

Course Syllabus
Thriving Academically in College, CTL 53
Sections 1 & 2
Summer 2025

Location: 408 Panama Mall, Room 148

Contact Information

Instructor: Savannah Pham, PhD

Email: spham@stanford.edu

Check-In Hours: By appointment (on Zoom)

Virtual check-ins are opportunities to meet with us to discuss the material being covered in class, to raise questions or concerns you might have, and to address other related issues. Feel free to schedule a meeting even if you don't have any questions. We can use the time to get to know each other!

Required Text: *Teach Yourself How to Learn: Strategies You Can Use to Ace Any Course at Any Level* by Sandra Yancy McGuire with Stephanie McGuire. An online version of the text is available through the [Stanford Library](#)

Course Description

Once you get into the school of your dreams, how will you be sure you can succeed there? The level of organization and study skills necessary for college success is often very different than in high school. This course aims to equip students with evidence-based strategies to help them thrive in the college environment. Students will learn techniques for effective time management, motivation, reading, note-taking, studying, test-taking, and more. This class is a great fit for high school students who want to prepare for college and for college students who want to expand their set of strategies for successful learning in STEM, social science, and humanities courses.

Course Learning Goals

Note: Course details and deadlines are subject to change. Last updated 6/19/25.

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

- Identify and apply research-based approaches to enhance your learning and study skills
- Develop effective strategies for time management, note taking, studying, reading, writing, and test-taking
- Articulate how motivation and resilience are connected to effective learning and academic success
- Develop a clearer understanding of research-based learning strategies and be able to articulate your findings to your community of peers

Acknowledgement of Challenging Times & Message of Support

We acknowledge that these are challenging times. Although we expect you to put your best effort into this class and take away as many insights as you can (it is for your benefit, after all!), we also recognize that things outside of this classroom—from world events to deeply personal ones, and how those might intersect—can impact your learning and well-being. As your instructors, we hope that we will all work together as a community to support one another as best as we can. If you have suggestions for how we might support you better in this course, please do not hesitate to let us know.

When You Need to Miss Class

If you need to miss class because of illness, self-isolation, or a pressing personal/family issue, please make sure to:

- Notify the instructor as soon as possible via email
- Get notes for the day from your accountability partner (or another student)
- Read through the slide deck for that week to review the material
- Read and complete the assigned activities on Canvas to make sure you stay up to date
- If you are able, schedule a remote check-in hour appointment to discuss any questions you may have with the instructor
- Rest up and take care of yourself. Feel better soon!

Course Privacy Statement

As noted in the University's [recording and broadcasting courses policy](#), students may not audio or video record class meetings without permission from the instructor (and guest speakers, when applicable). If the instructor grants permission or posts videos themselves, students may

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keep recordings only for personal use and may not post recordings on the internet, or otherwise distribute them. These policies protect the privacy rights of instructors and students, and the intellectual property and other rights of the University. Students who need lectures recorded for the purposes of an academic accommodation should contact the [Office of Accessible Education](#).

Course Expectations

What you can expect from us

As your instructors, we hope to guide you through your learning journey. We aim to provide an inclusive, collaborative classroom that is a safe place for everyone to share their goals, experiences, successes, and challenges. We are here to support you, so we will do our best to give you the tools, feedback, and encouragement you need to succeed in this course and beyond.

What we expect from you

We ask that you try as best as you can to remain focused and engaged during class. We expect you to actively participate in this community by coming to class meetings prepared, being ready to share your perspectives and ideas, participating in all class activities, and meeting all assignment expectations. Although we will sometimes engage in class learning activities that require the use of an electronic device, to make this the best learning experience possible for you and your classmates, we ask that you avoid using your devices during class for non-academic purposes. Please always show respect for others, even if you disagree with them. Our learning community benefits from the perspectives, values, and experiences that each student brings, and we encourage you to make the most of the opportunity to work with and learn from one another. We anticipate that every student in this class will be enriching our classroom with their. Overall, this class should challenge you, but we believe everyone has the ability to succeed with some effort. Let's work together and share resources.

Respect for Diversity

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and situations be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. Please let us know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Additionally, all people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their wishes. In this class, we will have the chance to indicate our names and, if we choose, to identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. We will do our best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

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Attendance and Expectations

Although we may provide background and context for the reading, the course will rely upon your active participation and your own exploration of the course concepts. Because our class discussions depend upon everyone's thoughtful contributions, attendance is required, and it is essential that you come prepared to discuss the homework material each week.

For college-level courses, the expectation is that for every hour a class meets, there is approximately two hours of work required outside of class. Since this is a two unit course (with meeting time including our scheduled course time plus time spent with your accountability partner), you should plan to allocate up to four additional hours for your individual work.

Assignments

To keep up with your course assignments, make sure you follow along with the Canvas Modules! Please submit all assignments on Canvas by 4:00 p.m. on the day before your section takes place as .doc or .docx files or PDFs. For every day an assignment is late, 10% will be deducted from the assignment grade, and after five days, the assignment will be assigned no points, or a 0%. If personal circumstances arise that make it difficult to meet a deadline, please reach out to your instructor about the possibility of an extension.

Readings and Reflections: The assigned readings are designed to prepare you for the upcoming week's lecture material. By engaging with the text, you'll be better prepared to participate in class discussions and activities. Please complete the reading and corresponding reflection before attending class to maximize your learning experience.

Final Project: The goal of this project is to 1) identify and explain a common academic challenge that college students face, 2) describe one research-based strategy that a student could use to overcome that challenge, 3) summarize the research around why that particular strategy would help to alleviate that challenge, and 4) teach your classmates how to do the strategy, problem-solving any challenges that could arise.

You can choose **one** of the following options to present this information:

- 4-6 minute presentation
- 4-6 minute video/movie
- 3-5 page research paper (double spaced)
- 2-3 page infographic/brochure
- If you would like to present the information in another way, please reach out to your instructors

Your final project will be graded on content, organization, creativity, and adherence to guidelines. You can find more details on how the projects will be graded in the scoring rubric.

Accountability Hours

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In this class, you will be assigned accountability groups. Together, you will determine a regular weekly meeting time. Attendance and active participation in these Accountability Hours is required. If you miss a session, you may still submit your assignment, but 50% will be deducted from your assignment grade. If personal circumstances arise that make it difficult to participate in your Accountability Hours, please reach out to your instructor.

Contact Us

The best way to get in touch with us outside of class is by email. Please bear in mind that we will need at least 1 business day to reply to emails. We will primarily communicate with you via your Stanford email and Canvas accounts, so **please check these accounts several times a week**.

During check-in hours, we are happy to learn more about you, talk about your academic plans, or discuss any of the course content. Please note, given the short time we are together in the course, we have a blanket policy that we do not provide recommendation letters. We recommend reaching out to someone who can better speak to your academic and/or professional abilities such as a teacher, supervisor, mentor, coach, or advisor.

Technology

You are required to have a device that connects to the internet so that you can access email, Canvas, and Zoom. All course details and materials will be posted on our Canvas course site.

On the matter of artificial intelligence (AI) please bear in mind that different courses at Stanford have different policies on the use of generative AI ([see here](#)). Although most of the assignments in this course are based on personal reflection and are therefore not a strong fit for AI-enabled tools, we ask that if you do choose to use AI tools at any point in this course, to please treat them similarly to how you would treat assistance from another person. In other words, you are permitted to use AI tools as part of your learning process, but you should not be turning in anything that was generated by AI. Please see below for specific examples of permitted and unpermitted uses, but we will discuss this further and provide more context in class.

Examples of permitted uses for AI in this course:

- Using it to answer questions you have about an idea that came up in class or in the course text
 - Caveat: Always be sure to check the accuracy of content generated by AI, since accuracy is not guaranteed. You are of course encouraged to bring any questions to your instructor!

Examples of unpermitted uses for AI in this course:

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- Copying and pasting any portion of AI-generated text into any of your assignment submissions
- Using it as a “shortcut” to write a response or reflection for you and only changing a few words

Of course, we feel confident that you can complete this course successfully without using any AI tools at all, which students have been doing for many years! However, if you are interested in using AI tools, we ask that you cite all AI-assisted material and explain how you have utilized AI in your work (e.g., include a short paragraph with any assignment where you use generative AI tools and explain how you used them). If you have questions about the use of generative AI in our class, please don't hesitate to ask.

Course Grade Calculation

Grading:

45%	Individual homework assignments on Canvas
20%	Lecture attendance & participation
20%	Accountability hour engagement & group assignments
15%	Final Project

Attendance and participation includes regular class attendance and participation in class activities, both verbally and in writing. This also includes listening attentively to others and communicating respectfully with all class members.

You will receive scores on assignments to help provide feedback on your course performance. The course as a whole is graded on a Satisfactory / No Credit (S/NC) basis.

To receive a grade of Satisfactory for the course, you must:

1. Achieve a class grade of 70%
2. Submit and present your final project
3. Attend at least 7 out of 8 classes

Course Website on Canvas

All course materials, including announcements, assignment instructions, readings, and additional resources will be available on Canvas. Please submit all homework and accountability hour assignments posted on Canvas Modules. Note that accountability hour assignments will be submitted as a group (only one person needs to submit something for your group).

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University Policies

The Honor Code

Class meetings and sections in this course will be highly interactive, you will hear plenty of great ideas from your peers, and if things go as planned, you might even change your mind based on what others say. However, you will be evaluated in this course as an individual and are expected to cite sources and individuals from whom you have learned and borrowed as a display of academic, intellectual, and creative integrity. Failure to do so is a violation of Stanford's Honor Code and is a serious offense, even when the violation is unintentional. Conduct prohibited by the Honor Code includes all forms of academic dishonesty, among them unpermitted collaboration and representing others' work as one's own. Please review [Stanford's Honor Code](#), including common misconceptions and examples, as well as [documentation and citation resources](#) from the Hume Center for Writing and Speaking. When in doubt, contact me.

Students with Documented Disabilities

It is our intention to make this course as accessible as possible for all of you based on your unique learning needs. If there is anything that can make class more accessible for you, please email us, talk to us before or after class, or schedule a check-in hour to let us know. Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must also initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Please contact the OAE as soon as possible, because they require substantial advance notice to ensure accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, email: oe-contactus@stanford.edu, URL: <http://oe.stanford.edu>).

Summer Academic Resource Center (SARC)

Students who are enrolled in Summer Session can access a variety of resources. SARC offers online tutoring for a variety of courses, foreign language conversation practice, academic workshops, and academic advising. For details, visit the [SARC website](#).

Course Schedule and Deadlines

Date	Topics	Accountability Hour	Homework Assignments on Canvas
Week 1 Class - 6/24	Syllabus and Time Management	<i>No accountability hour this week - you will meet your accountability group in class during Week 3!</i>	<p>Due Sunday, 6/29 at 4:00 pm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sign up for your Week 2 individual consultation with your instructor 2. Complete and submit the pre-class survey <p>Due Monday, 6/30 at 4:00 pm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch this 2 minute video: Feeling Overwhelmed? Time Management for Stanford Students. 2. Submit a calendar for next week's schedule using the template and strategies discussed in class
Week 2	Individual Consultations and Learning Plan <i>**No class meeting this week. Make sure you complete your individual consultation by Thursday, 7/3**</i>	<p>By Sunday, 7/6 at 4:00 pm: Individual study session. Follow instructions on Canvas & submit your response!</p>	<p><u>**No class meeting this week. Make sure you complete your individual consultations between 6/30 - 7/3**</u></p> <p>By Monday, 7/7 at 4:00 pm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete and submit Topic Reflection Assignment 2. Read and complete the reflection for <i>Teach Yourself How to Learn</i> pp. 6-8 (Chapter 2) and pp. 41 - 51 (part of Chapter 5 from "My Introduction of the Reading Strategies" through "Go to Class and Take Notes by Hand")

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<p>Week 3</p> <p>Class - 7/8</p>	<p>Reading & Note-taking</p>	<p>By Sunday, 7/13 at 4:00 pm: Meet with your accountability hour group. Follow instructions on Canvas - submit your group contract and response for the week!</p>	<p>Due Monday, 7/14 at 4:00 pm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the Final Project Assignment 2. Review the Final Project Rubric 3. Choose the topic, article, and format for your final project (see Canvas) 4. Read and annotate the article you selected for your final project, using the strategies discussed in week 3 lecture (submit a copy of your notes to Canvas)
<p>Week 4</p> <p>Class - 7/15</p>	<p>Executive Functioning</p>	<p>By Sunday, 7/20 at 4:00 pm: Meet with your accountability group; follow instructions on Canvas & submit your response!</p>	<p>Due Monday, 7/21 at 4:00 pm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and complete the reflection for <i>Teach Yourself How to Learn</i> pp. 9-39 (Chapters 3-4) and pp. 51-58 (part of Chapter 5 from “Use your Homework to Test Your Knowledge” to end of chapter)
<p>Week 5</p> <p>Class - 7/22</p>	<p>Organizing your Learning & Study Strategies</p>	<p>By Sunday, 7/27 at 4:00 pm: Meet with your accountability group; follow instructions on Canvas & submit your response!</p>	<p>By Monday, 7/28 at 4:00 pm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write and submit a 6-word story about an experience you had with academic failure 2. Read and complete the reflection for <i>Teach Yourself How to Learn</i> pp. 59 - 88 (Chapters 6, 7, and 8) (<i>note: this is our longest reading and reflection assignment, so please give yourself extra time!</i>)
<p>Week 6</p> <p>Class - 7/29</p>	<p>Resilience and Motivation</p>	<p>By Sunday, 8/3 at 4:00 pm: Meet with your accountability group;</p>	<p>By Monday, 8/4 at 4:00 pm:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and complete the reflection for <i>Teach Yourself How to Learn</i> pp. 97-104

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		follow instructions on Canvas & submit your response!	(starting at “Super Exam Preparation Tips” in Ch. 9 and through the end of Ch. 10) 2. Finish drafting your final project for feedback during your accountability hour!
Week 7 Class - 8/5	Writing and Test-Taking Skills	By Sunday, 8/10 at 4:00 pm: Meet with your accountability group; follow instructions on Canvas & submit your response!	Due Monday, 8/11 4:00 p.m.: 1. Submit final project on Canvas (note: for presentations, you should submit your slides) 2. Sign up for order of project sharing (on Canvas)
Week 8 Class - 8/12	Sharing Final Projects + Celebration		<i>Congrats on all of your hard work, and have a great rest of your summer!</i>

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