

Rhetoric and Writing Studies RWS 1302
Community Engagement and Leadership (CEL)*

CRN: 21802

Instructor Information:

Name: Menuka Gurung

Email: mgurunglam@miners.utep.edu (use Blackboard course email for class correspondence)

Office Hours: In person Monday 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm, University Writing Center, Library 227

Please email me to set up a meeting. I typically respond to emails within 24-48 hours. In case of not getting reply, please resend me the message

Program Overview

At UTEP, the **First-Year Composition (FYC) program** in the English department offers two first-year courses that are typically taken as a sequence, RWS 1301—Rhetoric and Composition 1 and RWS 1302—Rhetoric and Composition 2. These courses are intended to help students develop and reflect upon their rhetorical and writing knowledge including awareness of social and racial justice, and the implications of their language choices when they write, based on the understanding that language is never neutral. Therefore, we teach writing as a complex activity through which students are given guidance and often collaborate. Drawing on the rich scholarship of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, we have designed our courses to help students address the challenges of 21st century composing. In these courses, students are empowered to determine the most effective strategies, arrangements, and media to use in different rhetorical contexts.

The FYC program reminds students that the primary purpose of these classes are the learning and practice of writing. The Conference on College Composition and Communication together with the Council of Writing Program Administrators state:

Writing classes teach writing: Principally, writing classes foreground writing itself as a complex, distributed activity premised upon sociality and community formation, processes and

materials, flexibility, and ethical communication. Writing classes may involve participants in purposeful interpersonal interactions (discussions and conversations), writing-related activities (peer review, studying features in model texts), and interpreting texts (making meaning individually or together with others); however, the activity of writing itself continues to be central to what a writing class sponsors.

CCCC and CWPA Joint Statement in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

And we are...

The First-Year Composition Program is geographically and discursively situated in the US-Mexico borderland and offers a binational and transnational experience through culture, language, and knowledge. We are committed both to learning from students and to building our program in a way that honors what they bring with them into the classroom and encourages them to make their voices heard in the university and beyond. Our vision is to collectively journey toward the practice of self-reflexivity, listening carefully and empathically to the ideas and experiences that challenge our thinking, and to engage various rhetorical practices and genres of traditional and non-traditional writing. The program's curriculum design encourages students to imagine the possibilities of speaking, listening, and being heard through different literacies and compositions. We invite students to explore topics from local, global, and disciplinary contexts that matter to them while learning effective writing skills and being mindful of their own situations and audiences.

RWS 1301 & 1302 Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will reflect on and critically analyze their own language experiences.
- 2) Students will synthesize information about racial and ethnic biases and other social justice issues and confront these issues in their writing.
- 3) Students will demonstrate engagement with multiple media sources through their projects, including, but not limited to, digital resources.
- 4) Students will identify relevant research sources and opportunities from their lived experiences, their campus interactions, and their engagement within their communities.
- 5) Students will apply knowledge from local communities to research broader social issues demonstrating their critical awareness.

Rhetoric & Composition 2 (RWS 1302) AND Community Engagement & Leadership Course Description

Rhetoric & Composition 2 (RWS 1302) aims to develop further students' rhetorical and critical thinking skills in order to facilitate effective written communication in educational, professional, and social contexts. Effective communication is based on awareness of and appreciation for diverse language practices as well as knowledge specific to subject matter, genre, rhetorical strategy, racial and social justice, and writing processes.

Technologies - Additional technologies will be incorporated in this course as a means to engage students and encourage participation.

***The "CEL" designation** for this course stands for "Community Engagement & Leadership" and is part of a new certificate program in the College of Liberal Arts. The purpose of this CEL course is to strengthen students' understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and to build the knowledge and competencies that will enable them to be socially responsible and participating community leaders. Accordingly, course assignments and assessments are developed in line with the CEL program mission in Liberal Arts, as well as within the broader framework and mission of UTEP's "Edge Advantages" goals.

This course requires a minimum of 20 direct or indirect community-engagement exploration/research hours that address a real community need or concern. All course assignments and activities fulfill the 20 direct or indirect hours. Students are encouraged to reflect on how their experiences working with a community partner and/or partnering agency fulfill the course learning objectives and enhance their own beliefs about civic responsibility.

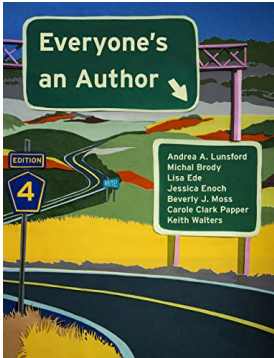
Students are asked to choose a social issue that they can advocate for. The social issue should connect to the local as well as the broader communities. Students will engage with the issue through research, class activities, lectures, and projects. To fulfill the CEL component, students are required to participate in a minimum of 5 volunteer hours or complete an additional assignment to satisfy the volunteer requirement. Students can complete volunteer hours virtually or in person.

If you decide that you don't want to participate in this CEL section of RWS 1302, you will need to change to another class before the end of late registration, by the end of the first week of classes.

The curriculum consists of these 5 modules:

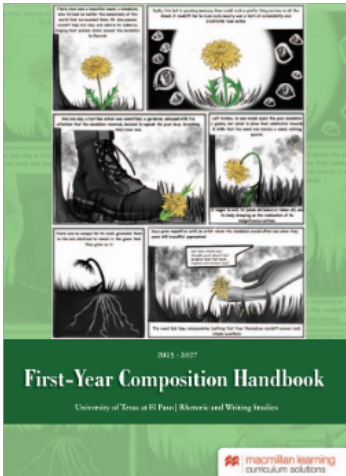
1. **Community Engagement Proposal:** Students will explore issues and concerns in their communities (home, place of worship, civic, work, school) and will identify a problem connected with the community that they wish to study. Students will explain how their own interests, goals, and values align with the organization or agency's mission. This paper will take the form of a proposal or memo.
2. **Community Genre Analysis:** Students will identify two distinct texts in different genres (written, visual, and/or oral) created by their organization or related to their selected issue. Students will write an explanatory genre analysis of the two texts and how they operate rhetorically. Students will engage in peer review activities during the writing process.
3. **Local Fieldwork:** Students will identify a social, political, or ethical issue related to their local community or partnering agency. As part of this assignment, students will generate research questions pertaining to the topic and their inquiry. Local research may include field observations, consulting local and primary sources, collecting surveys, and conducting interviews.
4. **Broader Community Study:** The broader community study will build upon students' local research, extending it into a broader inquiry. Students have the option to change their focus. This project will incorporate secondary research in order to examine the societal impact of their chosen issue. This includes developing a larger list of sources and creating an evaluative annotated bibliography.
5. **Multimodal Community Product/Tool:** Students will create a multimodal product or tool based on the needs of their community partner, organization, or a topic they are exploring. This can be an individual or group assignment to be completed with classmates focused on a similar topic. The goal of this project is to synthesize the research and writing students have done and present it to their classmates and/or chosen community.

Required Texts & Materials



Lunsford, A., Brody, M., Ede, L., Enoch, J., Moss, B.J., Papper, C.C., Walters, K. (2023). *Everyone's an Author, 4th*. Norton Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-324-04510-6

Available at the UTEP Bookstore.



UTEP First-Year Composition Handbook, 2025-2027 edition.
An e-book available directly through Redshelf.com.
Additional required readings may also be posted on Blackboard

Course Assignments and Grading

This section consists of an overview of assignments. Further instructions are posted on the Blackboard course content. The assignments and activities in this course are aimed to develop students' agility, motivation, and confidence as writers and members of communities in academia and across public spaces.

The curriculum consists of the following assignments:

Module 1: Community Engagement Proposal

Module 2: Community Genre Analysis

Module 3: Local Fieldwork

Module 4: Broader Community Study

Module 5: Multimodal Community Product/Tool

Grading: Your instructor will assign due dates for all and will provide you with detailed assignment sheets that describe expectations, constraints, and deadlines for each project. You are required to adhere to the terms of your instructor's grading policy that is attached to this syllabus.

Grade Distribution (Students can earn a total of 1000 points for the course):

1000-900 = A 899-800 = B 799 -700 = C 699- 600 = D 599 or below = F

Major Assignments - During the course, you will complete five major assignments. All due dates are clearly posted on the calendar as well as in Blackboard. Plan your schedule accordingly to accommodate your writing process, as well as the occasional need for support. Make time to ask your questions, visit during office hours, or visit the University Writing Center before the assignment is due. The Writing Center also has online consultations. Please plan accordingly.

Each of these writing assignments are scaffolded by minor assignments/activities that will help you develop major assignments. It is important to complete these minor assignments/activities. As you go through the writing process, you will participate in several peer review sessions. To benefit from these sessions, please have an almost completed draft of your work. The goal of peer reviews is to provide and receive valuable feedback from your peers. These comments are aimed at redirecting your work

for revision. One of the primary goals of the course is to learn how to rethink and rework your writing. The point is that early work is composed of first thoughts, and a truly sophisticated final draft usually involves a great deal of reflection, analysis, and craft. At the end of each module you will submit a final draft of that project. Your final project grade will reflect quality, as well as what you have put into the project in terms of effort, willingness to experiment with the drafting process, risks taken, response to suggestions made in peer review, and response to suggestions made by me.

To reiterate: the work you submit at the end of the module is your final draft. Final drafts are graded only once. Email me if you would like more detailed feedback. If you have questions about the feedback I've left you, please send me your specific questions via email. If you believe I have graded incorrectly or that feedback I have left is inapplicable, please email me and include a detailed explanation/ correction. Re-grades/ re-submissions will not be granted if: 1. You did not complete scaffolding activities. 2. You did not email me at least a week before the due date to ask questions. 3. You did not meet with me during office hours about this assignment. 4. You did not visit the Writing Center.

You are invited to speak with me anytime regarding the quality and progress of your work. If you are concerned about your progress in this class, discuss this with me by Week 10. After this date, there will not be enough points left with which to intervene positively. If you have not dropped by Friday in Week 10, then the drop request will be completed with your current course grade, rather than a 'W' (withdraw).

Individualized extra credit, make-up assignments, etc. are not an option in any case.

Requests for an "I" or Incomplete will not be granted for this class.

No one should be surprised by their final grade in the course.

Major projects are usually due Sunday by 11:59 PM (unless otherwise noted in the calendar and Blackboard

Participation- Participation is based on reading discussion responses, journal entries and peer reviews. This is a workshop style class in which each person's participation is essential. I encourage you to be a lively participant in our discussions on Blackboard and in class. What you offer to the

whole group in discussions can help stimulate all of us. I expect that you will offer thoughtful, original, informed responses, ask questions, and feel welcome to challenge views expressed by your classmates and me. So that we can have a lively discussion, Reading Discussions and Journal entries are due before you attend class the day that they are due.

Course Delivery

While most classes are held face-to-face, there are a few sections that are designated as online. Those classes may meet synchronously or asynchronously through Blackboard. Whether face-to-face or online, the course is designed to engage students through discussions with your classmates and instructor using Blackboard (Bb). In order to succeed in the course, you will need to have regular use of the internet and a stable connection regardless of whether your class meets face-to-face or online. If you don't have a computer or reliable internet at home, the university can help you with resources: [Technology Support - UTEP](#). Please speak with your instructor immediately if you will need assistance. We want you to have the opportunity to succeed in class without concern about access. There are also computers available for you to use in the library and other labs on campus.

Ensure your UTEP email account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in assisting with technological needs of students.

Students can prepare by taking the Blackboard Student Orientation (<https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/cid/student-resources/blackboard-orientation.html>)

Submitting Work: All work will be submitted through the Bb course shell for this class. Since Bb comment and grade function works best with Microsoft Word, please submit all assignments in Microsoft Word following APA or MLA format unless directed otherwise. Be sure to name each submitted assignment with your name and the title of the assignment.

Late Work: It is important to submit work before deadlines for full credit and feedback. Late work is not accepted unless arrangements have been made with the instructor prior to the due date. I am

flexible, so please talk to me if you have any questions or concerns about turning in your work on time.

Assignments: Typically, major assignments will be due before midnight (11:59) on the due date specified on Blackboard (unless otherwise noted). Note: It typically takes me more than a week to complete grading major assignments, so please be patient. If you would like to resubmit your work, you may do so after discussing it with me."

As a student in this course, it is your responsibility to read and follow instructions, complete assignments on time, manage your schedule, and ensure that coursework is submitted correctly before the deadline. Some examples of circumstances not covered by our course policies are outlined below:

"I finished my assignment but forgot to post it"

"My network didn't work"

"I was very busy and missed the deadline"

"I completed my assignment/quiz, but didn't hit submit"

It should also be noted that technical issues are not valid excuses for missing assignments, so we strongly urge you to submit assignments early (do not wait until the last minute), verify your submission, and document confirmation pages (e.g. with a screen shot).

In most instances, I will accept late work if you perform the following:

1. Communicate with me immediately via email if you know you will fall behind based on a family or personal emergency. If you are emailing me the day/hour an assignment is due, you must attach or copy/paste the work you have completed thus far. If this is not included, you will not receive permission to turn in make-up.
2. Continue to keep up with the assignments that we are currently working on. Being allowed to turn in make-up work is neither an excuse nor permission to turn in every other assignment late as well.

Classroom Etiquette: Debate, critical inquiry, and intellectual diversity are essential elements to higher education and a process of learning. There is the potential during this course for controversial

and sensitive topics to be discussed during small group or whole class interaction (whether face-to-face or online), and to surface through discussion board postings. You are expected to demonstrate respect and courtesy for your peers and instructor when they express differing arguments, viewpoints, and/or experiences. Sexist, racist, homophobic, or other hateful speech will not be permitted. Angry displays, whether in writing, online postings, or in class discussions will be handled as disruptions to the wellbeing of the class.

Blackboard is not a public internet venue. All postings have the expectation of privacy and should be considered confidential. Whatever is posted in these online spaces is intended for your RWS classmates and instructor only. Please do not share any documents on a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space. If students wish to do so, they have the ethical obligation to first request the permission of the writer(s).

A quick, but by no means comprehensive, reference of classroom policies can be found below:

- Any issue that affects attendance, assignment submission, or other class-related activities must be communicated in advance. Same-day messages or emails will not be considered, except in cases of emergencies, which must be supported with proper written documentation.
- Absences will be considered excused only if supported by proper written documentation.
- Use a laptop, rather than a mobile phone, for classroom activities.
- Mobile phones and other gadgets should not be used unless required for classroom activities.
- Please visit during office hours instead of before or after class for questions or assistance.
- Engage actively in class through active listening, note-taking, answering questions, and participating in discussions or small group activities.
- Arrive to class on time consistently.
- Questions about grades, feedback, or absences should be asked within 72 hours of receiving them.
- Submit original work for all assignments (both in class and via email), with minimal to no use of AI or other language learning models (LLMs).
- Requests for extensions or late submissions must be made before the due date.
- Maintain professional decorum in all communications, both in class and online.

- Obtain a letter of consideration from the Dean of Students, MAC, or CASS before requesting reconsideration of unexcused absences.

Email Etiquette: Email is a useful tool if you have questions for me, and emailing me using Blackboard course messaging tool is generally the easiest and most efficient way to make contact outside class. Given that this is a university setting, you should recognize that your emails are documents that represent you professionally, and therefore should rise to certain standards of professional decorum. There are some basic guidelines that you should follow, both in my class and in your other classes:

- All emails should have a clear subject heading.
- All emails should have a clear, courteous salutation. "Dear Menuka" would be appropriate in the case of this class.
- All emails written for professional purposes should adhere to standard grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.
- All emails should be signed with your name (otherwise, your reader may not know who you are!).
- Preferably, emails should be sent from your Blackboard account.
- If there are any attachments, you should explain your reason for sending them and indicate the program in which they were written.
- You should consider your rhetorical context when emailing. What is the purpose of your email, and how can you most effectively accomplish that purpose? Three particularly important matters to keep in mind are brevity, clarity, and courtesy. If your email is not clear, specific, and to the point, you may not elicit the response you desire. If your email is discourteous, you diminish the professionalism of the persona you present to others. To cite just one example, some professors find emails that include calls for action "ASAP" to be discourteous or even presumptuous. Emails that do not meet the standards of professionalism, clarity, and courtesy outlined above may be disregarded.

Emails will be disregarded/ response will be delayed if:

1. There is no subject
2. The email has not been properly written and/or proofread, and is thus incomprehensible
3. The tone is rude or discourteous
4. The issue has already been addressed (online or in class)

The Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) makes it illegal to provide information regarding your education to a parent or interested party. Should circumstances make an intercessor necessary, contact the Registration and Records Office.

Texas SB17 Exception for Course Instruction:

The Texas Conference of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has issued the following statement that protects academic course content. The FYC program includes writing along with speech as an academic freedom of expression (“students should not feel the need to censor their speech” or writing):

[Texas Senate Bill 17](#), the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations regarding academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics pertaining to race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

University and Program Policies

FYC Class Attendance Policy: According to UTEP’s [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#):

The student is expected to attend all classes and laboratory sessions. It is the responsibility of the student to inform each instructor of extended absences. When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course-drop deadline or with a grade of F after the course-drop deadline.

Please consult UTEP’s [Curriculum and Classroom Policies](#) for more information regarding Excused Absences for University-Recognized Activities, Absence for Religious Holy Days, and Military Leave.

Attendance is mandatory for all freshman-level courses. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate in discussions and workshops. In addition, the First-Year Composition Program has developed the following policies that should be adhered to strictly by all instructors:

For Face-to-Face Classes: Students are entitled to a single week of unexplained absences without penalty (for example, 3 classes missed in a three-times-a-week class, 2 classes missed in twice-a-week class, 1 class missed in a once-a-week class).

After 2 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive classes) the student's grade is lowered by a full letter (A becomes B, etc.).

After 3 total weeks of absence (not necessarily consecutive), the student is automatically dropped from class.

Missing a scheduled conference with the instructor constitutes an absence.

For Hybrid Classes: The attendance policy for hybrid courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses with each missed weekly class meeting constituting absence from a week of class.

The program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies in cases in which it is not possible to attend a weekly class meeting, while continuing to maintain robust participation in class activities. [see also online courses]

For Online Classes: In an online class, attendance is measured by participation in class activities. The attendance policy for online courses aligns with the structure for face-to-face courses, with each missed week of class activities constituting absence from a week of class.

The instructor can measure participation through various pathways, such as completion of scaffolded activities and discussion posts, and responding to other students' posts and feedback. We also recommend measuring course activity by using the Course Reports feature on Blackboard, particularly the Course Activity Overview.

When it becomes evident that it is not possible to participate in class, the program recommends that the student contact the instructor to discuss the attendance policy and how it applies, before resuming robust participation in class activities.

Drop Policy: If you cannot complete this course for whatever reason, please contact your instructor ahead of the course drop deadline. Your instructor can help you with the drop process or you can contact the Registrar's Office. If you do not drop, you are at risk of being dropped by the instructor and possibly receiving an "F" for the course.

Academic Integrity: The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Instructors are required to report the suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Affairs. Visit the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#) page for more information on Academic integrity.

The First-Year Composition Program fundamentally trusts its students and strives to create dynamic classroom experiences and writing opportunities rooted in the values of inquiry and critical thinking. We agree deeply with Anna R. Mills' (2023) claim, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, that "writing practice continues to be intensely rewarding for students and central to intellectual growth in college."

Because of the rapid pace of change represented by ChatGPT and other Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs, it is necessary to set clear program standards regarding their use in our classes. Specifically, the FYC Program recognizes that Large Language Models (LLMs) are part of our contemporary culture and hold educational value that can be explored in the classroom, such as narrowing down a topic idea or critically analyzing the quality of an AI-generated text. However, our program maintains an expectation that all assignment submissions must constitute original pieces of writing composed by the student-author only.

By this standard, an **appropriate use** of ChatGPT (or any AI-powered program) could take the form of

- writing an introduction paragraph that openly describes how this AI tool offered possible approaches to researching a particular topic, with any direct quotes placed in quotation marks and cited in-text and in a final references page.

By contrast, an **inappropriate use** of ChatGPT (or any AI-powered program) could take the form of

- copying any amount of text from an AI tool and claiming it as your original composition without acknowledging its source. This includes failure to cite and place quotation marks around any directly quoted language.

FYC faculty are required to submit any assignment submissions that appear to include unacceptable uses of AI programs (or that are marked for further review) to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

Accommodations: UTEP is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Students are encouraged to visit CASS in room 106, Union East Building or contact them at 747-5148 or cass@utep.edu.

Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy: "The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting

responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.”

For more information, please visit: <https://www.utep.edu/titleix/pregnancy-and-parenting.html>

University Writing Center: UTEP’s University Writing Center (UWC) offers free writing tutoring assistance for all UTEP students. The tutors are undergraduate and graduate students who can help with all parts of a writing assignment, including prewriting, organizing, revising, and editing. They can also help to understand any writing assignment and help work on comprehending difficult textbook material. Go to [University Writing Center - UTEP](#) to make an appointment with a writing center consultant.

Military Students: If you are a military student (veteran, dependent, active) please visit the [Military Student Success Center](#). I also recognize the complexities of being a student veteran. If you are a student veteran, please inform me if you need special accommodations. Drill schedules, calls to active duty, complications with GI Bill disbursement, and other unforeseen military and veteran-related developments can complicate your academic life. If you make me aware of a complication, I will do everything I can to assist you or put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you.

Course Support Resource

Title IX	915-747-8358	Institutional Compliance
Dean of Students	915-747-5648	Dean of Students

UTEP Health & Wellness Center	915-747-5624	Health and Wellness Center studenthealth@utep.edu
UTEP Police Department	915-747-5611	UTEP Police Department police@utep.edu
Counseling and Psychological Services	915-747-5302	Counseling Services caps@utep.edu

Academic Calendar Spring 2026

Jan 20th	<i>Spring classes begin</i>
Jan 20-23rd	Late Registration (Fees are incurred)
Feb 4th	Spring Census Day Note: This is the last day to register for classes. Payments are due by 5:00 pm.
Mar 16-20th	<i>Spring Break</i>
Mar 25th	Freshman midterm grades are due
Mar 27th	Cesar Chavez Holiday - No classes
Apr 3rd	Spring Study Day - no classes
May 7th	Spring last day of classes
May 8th	Dead day
May 11-15th	Spring Final Exams

Course Schedule

Your instructor will provide you with a course schedule specific to your class.

