

Syllabus | First Year Seminar

SRSI 1101

Fall 2026



Class: SRSI 1101-W01

Credit: 1

Class Time: Online Asynchronous

Location: Online/Blackboard

Instructor: Mike Fernandez

E-mail: miguel.fernandez@sulross.edu

Office: Eagle Pass, D129

Office Hours: Mondays 11 am – 12 pm, or
by appointment

Phone: 830-758-5035

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.

Course Goals:

All First-Year Seminars have five common goals for every student enrolled:

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.

Course Materials-Required: Blackboard Ultra access (via personal device or SRSU computer labs); SRSU email address (firstname.lastname@sulross.edu)

Supplemental Materials: (Provided through SR Blackboard)

Course Mission:

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

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

Student Learning Outcomes:

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Upon successful completion of this course students will:

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. Develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
7. Develop communication skills to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
8. Develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.

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Explanation of Assignments:

Weekly Discussions: Because this is an asynchronous course, regular participation will be demonstrated through Blackboard discussion posts rather than class attendance. Ten numbered discussions are worth 20 points each, for 200 points total. Simply logging into Blackboard does not count as participation.

Syllabus Quiz: During the first week of class, you will complete a short quiz in Blackboard covering important information from the course syllabus. **The Syllabus Quiz is due by 11:59 pm on August 30 and is worth 25 points.**

Introduction Post: During the first week of class, you will complete a brief introduction post in Blackboard to introduce yourself to the class and become familiar with the discussion board. **The Introduction Post is due by 11:59 pm on August 30 and is worth 25 points.**

Email Assignment: Early in the semester, you will practice professional communication by writing and sending an email to your instructor using your SRSU email account. The assignment will focus on organization, clarity, tone, and appropriate email etiquette. **The Email Assignment is due by 11:59 pm on September 6 and is worth 50 points.**

Instructor Meeting Assignment: Each student is required to meet individually with the instructor during the semester. You will be given several weeks to schedule and complete the meeting, which may be held in person, by phone, or through Microsoft Teams. Your meeting should be scheduled by October 5 and completed by October 16. Additional instructions and scheduling information will be provided on Blackboard. The Instructor Meeting Assignment is worth 100 points.

SMART Goal and Action Plan: You will develop a SMART goal that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. You will also identify practical steps, possible barriers, and resources that can help you make progress toward your goal. **The SMART Goal and Action Plan is due by 11:59 pm on October 4 and is worth 100 points.**

Research Skills Bibliography: You will use SRSU Library resources to locate and evaluate sources related to a topic of your choice. The assignment will ask you to demonstrate your ability to find appropriate sources, identify different source types, evaluate their usefulness, and create citations. **The Research Skills Bibliography is due by 11:59 pm on October 18 and is worth 150 points.**

Career Exploration Activity: You will complete a career assessment and investigate a career that interests you. The activity will ask you to explore areas such as education requirements, skills, salary, job outlook, and how the career connects with your interests and goals. **The Career Exploration Activity is due by 11:59 pm on October 25 and is worth 100 points.**

Registration Activity: To prepare for the Spring 2027 semester, you will meet with your advisor to review your academic progress and planned courses. You will complete the appropriate advising and registration steps and submit documentation of the completed activity. **The Registration Activity is due by 11:59 pm on November 22 and is worth 100 points.**

First-Semester Reflection: At the end of semester, you will reflect on your first semester of college, including your successes, challenges, habits, and progress toward your goals. You

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will use what you have learned to develop a plan for continued success in the Spring semester. **The First-Semester Reflection is due by 11:59 pm on December 9 and is worth 150 points.**

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Evaluation Points		Evaluation Scale		
Weekly Discussions	200 pts	900 – 1000 points	=	A
Syllabus Quiz	25 pts			
Introduction Post	25 pts	800 – 899 points	=	B
Email Assignment	50 pts			
Instructor Meeting Assignment	100 pts	700 – 799 points	=	C
SMART Goal and Action Plan	100 pts	600 – 699 points	=	D
Research Skills Bibliography	150 pts	Below 600 points	=	F
Career Exploration Activity	100 pts			
Registration Activity	100 pts			
First-Semester Reflection	150 pts			
TOTAL	1000 pts			

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Planned Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Topics	Preparation/Assignments
1	8/24–8/30	Module 1: Getting Started at SRSU Course introduction, syllabus, Blackboard, SRSU email, Microsoft 365/OneDrive, and online course expectations	• Read the syllabus • Syllabus Quiz due 8/30 by 11:59 pm • Introduction Post due 8/30 by 11:59 pm
2	8/31–9/6	Module 2: College Communication Communicating with instructors, staff, and classmates; audience, tone, professionalism, and online etiquette	• Discussion #1: What Makes a Good College Email? due 9/6 by 11:59 pm • Email Assignment due 9/6 by 11:59 pm
3	9/7–9/13	Module 3: Digital Organization Blackboard, Outlook Calendar, reminders, managing deadlines, and keeping course work organized	• Discussion #2: How Will You Keep Track of Everything? due 9/13 by 11:59 pm • Review Instructor Meeting Assignment requirements
4	9/14–9/20	Module 4: Taking Better Notes Why note-taking matters, choosing a method, organizing information, and practicing with SRSU traditions and history	• Discussion #3: What Note-Taking Method Works for You? due 9/20 by 11:59 pm
5	9/21–9/27	Module 5: Academic Integrity & Your Learning Plagiarism, collaboration, AI, homework-help sites, and recognizing when help replaces your own work	• Discussion #4: When Does Help Become Cheating? due 9/27 by 11:59 pm
6	9/28–10/4	Module 6: Goals, Motivation & Making a Plan SMART goals, action steps, barriers, and resources that support progress	• Discussion #5: Making Your Goal SMART due 10/4 by 11:59 pm • SMART Goal and Action Plan due 10/4 by 11:59 pm
7	10/5–10/11	Module 7: Finding Information Library resources and services, QuickSearch, books and articles, search terms, off-campus access, and research help	• Discussion #6: What Makes a Search Work? due 10/11 by 11:59 pm

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8	10/12– 10/18	Module 8: Evaluating & Using Sources Source evaluation, lateral reading, citation basics, and building the Research Skills Bibliography	• Instructor meeting must be completed by 10/16 • Discussion #7: Can You Trust This Source? due 10/18 by 11:59 pm • Research Skills Bibliography due 10/18 by 11:59 pm
9	10/19– 10/25	Module 9: Career Planning Interests, skills, work values, career paths, education requirements, salary, and job outlook	• Complete CareerOneStop Interest Assessment • Career Exploration Activity due 10/25 by 11:59 pm
10	10/26– 11/1	Module 10: Financial Aid & Managing Your Money FAFSA, grants, scholarships, loans, work-study, budgeting, credit, and financial choices	• Discussion #8: Making a Student Budget Work due 11/1 by 11:59 pm
11	11/2– 11/8	Module 11: Planning for Next Semester Advising, degree planning, course selection, registration steps, and preparing a tentative Spring schedule	• Begin Registration Activity • Registration Activity due 11/22 by 11:59 pm
12	11/9– 11/15	Module 12: Managing Your Time & Priorities Time-wasters, procrastination, time-blocking, competing responsibilities, and prioritization	• Discussion #9: Where Does Your Time Go? due 11/15 by 11:59 pm
13	11/16– 11/22	Module 13: Studying Effectively & Using Support Retrieval practice, spaced practice, preparing for finals, tutoring, advising, library, and academic support	• Registration Activity due 11/22 by 11:59 pm
14	11/23– 11/29	Module 14: Stress Management & Catch-Up End-of-semester stress, support resources, and time to catch up before the final stretch	• Thanksgiving Holiday: University closed 11/25–11/27
15	11/30– 12/2	Module 15: Looking Back & Moving Forward Reflecting on challenges, successes, habits, goals, and what you will carry into the Spring semester	• Discussion #10: What Will You Take Into Next Semester? due 12/2 by 11:59 pm
16	Finals Week	First-Semester Reflection Apply what you learned this semester to a plan for continued success in the Spring semester	• First-Semester Reflection due 12/9 by 11:59 pm

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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 the temptation to engage 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.

Students should also avoid using open AI sources *unless permission is expressly given* for an assignment or course. 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.

Statement Regarding Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI): The University does not recommend or endorse any specific AI tools or resources. Students should be aware that many generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) store user input and may use this data to train future models. For this reason, students should never upload or share personal, confidential, or identifiable information—such as names, ID numbers, health data, or assignment submissions containing such details—into any generative AI platform. When using AI tools, students should verify whether the tool complies with student privacy standards as indicated by the University. Faculty may recommend specific tools that better align with institutional data privacy policies, but ultimate responsibility for data protection rests with users. Students are encouraged to use faculty-recommended platforms when engaging in coursework involving generative AI. The University is not liable for any adverse experience or impact when students interact with these tools.

ADA Statement: 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 [SRSU's Counseling and Accessibility Services Office](#) at 432-837-8203. Office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Assignment Policy: It is expected that assignments will be submitted on or before the specified due date. *Assignments may be submitted after the due date and will be assessed a percentage penalty; submitted within 7 days = 15%; submitted 8-14 days = 30%; submitted 15 days & beyond = 50%.* Incompletes will only be assigned under extreme circumstances. The last day to submit any late/revised assignment is the last regular class day of the semester.

Attendance: Because this course is asynchronous, there are no scheduled class meetings. Students are responsible for regularly accessing Blackboard and completing assigned work by the stated deadlines. In an emergency, contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Health-Related Absences: Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and other on-campus events if you are ill. Students who miss class due to illness will be given opportunities to access course materials online. In the event of contagious

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illness, please do not come to class or to campus to turn in work. Instead notify the instructor by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that accommodations can be made. Please note that documentation (a Doctor's note) for medical excuses is **not** required.

Classroom Climate and Respect: It is my intent, as course instructor, that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and beyond the course, and that the multiplicity students bring to this course be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of all students. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of this course are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

At SRSU, we support learning environments where individual and cultural differences are appreciated, recognized, respected and understood. We shall hold each other accountable to demonstrate diligence in recognizing and respecting differing behaviors, perspectives and worldviews. In addition, in scheduling assignments, I have attempted to avoid conflicts with major religious/cultural holidays. If, however, I have inadvertently scheduled a major deadline that creates a conflict with your religious/cultural observances, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements.

Course Communication: Communication is a two-way interaction. Students are encouraged to stop by my office during posted office hours to ask questions, check-in or simply say hello. I also encourage you to call (phone number listed on p. 1) or email (also listed on p. 1). During the work week, I will check email multiple times through the day and will commit to responding to your communication within 48 hours. Weekend communication (noon Friday-8:00 AM Monday) will not be answered until Monday mornings after 8:00 AM. I request the same respectful commitment from you.

Library Information: The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend 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. 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), or 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/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

SACSCOC Learning Outcomes (SACSCOC)

1. Students will develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.;
2. Students will develop communication skills to include effective development,

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interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.

Shared Expectations:

You can expect me to:

- Provide learning opportunities that advance your knowledge and development in becoming a successful college student.
- Be available to provide assistance and answer your questions.
- Be fair in my grading and assessment of your work.
- Provide you with timely, constructive feedback on your work.
- Enjoy this class!

I will expect you to:

- Complete all assignments thoroughly, in a timely manner.
- Look at each assignment as an occasion for you to learn, and make the most of every learning opportunity.
- Be honest and submit your own original work.
- Participate in class discussions and activities; this helps you as well as all of your classmates.
- Enjoy this class!

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.

Tutoring:

- a) Tutor.com (online tutoring services available on BlackBoard) – be sure to allow 48 hours turnaround time for a writing assignment.