

Agricultural Communications 367

Agricultural Issues in Contemporary American Society

Spring 2009 — Undergraduate, 5 Credit Hours

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	Class Meeting Days	Times	Location
Lecture:	Monday	Noon-1:48 p.m.	AA 251
Recitation:	Tuesday, Thursday	1:30-2:48 p.m.	KH 102

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course enhances students' critical thinking and writing skills by providing a laboratory for discussion and writing on contemporary agricultural issues. Effective writing and editing require knowledge of tested communication techniques; sensitivity to audience characteristics such as gender, age, class, race, education and ethnicity; and knowledge of subject matter. Individual and small group assignments are employed to enrich the learning experience.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

A student completing this course will achieve the following objectives:

1. Gain confidence and experience in writing and editing in a variety of settings.
2. Understand the complexity of issues facing the food, agricultural and natural resources industry.
3. Develop leadership and public speaking skills, through team projects and class participation.
4. Achieve the learning outcomes of the General Education Curriculum (GEC) category Writing and Related Skills. As a result, students will be able to apply basic skills in expository writing, demonstrate critical thinking through written and oral expression, and retrieve and use written information analytically and effectively.

REQUIRED READINGS:

1. Diana Hacker (2007). *A Writer's Reference* (Sixth Edition). Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. Available at the University Bookstore, Barnes & Noble, and SBX.

2. Selected articles from newspapers, magazines and other publications distributed in class.

GRADING SCALE:

93-100 = A	80-82 = B-	67-69 = D+
90-92 = A-	77-79 = C+	60-66 = D
87-89 = B+	73-76 = C	<60 = E
83-86 = B	70-72 = C-	

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Any violation of the university's Code of Student Conduct will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct as specified by Faculty Rule 3335-31-02. Plagiarism, fabrication and other forms of academic dishonesty are justification for failure on any assignment or the course. All ideas, statements and quotations used in stories and essays are assumed to be factual and verifiable. Materials turned in for a grade are assumed to be the student's original work prepared specifically for this course.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

If you have special needs based on a disability, contact the instructor to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. The instructor relies on the Office of Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations. If you have not previously contacted the Office of Disability Services, please do so early in the quarter.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Accuracy in facts, grammar and spelling is critical for success in this course. Proofread your work carefully to avoid substantial grade penalties. All assignments must be prepared in the format listed in this syllabus. Grading for each assignment will be conducted using a rubric that will be returned with your writing assignment.

Attendance and participation

Roll will be taken periodically in lecture and recitation. Students not present when the attendance roster is read will be checked absent for the day. The instructors also will make notes throughout the quarter on the level and quality of each student's participation. To receive the full 20 points for attendance and quality of participation, students must consistently attend all classes, be on time, participate actively, and be respectful of peers and instructors.

Writing assignments

Students will complete several writing assignments this quarter across different genres appropriate for communicating with lay audiences. The assignments will require student mastery of the readings and participation in class discussions. Details about all written assignments will be provided well in advance of the deadline dates.

- All assignment topics must be approved by your TA and/or instructor.
- All writing assignments must be submitted in the following format: Times New Roman size 12 font, double spaced with 1-inch margins.

Article Summaries (25 points each, 50 points total)

Two times this quarter, you will select an agricultural news article and lead a brief class discussion, either in lecture or recitation, on the issue covered in the article. You also must write a summary of each article in 200 to 300 words and submit it to either your TA or Kyle during the class session where it was discussed.

E-mail Memo Assignment (30 points)

Your goal for this assignment is to write an effective business-style e-memo. This memo will introduce one of your classmates as a new employee of a company. Provide background information, education, etc., that you think will be beneficial for your instructor and TA to know.

Press Release and PSA (100 points)

Press Release: Each student will write a 400- to 500-word press release. The story should follow inverted pyramid style. The press release must be written about an event that was or will be held in April or May 2009. The release should be written as if you are the Communications Specialist and your company or organization is distributing the press release. You must interview one source for quotes. Grading will be based on written communication skills, accuracy, organization, AP style, creativity and grammar.

PSA (Public Service Announcement): Each student will write a 60-second spot (PSA) suitable for radio broadcast. The PSA must be written about the same event as the press release. The PSA should be written as if you are the Communications Specialist and your company/organization is distributing it. Grading will be based on written communication skills, accuracy, organization, creativity and adherence to the time limit.

News Story (150 points)

Each student will write a 600- to 800-word news story based on an agricultural or environmental topic or person. The story should follow inverted pyramid style. It should have a strong focus and lead (opening) paragraph. The story should provide answers to who, what, when, where, why and how. Students also must write a headline for their story. You must interview at least one source for quotes. Grading will be based on written communication skills, accuracy, organization, AP style, creativity and grammar.

Editorial (100 points)

Each student will write a 500- to 600-word editorial on an agricultural or environmental issue of interest. This is an opinion piece but you should use at least one source to support your argument. Grading will be based on written communication skills, accuracy, organization, AP style, creativity and grammar.

Research Paper, Presentation and Peer Evaluation (280 points)

Paper: Each student will participate in a writing team to produce a well-researched and written six- to eight-page research paper on an approved topic.

Presentation: Each team will make a 10- to 12-minute presentation based on their research paper.

Peer Evaluation: At the completion of the Research Paper and Presentation, team members will evaluate each other. These evaluations will help determine each member's final grade on this project.

Midterm and final exams (100 points each)

These will test mastery of the readings and class discussions. Missed exams may not be made up without advance permission from the instructor, medical excuse or an unavoidable situation that warrants an excused absence as judged by the instructor. The form and content of the exams will be discussed in class. Students must take the final exam during the time established by the university. No make-ups or exemptions will be granted. Students who arrive late will neither be given extra time nor be permitted to take the exam if a student has already completed the exam and left the room.

Revisions

Up to one week after each graded assignment is returned, students may resubmit a revised version of each assignment, along with the original graded version, to receive up to half of the points deducted from the original submission, based on the quality of the revision.

Class Schedule Ag Comm 367 — Spring 2009

(No lecture Monday, May 25 in observance of Memorial Day)

Week	Date	Topic	Points
1	3/30 3/31 4/2	Reading: Basic Grammar pages 489-508, Memos and E-mails pages 53-54 Lec: Course Introduction. Overview of agricultural issues. Writing a summary. Writing effective e-mails and memos. Rec: Article summary exercises. Rec: E-memo writing.	
2	4/6 4/7 4/9	Reading: News articles, Composing and Revising pages 14-37, Writing about Texts pages 57-66, Sentence Style pages 91-120, Word Choice pages 121-160, AP Style Handout Lec: Agricultural issues. Press release and broadcast writing, inverted pyramid, AP style and editing tips. Rec: AP Style, inverted pyramid and concise writing exercises. Rec: AP Style and PSA exercises. Peer reviews. Quiz. E-mail memo assignment due. Press Release/PSA Topics due via e-mail to your TA and Kyle.	10, 30
3	4/13 4/14 4/16	Reading: News articles, Grammatical Sentences pages 161-216, Punctuation pages 257-294 Lec: Agricultural issues. Lead writing, writing concisely, interviewing tips, research paper specs Rec: AP Style and lead writing exercises. Form research project teams, brainstorm topics. Rec: Grammar and punctuation exercises. Quiz. Peer reviews. Press release (75) and PSA (25) due. Research Topics due via e-mail to your TA and Kyle.	10, 100
4	4/20 4/21 4/23	Reading: News articles, Mechanics pages 295-314, Planning pages 3-13 Lec: Agricultural issues. Guest Speaker Rec: Thesis statement and outline exercises. Teams work on Research Paper outline. Rec: Research Paper outline due.	
5	4/27 4/28 4/30	Reading: News articles, Researching pages 315-352 Lec: Midterm. Agricultural issues. News writing and what makes something newsworthy. Rec: News writing exercises. Rec: Quiz. News writing exercises. News Story topics due via e-mail to your TA and Kyle.	100 10
6	5/4 5/5 5/7	Reading: News articles, Constructing arguments pgs. 67-85 Lec: Agricultural issues. Citizen action/Opinion writing. Rec: Op/Ed critiques. Exercises related to readings. Rec: Op/Ed writing. Quiz. Peer reviews. News Story due. Editorial topic due via e-mail to your TA and Kyle.	10, 150
7	5/11 5/12 5/14	Reading: News articles, APA Papers pages 413-459 Lec: Agricultural issues. Research writing. Rec: APA and citing sources exercises. Rec: Quiz. Teams work on Research Paper. Peer reviews. Editorial due.	10, 100
8	5/18 5/19 5/21	Reading: News articles Lec: Agricultural issues. Writing and editing with sensitivity to gender, class, ethnicity, nationality and age. Rec: To be announced. Rec: To be announced. Quiz. First draft of Research Paper due.	10, 20
9	5/25 5/26 5/28	Lec: NO LECTURE — MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY Rec: To be announced. Rec: To be announced.	
10	6/1 6/2 6/4	Reading: News articles Lec: Agricultural issues. Presentation Tips. Review for final exam, course evaluation Rec: Research Paper (150), Presentations (100) and peer evaluations (10). Quiz Rec: Research Paper (150), Presentations (100) and peer evaluations (10). Course evaluation	10 260
11	6/11	Final: Thursday, June 11, 11:30 a.m.-1:18 p.m. (Tentative)	100
		Two article summaries at 25 points each	50
		Class participation	20
		Total	1,000