

**AEC 4932: Effectively Communicating Agricultural and
Life Sciences Policy Issues (3 credits)**
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Life Sciences Policy Issues (3 credits)**
Spring 2021

INSTRUCTORS:

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CLASS MEETS in 107 Bryant Space Science Center (Mac Lab) and via Zoom (students should stick with the section they registered in for class attendance). Class meets weekly on Friday mornings (Second and Third period, 8:30-10:25).

COURSE OUTLINE AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION: The course is designed to educate students about major policy issues in agricultural and life sciences (ALS) and to expose students to a variety of methods used to effectively communicate, inform, and influence decisions about these issues. All discussions and activities are planned to involve you in "real world" ways.

READINGS: *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy Making Process* (5th Edition) by Catherine F. Smith

OBJECTIVES: After this course, the student will be able to:

- Recognize and analyze topical policy issues in agricultural and life sciences and facilitate consensus building and conflict management.
- Develop messages to communicate about topical policy issues in agricultural and life sciences using appropriate multimedia and social media.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

- *Message Box, Communication Points, & Storytelling:* In preparation for the *Issues Presentations and One-Pager* assignment, students will complete the handouts provided in class to help them develop their “issues” assignment.
- *Issue Presentations and One-Pager:* Students will select an agricultural and life sciences policy issue. Students will create a one-pager, based on instructions provided in class, as a “leave-behind” on the agricultural or life sciences policy or issue that the student selects to analyze. Students will present their one-pager as they would to a policymaker or leader in a one-on-one setting. Students will have the opportunity to revise their one-pager and presentation and do a second submission later in the semester.
- *Reflections (3) and Participation:* Students will provide three thoughtful reflection on guest speakers and/or overall topics. Students also will be assessed on their participation in class and during their interactions with speakers. It is expected that students take notes and interact with guest speakers.
- *Quizzes (5):* There will be five quizzes on the assigned readings and course materials. These will be due **prior** to class every other week. A sixth quiz will be conducted near the end of the semester; students will be able to make up one quiz by taking the sixth quiz OR drop their lowest quiz grade.
- **GRADUATE/HONORS STUDENTS:** *Interview with a Political Leader/Communicator:* Students will identify a Political Leader/Communicator with whom to conduct an interview via Zoom. A list of suggested questions will be provided. Students will supplement with questions relevant to the interviewee’s work.

ASSIGNMENT GRADES (Undergraduate Students)

Assignment	Points
Message Box, Communication Points, Storytelling	150
Issue Presentations and One-Pager 1	150
Issue Presentations and One-Pager 2	200
Reflections 1 & 2 (100 x 2)	200
Reflection 3	125
Participation	75
Quizzes (5 x 20)	100
TOTAL	1000

ASSIGNMENT GRADES (Graduate Students & UG Honors Students)

Assignment	Points
Message Box, Communication Points, Storytelling	150
Issue Presentations and One-Pager 1	150
Issue Presentations and One-Pager 2	200
Reflections 1 & 2 (100 x 2)	200
Reflection 3	125
Participation	75
Quizzes (5 x 20)	100
Interview with a Political Leader/Communicator	100
TOTAL	1100

Grading Scale

A = 930-1000
A- = 900-929
B+ = 860-899
B = 830-859
B- = 800-829
C+ = 760-799
C = 730-759
C- = 700-729
D+ = 660-699
D = 630-659
D- = 600-629
E = 599 and below

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

Late assignment policy: A **10-percent per day** deduction will be assessed for assignments turned in late. Work more than a week late will **not** be accepted.

Attendance: It is not possible for a student to perform satisfactorily in the course without regular attendance. Students are **required** to attend class and to be in class **on time**. Only documented doctor's excuses or UF-approved activities will be excused. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

COVID Response Statements

For face to face courses a statement informing students of COVID related practices such as: We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

- You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- This course has been assigned a physical classroom with enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move desks on stations.
- Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Follow your instructor's guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom. Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms ([Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus](#)), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the

instructions on whether you are able to attend class. [Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms.](#)

- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. [Find more information in the university attendance policies.](#)
- Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who unmute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

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.aa.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.aa.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>.

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 well-being 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*
 - Counseling Services
 - Groups and Workshops
 - Outreach and Consultation
 - Self-Help Library
 - Wellness Coaching
- U Matter We Care, www.umatter.ufl.edu/
- *Career Connections Center, First Floor JWRU, 392-1601, <https://career.ufl.edu/>.*
- Student Success Initiative, <http://studentsuccess.ufl.edu>.
- Student Complaints:

Residential Course: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>.

Online Course: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>

Course Schedule

Date	Schedule of Topics and Assignments
January 15	Course Overview Laws, Statutes, and Policies
January 22	Public Policy is Language Use Guest Speaker: Jaime Jerrels, Director of Agricultural Policy, Florida Farm Bureau Federation QUIZ 1: Covers materials from Jan. 15 & 22 (take prior to class)
January 29	Communicating in Policy Making Guest Speaker: Chris Moran, Special Assistant to the Vice President, UF/IFAS QUIZ 2: Covers materials from Jan. 29 (take prior to class)
February 5	Definition: Describing the Problem Guest Speakers: Jeanna Mastrodicasa, Associate Vice President for Operations, UF/IFAS Stacie Greco, Water Resources Program Manager, Alachua County
February 12	Evaluation: Analyze and Advise Guest Speakers: Mary Ann Hooks, Director of Governmental Affairs, UF/IFAS Victoria Price, Legislative Assistant, UF/IFAS DUE: Message Box, Communication Points, Storytelling
February 19	Legislative History: Know the Record Guest Speakers: Adam Basford, Director of State Legislative Affairs at Florida Farm Bureau Federation QUIZ 3: Covers materials from Feb. 5, 12 & 19 (take prior to class) DUE: Reflection 1 (through Feb. 12 speakers)
February 26	Position Paper: Know the Arguments First Round of Issue Presentations DUE: One-pager + Issues Presentation 1
March 5	Petition, Proposal, Letter: Request Action Guest Speakers: Katelyn Potter, Communications and Organizational Development Chief @ Suwannee River Water Management District Mallory Dimmitt, Vice President of Strategic Development, Lykes Bros, Inc.
March 12	Brief, Opinion, Resolution: Inform Policy Makers Jim Handley, Executive VP, Florida Cattlemen's Association Ben Bolusky, CEO, Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Assoc. Mike Joyner, President, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association QUIZ 4: Covers materials from March 5 & 12 (take prior to class)

Date	Schedule of Topics and Assignments
March 19	Testimony: Witness in a Public Hearing Andrew Walmsley/John Walt Boatwright, American Farm Bureau DUE (for Grad Students): Interview w/Political Leader/ Comm.
March 26	Public Comment: Influence Administration QUIZ 5: Covers materials from March 19 & 26 (take prior to class) DUE: Reflection 2 (through March 19 speakers)
April 2	Ethics for Policy Communicators TBA QUIZ 6 (make-up): Covers all materials this semester (take prior to class)
April 9	Issue Presentations (Revised) DUE: One-pager + Issues Presentation 2
April 16	Issue Presentations (Revised) DUE: Issues Presentation 2 DUE: Reflection 3 (synthesis of all speakers and content this semester)

Expanded Descriptions of Course Assignments

Message Box, Communication Points, Storytelling

In preparation for the *Issues Presentations and One-Pager* assignment, students will complete the handouts provided in class to help them develop their “issues” assignment. By this time, students will have selected the issue for their Issues Presentation + One-Pager assignment. Students will complete the Message Box and the communication points and create at least a draft of a story, using the “storytelling” handout. Students will submit these completed documents for grading, so that instructors can provide feedback to students. As part of this assignment, students must also provide at least a one-paragraph description of the following:

- Topic/issue that will be presented in the *Issues Presentations and One-Pager* assignment.
- A brief summary of the major “players/stakeholders” related to the topic/issue
- The policymaker/agency that the *Issues Presentations and One-Pager* assignment will be made to
- A summary of why this topic/issue is important

One-Pager + Issues Presentation

The objective of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to translate information on a policy issue into a “**one-pager**” for a “leave behind” to a legislator or agency and to present the issue to a policymaker in a mock setting.

Students will do the **Issues Presentation + One-Pager** about midway through the semester. Students will then REDO this assignment at the end of the semester, using the same issue. **The goal is for students to take the comments from the first presentation and then improve their presentation at the end of the semester.**

Students will develop an “**elevator message**” (**issues presentation**) to present the one-pager to a specific legislator or agency. The presentation will be graded based on brevity, focus, appropriate tone of the communication message, and clarity of the topic conveyed in the presentation. The **one-pager** will be graded on succinctness, focus, design, appropriate tone of the communication message, and grammar/punctuation.

The scenario:

You will “present” your issue (and one-pager) to an instructor in a role-play. One of us will take on the role of a decision-maker at the local, state, or national level, depending on the topic/issue you have selected. You will come into our “office” (or “virtually” via Zoom) and discuss the topic with us. After brief introductions – be sure to introduce yourself to us – you will present your topic/issue to us and provide us with the one-pager as a leave-behind. (HINT: It’s always a good idea to have a copy for the decision-maker and one for yourself.)

Remember to make the “pitch.” You can choose the topic/issue, and you can choose if it will be local, state, or national. You can also choose if you want us to take on the role of an elected official or a regulatory agency administrator (like the US Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, or the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services).

Time Limits:

For the **FIRST** time you present, you will have **up to THREE minutes**.

For the **SECOND** time you present, you will have **up to FIVE minutes**.

Remember: Briefer is better. ☺

Attire:

You are free to wear “regular” college clothes for the first presentation, but within reason. OK for jeans, but not cut-off shorts, if we can see them. (Or feel free to wear “business casual,” too.) For the **SECOND** round, we would like to see “business casual” (nice shirt/blouse).

Submit:

Submit your **ONE-PAGER** through Canvas by the **BEGINNING of class today (no later than 8:30 a.m.)**. Your presentation will be done either in-person (for the “in-person” section) or via Zoom.

Reflections

Students will provide a thoughtful reflection on guest speakers and/or overall topics. Students will discuss what they learned about communicating to policymakers from the speakers. There will be three reflection assignments throughout the semester. It is expected that the written reflection assignments would be at least two full pages (double-spaced). It is expected that students include specific examples from the speakers and course materials (readings, videos) as part of their reflections. The final reflection will be a synopsis of all that students learned during the semester.

To help guide your reflections, students may want to consider these questions. You don't have to use all of these questions, but they are provided to help you "reflect":

- What were the policy issues the guest speaker(s) discussed?
- What were the positions the guest speaker(s) had on the policy issue? And why?
- How does the guest speaker communicate about policy issues?
- What's in it for them?
- What are the resources of the guest speaker(s) related to the policy issue? Or what are the resources of the individuals/organizations who communicate about the policy issue?
- What did guest speaker(s) do to make the issue more (or less) visible to the public, or closer to (or farther from) government action?
- What were some specific examples from the guest speaker(s) that "spoke" to you?
- What did you learn about effectively communicating about agricultural and life sciences policies from the guest speaker(s)?
- How will you use what you learned from the guest speaker(s) after this course?
- Be sure to get the guest speaker(s) names and their organization/agency spelled correctly.

GRADING:

REFLECTIONS 1 and 2: 100 points each

REFLECTION 3: 125 points

Quizzes

There will be five quizzes (20 points each) on the assigned readings and course materials. These will be due **prior** to class the week that the quiz is assigned. A sixth quiz will be conducted near the end of the semester; students will be able to make up one quiz by taking the sixth quiz OR drop their lowest quiz grade. Quiz content will be based on one week's worth or two weeks' worth of material (the week immediately covered AND the content of the coming week). Students are to take the quiz before class.

Participation

Students are expected to participate in class by engaging with the instructors and guest speakers.

For UG Honors Students + Graduate Students:

Interview with a Political Leader/Communicator

Students will identify a **political leader/communicator** with whom to conduct and record an interview via Zoom. A list of suggested questions will be provided. Students will supplement with questions relevant to the interviewee's work. In addition to submitting the recorded interview, students will provide a written summary of the major points of the interview, as well as a reflection on what the student learned about how the political leader/communicator effectively communicates about issues.