

AEC6540

Communication Theories and Strategies for Agriculture and Natural Resources

Time: Tuesday 3:00-4:55

Location: Rolfs 306

Spring 2024, 3 Credits

Instructor

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Office Hours

Tuesday, 9:00 am – 11:00 am or by appointment

Course Format

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

Course Description

This course introduces a broad range of theories for understanding the communication process – how people communicate, why they communicate the way they do, and how communication affects both messengers and message recipients. The toolchest of theories, concepts, and strategies gained through this course will enable you to make communication decisions based on science, rather than gut instinct. It will also enable you to better predict the outcomes of communication decisions and, therefore, increase the probability of achieving your agricultural and natural resources objectives.

Course Pre-Requisites / Co-Requisites

None

Student Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Analyze agricultural and natural resources issues with communication theory
- Apply communication theory to novel agricultural and natural resources scenarios
- Select appropriate theories and strategies for research and practical applications

Required Textbooks

- None, readings provided by instructor.

Assignments

Research proposals (2)

In pairs, you will select one (or two if you can't choose) concepts discussed in recent weeks and apply it to an agricultural or natural resource issue of your choosing. I suggest a topic on which you have either pre-existing knowledge, or a topic that you may be interested in engaging in the future... perhaps a topic for your thesis or dissertation. During class time, your group of two will give a short presentation that includes an overview of the agricultural or natural resources topic, a research question, an explanation of how your chosen theory applies to the research question, and a theory-based research approach that could be used to evaluate the topic. Upon conclusion of your presentation, your peers will critique your proposal, providing suggestions for improvement. Your grade will be based on two components: (1) your presentation (*in pairs*) and (2) a two-page, single-spaced reflection paper (*one per individual*) that describes changes you would make based on peer feedback.

If you miss a presentation day, you must record your presentation for the class and submit an additional five-page, single-space paper on the topic. Your grade will be based on three components: (1) your presentation, (2) your five-page paper,

and (3) a follow-up two-page, single-spaced reflection paper that describes changes you would make based on instructor feedback. (This is obviously more work, so don't miss presentation days!)

Ad-hoc research study

Once during the semester, you will work with a small group to design and conduct ad-hoc research. Too often, theory and research are viewed as the domains of academics, not practitioners. But, the best practitioners regularly conduct small-scale, theory-based research to ground truth their communication strategies before implementation. They want to know that their communication will have the desired effect. For this assignment, your group will identify a practical communication challenge related to agriculture and natural resources and design a quick study that could inform the selection of a communication approach. As a group, you will present your topic, methods, and results to the class. Individually, you will submit a three-page, single-spaced paper that describes the research findings and implications. Your grade will be based on three components: (1) your group presentation, (2) reviews of your performance submitted by team members, and (3) your paper submission.

If you miss a presentation day, you must individually record your presentation for the class and submit an additional five-page, single-space paper on the topic. Your grade will be based on four components: (1) your recorded individual presentation, (2) your five-page paper, (3) reviews of your performance submitted by team members, and (4) a follow-up two-page, single-spaced reflection paper that describes changes you would make based on instructor feedback. (Again, this is more work, so don't miss presentation days!)

Theory bowl!

The most exciting event of the year. Graduate students go head-to-head in a theory brawl for the ages. Details coming later.

Concept matrix

You will create a matrix in a format of your choosing that includes the following components: (a) theory name, (b) key players, (c) fundamental elements, (d) research application, and (e) professional application. Examples are available in Canvas. You should add to this matrix each week as new theories are examined. Students often refer back to these matrices throughout their professional life, so make sure you are creating a good resource for yourself!

Perusall discussion

Each concept that we discuss this semester will have two readings: one reading that provides an overview of the concept and another that demonstrates how it has been used in research and/or practice. The articles are available in *Perusall*, accessible from the eLearning course. At any place in Perusall articles, you can post questions and comments and see the questions and comments of other students. It is a place for scholarly discussion and, therefore, a place where you and your peers can really dig into how you might apply the theory in agricultural and natural resources settings.

Attendance and participation

Attendance: You are expected to attend all lectures 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.

Grading

Assignment	Percentage of Final Grade
Research proposals (2)	30%
Ad-hoc research study	20%
Theory bowl!	10%
Theory matrix	12.5%
Perusall reading discussions	15%
Attendance, participation, and engagement	12.5%
Total	100%

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:

Wk	Date	Topic	Due this Week
1	1/9	Course Introduction	
2	1/16	Topics: 1. Social Identity Theory 2. Value-Belief-Norm	Perusall
3	1/23	Topics: 1. Theory of Planned Behavior 2. Diffusion of Innovations	Perusall
4	1/30	Topics: 1. Cognitive Dissonance 2. Inoculation Theory	Perusall Theory matrix check-in
5	2/6	<i>Tentative: No class (conference)</i>	
6	2/13	Present first research proposal	Pairs presentation
7	2/20	Topics: 1. Elaboration Likelihood 2. Narrative Paradigm	Individual reflection paper Perusall

8	2/27	Topics: 1. Echo Chamber 2. Spiral of Silence	Perusall
9	3/5	Topics: 1. Framing Theory 2. Agenda Setting	Perusall Theory matrix check in
10	3/12	<i>No class (Spring break)</i>	
11	3/19	Present ad hoc research study	Group presentation
12	3/26	Topics: 1. Face management 2. Conflict face negotiation	Individual paper Perusall
13	4/2	Topics: 1. Trust 2. Cultural dimensions	Perusall
14	4/9	Topics: 1. Social role theory of gender 2. Generational differences	Perusall
15	4/16	Present second research proposal	Pairs presentation
16	4/23	Theory Bowl!	Individual reflection paper Theory matrix

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.

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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 *Communication Theories and Strategies*

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>.

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
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 Complaints:

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