

**COMMUNICATING AGRICULTURAL ISSUES**  
**AGRI 340 – Spring 2017**  
**School of Agriculture - Western Illinois University**

**INSTRUCTOR**

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and by appointment

**CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS**

Section I will meet Monday & Wednesday 12:00-12:50 p.m. in KH 226

Section II will meet Monday & Wednesday 2:00-2:50 p.m. in KH 226

This is a two-semester hour lecture/discussion, **writing intensive** course.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITES**

AGRI 340 Development of written and oral communication skills to address current issues in agriculture.

Pre-Requisite: Eng 280 & Agri 220.

This course has been designated to meet the Writing Instruction in the Disciplines (WID) graduation requirement. WID courses provide instruction in the processes and formats for the writing content and style needed to be an effective professional in a student's chosen field.

The course has three main areas of focus: writing, a group research paper/presentation, and an outreach project.

**MATERIAL**

- Facebook Account
- Twitter Account
- WordPress Account
- Course handouts will be provided as necessary. Notes and additional information can be found on Western Online.
- Activities outside of the classroom will be required.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the conclusion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate stronger business writing and communication skills.
2. Analyze, understand, and effectively communicate current agriculture issues.
3. Orally present information on an agricultural issue with confidence.
4. Write business e-mails, letters, reports, blog posts, and presentations.
5. Feel comfortable discussing a variety of agriculture issues and help others to have a greater understanding of agriculture.
6. Question everything. Ask yourself why you do things the way you do. Strive to make improvements in agriculture.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

February 13-Lincoln's birthday, University is closed

March 14-Early warning grades available on STARS

March 13-17-Spring break, University is closed

Monday, May 8-Section I Final 1 p.m.

Section II Final 3 p.m.

## CLASS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Important class announcements (cancellations, etc.) will be made via WIU email, Western Online, and the WIU text notification system. It is in your best interest to check your email.

## ABSENCES

To succeed in this class, you must be present. Each class period is worth 10 participation points. Excused absences (emergencies, funerals, and illness) should be cleared with the instructor prior to the class either via email or the OARS system. Unexcused absences will result in a loss of participation/attendance points for that day. All assignments due for that class period should be completed prior to the next class period.

## LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Unless your work is late due to an excused absence, late assignments do not exist. Your assignment is due at the beginning of class on the day it is due in the form assigned (WO, hard copy, etc.). No exceptions.

## CLASS GUIDELINES

**Failure to comply with the class rules will result in a loss of participation points. Repeated offense will result in the loss of one letter grade.**

Cell Phones/laptops/tablets: Cell phones/laptops/tablets are not to be used during class unless requested to do so for class activity purposes. If, due to medical or public safety concerns, a student needs an exception to this policy he/she should inform the instructor prior to class.

**\*\*\*Phone usage is not allowed during class. This isn't a joke. Seriously, put your phones away.\*\*\***

Tobacco: Use of tobacco **in any form** is prohibited in university buildings/classrooms.

Talking: Unnecessary side conversations will not be tolerated.

Respect: Please respect the opinions of your classmates during all class discussions and activities. **Fifty points** will be deducted if at any time during a conversation you are harassing or demeaning towards another student with an opposing viewpoint.

Do. The. Work.: The more effort you put into this class, the more you will get out of it.

Whining: There is a \$5 fine for whining.

## PLAGAIRISM

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Students caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment and possibly the course. Properly learning to cite a source is vital to this course. <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>

## GRADING SCALE:

93% and above = 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-

59 and below = F

Agriculture Education Majors please note the following:

*In accordance with the Illinois State Board of Education certification rules, all candidates seeking teacher certification are required by Western Illinois University to obtain a grade of "C" or better in all directed general education courses, all core courses, and all courses in the option. Note C- is below a C.*

## UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

The University Writing Center is available to you for your use on assignments and papers. Please feel free to visit it about material for this class or other classes. [http://www.wiu.edu/university\\_writing\\_center/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/university_writing_center/index.php)

Ag 340-Communicating Agricultural Issues

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Formatting:** Unless otherwise noted, all assignments should be:

- **typed**, 12 pt. font
- 1” margins on all sides
- Times New Roman or Garamond font
- Labeled with your name, date, assignment name, and class section.
- MLA style
- All papers of one draft stapled together. Drafts should be paper clipped together.

Failure to properly format any assignment will result in a loss of 5 points.

\*\*Handwritten assignments or unreadable will not be accepted and will result in 0 points.

## THE BASICS

Proper grammar, spelling, verb usage, flow, punctuation, capitalization, etc. should come naturally to you by now.

**Any writing assignment that has a misspelling will not receive a grade higher than an 80%.**

All writing assignments will be graded for mechanics and additional errors will result in a loss of points.

Assignments will also be graded on content, clarity, attention to detail and instructions, and completeness among other components.

### Writing Focused Assignments

**Ag Issue Opinion Piece: (30 pts)** Write a brief on the biggest issue facing the agriculture industry today. If you are stating the obvious, look at it from all angles. Breathe new life into the issue.

**Email: (30 pts)** Write and send a professional email.

**Letter: (50 pts)** Write a business letter.

**Blog Post (120 pts):** Write a blog post and post it to the WIU School of Ag blog. Posts should include a title, your name as the author, relevant, pre-approved content, and photos. Your post will be read by the public. \*\*Posts deemed inappropriate or profane will result in a failing grade.

**Facebook Posts: (50 pts)** Create 10 Facebook posts advocating for agriculture. **Five** shares of articles (not classmate’s posts) are allowed, but you **must** include your own unique comments for the post. Five of your posts must be created using Canva.com. Summarize your experience. Was there engagement? Did people comment/like/share your post? Did you receive any negative comments? If so, how did you handle them? Screenshot each of your posts and comments and include with your write-up in a Word document.

**Twitter Posts: (50 pts)** Create 10 Twitter posts advocating for agriculture. **Five** retweets (not from classmates) are allowed, but you must include your own unique comments for the post. You **must tag @WIUAg** and use the hashtag **#WIUAgLife**. If you do not tag WIUAg AND use the hashtag, you will not receive credit for that tweet. Compile screenshots into a Word document on WO. No write up is needed.

**Advocacy Case Responses: (50 pts)** Respond to case studies using the EASE method of communicating agriculture issues.

**Ag Documentary Reflection Summary: (50 pts)** After watching a documentary in class, write a reflection summary based on the questions provided and your own reaction.

### Group Paper/Presentation

**Thesis & Outline: (50 pts)** Complete a working thesis and outline of your final paper to help you organize your research and the flow of your paper. Additional items may be added to your final paper, however the material presented in your outline should appear in your paper. You must hand this in with your final paper.

**Source Credibility Check: (25 pts)** Determine the credibility of the provided sources by answering the questions provided in the library guide.

**Source Identification: (10 pts)** Identify two credible sources of information for your essay. Hand in two complete MLA citations.

**Draft: (50 pts)** Your first draft of your paper should be a minimum of one-page long. It will be reviewed by the instructor as well as a peer in order to provide constructive feedback as you finalize your paper. You must hand in this draft with your final paper.

**Peer Review: (15 pts)** Review a draft of a paper written by another group. Your feedback should be constructive.

### **Food Labels: (300 pts)**

Review food labels as printed on current food packaging for your assigned commodity. Are the food labels mandated by the government? Regulated by the government? Necessary for health reasons? Truthful? Solely for marketing purposes? Conduct a survey of consumers to understand their preferences and what contributes to their purchasing choices. Compile your information in writing and with graphs/charts. Present your information in class.

**Ag Issues Paper: (400 pts)** As a group, write an in-depth research paper covering your assigned commodity from the beginning of production through its processing into a consumable product. Identify and discuss the issues that producers face in sustainably operating their farm as well as the issues that concern consumers at each step of the process. Upon completion of your paper, you should be well versed about the production of that commodity as well as the truths related to the issues along the way.

Please hand in all drafts and peer review copies with your final paper (one paper per group). The comments made in your drafts should be addressed in your final paper unless previously cleared with the instructor. Your paper should include:

- A cover page with paper title, names of each student in the group, class number and section, date.
- Executive summary
- Essay
- Optional addendums
- Works Cited: You must use a minimum of 4 credible sources for your paper. You may NOT use Wikipedia as a source.

**In-Class Group Presentation: (100 pts)** Present your research in presentation form to the class. Answer any questions raised in an effective manner.

### Exams

**Quizzes:** Quizzes will be given at the instructor's discretion and will be unannounced.

**Final Exam: (200 pts)** The comprehensive final exam will cover the material presented in class by the instructor and the group presentations.

### Extra Credit

**Daily Dirt: (10 pts)** Each week we will discuss a current event/ag issue. If you provide me with the topic you wish to discuss and lead the discussion in class, you will receive 10 extra credit points. You must notify me of the topic prior to class, either via email or in person.

\*Additional extra credit opportunities may be available throughout the semester.

## **GROUP WORK**

The real world relies on group work, therefore, so does this class. How well you work with your group members will affect your grade. You will have the opportunity to evaluate your contribution and the contribution of your group members at the end of the course.

## **ACCREDITATION**

The School of Agriculture is housed in the College of Business and Technology which is accredited by AACSB-International.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

*Students with disabilities:* In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, [disability@wiu.edu](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

*Title IX:* University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: [http://www.wiu.edu/equal\\_opportunity\\_and\\_access/request\\_form/index.php](http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php). If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

*Academic Integrity:* The rules and regulations outlined in the University's policy on academic integrity are applied to this course. <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>

*Student Rights and Responsibilities:* Detailed information regarding student rights and responsibilities can be found at <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/student.php>. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the posted information.

*Disruptive Student Behavior:* Disruptive Student Behavior is defined as inappropriate student behavior that a reasonable faculty member would view as interfering with the ability of the instructor to teach and students to learn whether in a classroom or other learning environment (such as an online course, laboratory, site field experience, internships, instructor's office, computer lab, or other setting whether it is an on-campus or off-campus location), which disrupts the educational process. It is also considered disruptive behavior for a student to exhibit threatening, intimidating, or other inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates outside of the learning environment. Further information is available at <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/disrupst.php>.

## **NOTICES**

Please be advised that this syllabus is **tentative**. All classes are different and we may or may not be able to address all of the content areas. Any deviations from the syllabus will be announced as soon as possible.