COMM 3321 - Political Communication: Political Communication-RELLIS (F13- Feb 05 to May 14)

Spring 2026 Syllabus, Section 281, CRN 29072

Instructor Information

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Office Hours:
TR: 12:00 PM-2:30 PM or by appointment
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Times and Location

Does Not Meet Face-to-Face

Course Description

This course will provide an introduction to understanding and answering questions in the field of political communication. This course will investigate how political communication is structured by the media and used by people. The course also will explore how news media functions in a democratic system. Special emphasis will be placed on investigating how the media shapes, and is shaped by, public opinion. Theoretical and empirical research from political science, social psychology, and mass communication will be discussed.
Psychology & Communication Department, College of Arts & Sciences

Additional Course Information

Format

This course is delivered in a fully online, asynchronous format through the Blackboard learning management system, allowing students the flexibility to access materials and complete work at their own pace without scheduled live meetings. Each week, you will engage with assigned readings, interactive discussion forums, quizzes, and assignments organized into structured modules that open on Mondays and have deadlines by Sundays at 11:59 PM. Interaction occurs primarily through asynchronous discussion posts, where you will post original responses and reply to peers, as well as virtual office hours via Teams or email for individualized support. To succeed, strong time management is essential; expect to dedicate 8–10 hours per week to reviewing content, participating in discussions, and submitting work, ensuring you meet all deadlines to avoid late penalties.

Minimum Technology Requirements

- A reliable laptop or desktop computer (PC or Mac) capable of running web browsers and accessing Blackboard.
- High-speed internet access for streaming videos, submitting assignments, and participating in online discussions.

AI Policy

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in this course is permitted only under specific, approved conditions designed to support (NOT REPLACE) your own intellectual effort.

Approved AI Usage: You MAY use AI software, such as Grammarly, to assist with checking the language quality, grammar, spelling, and clarity of your written assignments. If you use any approved AI tool in your coursework, you must include a clear notation at the bottom of your paper indicating the tool used and its purpose (e.g., "Grammarly was used for grammar and style checking").

Generative AI is Prohibited: Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, or other systems that generate original text, outlines, or content, are not allowed for writing papers, projects, or substantive portions of your assignments. Students must write their own work. Any unauthorized use of generative AI constitutes a violation of the TAMIU Honor Code and will be reported to the Honor Council.

Case-by-Case Approval: Other uses of AI, beyond grammar and style assistance, may be considered on a case-by-case basis. You must speak with the instructor and receive explicit permission before using any AI tool in your coursework. The instructor recognizes that AI can, when used appropriately, help expedite certain tasks and improve work quality, but such use must be pre-approved and properly documented.

Transparency and Accountability: All AI use must be transparent. If you are approved to use a generative AI tool for a specific purpose (e.g., brainstorming or organizing ideas), you must clearly cite and describe how the tool was used. Failure to disclose AI assistance is considered academic dishonesty.

Review and Consequences: Assignments may be reviewed for inappropriate AI use. If work is flagged as potentially AI-generated without permission or disclosure, you may be required to:

- Provide evidence of your original work process (e.g., drafts, notes, outlines).
- Revise and resubmit the assignment.
- Face grade penalties, including a zero on the assignment, and/or referral to the Honor Council.

When in Doubt, Ask: If you are uncertain whether a particular AI tool or use is allowed, you must contact the instructor before using it in your coursework.

Participation

Active and engaged participation is a critical component of the learning experience. You are expected to contribute thoughtfully to class discussions, ask relevant questions, and engage constructively with peers and the course material.

Deadlines & Late Work Policy

I recognize that university life involves balancing multiple priorities. While this policy is designed to accommodate occasional late submissions, it is structured to discourage chronic lateness and reinforce the importance of meeting deadlines, which are essential in professional communication contexts.

All weekly assignments must be submitted via Blackboard by Sunday at 11:59 PM, unless otherwise indicated in the course schedule. Work submitted late will be penalized 10% per day, unless a documented university-approved excuse (e.g., medical, legal, or official university activity) is provided in advance. In such cases, students must contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange an alternative submission.

Assignments submitted more than nine (9) days late without a valid excuse will not receive any credit. All coursework, including late submissions, must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM on May 8th to be eligible for grading. No submissions will be accepted after this date.

Feedback Timeline
Instructor feedback and grades for assignments will typically be provided within two weeks of the submission deadline.

Grade Appeals Process
If you wish to appeal a grade, you must email the instructor within one week of the grade being posted on Blackboard. Your appeal must include a clear, evidence-based argument that references specific components of the assignment and the corresponding grading criteria. Please be aware that the result of an appeal may be an unchanged, higher, or lower grade. All appeals must be submitted within the one-week window; grades are considered final thereafter.

Academic Integrity

TAMIU enforces strict policies against plagiarism, copyright infringement, and scholastic dishonesty. All submitted work must be your own and include proper APA-style citations (both in-text and in a reference list). Unauthorized collaboration, use of generative AI without permission, or submission of others' work as your own will result in a zero on the assignment and referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

Student Responsibilities

Students are required to monitor their TAMIU email account and Blackboard announcements daily. All official course communications, updates, and reminders will be distributed through these channels. Non-TAMIU email addresses should not be used for course correspondence, as messages from external domains may be filtered as spam and will not be considered valid proof of contact. Ensure your Blackboard notifications are linked to your TAMIU email to prevent missing critical information.

Professional Expectations: Professionalism is fundamental to your success in this course and applies to all aspects of your participation, including conduct, communication, and academic work. Professional behavior includes:

- Submitting polished, proofread work that is free of grammatical and formatting errors.
- Completing all assigned readings and tasks by posted deadlines.
- Taking ownership of your academic and technological responsibilities—technical issues must be supported by an OIT service ticket.
- Communicating with courtesy and respect in all interactions, whether in person or online.
- Using appropriate, monitored channels for communication; do not use the assignment "comment" function for messages to the instructor.

The instructor reserves the right to lower a student's final course grade in cases of significant or repeated unprofessional behavior that disrupts the learning environment or negatively impacts the classroom community.

Creating a Respectful Learning Environment

A respectful and inclusive classroom is essential for meaningful learning. Our differences enrich discussion and foster deeper understanding. While course topics may sometimes be challenging or controversial, all dialogue must remain civil, constructive, and focused on ideas—not individuals. Disagreement is encouraged, but personal attacks, harassment, hate speech, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Treat others as you wish to be treated. Students who violate this standard will receive one private warning; continued issues may result in reduced participation points or further academic penalties.

Communication with the Instructor

If you have questions, concerns, or face challenges during the semester, please communicate with me promptly. I am here to support your learning, but I can only help if you reach out. Timely, respectful communication ensures that issues can be addressed constructively and allows us to maintain a positive and productive classroom environment for everyone.

When emailing me, please follow these guidelines:

- Use your TAMIU email address.
- Subject line: Begin with COMM 3321: followed by a brief, specific reason for your email.
- Greeting: Use a formal salutation (e.g., Dear Professor Sharma, or Hello Mr. Sharma).
- Identification: Include your full name and course section in the body of the message.
- Content: Compose your email clearly and concisely, as you would a professional letter. State your purpose early, choose your words carefully, and remain respectful.
- Length: Be brief, professional, and to the point.

A clear, grammatically correct email reflects your professionalism and helps ensure a prompt and helpful response. I reserve the right not to respond to emails that do not meet these standards. I will reply to weekday emails within 24 hours. Emails sent on weekends or university holidays will be answered on the next business day.

Syllabus Statement & Modifications

This syllabus serves as an agreement between the students and the instructor. By enrolling in and continuing in this course, you agree to abide by all policies, deadlines, and requirements outlined herein. The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus, schedule, or assignments as needed to support course objectives. Any changes will be communicated to students via Blackboard announcements. You are responsible for regularly checking Blackboard and your TAMIU email to stay informed of any updates.

Program Learning Outcomes

PLO 1. Students will develop critical thinking skills to evaluate theories and approaches to selected media and communication problems.

PLO 2. Students will effectively communicate oral, written, and audiovisual messages addressing communication-related issues and/or problems.

PLO 3. Students will apply communication knowledge and skills in professional settings to improve communication processes and outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify and explain key theories, concepts, and actors (e.g., media, politicians, citizens) in the American political communication system.
- Analyze and critique political messages (e.g., speeches, ads, social media) using rhetorical and social science frameworks.
- Evaluate the role of both traditional and digital media in shaping political agendas, public opinion, and electoral outcomes.
- Apply political communication concepts to contemporary case studies and controversies.
- Synthesize research and theory to develop a strategic analysis of a current political communication phenomenon.

Important Dates

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

Other Course Materials

All required readings (articles, case studies, and reports) will be provided via Blackboard at no cost to students. Some materials may require access through the TAMIU library with valid credentials.

Grading Criteria

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	91-100
B	80-90.9
C	70-79.9
D	60-69.9
F	Below 60

Methods of Assessment

Bi-Weekly Reading Quizzes (200 points, 20%)

To ensure consistent engagement with course concepts, you will complete a brief online quiz every two weeks. There will be a total of 6 quizzes throughout the semester, each covering the material from the preceding two weeks of readings and lectures. Quizzes will consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions designed to assess your comprehension of key ideas and prepare you for deeper analysis in discussions and papers. To allow for flexibility, your lowest quiz score will be automatically dropped at the end of the semester. Quizzes must be completed by Sunday at 11:59 PM CT in the week they are assigned.

Discussion Board Leadership (200 points, 20%)

Active dialogue is the heart of this online course. Each of you will serve as a discussion leader for two different weeks during the semester. As a leader, you will be responsible for posting initial discussion questions, curating relevant multimedia resources, actively facilitating peer responses, and synthesizing the week's conversation in a final summary post. When you are not leading, you are expected to be an active participant, contributing

substantive posts and replies. This assignment develops critical thinking, facilitation skills, and the ability to engage constructively with diverse perspectives in a digital forum.

Framing Analysis Paper (200 points, 20%)

This 5-6 page paper asks you to apply the theoretical concept of framing to a real-world political issue. You will select a current political event or controversy, identify at least three different media sources (e.g., a national newspaper, a cable news network, a partisan website), and analyze how each source frames the issue. Your analysis must connect your observations to course readings on framing theory, media bias, and audience effects. The goal is to move beyond description to critical analysis, revealing how strategic communication shapes public understanding.

Campaign Message Audit (300 points, 30%)

This 8-10 page research paper is the capstone project of the course. You will conduct an in-depth audit of the strategic political communication for a specific candidate, campaign, or political organization from a recent election cycle. Your audit will analyze their key messages across multiple channels (e.g., speeches, advertising, social media, debates), evaluate the consistency and effectiveness of their strategy, and connect their tactics to broader theories of political communication covered in class. This assignment synthesizes your learning and demonstrates your ability to conduct independent, evidence-based analysis of political rhetoric.

Professionalism & Engagement (100 points, 10%)

Success in an online environment depends on consistent and respectful participation. This portion of your grade reflects your commitment to being a reliable and professional member of our learning community. Points are earned through your weekly, substantive contributions to discussions (even in weeks you are not a formal leader) and your adherence to principles of netiquette, which include respectful communication, timely participation, and integrity in all course interactions. A detailed rubric for this component is provided in the course policies section.

ASSIGNMENT	VALUE
Bi-Weekly Reading Quizzes	200
Discussion Board Leadership	200
Framing Analysis Paper	200
Campaign Message Audit	300
Professionalism & Engagement	100
Total	1000

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week of	Agenda/Topic	Reading(s)	Due
2/2	Introduction to Political Communication	Denton & Kuypers (2008); Strömbäck (2005)	Acknowledgment of Syllabus and Policies
2/9	The Political Media Ecosystem	Patterson (2020); Shoemaker & Vos (2009)	Quiz #1
2/16	Media Influence: Agenda-Setting, Framing, Priming, Bias, & Selective Exposure	McCombs & Shaw (1972); Entman (1993); Iyengar & Kinder (1987); Stroud (2017)	
2/23	Political Campaign Communication: Strategy & Stages	Trent et al. (2011); Benoit (2014)	Quiz 2
3/2	Political Campaign Communication: Messages & Advertising Enjoy the Spring Break!	Brader (2005); Fowler & Ridout (2013)	
3/9	Debates & Political Speeches	Schroeder (2020); Hart & Childers (2004)	Quiz 3
3/16	Digital Politics & Social Media	Lilleker et al. (2015); Bode & Vraga (2018)	Framing Analysis Paper Due
3/23	Misinformation, Disinformation, and Fake News	Lewandowsky et al. (2017); Allcott & Gentzkow (2017)	Quiz 4
3/30	Political Public Relations & Image Management	Strömbäck & Kiousis (2011); Benoit (1997)	
4/6	Public Opinion & Political Socialization	McDevitt (2016); Conover & Miller (2018)	Quiz 5
4/13	Alternative Media & Political Activism	Atkinson (2017); Theocharis et al. (2015)	

4/20	Synthesis & The Future of Political Communication	Williams & Delli Carpini (2011); Chadwick (2017)	Quiz 6
4/27	Final Exam Week		Campaign Message Audit Due

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.

Distance Education Courses

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), 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

This course is delivered in a fully online, asynchronous format through the Blackboard learning management system, allowing students the flexibility to access materials and complete work at their own pace without scheduled live meetings. Each week, you will engage with assigned readings, videos, interactive discussion forums, quizzes, and assignments organized into structured modules that open on Mondays and have deadlines by Sundays at 11:59 PM. Interaction occurs primarily through asynchronous discussion posts, where you will post original responses and reply to peers, as well as virtual office hours via Teams or email for individualized support. To succeed, strong time management is essential; expect to dedicate 8–10 hours per week to reviewing content, participating in discussions, and submitting work, ensuring you meet all deadlines to avoid late penalties.

Student-Instructor Communication Policy and Response Time

Announcements/Course Messages/Emails

The instructor will communicate with students mainly through Blackboard announcements, messages (preferred), and email. Every Monday, the instructor will post an announcement to inform students about weekly readings, assignments, and any other course-related updates.

Regarding course messages and emails, students can expect to receive replies from the instructor within 48 hours on weekdays (Monday through Friday, 08:00 a.m. to 05:00 p.m.).

Note: If students have an urgent matter that requires the instructor's immediate attention, they should email URGENT: COMM 3309 in the subject line.

Assignments and Assessments

The course schedule notes all assignment due dates. Students will receive grades and feedback within two weeks of submission.

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

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 (https://www.tamiu.edu/distance/students/technology-requirements.shtml) when using the learning management system (LMS) of the University.

Additional Hardware. For this class, you will need the following additional hardware: 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.

Additional Software. You will need the following additional software: Microsoft Office. TAMIU Students may access online versions of this 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 TAMIU'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 items at any electronic 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@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

All live sessions for the course are optional. Throughout the semester, the instructor will hold weekly virtual office hours (MW 12:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.). Attendance is encouraged but not mandatory.

Grading Scale/Schema (after Grade Breakdown section)

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

- *90-100 = A*
- *80-89.9 = B*
- *70-79.9 = C*
- *60-69.9 = D*
- *Below 60 = F*

Rubrics

TAMIU Analytical Writing Rubrics will be used to assess students' written assignments.

Late Work Policy

All assignments must be submitted via Canvas by 11:59 PM on the due date.

Late submissions within 24 hours incur a 20% deduction; between 24 and 48 hours, a 50% deduction; after 48 hours, a grade of 0.

Extensions require advance notice and documentation of emergencies, per university policy

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.

Turnitin Policy Or Other Types of Assignments in Other Systems

Proctoring

This course requires the use of Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor for online exams.

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**.

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.