BIOL 5472 - Special Topics in Biology: Adv. Fundamentals of Biotechnology (F13- Feb 05 to May 14)

Spring 2026 Syllabus, Section 204, CRN 28390

Instructor Information

Ruvini Pathirana, PhD
Assistant Professor of Microbiology
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Office: LBV 379C
Office Hours:
Tue 1030 AM – 1230 PM
Thu 0100 PM – 0200 PM
(may subject to change with notification)

*Note that the office hours (student hours) are walk-ins. No appointments are needed to meet me during the designated student hours and they are on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you need to meet outside the student hours, please email ruvini.pathirana@tamiu.edu to schedule an appointment. I have an open-door policy, so feel free to stop by. If my door is closed, I am likely to be in another teaching session, meeting, or busy with research. You may have to return at another time.
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Office Phone: 956-326-2584

Times and Location

TR 8:30am-10:50am in Bullock Hall 224

Course Description

A seminar course on topics of current biological interest. May be repeated when topic changes. No laboratory section included. Prerequisites: Graduate standing and permission of the instructor.
Biology&Chemistry Department, College of Arts & Sciences

Additional Course Information

This course introduces the fundamental principles and applications of biotechnology, with an emphasis on how biological systems are harnessed to develop products and technologies that address challenges in health, agriculture, industry, and the environment. Students will explore the basic concepts underlying biotechnology, including the structure and function of genes, genomics, and recombinant DNA technology. The course examines major areas of biotechnology based on application, such as microbial, plant, animal, and medical biotechnology, highlighting real-world examples and emerging innovations.

In addition, students will gain an understanding of the regulatory frameworks governing biotechnology, as well as issues related to intellectual property rights, ethics, and responsible conduct in the biotechnology industry. The course also connects biotechnology advances to global challenges by examining their relevance to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through lectures, discussions, and applied learning activities, students will develop a foundational understanding of biotechnology and its societal, ethical, and global impact.

COURSE POLICY (Keys to Success)

It is not my intention to make your life difficult. Still, as the instructor for this course, I have high expectations for you to fulfill your dream of getting into a successful STEM career, particularly in biomedical sciences. Please read this section at least twice, as it answers most of your FAQs. Feel free to reach out to me for further clarifications.

LECTURE: This will be offered as an in-person class. **You are required to actively READ the course materials to succeed in class.** The tentative schedule of topics and assignments can be found at the end of this document and will also be uploaded separately on Blackboard (Bb) if there are any updates. I recommended that you check Bb frequently for course updates.
You must bring your electronic device with internet access to get connected to the internet. We will be using online platforms like Top Hat, Blackboard, etc., for in-class activities, quizzes, and exams throughout the course, therefore a laptop or iPad is the most preferred device. Make sure you have a good internet/Wi-Fi reception. It is your responsibility to maintain your device in good condition, and any technical defaults are NOT an excuse for a make-up quiz/exam/attendance, etc. Please go to OIT to solve your technical issues and ask for additional support via OIT or Computer labs. For online portions of the quizzes/exams (if relevant), you must have Respondus Lockdown Browser installed on your device.

* The materials I make available to you are my intellectual property. You are welcome to use the notes and recordings that I provide for your personal (educational) use. Posting my lecture notes, slides, quizzes, exams, answer keys, or lecture recordings to ANY website outside of TAMIU without my written permission is a violation of the academic integrity code. This includes all note-sharing websites, including Generative AI tools, CourseHero, Studyblue.com, Google Docs, etc. Any student caught sharing my intellectual property (lecture notes, slides, quizzes, exams, lecture recordings, etc.) will be charged with a breach of academic integrity.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance a requirement to understand course materials, succeed throughout the course, and actively participate in the discussions. You are expected to come to class on time and submit any assignments on time. Late arrivals disrupt the class in session. Missed information will be not repeated for tardy students. TAMIU views class attendance as an individual student responsibility. Therefore, being absent or late is NOT AN EXCUSE to override the course grading policy. However, attendance will be recorded to assess student performance and learning commitments.

You will get an excused or extended deadline (based on the assignment) for a missed class **ONLY** when a TAMIU-approved excuse is provided. **Please refer to the Student Handbook (https://www.tamiu.edu/scce/studenthandbook.shtml): *Appendix A. Attendance Rule* for acceptable documents for excused absences.**

At TAMIU, we are dedicated to a fair and unbiased decision-making process that values mutual respect and personal accountability (TAMIU Office of Student Conduct and Community Engagement). As a TAMIU student, you are bound by the TAMIU Honor Code. The focus on 'professionalism' helps you to see the classroom experiences as preparation for the "real" world. Talking or other disruptive behavior during lectures will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes giving, receiving, or using unauthorized aid on any academic work. This includes a student/person who has taken a test discussing what was on a test with a student/person who has not taken the test. Any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism will receive a grade of F for that exam. Please refer to the student handbook for information, definitions, and codes on non-academic misconduct, academic misconduct, academic dishonesty, and sexual misconduct.

OFFICE HOURS: Please see the top of page 1 for student (office) hours. I have an open-door policy, so you can stop by anytime. Meeting time can also be arranged by appointment: in person OR (under certain circumstances only) virtually on Blackboard in Virtual Meeting Space.
The second preferred contact method will be by email (ruvini.pathirana@tamiu.edu).

- Students must be aware that email communication does not replace face-to-face communication (i.e., meetings during office hours or by appointment). Students must plan their communication with the instructor accordingly and leave enough time to respond.
- Students should not expect immediate responses, particularly around assignment due dates or exam dates. Failure to leave a reasonable amount of time for an instructor to reply constitutes a failure of the student's obligation. Students should be aware that faculty (professors, instructors, lecturers, etc.) receive a very high volume of emails daily. Faculty typically teach more than one course while involving other academic activities such as research and/or service. Therefore, respect everyone's time.
- All student emails will be answered within THREE business days of receiving the email. Send a courtesy reminder if you do not receive a response email after three days. Emails received over the weekend will be answered by the next business day.
- To help prioritize emails, include the course code and a short subject line in each email. Also, remember to mention your name (first and last name) and TAMIU student number in the signature line.

CELL PHONE USE: Please MUTE cell phones or keep silent mode during lectures. If the occasion should arise where an individual must use their cell phone as a courtesy to their fellow students and the instructor, please excuse yourself from the classroom. Under no circumstances should a cell phone be used during an examination.

SYLLABUS: Any changes to the syllabus/course information, or schedule will be updated on *Blackboard* promptly.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES & ASSIGNMENTS: **Complete and submit all assigned coursework by the scheduled due date.** Communicate immediately issues that impede your ability to participate/complete assignments. **Deadlines are time-sensitive,** and your immediacy in communicating with me will be critical to your success. *Note: 10% of the earned points will be deducted for late submissions.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) USE POLICY

Any assignment required to submit must be your own. **Reading and Writing is integral to thinking.** It is also challenging. Part of treating others with respect is giving appropriate credit for ideas and scholarly work. Therefore, prompt-based generative AI tools like ChatGPT or CodePilot (and many more) are NOT PERMITTED in this course to generate new content.
However, certain AI tools can serve as learning supports, for example, to help clarify concepts, improve writing, or create data visualizations. All work you submit, however, must represent your own understanding and effort.

Allowed Uses:
• Assisting with grammar, editing, or formatting.
• Explaining or clarifying concepts to aid learning.

Not Allowed:
• Submitting content generated by AI as if it were your own.
• Using AI to complete assignments or assessments that are meant to reflect your independent work.
• Creating presentation slides or your pitch using AI.

If you incorporate AI, you must clearly state how it was used (e.g., "AI assisted with grammar corrections"). Misuse of AI, such as copying without understanding or misrepresenting your work, will be considered an academic integrity violation according to university policy.

In any case of suspicion, the instructor reserves the right to request an oral explanation of the write-up/answers and additional supportive assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of this course, students will be able:

1. **Differentiate and characterize the major areas of biotechnology**, including microbial, plant, animal, and medical applications.
2. **Integrate knowledge of core molecular biology and genetics concepts**, including genes, genomes, and DNA technologies, and explain their roles in diverse biological systems.
3. **Demonstrate the current use of molecular tools and techniques** in biotechnological applications, with examples.
4. **Apply biotechnology principles to address real-world challenges** in health, agriculture, industry, and the environment.
5. **Evaluate the regulatory, intellectual property, business, ethical, and societal considerations** relevant to biotechnology research and innovation.
6. **Relate biotechnology advances to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and global challenges.
7. **Demonstrate the ability to analyze a biotechnological process/product,** including its biological and molecular tools, development process, applications, market potential, and ethical and societal considerations, through a research or term paper

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	Introduction to Biotechnology, Fourth Edition	William J. Thieman; Michael A. Palladino	978-0-13-465019-7

Grading Criteria

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	90 - 100
B	80 - 89.9
C	70 - 79.9
D	60 - 69.9
F	Below 60

Course Grading

ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA	PERCENT CONTRIBUTION
Quizzes	10 %
Research Paper/WIN component	20 %
Exam 1	20 %
Exam 2	20 %
Exam 3 (FINAL COMEPREHENSIVE)	30 %

Research Paper / WIN Component:
This course includes a writing-intensive research paper that will be assessed through multiple stages to support student progress and feedback. These stages include topic selection, submission of a detailed outline, the first draft, and the final paper.

As part of this component, all students are required to present their research paper in class. Each student will deliver a 5–7 minute presentation summarizing the key aspects of their work, followed by a brief Q&A session. This presentation is intended to assess students' ability to clearly communicate biotechnological concepts, explain the underlying molecular tools and processes, and discuss the broader impact of their chosen product or development. Successful completion of this component will demonstrate students' competency in scientific writing, critical thinking and oral communication, which are essential skills for a STEM career.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Day	Date	Agenda/Topic	Reading(s)	Due
Thu	2/5	Introduction & Syllabus Review What is Biotechnology?	Chapter 1	
Tue	2/10	An Introduction to Genes & Genomes	Chapter 2	
Thu	2/12	An Introduction to Genes & Genome	Chapter 2	
Tue	2/17	Recombinant DNA Technology	Chapter 3	QUIZ 01
Thu	2/19	Proteins as Products	Chapter 4	
Tue	2/24	Microbial Biotechnology	Chapter 5	
Thu	2/26	Microbial Biotechnology	Chapter 5	QUIZ 02
Tue	3/3	Bioremediation Term Paper Information	Chapter 9	
Thu	3/5	EXAM 01 SPRING BREAK - No Class		
Tue	3/10	SPRING BREAK - No Class		
Thu	3/12	Bioremediation	Chapter 9	Term Paper Topic/Abstract DUE
Tue	3/17	Medical Biotechnology	Chapter 11	
Thu	3/19	Medical Biotechnology	Chapter 11	
Tue	3/24	Medical Biotechnology	Chapter 11	Term Paper Outline DUE QUIZ 03
Thu	3/26	Applications in Plant Biotechnology Applications in Animal Biotechnology	Chapter 6 Chapter 7	
Tue	3/31	Biotechnology Industry & Start Ups Writing - Progress Check		

Thu	4/2	EXAM 02		
Tue	4/7	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)		Term Paper - FIRST DRAFT DUE
Thu	4/9	Biotechnology Regulations	Chapter 12	QUIZ 04
Tue	4/14	Ethics and Biotechnology	Chapter 13	
Thu	4/16	Term Paper Student Presentations Writing - Progress Check		
Tue	4/21	Term Paper Student Presentations Writing - Progress Check		
Thu	4/23	Intellectual Property Rights		Research/Term Paper DUE
Tue	4/28	Review Class		QUIZ 05
Thu	4/30	FINAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM		

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)

In the classroom, students are expected to listen attentively, participate respectfully, and adhere to established rules. Behavior that interferes with the class lecture may result in disciplinary action, ensuring a productive and respectful learning environment for everyone. Any disputes over academic matters should be addressed calmly and constructively, ideally during designated times such as office hours or after class. If a student does not agree with a decision, they can request a meeting with the instructor to discuss their concerns in more detail. Should further resolution be needed, the student may escalate the matter to the department head or use formal grievance procedures as outlined in the sections below. (please refer to Student Handbook Article 4 (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/article-04.shtml)).

TAMIU Honor Code: Plagiarism and Cheating

As a TAMIU student, you are bound by the TAMIU Honor Code to conduct yourself ethically in all your activities as a TAMIU student and to report violations of the Honor Code. Please read carefully the Student Handbook Article 7 and Article 10 available at Student Handbook (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/index.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 SafeZone (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 Disability Services for Students located in Student Center 124. 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 Office of Disability Services for Students.

For accommodations or assistance with disabilities, contact the Disability Coordinator, Karla Pedraza, at karla.pedraza@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2763, or visit Student Center 124.

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: Student Handbook (https://www.tamiu.edu/handbook/index.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. Students who experience or observe alleged or suspected discrimination due to their pregnant/parenting status, should report to the TAMIU Title IX Coordinator (Lorissa M. Cortez, 5201 University Boulevard, KLM 159B, Laredo, TX 78041, TitleIX@tamiu.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, *Report It*, at https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit (https://www.tamiu.edu/reportit/index.shtml).

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 Compliance (Lorissa M. Cortez, lorissam.cortez@tamiu.edu) can assist the student and professor in working out the reasonable accommodation. For other questions or concerns regarding Title IX compliance related to pregnant/parenting students, contact the Title IX

Coordinator. In the event that a student needs 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 LOAs 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*.

For parenting-related rights, accommodations, and resources, contact the Parenting Liaison, Mayra Hernandez, at mghernandez@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2265, or visit Student Center 226.

For pregnancy-related rights, accommodations, and resources, contact the TIX Coordinator, Lorissa Cortez, at lorissaM.cortez@tamiu.edu, call 956.326.2857, or visit Killam Library 159.

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@tamiu.edu, 956.326.2857, via the anonymous electronic reporting website, ReportIt (https://www.tamiu.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.