

Spring 2026 // SP in Metals // University of Texas at El Paso

MTLS : 4323, Special Problems in Metals, crn 20562

Fox Fine Arts, main studio room 154

Tuesday / Thursday, 9:00 am - 11:50 am

Associate Professor // Jess Tolbert
pronouns: she/her/hers/they/them/theirs

contact info

jltolbert@utep.edu (email)

office hours

Tuesday & Thursday, 12 - 1 pm, By Appointment

153A Fox Fine Arts

Contact via email, or make arrangements during class.

There is generally sufficient time for individual counseling during class. For additional project related questions, schedule an outside appointment.

Class time is not for discussing class performance, grades, or personal issues - please email or arrange an appointment for those matters.

Jess Tolbert is the Head of the Jewelry + Metalsmithing Program at UTEP. She holds two degrees in fine arts, both with a focus on Metalsmithing and jewelry. She received her MFA from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and her BFA from Texas State University, San Marcos. Jess actively exhibits her artwork nationally and internationally, has received prestigious awards and grants, attended multiple Artist-in-Residence programs, and regularly curates exhibitions of contemporary jewelry and craft work in in the USA and abroad.

Jesstolbert.com

course description:

This advanced course explores *METAL, ADORNMENT, FUNCTION, & the BODY* as creative material in art, with a focus on developing a personal conceptual direction alongside formal and technical problem solving. Students will utilize historic and contemporary precedents and issues of Metalsmithing, as well as other creative work or relevant topics as inspirational points of departure and reference. As a capstone to the Metals program, students will independently develop a conceptual theme, applying the hand skills, techniques, and process knowledge gained throughout the program.

Course goals/objectives & outcomes:

This course builds on the technical knowledge from Metals I-VII, focusing on personal vision through a self-directed approach. Students are expected to be independent, creating a clear outline with instructor guidance. Emphasis is placed on professional development, including artist statement, biography, resume, research, documentation, and website. Students will either continue work from Metals VII or develop a new, focused body of work driven by both concept and technical skill.

Course requirements:

The course will include independent creative assignments, technical samples, research, sketching, reading, and writing, with a focus on technical, formal, and conceptual explorations. Students will present their work, research, and progress at scheduled interim discussions. While attendance at class demonstrations is not mandatory (except for visiting artists), students must use class time to focus on their projects and follow the attendance policy.

Your responsibilities as a student are to make an *honest* effort to master the assignments and challenges that are presented to you, to contribute *positively* to the learning experience of the class by being an *active* participant in all class activities, and to be *respectful* of the studio, the tools, and all others around you.

This course requires 6 hours of in-class time weekly, plus an additional 6 hours outside of class for successful completion (give or take). Minimal effort will not lead to quality work; active engagement both in and outside of class is essential. In-class time is structured for group and individualized instruction, and maximizing it depends on your preparation and progress outside of class. Organization and discipline are key to making the most of both in-class and outside work time.

grading

Final grades will be based on the following breakdown:

75%	Creative Assignments
25%	Professional Development
100%	Final *

*The final grade will be determined after calculating the course average and applying any attendance penalties.

Grades are translated into points for averaging as follows:

A+	12 points	100-97%
A	11 points	96-93%
A-	10 points	92-90%
B+	9 points	89-87%
B	8 points	86-83%
B-	7 points	82-80%
C+	6 points	79-77%
C	5 points	76-73%
C-	4 points	72-70%
D+	3 points	69-67%
D	2 points	66-63%
D-	1 points	62-60%
F	0 points	less than 60%

Grades are evaluated on the following (when applicable):

- Class participation, effort, and attitude
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Progress in and out of class
- Research thoroughness, design and model quality
- Technical execution and craft
- Overall visual impact of finished work
- Development of concept/intellectual basis for work
- Critique and discussion participation

Grades are defined as follows:

A – excellent quality work	D – below average work
B – above average work	F – unsatisfactory, failing
C – average work	

As your instructor it is my goal to instill a passion for the creative process & the desire to understand, practice, and showcase the skills you learn.

assignments:

The course includes at least three Creative Assignments, each requiring research, design, and technical samples.

Professional development includes an artist statement, biography, resume, an annotated bibliography, professional images, an artist portfolio website, and planning calendar. The final grade also includes a final artist presentation, and a one-week exhibit at the JaM Gallery or other venue.

CREATIVE ASSIGNMENTS must be submitted on time and fully completed following the calendar of dates provided. Late work will not be accepted. Projects are graded as presented. After receiving feedback on the first Creative Assignment, students may revise and resubmit it by the last class for re-grading. The new grade will be averaged with the original. Note: This option only applies to the first assignment due to the final deadline.

IF NO WORK IS SUBMITTED BY THE DUE DATE, THE STUDENT RECEIVES AN 'F' AND CANNOT RESUBMIT FOR A HIGHER GRADE.
For illness or emergencies, email before the critique (or as soon as possible) to arrange late submission.
No email = 'F' for the assignment.

ALL OTHER ASSIGNMENTS (technical, research/design) are due at the start of class, unless stated otherwise. Late submissions will incur a 3-point grade deduction per class day, with no acceptance after one week.

professional development:

25% of your grade is based on the development of the following:

- Drafts of your artist statement, biography, and resume, with feedback for content and grammar.
- An annotated bibliography tracking your research and sources.
- An artist website with professional images, captions, statement, bio, resume, and other relevant info.
- A final exhibition at the JaM Gallery (or another venue, if arranged before mid-term).
- A final artist presentation during the last class or exam week.

Professional development will be evaluated throughout the semester, with grades averaged into your final grade. Late evaluations are not accepted. No extra credit available. See the calendar for due dates.

incompletes, withdrawals, pass/fail:

Incomplete ('I') grades may be considered for students with satisfactory work and legitimate circumstances requiring extra time, subject to instructor discretion and Department Chair approval.

Withdrawal is the student's responsibility and must be completed by the deadline to receive a 'W'. After the deadline, a grade will be assigned.

Pass/fail, audit, or graduate credit options are not available.

course policies:

Attendance, participation, and conduct are key performance criteria. Failure to meet standards will result in significant grade penalties and may lead to course failure.

attendance:

- Attendance is required & promptness is expected.
- I take attendance each class and your progress is available for review on Blackboard.
- Students are allowed 3 absences without penalty.
- More than 3 absences may warrant dropping the course and retaking it when full commitment is possible.
- Art Department Policy: Each unexcused absence after 3 will lower the final course grade by one letter.
- Additional absences may be excused at the instructor's discretion, only if the first 3 are excused.
- Excused absences include documented serious illness, childcare emergencies, death in the immediate family, or university sanctioned events. Scheduled appointments, transportation problems, or job demands are not excused.
- Tardiness or leaving early counts as one-third of an absence (3 X ½ hour or less = 1 full absence). Being late or leaving early can be disruptive and unprofessional and is often when important class information is provided. Late after ½ hour = absent.
- Any information missed due to being late or absent is the responsibility of the student.
- Come prepared to work – unpreparedness will be counted as an absence.
- **Critique attendance is mandatory.** Missing a critique or due date results in an 'F' for the project.

participation:

- Participation in discussions, demonstrations, critiques, and all class days is required.
- Projects must be completed using in-class time; work done solely outside of class will not be accepted.
- Active participation and productivity are crucial for skill development and understanding, as hands-on experience is the key to demonstrating progress.

critiques: Participation and attendance at critique days are mandatory and as important as exams in a lecture course. Critiques provide a structured opportunity to discuss your work and peers' work, fostering critical thinking and reflection on techniques, concepts, and broader contexts like wearable/functional art and contemporary culture. They are also an exercise in professionalism – be on time, engaged, respectful, and prepared. Only completed work will be critiqued.

conduct:

- **Behavior:** Professional and respectful conduct is expected. A warning will be given for issues; repeated violations may result in removal from the course.
- **Sick Policy:** Do not attend class if ill or showing symptoms of contagious illness (e.g., flu, COVID-19). Contact me for accommodations.
- **Guests | Children:** No visitors or children allowed in the studio for safety reasons.
- **Cell Phones:** Silence phones; phone use during class is prohibited. Repeated issues may result in being asked to leave and counted absent.
- **Laptops | Tablets:** Unless required for an assignment, their use is prohibited. Repeated use will result in being asked to leave and counted absent.
- **Music | Media:** Personal music is allowed with headphones at a reasonable volume. Watching videos or media during class is prohibited.
- **Cleanliness:** Clean your workbench and any used spaces daily, including outside class hours. The last 5-10 minutes of class time are for cleanup. Always clean up when leaving the studio, even if returning later – put tools away, return communal equipment, and wipe down work areas. Keep your bench area and floor clear. Please do not store things in studio areas not designated for personal use. Reminders will be given, but being proactive in this is expected.
- **Studio Responsibilities:** The studio is everyone's responsibility. Maintain a clean, organized space and treat it as your own to ensure a positive, efficient working environment. We all benefit when we all contribute.

University Policy Statements

Disabilities Statement

Disabilities: I will make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally before or after class in the first two weeks or make an appointment to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Center for Accommodations & Student Services within the first two weeks of classes. CASS Office, cass@utep.edu Union East Bldg., Rm 106, 915.747.5148
www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/

Academic Dishonesty Statement

Cheating/Plagiarism: Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student or possessing unauthorized materials during a test/quiz. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the word/ideas of another as ones' own. All work must be the original work of the student. Any quotations, paraphrases, or direct appropriation of imagery or ideas from borrowed sources must be properly cited to comply with applicable citation guidelines and copyright law, including AI tools. Do not submit work under your name that you did not do yourself. You may not submit work for this class that you did for another class, including previous metal courses. All suspected violations will be reported and subject to disciplinary action, per [UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures](#).

AI allowed only with prior permission from instructor

Use of AI technologies or automated tools, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT or DALL-E is only allowed with approval BEFORE being used. If given permission to use any of these tools, students must properly cite and give full credit to the program used upon submission of every relevant assignment.

Policy for Pregnant and Parenting Students

UTEP is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discrimination of pregnant or parenting students in accordance with Texas Education Code, Section 51.982 and other applicable laws, such as Title IX. 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. For more information, please see the [HOOP Chapter 13](#).
Or visit: <https://www.utep.edu/titleix/pregnancy-and-parenting.html>

- **Open Lab Hours | Access:** The studio is open Monday-Saturday for enrolled Metals students under monitor supervision. Check the studio doors for the semester schedule. Students must sign in and out, and only advanced students or instructors can open/close the lab. As the first or last to be in the studio, follow the opening and closing procedures. Police identification access is reserved for advanced students with your student ID. Call campus police outside of normal business hours for studio access, Mon-Fri, before 8 am, after 6 pm; anytime Sat/Sun *except game days.
- **Studio & Personal Safety:** Follow all safety procedures and be proactive about your health & safety.
 - Only use tools or equipment demonstrated by the instructor.
 - Work with equipment under proper instruction and supervision; avoid working when tired.
 - Report any broken tools or equipment to the instructor, TA, or work-study student.
 - No eating in the studio. Drinks must be in a closed container and stored properly.
 - Wear appropriate PPE; safety glasses, masks, gloves, aprons, and other gear as required.
 - Always wear closed-toe shoes, secure long hair, remove loose jewelry/headphones, avoid loose and revealing clothing. Non-compliance will result in being asked to leave for proper attire.
 - It is advised that you don't work alone; in case of an emergency, call [UTEP police \(747.5611\)](#).

disclaimer/blackboard:

Any changes to the syllabus will be communicated to students. Weekly updates and important information will be sent via Blackboard Announcements/email, and students are responsible for checking them regularly. Failure to check Blackboard/email is not an excuse for missing course information. All course Blackboard content is private and confidential and should not be shared or posted in any publicly accessible space (online/irl).

As an advanced student your toolbox should include the following:

- ◆ 6" Half-round #2 cut file with handle
- ◆ Jewelers saw frame, 4" or 5"
- ◆ Plier set: chain, round, flat nose
- ◆ Side cutter (sometimes included with plier sets) for cutting wire & solder
- ◆ 6" metal ruler
- ◆ Center punch
- ◆ Scribe
- ◆ Ring clamp

- ◆ Set of 6 assorted needle files, cut #2
- ◆ 6" steel tweezers with sharp non-serrated tip
- ◆ Assorted drill bits: #60, 55, 52 are good to have
- ◆ Saw blades: various sizes - #2/0, #4/0 are good to have
- ◆ Silver solder: Hard, Medium, and Easy (at least 1ft. each)
- ◆ Solder tins (mint tins)
- ◆ Solder pick
- ◆ Jar and small, soft paint brush for flux
- ◆ Wet/Dry Silica Carbide sandpaper (black color): #'s 220, 320, 400, 600
- ◆ Steel Wool: Grade #0000, fine
- ◆ Beeswax, old candle, or soap - for saw blade/drill bit lubrication

- ◆ Scissors & X-acto knife with replacement blades
- ◆ Masking/painters tape
- ◆ Rubber Cement
- ◆ Fine point & regular sharpie marker
- ◆ Sketchbook, tracing paper, cardstock
- ◆ Notebook/3-ring binder
- ◆ Safety glasses
- ◆ Hand towel, rag, or old t-shirt
- ◆ Small/Medium art supply/tool box
- ◆ Metal/Wire as needed for assignments
- ◆ Expect to replace expendables: sandpapers, blades, etc.

Optional items that are handy:

- ◆ Caliper
- ◆ Square
- ◆ Miter vise
- ◆ Dividers
- ◆ Shape templates

Materials and supplies will be required throughout the semester, with advance notice provided for specific projects and assignments. As an advanced student, it's recommended to maintain a stock of various metals (sheet, wire) for ongoing needs.

Tool Loan:

The Metals Program can provide tools for the semester, if available. Students are responsible for their care, tracking, and return in good condition. Lost or damaged tools must be replaced by the last class day at the student's expense. Failure to do so will result in an 'Incomplete' grade until replaced.

Communal tools, supplies, & studio intent:

When using a communal tool or supply, please help everyone maintain access by ALWAYS putting items back in the appropriate place. Please do not take studio tools home with you.

Studio/Lab UTEP Course Fee:

General studio expendables; general studio tool wear and replacement; sparex/pickling solution - post-soldering cleaning acid; gases used for soldering; materials/tools for student use

local suppliers:

- Perkins Jewelry Supply / 1124 E Yandell Dr. **10% student discount with ID
Open: Monday - Friday 10 am to 5 pm. Closed weekends. 915.533.6565
- Armor Metals / 9925 Carnegie * larger sheet metal
- Hobby Lobby, Michael's, Hal's Hobby Warehouse, Home Depot, Lowes, Ace Hardware

online suppliers:

- www.riogrande.com | www.ottofrei.com | www.contenti.com | www.allcraftusa.com

recommended (not required) books/resources:

- UTEP Library - There is an AMAZING selection of jewelry/metals books available!
- Online: www.artjewelryforum.org - large resource for contemporary jewelry books, articles, interviews, reviews, opportunities, etc.
- www.snagmetalsmith.org - Society of North American Goldsmiths

membership:

- SNAG - \$58/year student membership (includes digital & print *Metalsmith* subscription). THE organization for the field: Stay connected, learn of opportunities, network, conference discount, etc. *Discount when 4 or more students sign up.

ADDITIONAL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

COVID-19 HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION

UTEP COVID-19 information, including testing availability, can be found here:

<https://www.utep.edu/ehs/covid/>

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

The UTEP [Help Desk](#) is available to assist with technological needs of students: general troubleshooting, software resources, wifi hotspots, and possible laptop checkouts.

FOOD PANTRY

The UTEP Food Pantry offers support and assistance to students dealing with food insecurity. Food insecurity refers to having limited food available, including a reduction in the quality, safety or variety of food or ability to acquire food in a socially acceptable manner. Researchers have suggested that food insecurity is an issue that an estimated half of all college students struggle with. At UTEP, we recognize that food insecurity is an obstacle to student success and think it's crucial that students' basic needs are being met. The food pantry is located in Memorial Gym and is open to all currently enrolled students with a student ID.

<https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/foodpantry/>

MENTAL HEALTH

Counseling and Psychological Services provides a variety of services at UTEP that support students' ability to benefit from their experience: career counseling, psycho-educational workshops, individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, and professional training experiences. <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/>

Miners Talk Crisis Line: 915-747-5302

Togetherall: Online mental health support, anonymous & 24/7. [Register here.](#)

STUDENT SUCCESS RESOURCE HUB

For more resources UTEP offers for students to meet their goals, visit the link:

https://www.utep.edu/advising/student_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html

GO SEE SOME ART! But, where? Here's a few local ideas...

THE RUBIN CENTER

The Rubin Center for the Visual Arts is UTEP's contemporary art gallery; each semester, the Rubin features exhibitions of contemporary art by artists from around the world, working in diverse media. The Rubin also hosts family days, visiting artist workshops, public programs, and the annual student exhibition and biennial faculty exhibition for DoArt faculty. Every Rubin Center program and exhibition is free and open to the public. The Rubin also employs up to 10 paid student interns, most of whom are DoArt majors. The Rubin is located between Fox Fine Arts and the UTEP Miners' stadium, just beside the Sun Bowl Garage. Updates about exhibitions and programs can be found on the website: www.utep.edu/rubin or on the center's Instagram page @el.rubincenter. Paid student internships at the Rubin Center are posted on the university's Handshake page.

Hours are: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, 10 am to 5 pm

Thursday, 10 am to 7 pm

Saturday, 11 am to 3 pm (except on home football game days)

THE GLASS GALLERY

Our Department's gallery! Students can mount their own one/two week solo/group exhibitions during the fall/spring semesters. Pay attention to flyers in the halls for your peer's exhibition announcements too! Email the Gallery Coordinator Victor Muheddine for availability and booking: vmuheddine@utep.edu

EL PASO MUSEUM OF ART

<https://epma.art/> @elpasomuseumofart

MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER

<https://www.epmacc.org/> @elpasomacc

THE FALSTAFF

Arts complex – galleries, studios, events – located in central EP at 3801 Frutas Ave. Galleries include: La Mecha Contemporary @lamechacontemporary, Super Ultra Nova @super.ultra.nova, Zephyr Contemporary @zephyr_contemporary

GALERÍA CINCO PUNTOS

Small contemporary gallery in Five Points, 822 N. Piedras - @galeriacincopuntos

AZUL ARENA

Great contemporary art space in Ciudad Juárez, showcasing local and international artists. <https://www.azularena.org/> @azularena.jz

SAN LUIS CONTEMPORÁNEO

Contemporary arts and culture space in Ciudad Juárez – run by a former UTEP Metals alum! @sanluis.contemporaneo

EDIFICIO DE LOS SUEÑOS

Contemporary arts and culture space in Ciudad Juárez – @edificiodelosuenos

SP in Metals Syllabus Acknowledgement & Course Contract Acceptance

Please sign below if you acknowledge that you have received and read the syllabus. That you have had the opportunity to ask questions for clarification. That you understand and agree to the policies and criteria described and understand that if anything is subject to change you will be notified.

Name (print clearly): _____

Signature: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

What name you prefer to be called (nickname) / preferred pronouns:

Phone Number: _____

UTEP Email: _____

What are you excited to accomplish this semester in Metals? What are your goals?

What are your post-graduation plans?

How can I help and support you to achieve those goals/plans?