AEE 6540: Communication Theories and Strategies for Agriculture and Natural Resources

Summer A, 2013, 409 Rolfs Hall, section #014H
Time: M 9:30-12:15; W 9:30-10:45
Instructor: Dr. Tracy Irani
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Phone: 273-2588
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Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE GOAL: Effective communication is at the heart of successful operation in every enterprise in agricultural and natural resources-based industries. Whether communicating interpersonally, inter-organizationally or through the mass media, it is critically important to understand the communication process in order to achieve effective discourse on the major issues facing agricultural and natural resources industries.

This course is specifically designed to teach communication theory and concepts and research processes as they apply to important agricultural/natural resources issues. The major objective of the course is to enhance students' ability to think critically and to develop effective strategies and tactics that draw on the theoretical frameworks and methodologies that are most central to the communication process for agricultural communications professionals.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Following completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Understand the history and evolution of agricultural communications as a professional discipline;
- Analyze agricultural communication issues within the context of communication theory and research;
- Develop a strategic approach to communication research that is specifically related to agricultural communications media, audiences and organizational systems.

COURSE OVERVIEW: The instructor will use a combination of lecture and online discussion to illuminate the major themes of the course. Course contextual examples will be drawn from the web, YouTube, and online media sources. Students will have the opportunity to discuss theory related to the course concepts, and to develop a conference quality research paper based on concepts they have learned. As a class we will focus our discussion of relevant theories and strategies on current agricultural/natural resources based issues. Using the Sakai online discussion forum, students will read lecture material, then post responses to questions and comments that illustrate the theoretical and strategic frameworks discussed in class and in the readings for the course.
**TEXTBOOKS:**

**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>930 – 1000 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>900 – 929 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>860 – 899 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>830 – 859 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>800 – 829 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>760 – 799 points</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>730 – 759 points</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>700 – 729 points</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>660 – 699 points</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>630 – 659 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>600 – 629 points</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>599 points and below</td>
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**UF grading policies:** For information about UF grades and grading policies, including the new minus grades, please visit [http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html](http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html).

**Brief description of assignments:**

**Research paper:** The goal of this assignment is to develop a conference quality research paper on an ag related issues based research study topic using one of the instructor supplied data sets. Students will work in pairs to develop the research paper according to the guidelines for a conference our journal to which they plan to submit the paper. (Students will need to attach the conference paper guidelines to the final draft of the paper). The research paper should include abstract, introduction/theoretical framework, purpose and objectives, methods, results, and discussion/conclusions/recommendations, drawing on theories presented in this class to establish a theoretical framework. The goal of this project is to help you develop a publishable research product that would contribute to the understanding of the human dimensions of ag and natural resources issues. During class, we’ll discuss potential ideas for each of your projects, facilitated by the readings and the lecture material. Your team will need to schedule a meeting with the instructor to discuss ideas for the paper during weeks two-three of the course, and will submit a rough draft for instructor review. Final drafts will be due at end of semester.

**Worth:**

- Rough draft: 20%
- Final draft: 40%

**Weekly online discussion** – There will be a series of discussion questions based on course material at the end of each week’s lecture. Students should post their responses to the corresponding weekly discussion forum in Sakai and comment each week on at least one other student’s post. To achieve full points, students should expect to post more than the minimal numbers of items each week, and to provide quality reflective responses. The instructor will not answer each individual post, but will provide discussion feedback, summarize discussion points and prompt class response with additional questions. Plan to post your responses early in the week (discussion weeks begin each Monday).

**Deadline for initial posting is Friday of each week; plan to check the forum to provide**
follow up responses Friday-Sunday. Each discussion posting week ends Monday by 11:59 p.m.  
Worth: 30%

**Speed read a colleague’s personality type:** You will have the opportunity to put the MBTI into action through speed reading a colleague’s personality type and then determining how best to communicate to this colleague. Details on assignment requirements are in the “course Introduction” file in Sakai.  
Worth: 10%

**Lateness of assignments:** As this is a graduate level class, your discussion and analysis is a primary component of the class. Late assignments will not be accepted. Please get in touch with instructor if you have extenuating circumstances that need to be discussed.

**University Policies**

**Accountability to Academic Honesty**
The University of Florida requires all members of its community to be honest in all their endeavors. Students are required to commit themselves to academic honesty by signing a prescribed basic statement, including the Student Honor Code, as part of the registration process. A fundamental principle is that the whole process of learning and pursuit of knowledge are diminished by cheating, plagiarism, and other acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, every dishonest act in the academic environment affects other students adversely, from the skewing of the grading curve to giving unfair advantage for honors or for professional or graduate school admission. Therefore, the University will take severe action against dishonest students. Similarly, measures will be taken against faculty, staff, and administration members who practice dishonest or demeaning behavior.

Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Code of Conduct. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1-4.017).

**UF Honor Code**

Upon admission to the University of Florida, you agreed to abide by the following Honor Code:

> We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” Students will be given templates to report on and analyze one of seven issues:

**This includes plagiarism, shared work, and documentation of references used on all assignments submitted. We expect you to uphold this code. If you have questions as to what dictates plagiarism, please see the instructors.**

For more information regarding your rights as a student, please visit:  

**Special Accommodations and Medical Disabilities**
Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (P202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261), which will provide necessary documentation to provide to your instructor. **You must provide this documentation to the instructor by Monday, January 11.** Students with recurring medical disabilities that may impede your ability to attend class must provide the instructor with a letter from a doctor by this date.

**Special Circumstances – Incomplete (I)**
An incomplete (I) will only be granted in the case of documented, long-term, serious illness or other extenuating circumstances. Students taking too many courses or other “more difficult” courses and putting effort into those rather than AEC 4905 will NOT be granted an Incomplete. Students requesting an “I” must bring their situation to the instructor’s attention **10 days before the last class.** Incompletes must be rectified the next semester the class is offered.

**Counseling**
Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals which interfere with their academic performance. These resources include: (1) University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling; (2) Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling; (3) Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling; and (4) Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

**Software Use**
All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.
COURSE SCHEDULE: Please note, in order to insure fruitful and productive class discussion, assigned readings are to be completed in advance of the class where they are listed.

Week 1 –
Week of 5/13-15

Lecture material:
- Course Introduction
- Communication theory and models.
- Personality type – individual cognitive influences on communications

Ag communications as a profession and discipline. The nature and value of theory. How we develop and apply theories of communication to ag communications. Major communication models.
Readings: Stone, ch. 1, 2, 4, 6 & 7

Dr. Ricky Telg will be administering the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) on first day of class and will provide results on Wednesday.

Week 2 –
Week of 5/20-22

Lecture material:
- When a Plan Comes Together

Models of PR. Gatekeeping, crisis and issues management, attitudes and Elaboration Likelihood Model.
Readings: Stone, ch. 20-22

Dr. Angie Lindsey will be our guest on Monday to lead class discussion on issues management, crisis communications and community outreach methods.

Assignment: Speed read personality type due Friday, May 24

Week 2 –
Week of 5/27-29

No class Monday

Lecture material:
- Tools of the Trade

Human social communications processes. Credibility and trust. Communication research methods
Readings: Stone, ch. 8-13; 33-36.

Week 4 –
Week of 6/3-5

Lecture material:

- Getting News in the News

Agenda setting and the media. The issue-attention cycle and public opinion. Framing and social cognition.
Readings: Stone, Ch. 26, 28, 31

Assignment: Research paper rough draft up to analysis due Friday, June 3

Dr. Joy Goodwin will be our guest on Monday to lead our discussion of agenda setting and framing and teach us how to content analyze using Weft –QDA.
Special note: We will be learning content analysis using the Weft –QDA software system on Monday. If you have a PC laptop, download as shareware and bring to class.

Week 5 –
Week of 6/10-12 ONLINE ONLY

Lecture material:

- The Medium is the Message
  McLuhan, uses and gratifications, knowledge gap.
Readings: Stone, ch. 5, 23-25 & 27

Week 6 --
Week of 6/17-19

Lecture material:

- Seeds of Change
Readings: Stone, ch. 16, 18, 19, 29

Dr. Quisto Settle will be our guest on Monday to lead our discussion of branding, diffusion and communications methods and strategies.

Assignment: Research paper final draft due last day of class; paper presentations last day of class
OUTSIDE READINGS


