

# Connections 2009 Syllabus

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## Course Dates

Pre-semester Session: August 19-22

First Follow-Up Week: August 25-27

Second Follow-Up Week: September 1-3

Third Follow-Up Week: September 8-10

Coursework completed by: September 25

## Required Texts

Barefoot Heart: Stories of a Migrant Child by Elva Treviño Hart

Connections Student Text

2009-2010 USU General Catalog

(resource document online @ <http://www.usu.edu/registrar/catalogpdf/>)

USU Student Handbook and Planner

## Course Fee

\$50.00 (paid as part of course registration) - Fee provides students with a t-shirt, USU planner, Convocation speaker, class activities, and supplies.

Welcome to Connections and to Utah State University, home of the Aggies! The faculty and staff of Connections are pleased to note your arrival on campus and the start of an exciting and challenging year ahead. Our commitment to you is to make the time we spend together in this course challenging, stimulating, rewarding, and productive in helping you make the transition to university life.

University Connections is designed to give you an early introduction to the expectations and challenges of university life, as well as emphasize some of the learning skills you will need to successfully achieve your goals at the University. The course explores problems common in the transition from high school to university life, in an atmosphere that encourages the development of enduring relationships between you, your instructor, and your fellow classmates.

Connections also provides an orientation to a breadth of University services and resources, to basic policies and procedures governing the conduct of staff and students, and to the physical layout of the USU campus and Cache County community.

Connections curriculum and activities are specifically designed to meet the following objectives:

- Introduce students to the expectations of Utah State and promote academic success.
- Share, discuss, and analyze a common reading experience that will enhance students' connection to the campus community.
- Develop in students the desire and ability to be an "informed participant" in the educational process.
- Help students identify and address the anxieties involved in the transition to university life and help them make the transition to USU a productive learning experience.
- Introduce the role of the academic library in a college career, including the range of resources available and the role of librarians in providing assistance.
- Broaden the educational experience by encouraging student involvement in co-curricular and service-learning activities.

- Create an environment that helps students establish friendship and support networks.
- Explore the Cache Valley community and opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

All classes have a common core syllabus and assignments. However, there are 60 sections of Connections 2009! With this large number of classes, there is bound to be a variety of teaching styles and personalities among the faculty, as is true of the University at large. There are differences in teaching styles and some differences between classes in content and activities, and that's OK! We don't want every class to be exactly the same.

### Honor Pledge

Upon admission to the University, students agree to abide by the Utah State University Honor System by signing the Honor Pledge, which reads: "I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity."

A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat, falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah State University community.

### Attendance

Class sessions will start promptly, and students are expected to participate during the entire class period. Early departure, as well as anticipated absences, should be kept to a minimum and coordinated with the instructor prior to class. Please, as a courtesy to all, turn off all cell phones before coming to class. (If you have a situation requiring an adjustment to this policy, please discuss this with the instructor).

### Participation

Frequently students will ask: "Do I have to attend class?" The answer is YES! Much of your learning will occur as a result of your attendance and participation. Class participation includes asking appropriate questions and sharing comments with the class, bringing materials for in-class work, and attending the lectures. It is important to practice looking alert, taking notes, and thinking about the ideas presented in class. In-class assignments will be part of the class format. Missed class activities and assignments may not be made up. Late assignments are only accepted under unusual circumstances and are reduced five percent for each day late.

### Grading Scale

The grading scale that is used by all of the classes is as follows:

• Literature Assignment	100	Percent	Points	
• Get Acquainted with USU Policies and Procedures	25	93-100	465-500	A
• Learning About Campus Resources	25	90-92.9	450-464	A-
• Time Management and Syllabus Analysis	50	86-89.9	430-449	B+
• Academic Strategies	50	83-85.9	415-430	B
• Exploring a Major	25	80-82.9	400-414	B-
• Connecting to Campus	25	76-79.9	380-399	C+
• CIL Tests (2@ 25 points each)	50	73-75.9	365-379	C
• Course Evaluation	25	70-72.9	350-364	C-
• Connections Attendance and Participation (determined by instructor)	125	66-69.9	330-349	D+
		63-65.9	315-329	D
		60-62.9	300-314	D-
Total Points	500	<60	0-299	F

## Assignment Descriptions

Connections assignments are designed to introduce you to the campus environment and the skills that often challenge new college students. (All assignments and directions are available in the Connections Student Manual and on the Connections Blackboard site)

### **1. Literature Assignment**

**Due August 19 -- 100 points**

Complete the discussion questions for "A Barefoot Heart." Questions are available at SOAR, on the Connections website [www.usu.edu/connections/literature](http://www.usu.edu/connections/literature), and on the Blackboard site.

### **2. Get Acquainted with USU Policies and Procedures**

**Due: TBD -- 25 points**

This assignment is designed to introduce you to the important Utah State policies and procedures that can affect your academic success and progress. Utah State is a large institution with many procedures and deadlines that you must follow. Many times students are frustrated with paying late fees or discovering that there is a hold on their transcript. Being informed will help you easily navigate the business side of the university.

### **3. Campus Resources Quiz**

**Due: TBD -- 25 points**

The university campus is similar to a small town with services designed just for students. This assignment introduces you to the many resources and services available to help you succeed and become part of the Utah State community. It will also introduce you to the Utah State websites that contain in-depth information about each resource.

### **4. Time Management**

**Due: TBD -- 50 points**

Research shows that one of the major barriers to first-year students' success is learning how to manage their time in the academic environment. There is less time in class, but more time required to learn course information on your own. Many students must fit in work as well as time for a social life. This assignment guides students to become more conscious of how they use their time so that they can manage and achieve their academic, social, and personal goals. It will also provide practice in using time management and organizational techniques.

### **6. Exploring a Major**

**Due: TBD -- 25 points**

It is not unusual for students to enter the university without declaring a major or to change their major after a few semesters. This assignment is designed to help you explore possible majors and their requirements or to fully understand the requirements in the major you have chosen. It introduces the major requirement sheet, which is the roadmap through your major and can be a great exploration tool as well. Also this assignment will help you understand the need for academic planning and the important role your advisor has in this process.

### **7. Connecting to Campus Assignment**

**Due: TBD -- 25 points**

Campus life is rich with opportunities for you to attend cultural and social events. Often these events are free or at very little cost. The research on student success has demonstrated that students who become involved with their campus have an enriched academic experience, have a higher rate of retention, and express greater satisfaction with their higher-education experience. They tend to perform better academically, develop a large group of social contacts, and broaden their cultural interests. This assignment introduces you to organizations and activities available on campus that can provide you with an enriched experience.

## **8. CIL Assignment**

**Due: TBD -- 50 points**

Under the General Education requirement, all students must pass competency exams in computer and information literacy. The Computer and Information Literacy requirement includes six exams. The Connections course requires you to complete two of these exams: the Information Law and Ethics exam and the Information Resources exam. Because this is a graduation requirement, students often leave these exams until their last semester. This creates unnecessary stress at a time when your focus will be on your major classes. It is best to complete this requirement your first semester. (If you completed this requirement in high school, your Connections instructor will help you find out if it has been posted to your transcript.)

**9. Academic Strategies Assignment Options:** Each student is required to focus on one academic study skills area for which he or she thinks the strategies will enhance his or her academic success. Choose one of the following assignments and complete as instructed in Blackboard:

### **Note-Taking**

**Due: TBD -- 50 points**

Many university classes are taught in a lecture format. Taking effective notes that you can later use to study and learn the information is often a skill that is developed in the university environment. Often the information from the lecture is the primary information that will appear on course tests. Many instructors put their notes online and students need to learn how to add information to these notes. This assignment provides you practice with a note-taking method with instructor or prepared notes.

### **Test Taking Strategies**

**Due: TBD -- 50 points**

Students often find their first university test a learning experience. Strategies they have used before may not have brought them the grades they are used to receiving. Test-taking is a process of using appropriate and effective strategies and skills before, during, and after a test. To help you become a more effective and efficient test-taker, you will learn about test-taking strategies for multiple choice, true/false, and essay exams.

### **Textbook Reading**

**Due: TBD -- 50 points**

College textbooks are often a surprising challenge to first-year students. They are written to cover a vast amount of knowledge in one semester. Even students who consider themselves above average readers report difficulty in comprehending and retaining the textbook information. This assignment provides you with active reading strategies to improve your ability to comprehend college textbooks and other required reading materials.

## **10. Course Evaluation**

**Due: September 25 -- 25 points**

Students will complete a course evaluation on Blackboard/Vista and submit it by September 26.

If a student has a disability that requires some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center. In cooperation with the Disability Resource Center, course material will be provided in alternative formats, such as large print, audio, diskette, or Braille.