

Communication Theories and Strategies for Agriculture and Natural Resources



AEC6540

Spring 2024 – 3 Credits



Instructor

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Assistant Professor

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Office location: 117A Bryant Space Science Center

Office hours: Monday 2:00-4:00 or by appointment

Class Times

Tuesday 3:00-4:55

Location

TBA

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 Objectives

{Insert any course objectives information here. PLEASE NOTE: if you are using any images in your syllabus, you should include alternate text!}

Course Design

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

Requirements

Textbook:

None

Technology:

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

- Desktop Computer or Laptop
 - Audio Capabilities
 - Webcam and Microphone for synchronous sessions
- Microsoft Word - [Microsoft 365 basics video training](#)
- Adobe Reader - [Acrobat tutorials](#)
- Zoom - [Zoom Privacy Policy](#)
- 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](#) is provided if you have additional questions.
 - View [Canvas Privacy Policy](#)
- **Web Browser - Chrome** is the preferred browser for Canvas. If you do not have Chrome, you can [download it](#).
- University of Florida Email
 - Students are expected to check their my.ufl emails daily. View the [Student Computing Requirements](#) page for information on technology requirements and expectations.

Prerequisite Knowledge:

None

Instructor Response & Feedback

The instructor is committed to responding to your Canvas and email messages **within 24 hours** when feasible during the work week, Monday through Friday, *except holidays*. There are also office hours each week. The major assignments will be graded, with *meaningful feedback* provided, **within one week of their submission**.

Assignments

Research proposals (2)

In groups, 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 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.

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. (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.

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. (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.

Assignment Points

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

Course Grading:

Grading Scale

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

Further information about UF grading policies can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Reading & Assignment Schedule:

Wk	Date	Topic	Due this Week
1	1/14	Course Introduction	
2	1/21	Topics: 1. Social Identity Theory 2. Value-Belief-Norm	Perusall
3	1/28	Topics: 1. Theory of Planned Behavior 2. Diffusion of Innovations	Perusall
4	2/4	Topics: 1. Cognitive Dissonance 2. Inoculation Theory	Perusall
5	2/11	Present first research proposal	Group presentation
6	2/18	Topics: 1. Elaboration Likelihood 2. Narrative Paradigm	Perusall
7	2/25	Topics: 1. Echo Chamber 2. Spiral of Silence	Perusall
8	3/4	Topics: 1. Framing Theory 2. Agenda Setting	Perusall

9	3/11	Present ad hoc research study	Group presentation
10	3/18	Spring break	
11	3/25	Topics: 1. Face management 2. Conflict face negotiation	Perusall
12	4/1	Topics: 1. Trust 2. Cultural dimensions	Perusall
13	4/8	Topics: 1. Social role theory of gender 2. Generational differences	Perusall
14	4/15	Present second research proposal	Group presentation
15	4/22	Theory Bowl!	Concept matrix

Academic Integrity

UF's Academic Honesty Statement:

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 dishonesty to the instructor, department chair, college dean or Student Honor Court. **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: [UF Student Code of Conduct Webpage](#).

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism includes taking **verbatim phrases of just a few words** without permission or full attribution. It includes **quoting too much** from your sources, thereby substituting their expression for your own, or quoting too much from one source, effectively taking more than a *fair use* of their work. **Over quoting (direct quotes)** comprising more than 10% of any assignment will be considered plagiarism. Plagiarism includes **unique expression**, which can be a phrase of a few words or a simple moniker. Our writing is mostly *our own expression*. When writing for science and business, we base our work on **facts** obtained from a variety of **credible sources**. We give credit where it is due. We **cite our sources** so

others can access the information we present. When appropriate, we very carefully, ethically, and lawfully use others' expression of that information. We obtain permission to use our sources' expression or give full credit for a *limited, fair use*, including direct quotes.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

If you use 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.

Attendance Policies

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found at: [UF Attendance Policies](#).

Institutional Policies

Recording Statement

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. 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 guest 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. [UF IN-CLASS RECORDING](#)

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. [UF ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY](#)

Course Evaluations

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/>

Student Services

Health & Wellness

- U Matter, We Care
 - If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- Counseling and Wellness Center
 - Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
 - 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.
- Student Health Care Center
 - Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).
- University Police Department
 - Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- GatorWell Health Promotion Services
 - For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support
 - Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#)
 - Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#)
 - Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- [Teaching Center](#)

- Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#)
 - 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Student Complaints On-Campus
 - Visit the [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#) for more information.
- On-Line Students Complaints
 - View the [Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.](#)

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, [UF Disability Resource Center.](#)

[Canvas Accessibility Standards](#)

[Zoom Accessibility Information](#)