Handbook.

## Final Examination

All courses in all colleges must include a comprehensive exam or performance and be given on the date and time specified by the Academic Calendar and the Final Exam schedule published by the Registrar's Office. In the College of Arts & Sciences all final exams must contain a written component. The written component should comprise at least 20% of the final exam grade. Exceptions to this policy must receive the approval of the department chair and the dean at the beginning of the semester.

## 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 Telus app is available to download directly from TELUS (tamiu.edu) (<https://www.tamiu.edu/counseling/telus/>) or from the Apple App Store and Google Play.

## Distance Education Courses

### Exam:

There will be one exam—the Final, which will be given on **Dec. 5**. See the course calendar in this syllabus for additional information. The final exam will cover all reading materials and lectures (it's comprehensive). The exam will be taken online via Respondus Monitor. If you have not yet paid the **annual \$15, that fee may be required to take the exam**.

Respondus Monitor is part of the LockDown Browser and requires a webcam for online exams. If you need assistance with Respondus Monitor, you may contact OIT or click the Student Support tab on Blackboard and search for Instructional Technologies section and select Respondus LockDown Browser. The download itself is free.

If you do not have access to a computer with a webcam, you may be able to check one out from OIT. Please contact OIT for additional information on borrowing a laptop.

### Reading Assignments:

Reading assignments for the course are to be completed before the online lecture for which they are assigned. The reading assignments will prepare you for the content of the lectures, for the activities and writing assignments, as well as for the exam.

### Make-up Work:

There is **NO** make-up option for a Final Exam.

Obviously, the best plan is to turn assignments in on time (the deadline) so they may be graded in a reasonable amount of time to give students necessary feedback. Assignments received late receive reduced grades for each day past the deadline (see Late assignments below). Late work **MUST** be made up within a week of the due date or by the day of the Final Exam, whichever comes first. Depending on the circumstances, the



point loss will be decided upon by the instructor. Typically, the following rules will affect point deduction for late assignments, though the instructor may take special situations into consideration:

- For each class period an assignment is late, the work will take a 20-percent grade reduction.
- Students are required to contact the instructor about make-up work. The instructor will NOT make an effort to contact a student about make-up work. A student's ability to turn in late work will be decided at the discretion of the instructor. Reasons for the lateness of the work will be taken into account, especially in the case of medical emergencies and other University-approved absence excuses.

### **Blackboard Grade Book:**

This is a great tool for your reference while in the course. I will do my best to keep it fairly updated with course information and resources. It may also be used as a place to ask questions (class discussions too), which I will try to monitor and respond to at my first availability. I strongly suggest everyone keep a running record of their grades as assignments/evaluations are returned. I also recommend keeping a copy of all of your papers/assignments up until final grades are posted.

### **Late assignments:**

Late assignments, will receive a grade reduction of 20% (two letter grades lost) for every day they are late. If you do not have a verifiable and accepted excuse, the late assignment grade reduction will be applied. A "verifiable excuse" is determined on a case-by-case situation by the instructor but normally includes things such as a doctor's excuse, military service, etc., in accordance with the policies of the College of Arts and Sciences.

### **Expectations:**

Your overall class participation grade is determined by the discretion of the instructor. These points are factored based on online discussion participation and the following list of expectations:

- Adoption of an "I can do" attitude
- Being punctual and prepared for each class
- Positive participation in class discussions as well as professional behavior in all communication with other students and the instructor
- Being attentive and respectful during lecture and any student presentations
- Compliance with all Academic Policies & Requirements of Texas A&M International University and the College of Arts and Sciences

### **Your Grade Discussions:**

If a student wishes to discuss their grade, please make a virtual appointment with the instructor. The instructor will not discuss grades of any form during class or lab time, or in front of other students. The student must work with the instructor to schedule a time when both are available.

### **Online Courses and On-Campus Meetings:**

Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 2, Subchapter J, Section 2.202 ([https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p\\_dir=&p\\_rloc=&p\\_tloc=&p\\_ploc=&pg=1&p\\_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=2&rl=202](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=2&rl=202)), defines distance education as the formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (more than 50%) of instruction. Distance education includes hybrid and 100% online courses and programs as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB):

- **Hybrid Course** - A distance education course in which more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations.
- **100-Percent Online Course** - A distance education course in which 100 percent of instructional activity takes place when the student(s) and instructor(s) are in separate physical locations. **Requirements for on-campus or in-person orientation, testing, academic support services, internships/fieldwork, or other non-instructional activities do not exclude a course from this category.**

### **Course Structure:**

Students are expected to log into Blackboard at least weekly, read course materials each week, follow each Blackboard Module in the order it's presented within the timeframe for each module, starting with the PowerPoints/lectures, then proceeding to online discussions, then proceeding to a weekly activity (for the first three weeks) and then finally to each week's writing assignment. Writing assignments are turned in via Blackboard Turnitin, unless otherwise noted. Activities are turned in via Blackboard Dropbox, unless otherwise noted.

To get the most out of this course, it's best for students to complete things in the order they're presented. Each reading assignment prepares students for the PowerPoints/lectures, which hopefully make the reading assignments more clear (through examples, visuals, and context) and further the ideas established in those readings. This information is useful to help the students answer the weekly online discussion questions, as well as to complete the weekly activity (which depends on the knowledge they learned). The weekly activities are the building blocks to help students complete the weekly writing assignments. And the culmination of all of that is necessary for students to complete the Final Game Project, which requires all of the knowledge and skills they have gained up to that point. Everything in this course is interconnected. Students who approach things in the proper flow will be more successful in this course.



## Student-Instructor Communication Policy and Response Time

### **Announcements/Course Messages/Emails:**

The instructor will frequently use announcements during the regular course week (Mondays-Fridays), or as needed.

The instructor and students will also communicate via course discussions. There will be at least one required course discussion per week, for a grade. Students may also post to general discussion topics to ask questions (not graded) about activities, assignments, etc.

If a student is in need of a faster response, I recommend they email me directly to [thomas.brown@tamiu.edu](mailto:thomas.brown@tamiu.edu) rather than use course messages. I check my emails much more frequently than I do course messages.

I do my best to respond to messages as soon as possible, but my schedule and yours may not match up in some respects. Please be patient, especially if you email over the weekend (late Friday through Sunday).

### **Assignments and Assessments:**

My goal is to complete some grading each week. If you find that you need feedback to proceed with the next assignment, feel free to email me and I will offer you feedback directly so you can move on to the next assignment—especially if you're working ahead of schedule.

### **Course Communication Guidelines (Netiquette):**

There are course expectations concerning etiquette or how we should treat each other online. We must consider these values as we communicate with one another. Visit **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' web page on Netiquette** (<http://www.tamiu.edu/distance/students/netiquette.shtml/>) for further instruction.

### **Accommodations/Accessibility Policy:**

Texas A&M International University seeks to provide reasonable accommodation for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Director of Student Counseling and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodation. For more information, contact the online at **Office of Disability Services for Students (DSS)**, via phone at 956.326.3086 or by visiting the staff at the Student Center, room 118. A link to the Disabilities Services for Students site has also been included under the "Resources" tab inside the course.

### **Student Support Resources:**

The University wishes to have all students succeed in their courses. To provide support to our students, an array of services in the areas of technology support, academic support, student support, and accessibility support may be found at the University. For more information, visit the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services page on **University Resources and Support Services**.

### **Computer/Technology Requirements:**

In order to be successful in this course, in terms of its technology requirements, students will need access to a computer with Internet access sufficient enough to watch online videos. Students should have access to a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word, for any writing assignments and activities. Students optionally may use Adobe Acrobat. All writing and activity assignments should be turned in as either .DOC, .DOCX, or as .PDF.

When participating in distance education courses, it is vital to consider the technology involved in order to have a successful course. Online students will need regular access to a personal computer that runs on a broadband Internet connection.

It is recommended that you meet the technical requirements listed on the Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' webpage when using the learning management system (LMS) of the University.

**Additional Hardware.** For this class, you will need the following additional hardware: **Webcam (for the Midterm and Final Exams)**. Recently purchased laptops may have these built-in web cameras. If you do not have this equipment, it is recommended to purchase a stand-alone webcam, microphone, or a webcam with a built-in microphone from your local electronic store or any online store.

**NOTE:** Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services may check out available webcams to students on a first-come, first-served basis. To check out a webcam, please stop by Killam Library, Room 259, and request an available webcam. NOTE: Many OIT offices have recently moved over to Cowart Hall. These services might be there now.

TAMIU Students may access online versions of Microsoft Word and PowerPoint software through their Dusty Office 365 account at <https://dusty.tamiu.edu/>. This site also provides students access to download the Microsoft suite for educational use. **See instructions for downloading the Microsoft Office suite.**

**Note:** Students, if you do not own the required hardware or software or do not have access to the Internet, it will be highly challenging for you to make any progress in this class. However, my goal is to assist you in finding solutions and guide you appropriately most of the required materials can either be found free of charge at TAMU's library, classrooms, and available computer labs. **Visit Media Services' web page on the availability of on-campus computer labs.** In addition, you may also purchase any of these hardware items at any electronics store.

### **Learning Management System (Blackboard):**

Students are provided with an orientation (\*eLearning (Blackboard) Student Orientation\*) and access to guides on how to use the Blackboard LMS. Guides may be available at **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' Student eLearning Tutorial Videos page** or by contacting the eLearning team at [elarning@tamiu.edu](mailto:elarning@tamiu.edu).

### **Minimum Technical Skills Expected:**

When participating in distance education courses, it is vital to consider the technology involved in order to have a successful course. Students in distance education should have knowledge of basic computer and Internet skills, as mentioned on the **Instructional Technology and Distance Education Services' webpage**.

#### **Technical Support Services:**

Because of the nature of distance education courses, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) computing and information services are vital to the success of online students. This webpage covers contact information for Distance Education Services (Blackboard Support), the OIT Help Desk, and E-mail support: **Technical Support Services**.

### **Web Conferences/Synchronous sessions:**

If you need to discuss your grades or get help from the instructor, you may schedule a virtual meeting. These virtual meetings will be held through Blackboard Collaborate. You must request a meeting via email ([thomas.brown@tamiu.edu](mailto:thomas.brown@tamiu.edu)) at least 24 business hours in advance and offer suggested times when you are available. I will do my best to accommodate your schedule, within reason, and I will email you a link to the Collaborate virtual meeting. Meetings should be scheduled for Mondays through Thursdays.

### **Grading Scale/Schema:**

In determining the final course grade, the following scale is used in point value.

- 900+ = A
- 800-899 = B
- 700-799 = C
- 600-699 = D
- 599 or below = F

### **Rubrics:**

Rubrics are available online in the course content in the Resources course module. Note: for the most part, I use the standard writing Rubric.

### **Course Evaluation:**

At the end of this course, students are encouraged to complete a course evaluation that will be distributed to them via email and through a course link on Blackboard.

### **Turnitin Policy Or Other Types of Assignments in Other Systems:**

Students may turn in Turnitin or Drop Box assignments in DOC, DOCX, or PDF formats. Do NOT use Pages format. Please make sure that you have received an electronic receipt after each submission. Save that receipt. If you did not receive a receipt, it's possible you did not completely submit your assignment and I won't be able to grade it until you finish the submission process.

### **Proctoring:**

Please see the section titled "Exam:" up above. This course's Midterm and Final Exams will be through Respondus LockDown Browser with Monitor (web cam required).

### **Accessibility and Privacy Statements on Course Technologies:**

At Texas A&M International University, we believe that all students should have equal technology opportunities in the classroom. These technologies/sites may also require user data, such as the creation of a username and password. You may find the accessibility and privacy policies of the technologies used in this class on the following pages: **Accessibility Statements and Privacy Statements**.

*In this class, we will utilize: Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Blackboard, and possibly other software.*



### **Syllabus Subject to Change:**

While information and assurances are provided in this course syllabus, it should be understood that content may change in keeping with new research and literature and that events beyond the control of the instructor could occur. Students will be informed of any substantive occurrences that will produce syllabus changes.