

**AEC4031**  
**The Communication Process in Agricultural and Life Sciences**  
Time: Thursday 1:55-4:55  
Location: Little Hall 125  
Fall 2024, 3 Credits

**Instructor**

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Assistant Professor  
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**Instructor Office Hours**

Thursday, 9:00 am – 11:00 am or by appointment  
117A Bryant Space Science Center

**Teaching Assistant**

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office hours by appointment

**Course Format**

This is an in-person course. Students are expected to attend all class sessions unless otherwise excused.

**Course Description**

Effective communication is at the heart of a successful operation in every enterprise in agricultural and natural resource-based industries. This course is designed to teach communication concepts and the knowledge of how to apply those concepts in the workplace. This writing course prepares students to effectively present extended analyses and sophisticated ideas (more information at <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-courses/structure-of-wr-courses/wr-course-guidelines/>).

**Course Pre-Requisites / Co-Requisites**

None

**Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)**

To be successful in your career, you need to be able to get what's in your head onto paper in a compelling and persuasive manner. Following completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Select topics
2. Develop hard news articles, press releases, and feature stories
3. Effectively structure your thoughts in writing
4. Write with your audience, purpose and context in mind
5. Maintain fairness
6. Interview information sources
7. Analyze and edit your own work and the work of others
8. Recognize and attend to the unique challenges of science writing
9. Communicate using accepted conventions of standard written English

Course objectives include general education objectives as detailed at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-programs/general-education/#objectivesandoutcomestext>

**Writing Requirement**

As a general education writing requirement, students will write at least 6000 words in this course. The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

To facilitate writing improvement throughout the course, prompt feedback will be provided on all assignments, and all feedback will be provided before the end of the semester. Feedback will include comments and instruction on grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. Writing assessment rubrics are provided in Canvas by assignment.

## Grading

Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments must be typed and submitted in the required format to receive full credit.

*Late submissions:* Unless otherwise stated or agreed upon, late submissions will be penalized as follows

-10% if between 1 minute and 24 hours late

-20% if 24 to 48 hours late

-30% if 48 to 72 hours late

Not accepted if more than 72 hours late

## Grading scale

Percent	Grade
93 - 100	A
90 - 92	A-
87 - 89	B+
83 - 86	B
80 - 82	B-
77 - 79	C+
73 - 76	C
70 - 72	C-
67 - 69	D+
63 - 66	D
60 - 62	D-
0 - 59	E

For information on current UF policies for assigning grade points, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

## Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments:

Week	Date	Topic	Assignments Due
1	Aug 22	Introduction	
2	Aug 29	News writing	Topic selection
3	Sept 5	Evidence and sources	Hard news planning, part 1
4	Sept 12	Headlines, leads, and the rest	Hard news planning, part 2
5	Sept 19	Press releases	Hard news article
6	Sept 26	Wordsmithing and editing 1	Press release planning
7	Oct 3	AP Style	<i>Rewrite:</i> Hard news article
8	Oct 10	Feature writing part 1	Press release
9	Oct 17	Interviews	Feature planning
10	Oct 24	Feature writing part 2	Interview prep for feature article 2 <i>Rewrite:</i> Press release
11	Oct 31	Wordsmithing and editing 2	Feature article 1: Issue
12	Nov 7	<b>No class</b>	
13	Nov 14	Bias and fairness	Interview recording
14	Nov 21	Wrap up	Feature article 2: Person profile
15	Nov 28	<b>Thanksgiving, No class</b>	<i>Rewrite:</i> Feature article 1
16	Dec 5	<b>Reading day, No class</b>	<i>Rewrite:</i> Feature article 2

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Percentage of Final Grade</b>
Topic selection	5%
Hard news article	10%
Press release	10%
Interview recording	10%
Feature article 1: Issue	10%
Feature article 2: Person profile	10%
Planning assignments (4)	20%
Attendance, participation, and reading quizzes	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **Assignments**

*Topic selection.* In this assignment you will select an agriculture, natural resources, or science topic that you will use in each of your writing assignments.

*News planning.* In this assignment you will develop a plan to guide your writing for the hard news assignment that follows. You will identify a newsworthy topic and audience, then research the five Ws and one H. Approximate words: 500. SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10

*Hard news assignment.* Using the information assembled in the previous assignment and additional research, you will develop a hard news story. The story will must follow the inverted pyramid structure. Approximate words: 500. SLOs: 2, 3, 6, 8, 9

*Press planning.* In preparation for your press release assignment, you select a topic and gather necessary information. Approximate words: 500. SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9

*Press release.* In this assignment, you will prepare a press release to draw media attention to an organization of your choosing. Press release formatting must be used, along with the inverted pyramid structure. Approximate words: 500. SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9

*Feature planning.* This assignment begins your planning for two feature stories. You will select topics, conduct research, and plan your story structure. Approximate words: 500. SLOs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9

*Interview prep for feature article 2.* In preparation for your feature assignment, you must develop interview questions for your potential sources. Approximate words: 300. SLOs: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9

*Interview recording.* You will submit a recording of your interview. SLOs: 2, 5, 6, 8

*Feature article 1: Issue.* In this assignment, you will write a feature-style story on an issue. Approximate words: 900. SLOs: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

*Feature article 2: Person profile.* In this assignment, you will write a feature-style story on the person you interviewed. Approximate words: 900. SLOs: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9

*Attendance, participation, and reading quizzes.*

*You will receive a daily grade based on your attendance, participation, attentiveness, and a reading quiz. The lowest two daily grades will be dropped. If you have excused absence beyond the two drops, you may write a one-page single-spaced reflection paper on the course content for the missed day for a chance at full points (due before next class period).*

## **Rewrites**

You will have the opportunity to resubmit the four largest assignments (hard news article, press release, and feature articles) to regain 50% of the points deducted in the original submission.

## Use of Artificial Intelligence

If you are suspected of using artificial intelligence (including but not limited to Chat GPT) without permission, your grade could be penalized up to 100%. Exception: Use of [Grammarly](#) is permitted and encouraged.

## Attendance and Participation

*Attendance:* You are expected to attend all classes unless otherwise excused. Excused absences must be consistent with university policies in the Graduate Catalog (<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#attendance>) and require appropriate documentation. Additional information can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

*Participation:* You are expected to fully engage in all lectures and stay current with assigned readings. Active participation means asking relevant questions, sharing appropriate examples that help illustrate concepts, and engaging in a professional manner.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

## Writing Studio

The Writing Studio (<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>) is committed to helping University of Florida students and faculty meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. We support independent learning and encourage scholarship by providing one-on-one consultations, workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate), and faculty retreats focusing on publishing original research.

## Online Course Evaluation Process

Student assessment of instruction is an important part of efforts to improve teaching and learning. At the end of the semester, students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course using a standard set of university and college criteria. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at: <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at: <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## Academic Honesty

As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "*We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.*" You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "*On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.*"

It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g., assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information regarding the Student Honor Code, please see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>.

## Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class content. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **Software Use**

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the 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.

### **Services for Students with Disabilities**

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation: 0001 Reid Hall, 352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

### **Campus Helping Resources**

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. The Counseling & Wellness Center provides confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance.

- University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road, 352-392-1575, [www.counseling.ufl.edu](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu)  
Counseling Services  
Groups and Workshops  
Outreach and Consultation  
Self-Help Library  
Wellness Coaching
- U Matter We Care, [www.umatter.ufl.edu/](http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/)
- *Career Connections Center*, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, <https://career.ufl.edu/>.

Student Complaints:

- Residential Course: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-studentconduct-code/>
- Online Course: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>