

**SRSU 1101**  
**First Year Seminar**  
**Fall 2025**  
**Mondays, 1-1:50 p.m., LH 200**

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**Professor:** Jessica Velasco, DPA  
**Office Hours:** M (2-5 p.m.), Thur (1-3 p.m.), and by appointment  
**Office Location:** LH 210  
**Phone:** 432-837-8742 (office)  
**Email:** [jessica.velasco@sulross.edu](mailto:jessica.velasco@sulross.edu)  
**Peer Mentor:** TBA

**Mission:**

The mission of the First-Year Seminar is to provide first-year students an opportunity:

1. to develop knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that promote successful academic and non- academic participation and
2. to appreciate multiple perspectives and reflect intellectual and cultural diversity within and beyond college.

**Course description:**

First-Year Seminar is designed to help students develop strategies and skills necessary for a successful college experience. Topics include adjusting to college, setting academic goals, managing time and keeping organized, learning and studying in college, preparing for and taking tests, understanding college policies and regulations, and accessing and using SRSU computer technology. Students will learn about SRSU's resources, activities, and rich cultural diversity. Throughout the course, students will use critical thinking skills to make informed choices, to understand their responsibilities for academic success, and to become independent, motivated learners.

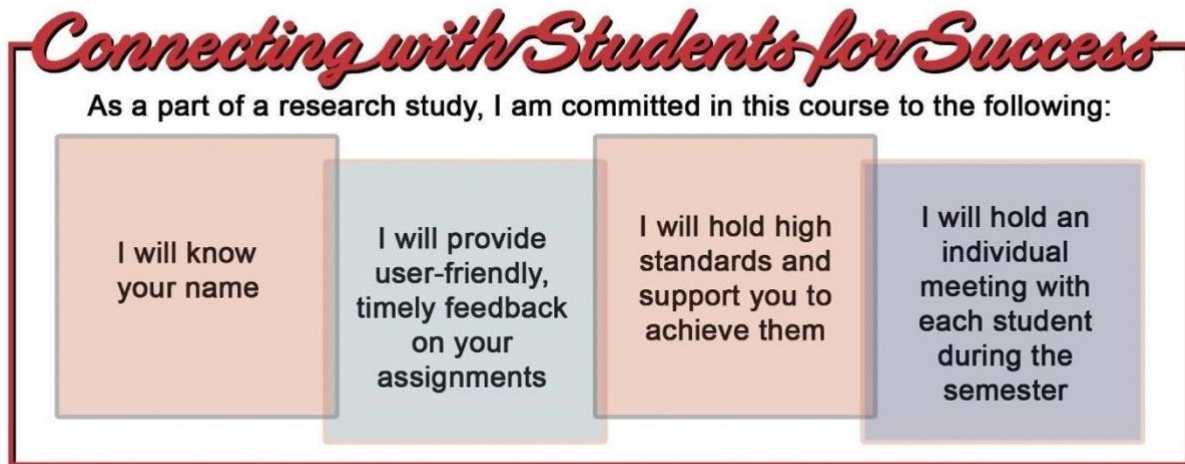
**All First-Year Seminars have five common goals. The student will be able to:**

1. Expand and deepen their understanding of the world and of self,
2. enhance their ability to read and think critically,
3. Enhance their ability to communicate effectively, in writing, speech, and other appropriate forms,
4. Develop the fundamentals of information literacy and library research,
5. Work closely with the class instructor.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Implement personal time management strategies based on short and long-term goals.
2. Describe behaviors that support personal responsibility for learning, characteristics of an effective learner, techniques that promote student success and problem-solving of academic issues, and be able to discuss respect, civility, and academic integrity at SRSU.
3. Describe the institution, department, and course requirements to earn a college degree and be able to identify SRSU policies in relation to them.
4. Identify and utilize college resources, activities, and events and demonstrate the use of SRSU technology: student e-mail, SRSU website, Blackboard, and Lobo Online.
5. Exhibit financial literacy in relation to college and beyond.
6. Discuss the importance of SRSU in the larger community.



This course will be participating in an initiative at Sul Ross State University referred to as “Connecting with Students for Success”. This study is aimed at connecting with students in a way that sets them up for better success, overall. As a part of this study, each student will be required to meet with me at least once during my office hours by September 15. This will be included in your grade for the course (worth 100 points). This meeting must be scheduled through an email to me (using the instructions provided). The email must be sent by September 1.

During these meetings, we will discuss how you are doing overall , any resources you may need, and the class assignments and expectations.

## **Textbook & Course Materials:**

All of the materials for this class will be provided in class or on Blackboard. In addition, we will be reading portions of a book that you can access for [free online here](#):

Miranda Tapia, O.R., Artze-Vega, I., Lambert, L.M., & Felten, P. (2023). *Connections Are Everything: A College Student's Guide to Relationship-Rich Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. <https://dx.doi.org/10.56021/9781421443126>.

### GRADING

Grades in this class will be determined **by the number of points you earn by the end of the course**. The point distribution is listed below:

A	895-1000 points
B	795-894 POINTS
C	695-794 POINTS
D	595-694 POINTS
F	BELOW 595 POINTS

You can track your progress by clicking on the “My Grades” tab in Blackboard. You can also view grading rubrics for each assignment in the “My Grades” tab. If I leave you additional feedback outside of the rubric, you will see a message bubble in the grading center. PLEASE NOTE: As mentioned above, the grade for this class is based on POINTS, not the average that Blackboard gives you.

### POINT DISTRIBUTION

Attendance & Participation	100 points
Discussion Boards (60 x 5)	300 points
Syllabus Quiz	20 points
Email Assignment	100 points
Office Meeting with Professor	100 points
SRSU Engagement Card	80 points
Class Service Activity	100 points
Registration Exercise	100 points
Final Presentation-FYE Portfolio	100 points
Total	1000 points

### EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION/CLASS ENGAGEMENT:** Attendance and participation are worth 100 points in this class. Please come prepared to participate. Being prepared to participate means:

- You have read the assigned materials
- You have paper and writing utensils to take notes
- You have removed all distractions—phone is off and stowed away, earbuds are removed, etc.
- **You are on time, and you stay for the entire class**
- You refrain from distracting other students during class
- You fully participate in discussions and other activities Your participation grade will be based on the items above.

**DISCUSSION BOARDS:** To better familiarize you with Blackboard and each other, as well as give you the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the topics we cover each week, you will be completing 5 discussion boards. Instructions and rubrics are on Blackboard. All discussion board posts are due Friday by 11:59 p.m. in the week they are listed. For example, the discussion board for Chapter 1 is due on September 5 by 11:59 pm.

**SYLLABUS QUIZ:** By Friday at 11:59 p.m. of the first week, you need to complete the syllabus quiz on Blackboard in the Week 1 folder. You will have ONE attempt. The quiz is worth 20 points.

**EMAIL ASSIGNMENT:** To help you practice appropriate email etiquette, you will be completing this assignment by September 1. Instructions and rubrics are on Blackboard. This is worth 100 points.

**OFFICE MEETING WITH PROFESSOR:** As explained above, each of you need to schedule a meeting with me. The meeting must be completed by September 15. This is worth 100 points.

**SRSU ENGAGEMENT CARD:** In order to promote the full college experience and your engagement with your campus community, you will complete a SRSU Engagement Card. This includes a series of activities you will participate in by November 17. Instructions and rubrics are on Blackboard. This is worth 80 points.

**CLASS SERVICE ACTIVITY:** Early this semester, we will discuss options for a class service activity. This will take place during one or two class periods this semester. It is worth 100 points.

**REGISTRATION EXERCISE:** To facilitate and incentivize early Spring 2025 registration, you will be earning 100 points for completing registration by November 10. The instructions and a rubric are provided on Blackboard.

**FINAL PRESENTATION-FYE PORTFOLIO:** At the end of each class, you will be asked to write down the two most important things you learned from that day's class, as well as 1-2 items

you plan to put into action. These, along with other assignments and in-class self-assessments, will all be compiled into a FYE Portfolio. At the end of the semester, you will present the highlights from your portfolio, as well as update the class on whether or not you completed each of your action items.

**EXAMS:** The final exam for this class is a presentation of your FYE portfolio.

W	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	Aug. 25	First Day Blackboard, OneDrive, Office 365, College vs. HS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Syllabus</li> <li>• Syllabus Quiz due on 8/29</li> <li>• Introduction Post on BB due 8/29</li> </ul>
2	Sept. 1	No class on Monday (Labor Day)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Board (Chapter 1) due by 11:59 pm on 9/5</li> </ul>
		Student Engagement Fair (9/3) –Extra credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email to professor must be sent by 9/1 (follow the instructions)</li> </ul>
3	Sept. 8	Goal-Setting & Resources (Basic needs, Opportunities) Including: SSS, McNair, Honors Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter to Self and Mission Statement Activity and/or SMART goals (in class)</li> <li>• Discussion Board Post (Chapters 2-3) due by 11:59 pm on 9/12</li> </ul>
4	Sept. 15	Time Management & Academic Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In class exercises only</li> <li>• Short meetings with me must be completed by September 15</li> </ul>
5	Sept. 22	University Leadership Structure & Campus Traditions & Note-Taking	Discussion Board Post (Chapter 6) due by 9/26 at 11:59 pm
6	Sept. 29	<b>October 1: Workshop: Counseling &amp; Voting Information</b>	In class exercises only

	7 Oct. 6	Library Resources <b>In class</b>	<b>exercises only—Meet at the SRSU library</b>
	8 Oct. 13	Test-Taking, Reading, FTF vs. Online Classes	<b>Discussion Board (Chapter 5) due by Oct.17 at 11:59 p.m.</b>
9	Oct. 20	Support Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Check your Mid-term grades</b></li> <li>• <b>Discussion Board (Chapters 4 &amp; 7) due by Oct. 24 by 11:59 pm</b></li> <li>• <b>*Connecting Students Survey (if available)</b></li> </ul>
10	Oct. 27	DegreeWorks, HB2504, Registration Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Set up advising appointment</b></li> <li><b>*Connecting Students Survey (if available)</b></li> </ul>
11	Nov. 3	StrengthsFinder, MBTI, and/or Strong Interest inventory	In class work only <b>*Connecting Students Survey (if available)</b>
12	Nov. 10	Career Planning/Exploration	Registration Exercise Due <b>*Connecting Students Survey (if available)</b>
13	Nov. 17	Class Service Activity (TBA)	Student Engagement Card Due (Nov. 17)
14	Nov. 24	Class Service Activity (continued)	Thanksgiving Week (Thursday)
15	Dec. 1	Financial Literacy	In class activities
	Dec. 5, 12:30-2:30 p.m.	Final Presentation-FYE Portfolio	

**Other important dates:**

- 8/25, First day of classes

- 9/1, Labor Day Holiday, no classes
- 8/28, Last day for registration and schedule changes
- 9/10, Last day to drop a 16-week class without a record
- 9/26, University Meal on the Mall
- 10/6, Last day to register to vote in the November election
- 11/3, Registration for Spring 2026 & Spring 2026 graduation application opens
- 11/4, Election Day
- 11/7, Last day to withdraw with a “W” (16 week classes)
- 11/26-11/28, Thanksgiving Break, No Classes
- 12/3, Last class day before finals
- 12/4, Dead day
- 12/5 & 12/8-12/10, Final Exams
- 12/11, Residence Halls: Close at 12 pm (noon) for all non-graduating residents (any extended stay requests must be approved by the Director of Residential Living)
- 12/12, Fall Commencement, 5:30 p.m. Gallego Center
- 1/11/26, Residence Halls: Move-In Day from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
- 1/13/26, Regular registration ends
- 1/14/26, First Day of Spring 2026 Classes; Late Registration & Schedule Changes

#### **WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME:**

- I will provide email responses within 24 hours of receipt during the hours of 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday.
- I will provide grades and feedback for assignments **within one week of the submission due date.**
- I will provide clear and concise instructions on how to complete the course requirements.
- I will provide a range of opportunities to engage in the course content in a meaningful way.
- I will approach this class and all interactions with you with sincere care and concern for you and your classmates.

#### **WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:**

- You will familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, policies, assessments, evaluation, grading criteria, and course design.
- You will acquire the tools necessary to be successful in this class. This includes paper, writing utensils, reliable Internet access, and a device other than your phone for completing assignments.
- You will complete all coursework by assigned due dates.
- You will take the time to review feedback I provide to avoid repeating mistakes.
- You will engage in the course, with your peers, and with me, using open, appropriate, and respectful communication



- You will be diligent about using communication in a way that shows respect to me and your classmates.
- You will submit college-level work that has been checked carefully for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation (using a free extension like Grammarly is recommended).
- You will respond to communication from me and your classmates in a timely manner (within 24 hours).
- You will not plagiarize the work of others or yourself.
- You will reach out to me immediately if you are having trouble in the class or with access to course materials. For general access issues or technical help, please call the Help Desk--888.837.6055.

### **OTHER COURSE POLICIES & RESOURCES**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid engaging in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. ***In this course, every element of class assignments must be fully prepared by the student. The use of generative AI tools for any part of your work will be treated as plagiarism.*** Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

As an SRSU student, it is your responsibility to read and understand the university's expectations about academic integrity. All violations will be taken seriously and handled through the appropriate university process. The policy can be found at:

<https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/>

**In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments.**

If you have any questions about this, please ask!

### **CLASSROOM COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS**

- Show up on time.
- Be present for the 50 minutes we are together.
- Be respectful to others.
- I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.



### **LATE WORK:**

I have been very intentional about how I have designed this course and distributed the content to optimize your learning and comprehension. Trying to cram weeks of work into a few days or waiting until the end of the semester to do everything isn't conducive to learning. For this reason, you must have an extenuating circumstance and approval from me to submit late work. If you submit late work without an approved extension from me, I reserve the right not to grade it. IMPORTANT NOTE: Since university-related travel (e.g., travel for athletics competition) is planned in advance (with a few exceptions), make sure to plan ahead. Please consult with me if you have concerns about how your university-related travel will impact a submission deadline. This needs to be done BEFORE you leave and before the deadline.

### **COURSE BLACKBOARD RESOURCES:**

There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class. NOTE: Please post general, course-related questions to the discussion board forum I have set up for this. Typically, if one student in the class has the question, others do as well. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and then feel free to email me or call me directly with your question.

### **ADA STATEMENT**

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu) or [ronnie.harris@sulross.edu](mailto:ronnie.harris@sulross.edu). RGC students can also contact Alejandra Valdez, at 830-758-5006 or email [alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu](mailto:alejandra.valdez@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832.

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES STATEMENT**

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

### **COUNSELING SERVICES**

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting

Timelycare/SRSU. The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

### **SRSU LIBRARY INFORMATION**

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu/](http://library.sulross.edu/). Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting [library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/](http://library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/) or ask a librarian by emailing [srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu).

### **TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

The Support Desk is where you can direct your more technical questions. For example, the Support Desk can help you if you are having issues submitting a document, getting videos to play, or using BlackBoard. The support desk is open 24 hours a day/7 days a week for your convenience.

You can reach the support desk:

- By calling 888.837.6055
- Via email [blackboardsupport@sulross.edu](mailto:blackboardsupport@sulross.edu)
- Using resources from the Technology Support tab within blackboard • Clicking the Support Desk graphic on the course homepage

### **TUTORING:**

- a) Tutoring and Learning Center located in the library (call 432-837-8982 for a reservation with a tutor)
- b) Tutor.com (online tutoring services available—access via BlackBoard Tools) – be sure to allow 48 hours turnaround time for a writing assignment

### **GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION (VIRTUAL/IN-PERSON)**

SOURCE: Center for Teaching and Learning. (2020). Sample discussion board ground rules. Retrieved from <https://ctl.wiley.com/sample-discussion-board-ground-rules/>

- **Ask questions.**

If you find something confusing or want to know more, do not hesitate to ask questions. Make sure to post your questions in the appropriate thread.

- **Participate.**  
Do not hide in the background; it is not fair to lurk and let others do all the work. Contribute to discussions to get as much as possible from the course and to maintain your participation grade.
- **Do not dominate a discussion.**  
Share your knowledge, but not to the point of excluding others. If you have something to offer, please share it, but allow everyone to contribute equally to a discussion.
- **Be intellectually rigorous.**  
Do not excuse sloppy or illogical thinking. Challenge yourself and one another.
- **Be tactful.**  
Be critical of ideas but remember there are other people involved. Be tactful and kind. You can hurt the feelings of a person reading your post.
- **Forgive other students' mistakes.**  
Do not correct others, even if you follow the rules of netiquette and use good manners. Just because you do not agree with a student's post does not mean that he or she is wrong. Instead, offer a different perspective to encourage further discussion.
- **Read the whole thread before posting.**  
Read all the posts in a thread before responding so you don't repeat what others have already said. Try to contribute clarifying information or a new idea to a discussion.
- **Be concise.**  
Do not waste people's time by posting basic, repetitive information. Make your point clearly and quickly.
- **Reread and check your posts.**  
Practice professionalism. Be mindful of how you look online; others will likely judge the tone and quality of your writing. Reread your posts and edit for clarity and mechanics.
- **Cite your sources.**  
If you use a source, cite it properly. Give credit where credit is due. Include links where appropriate.
- **Maintain confidentiality.**  
Respect your classmates' privacy. Do not repeat the personal information that others share.
- **Report technical problems.** If the platform is not working properly, please let me know as soon as possible