

Communication Practices for Agricultural and Life Sciences

AEC 4035

Fall 2025 3 credit hours

# Instructor

Troy Tarpley, Ph.D.

Instructional Assistant Professor

Email: [ttarpley@ufl.edu](mailto:ttarpley@ufl.edu)

Office location: 121 Bryant Space Science Center

Office hours: Mondays 9 to 10 a.m. & Tuesday 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Students can use [Teams](https://outlook.office.com/bookwithme/user/39bc1a04a6444dd8b90e9455b6a61a4c@ufl.edu/meetingtype/LyhBH-OXD0eI1P7gP80Yeg2?anonymous&ep=mlink) to schedule a time to meet with Dr. Tarpley.

# Teaching Assistant

Caroline Barnett

Email: carolinepbarnett@ufl.edu

Office hours: By appointment

# Class Times Location

Monday: Periods 7-8 (1:55-3:50 PM) Bryant 107

# Course Description

This course is designed to expose students to a variety of writing, multimedia, hardware, and software for assignments that mimic the “real world” of agricultural communication. The goal is to broaden your experience and move you as close as possible to the professional level by stretching you to learn more and apply yourself. This course will build on skills and knowledge gained in AEC 4031 and AEC 3070.

# Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to:  
1. Write effectively in business, promotional, and informational contexts  
2. Effectively edit written material  
3. Communicate information tailored to the needs and expectations of target audiences  
4. Layout and design print and digital materials based on the principles of design  
5. Use industry-standard software to create print and digital materials

# Instructor Team Communication & Feedback

**Communication**  
The instructor and graders are committed to responding to messages sent via Canvas or email within 24 hours during the work week (Monday through Friday), excluding holidays. Major assignments will be graded within one week of submission, accompanied by meaningful and constructive feedback.

**Individual Learner Interaction**  
Education is more than the transmission of knowledge—it is a dynamic process that includes personalized feedback and ongoing communication. The instructor is dedicated to engaging with each student individually. This interaction may take the form of detailed feedback on assignments, responses to discussion board posts, or personalized messages via Canvas to support and monitor student progress.

**Office Hours**  
Dr. Tarpley holds weekly office hours both in-person and via Teams on Mondays from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. and Tuesdays from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Students may also schedule appointments through Teams. But what are office hours, exactly? They are designated times each week when students are encouraged to drop in—physically or virtually—to connect with Dr. Tarpley. Whether you have questions about course content, assignments, or simply want to chat and build rapport, these hours are reserved for you. Dr. Tarpley strongly encourages students to take advantage of office hours as a valuable opportunity for academic support and personal connection.

# Requirements

## Textbook:

Students are expected to purchase the text online via Perusall, an online platform that we will utilize to not only read the text but also annotate together as a class. Texts acquired from sources other than Perusall will not be eligible for use within the platform. For more information, please review the Perusall Information page within Canvas.

* Olson, R. Houston, We Have a Narrative: Why Science Needs Story.
* University of Chicago Press
* $22.99 USD | Perpetual online access
* $19.71 USD | 180-day online access

## Technology:

To succeed in this course, you must have access to the following technology:

* Adobe
  + This includes Reader and the Creative Suite (Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign, and Express)
  + [Acrobat tutorials](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fhelpx.adobe.com%2Facrobat%2Ftutorials.html&data=05%7C01%7Cbrooke.brammer%40ufl.edu%7Cfa687a99f8814d9457ff08db03a74f10%7C0d4da0f84a314d76ace60a62331e1b84%7C0%7C0%7C638107789339169026%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=hZA7%2FIKCV%2BzbSPu2MjomDnxCbI5usbBdV2%2FMV9lzRso%3D&reserved=0)
  + [Adobe Privacy Statement](https://www.adobe.com/privacy/policy.html)
  + [Adobe Accessibility Statement](https://www.adobe.com/trust/accessibility.html)
* Desktop Computer or Laptop
* Audio Capabilities
* Webcam and Microphone for synchronous sessions
* Microsoft Office Programs
  + [Microsoft Privacy Statement](https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-us/privacystatement)
  + [Microsoft Accessibility Information](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/trust-center/compliance/accessibility)
  + Word - [Microsoft 365 basics video training](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsupport.microsoft.com%2Fen-us%2Foffice%2Fmicrosoft-365-basics-video-training-396b8d9e-e118-42d0-8a0d-87d1f2f055fb&data=05%7C01%7Cbrooke.brammer%40ufl.edu%7Cfa687a99f8814d9457ff08db03a74f10%7C0d4da0f84a314d76ace60a62331e1b84%7C0%7C0%7C638107789339169026%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=TLW6NUAxqahJlebtSJzmI6gGZFi5bvKksQmj7nOsgPA%3D&reserved=0)
* Adobe Reader
  + [Acrobat tutorials](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fhelpx.adobe.com%2Facrobat%2Ftutorials.html&data=05%7C01%7Cbrooke.brammer%40ufl.edu%7Cfa687a99f8814d9457ff08db03a74f10%7C0d4da0f84a314d76ace60a62331e1b84%7C0%7C0%7C638107789339169026%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=hZA7%2FIKCV%2BzbSPu2MjomDnxCbI5usbBdV2%2FMV9lzRso%3D&reserved=0)
  + [Adobe Privacy Statement](https://www.adobe.com/privacy/policy.html)
  + [Adobe Accessibility Statement](https://www.adobe.com/trust/accessibility.html)
* Zoom
  + [Zoom Privacy Policy](https://explore.zoom.us/en/privacy/)
  + [Zoom Accessibility Information](https://explore.zoom.us/en/accessibility/)
* Internet Connection with access to Canvas
* Canvas is the course management system at the University of Florida in which students will find course content, links to video lectures, assignments, quizzes, discussions, and grades. The use of this system will vary by instructor, but the following videos describe the most common tools in Canvas. The [full student guide](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcommunity.canvaslms.com%2Ft5%2FStudent-Guide%2Ftkb-p%2Fstudent&data=05%7C01%7Cbrooke.brammer%40ufl.edu%7Cfa687a99f8814d9457ff08db03a74f10%7C0d4da0f84a314d76ace60a62331e1b84%7C0%7C0%7C638107789339325259%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=584OMZNA3VDOhfbJir6w2cQXUz118ncUvLFwjg063fw%3D&reserved=0) is provided if you have additional questions.
* [Canvas Privacy Policy](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.canvaslms.com%2Fpolicies%2Fprivacy&data=05%7C01%7Cbrooke.brammer%40ufl.edu%7Cfa687a99f8814d9457ff08db03a74f10%7C0d4da0f84a314d76ace60a62331e1b84%7C0%7C0%7C638107789339325259%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=MZOYIJ9jHRaqebfqNW15YE%2F6T%2Biy6S6znresFJaVMrQ%3D&reserved=0)
* [Canvas Accessibility Standards](https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Basics-Guide/What-are-the-Canvas-accessibility-standards/ta-p/1564)
* **Web Browser - Chrome** is the preferred browser for Canvas. If you do not have Chrome, you can [download it.](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3D%26esrc%3Ds%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D2%26cad%3Drja%26uact%3D8%26sqi%3D2%26ved%3D0CDYQjBAwAQ%26url%3Dhttps%253A%252F%252Fsupport.google.com%252Fchrome%252Fanswer%252F95346%253Fhl%253Den%26ei%3D16T0U_61AZWAygT1vYHoAQ%26usg%3DAFQjCNHFiowHAaPSkTUo-EyAOIeZWDPSCw%26sig2%3DulcujkhFWJawLyO6J0SvpA%26bvm%3Dbv.73231344%2Cd.aWw&data=05%7C01%7Cbrooke.brammer%40ufl.edu%7Cfa687a99f8814d9457ff08db03a74f10%7C0d4da0f84a314d76ace60a62331e1b84%7C0%7C0%7C638107789339325259%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=NJn3IJOjWwtZLgxmHrwwCiuh0EKyquERtWcT9Vs%2FKus%3D&reserved=0)
* University of Florida Email
* Students are expected to check their my.ufl emails daily. View the [Student Computing Requirements](https://it.ufl.edu/policies/student-computing-requirements/) page for information on technology requirements and expectations.

## Prerequisite Knowledge:

Prerequisites include content from AEC 3070C and AEC 3071/JOU 3101.

## Expectations for Writing:

In all courses in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication’s Communication and Leadership Development (CLD) specialization, the following **writing** **standards** are expected to be followed, unless otherwise specified for a particular writing assignment. Not following these writing standards will result in substantially lower grades on writing assignments.

* Proper grammar and punctuation are mandatory.
* Proper sentence structure is required. This means…
  + Not using “tweet-talk” in your assignments.
  + Making sure that your sentences have a subject, verb, and (when needed) an object.
  + Not having sentence fragments.
  + And anything else that would pertain to “proper sentence structure.”
* Good thoughts/content throughout the writing assignment.
* For assignments that require citations, use American Psychological Association style. Proper APA citation and reference document is expected.
* For assignments that are more reporter-style articles (news stories, news releases, public relations writing), you are expected to follow Associated Press Style, as discussed in AEC 4031.

## Expected Technical & Digital Literacy Skills:

Minimum skills required:

* Proficiency in utilizing Canvas and navigating the internet effectively.
* Competence in using email for communication purposes, including sending and receiving messages and managing attachments.
* Familiarity with commonly used word processing applications (such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs), including the ability to create, edit, and format documents.
* Basic computer skills, including understanding fundamental operations like file management, using menus and toolbars, and navigating between different applications.
* Using online search tools for specific academic purposes, including the ability to use search criteria, keywords, and filters.
* Analyzing digital information for credibility, currency, and bias.

## Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) Use:

**Use of AI Tools Policy**

As many of us have had the opportunity to explore new AI tools like ChatGPT, they can be incredibly helpful, much like a calculator is for math classes. These tools are best used for idea generation, essentializing, and gathering information about common understandings of a topic. However, it is essential that you guide, verify, and craft your ultimate answers. Please do not simply cut and paste without understanding the content. Let's leverage these tools as extensions of our knowledge to enhance their power.

**Guidelines for Using AI Tools:**

1. **Original Work**: All assignments should be your own original work, created specifically for this class. The submission of AI-generated answers constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of UF's student code of conduct. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or academic dishonesty more in class.
2. **Credit and Documentation**: When using AI tools for assignments, you must:
   * Add an appendix showing:
     + (a) The entire exchange with the AI tool, highlighting the most relevant sections.
     + (b) A description of precisely which AI tools were used (e.g., ChatGPT private subscription version or DALL-E free version).
     + (c) An explanation of how the AI tools were used (e.g., to generate ideas, turns of phrase, elements of text, long stretches of text, lines of argument, pieces of evidence, maps of conceptual territory, illustrations of key concepts, etc.).
     + (d) An account of why AI tools were used (e.g., to save time, to surmount writer’s block, to stimulate thinking, to handle mounting stress, to clarify prose, to translate text, to experiment for fun, etc.).
3. **Examinations and In-Class Assignments**: AI tools are not to be used during in-class examinations or assignments unless explicitly permitted and instructed.
4. **Originality Checks**: Employ AI detection tools and originality checks prior to submission to ensure that your work is not mistakenly flagged.
5. **Wise Use**: Use AI tools wisely and intelligently, aiming to deepen your understanding of the subject matter and to support your learning.
6. **Communication**: If you have any questions or concerns about using AI tools, please reach out to me. Your proactive communication is key to managing your coursework effectively.

By following these guidelines, we can ensure that AI tools are used ethically and effectively to enhance our learning experience.

# Assignments

## Last Assignment Policy:

Assignments are expected to be submitted by the due date specified in the syllabus. To encourage timely submissions and fairness, the following policy will be enforced:

1. **Late Penalty**: Assignments submitted after the due date will incur a penalty of 10% off the total grade for each day they are late. For example, an assignment that is one day late will receive a 10% deduction, two days late will receive a 20% deduction, and so on.
2. **Communication**: If you anticipate that you will not be able to submit an assignment on time, it is crucial that you reach out to me **before the due date**. By informing me in advance, we may be able to discuss your situation and potentially work out an alternative arrangement. This policy is in place to support you and ensure that any issues can be addressed proactively.
3. **Exceptions**: Extensions or exceptions to the late penalty may be granted in cases of documented emergencies or other extenuating circumstances. However, these will only be considered if you have communicated with me prior to the assignment's due date.
4. **Maximum Late Period**: Assignments will not be accepted if they are more than seven days late, unless prior arrangements have been made.

Please make every effort to submit your assignments on time and communicate any issues as early as possible. Your proactive communication is key to managing your coursework effectively.

## Assignment Points & Explanation:

### Discussion Board

Throughout the semester there will be seven discussion boards. Please refer to Canvas for more information about the requirements and specific topics.

### Perusall Readings

Perusal Readings are assigned throughout the semester for our course textbook, *Houston We Have a Narrative* Please review the requirements on Canvas.

### Topic Selection

For this assignment, you will pitch a topic or beat in the agricultural or natural resources field that you are passionate about and will explore throughout the course. Your pitch should include the people you plan to interview, the unique angle or spin you’ll bring to your project, and a clear description of your target audience. Additionally, outline the story elements, identify the problem or complication that will drive the narrative, and propose a timeline with key milestones.

### Interview Contact & Question Guide

In this assignment, you will email the expert(s) you selected in your Topic Selection to schedule an interview and photo shoot for your photo essay and print piece. You will create an interview question guide based on your background research and use it to conduct the interview. Additionally, you will brainstorm photo ideas to accompany your stories, document your expert's response, and submit all required elements in a Word document.

### Writing Drafts (Adobe Express Page / Adobe InDesign-Print Piece)

This assignment involves creating a feature story about an ANR (Agriculture and Natural Resources) topic in two different formats: an online Adobe Express page and a print piece using Adobe InDesign. Your final Adobe Express and InDesign projects are due at the end of the semester.

### Adobe Illustrator Design

In this assignment, you will create an original design in Adobe Illustrator to accompany a written story on Adobe Spark, emphasizing the integration of visual and textual elements. Through brainstorming, concept development, and execution, you will refine essential design skills, learning to produce high-quality, vector-based graphics that communicate complex ideas effectively. Success will be measured by originality, technical accuracy, relevance, and overall quality.

### Adobe Express Page Draft & Final

In this assignment, you will create a draft of an Adobe Express web page to showcase your chosen topic through a blend of written narratives and relevant photos. You will focus on developing storytelling and visual design skills by integrating multimedia elements effectively. Once your draft is complete, it will be submitted for peer-review. Then you will review and revise it for coherence and accuracy before submitting a published link for evaluation.

### Adobe InDesign Print Draft & Final

In this assignment, you will create a draft of a two-page Adobe InDesign print piece to showcase the stories of influential scientists, combining written narratives with photos to highlight their contributions. You’ll develop skills in storytelling, visual design, and multimedia integration while learning to create cohesive and engaging layouts. Once your draft is complete, it will be submitted for peer-review. After drafting and revising your piece, you will submit a packaged file, including the .indd file and a PDF, for evaluation.

### Final Presentation

This assignment is designed to showcase your semester-long journey of exploration and discovery through a final presentation of your photo essays and InDesign layout. You will demonstrate your understanding of your chosen expert, delve into your ANR topic, and highlight the skills you've developed in science communication, writing, and design. The tasks involve preparing a verbal and visual presentation, designing it for impact, and rehearsing for a polished delivery.

## Course Grading:

**Assignment Weight (%)**

Discussion Boards 10

*Class Introduction*

*Photoshop Ethics Statement*

*The Dangers of a Single Story*

*Should We Be Storytellers?*

*Community Inspiration*

*Design Spotlight: Analyzing Typography, Grids, and Alignment*

Readings 5

*I. Introduction-Houston, We Have a Narrative*

*II. Thesis- Houston, We Have a Narrative*

*III. Antithesis Chapter 5- Houston, We Have a Narrative*

*III. Antithesis Chapter 6- Houston, We Have a Narrative*

*III. Antithesis Chapter 7- Houston, We Have a Narrative*

*III. Antithesis Chapters 8-10- Houston, We Have a Narrative*

*IV. Synthesis Chapter 11 & 12- Houston, We Have a Narrative*

*IV. Synthesis Chapter 13 & 14- Houston, We Have a Narrative*

Assignments 15

Topic Selection

Drafts 20

Copy and photos of online feature

Copy and photos (cover, and two editorials) for print teaser

Adobe InDesign-Print Piece

Adobe Express- Online Feature

Final 30

Final Adobe InDesign-Print Piece

Final Adobe Express Page

Final Presentation

Participation 20

Fieldwork Day #1

Fieldwork Day #2

Fieldwork Day #3

Class Participation

### Grading Scale

| A = 93-100% | C+ = 76 – 79.99% | F = Below 60% |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A- = 90 – 92.99% | C = 73 – 75.99% |  |
| B+ = 86 – 89.99% | C- = 70 – 72.99% |  |
| B = 83 – 85.99% | D+ = 66 – 69.99% |  |
| B- = 80 – 82.99% | D = 63 – 65.99% |  |
|  | D- = 60 – 62.99% |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week | Class Meeting | Topic (In Person) | Topic (Online) | Assigned (Due Date) |
| 1 |  | Course Introduction |  | Class Introduction Discussion Board (8/24/25)  Perusall Tutorial (8/24/25)  I. Introduction-Houston, We Have a Narrative (8/24/25) |
| 2 | 8/25/25 | Interviewing & Reporting | Topic | Photoshop Ethics Statement (8/31/25)  II. Thesis- Houston, We Have a Narrative (8/31/25)  Topic Selection & Interview Guide (8/31/25) |
| 3 | 9/1/25 | Gear & Photography |  | The Dangers of a Single Story (9/7/25) |
| 4 | 9/8/25 | Fieldwork #1 |  | Should We Be Storytellers? (9/14/25) |
| 5 | 9/15/25 | Field Work #2 |  | III. Antithesis Chapter 5- Houston, We Have a Narrative |
| 6 | 9/22/25 | Writing Workflow |  | III. Antithesis Chapter 6- Houston, We Have a Narrative  Draft: Copy and Photos for Online Story (10/12/25)  Draft: Copy and Photos for Print Piece (10/12/25) |
| 7 | 9/29/25 | Writing Feature Stories |  | III. Antithesis Chapter 7- Houston, We Have a Narrative |
| 8 | 10/6/25 | Crafting Captions |  | III. Antithesis Chapters 8-10- Houston, We Have a Narrative |
| 9 | 10/13/25 | Fieldwork #3 |  | IV. Synthesis Chapter 11 & 12- Houston, We Have a Narrative |
| 10 | 10/20/25 | Grids & Layouts |  | IV. Synthesis Chapter 13 & 14- Houston, We Have a Narrative  Draft: Adobe InDesign-Print Piece (11/2/25)  Draft: Adobe Express-Online Feature (11/2/25) |
| 11 | 11/3/25 | Cultivating Creativity |  | Community Inspiration (11/9/25) |
| 12 | 11/10/25 | Working with Layouts |  | Design Spotlight: Analyzing Typography, Grids, and Alignment (11/16/25) |
| 13 | 11/17/25 | Print Shop Tour |  | Final Presentations (12/1/25)  Final Adobe InDesign-Print Piece (11/23/25)  Final Adobe Express Page (11/23/25) |
| 14 | 11/24/25 | Fall Break |  |  |
| 15 | 12/1/25 | Final Presentations |  |  |

## Reading & Assignment Schedule:

Instructional materials for this course consist of only those materials specifically reviewed, selected, and assigned by the instructor(s). The instructor(s) is only responsible for these instructional materials.

Please note that the course schedule and syllabus are subject to change. The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus, including assignment due dates and course content, as deemed necessary. Any changes will be communicated promptly to ensure you have adequate time to adjust.

# University-Wide Policies and Student Support Services

As part of the updated University of Florida Syllabus Policy, this course syllabus refers students to a central online resource that contains the most current university-wide academic policies and student support services. Using this shared link helps ensure that all students receive accurate, consistent, and up-to-date information.

Students are expected to visit and review the centralized UF Syllabus Policy page at: [UF Syllabus Policy Link](https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/). Throughout the term, students are strongly encouraged to return to this page regularly to stay updated on important university expectations and explore available resources. The page includes information on topics such as:

**Academic Policies**

* Attendance requirements and make-up work procedures
* Academic accommodations for students with disabilities
* Grading standards and grade point policies
* Course evaluation instructions and portals
* Student Honor Code and University Honesty Policy
* Guidelines governing the recording and use of class lectures

**Academic Resources**

* E-learning support and technology assistance
* Career and counseling services (Career Connections Center)
* Library access and help services
* Study skills support and tutoring (Teaching Center)
* Writing support (Writing Studio)
* Complaint procedures and academic grievance resources
* UF Student Success Initiative resources

**Campus Health & Wellness**

* Physical, mental, and emotional health services
* Safety and support programs
* UF Whole Gator wellness tools