

**AGRICULTURAL SALES AGRI 390- SPRING 2025**  
**School of Agriculture - Western Illinois University**

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**INSTRUCTOR**

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or by appointment.

**CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS**

For Spring 2025, AGRI 390 will be offered online in an asynchronous format.

**EMAILS**

Please be sure to include the course number in the subject line in your emails. Emails are preferred over phone calls for contact outside of class.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITES**

AGRI 390 - *Agricultural Sales* explores the sales process. Topics include methods of selling, steps and techniques in the selling process, customer service, sales ethics, consumer behavior concepts, and sales management in agriculture. The prerequisites for this course are Agriculture 220 or Econ 232, and Ag Econ 333 or Marketing 327. If you have not had these prerequisites then this course will likely prove to be challenging.

**TEXTS**

There is no required text for the course.

Supplemental handouts will be provided via Western Online.

**PURPOSE OF COURSE**

According to Robert Zemsky, the most important revolution on higher education's horizon is the shift from processes to outcomes; from asking, "What courses did you take and pass when you were in college?" to asking, "What do you know and what can you do?" Along these lines, this course combines a bit of salesmanship, marketing, management, communications, ethics, history, economics, and politics.

In recent years agricultural businesses have increased their emphasis on marketing. One outgrowth of this emphasis is a large number of marketing and sales position openings for agricultural students with four-year college degrees. The rapid pace of advances in production technologies, an increasingly competitive marketplace, and thin profit margins for sales have increased the need for well-trained sales specialists who can market new ideas and services to farm customers and agribusinesses. Farmers and agribusinesses need solutions to difficult production and marketing problems - often utilizing complex products, new technologies, and sophisticated communication methods. Traditionally, it was enough to have a good product, a pleasant personality, and to work hard. But today's highly competitive market has thrust agricultural suppliers and marketers into intense battles for fewer, larger customers. The agricultural sales professional is on the front lines of the battle.

This course will explore some of the human elements of agribusinesses. It is designed for juniors and seniors majoring in agriculture who plan a professional career in agribusiness. This course should be highly practical for students outside of agriculture who are interested in pursuing a career in professional selling. It recognizes the wide diversity of backgrounds, interest areas and problems young professionals are likely to face as they begin their careers.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this course students will:

1. Be conversant in the language of sales and marketing.
2. Create a profile of a professional salesperson.
3. Develop goal setting and time management skills.
4. Understand consumer behavior and how to use this understanding to market to consumers.
5. Be familiar with the decision buying process of buyers.
6. Explore the relationship between marketing and personal selling.
7. Explore the process of verbal and non-verbal communications.
8. Experience the sales process firsthand by spending a day with a salesperson.
9. Understand the role of ethics in the sales process.

Day with A Salesperson Exercise: Through this exercise, you will directly observe a professional at work. You will learn more about what a salesperson actually does during a typical day. You'll find out first-hand what it's like to be a salesperson, so that you can make a more informed career choice -- after all, sales is not for everyone! You will observe how a salesperson in your area of professional interest actually works with customers -- it should help you to be a better buyer! You'll learn how the concepts and techniques that you study in class are applied by professionals in the field. You will learn how to handle yourself as a professional in a professional environment. You'll arrange for your observation day, complete it, and write a report that will provide you with an opportunity to sharpen your communication skills (Writing Center is in Malpass Library on the Third Floor - West Side -- 298-2815 --), as well as to get a taste of the "real world." You'll make contacts in your area of professional interest. A summer job, interview, or even a career might develop from your day with a salesperson. You never know when you might need such a contact. You'll receive more information on this project early in the course. **You will not receive a passing final grade until this project is successfully completed.**

Jan 20	-	Martin Luther King Day – No Class
Feb 12	-	Lincoln's Birthday – No Class
Mar 10-14	-	Spring Break – No Class
March 30	-	Last Day to Drop with a W
May 7	-	Final – 8:00 – 9:50

Please note: Since we are online this semester, there will be some flexibility regarding the timing of the final. The posted time is when it would have been scheduled if the course was offered in its normal format.

## GRADING POLICY

The course grade will be based on the following factors, with weightings as indicated:

Mid Term Exam	20 %	A = 93% or above	C- = 70-72.99%
Comprehensive Final Exam	30 %	A- = 90-92.99%	D+ = 67-69.99%
Day with a Salesperson Exercise	20 %	B+ = 87-89.99%	D = 63-66.99%
Team Project and Presentation	15 %	B = 83-86.99%	D- = 60-62.99%
<u>Quizzes &amp; Homework</u>	<u>15 %</u>	B- = 80-82.99%	F = <60%
		C+ = 77-79.99%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>C = 73-76.99%</b>	

Grade breaking points may be lowered, but in no case will they be raised. These breaking points will be evaluated only after final numerical grades have been calculated.

**Attention Education Majors: Please note the following change:** You are required to receive a grade of a "C-" or better in this course in order to meet certification requirements. Receiving a grade below will require you to retake this course or find a substitute course to meet School of Agriculture graduation requirements.

Exams will consist of a wide variety of questions with emphasis on short answers and problem solving. Points for class participation will include meaningful participation in class discussions and attendance. Quizzes will be both announced and unannounced! The lowest quiz score will be dropped. The final will be comprehensive. Makeup exams will be given only in extreme situations.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be docked 10% per day (including the due date.) Assignments will not be accepted after the homework has been discussed in class.

The following guidelines should be used for all assignments.

- a. All papers are expected to be neat and legible.
- b. Do not use torn paper out of a spiral notebook.
- c. Answers to questions or problems should be in the order requested,
- d. Securely fasten all papers together with a staple or paper clip; do not dog-ear papers.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS**

**Academic Integrity:** The rules and regulations outlined in the University's policy on academic integrity are applied to this course.

## **DISCUSSION BOARDS**

We will use discussion boards to highlight specific issues with each chapter. The boards also help me assess (in part) your comprehension of the course material. Boards will be based (loosely) on 1 per Chapter of notes. There will be one quiz associated with each discussion board, and you must complete the discussion board before completing the quiz (the quiz will not appear until the discussion board has been completed).

## **ONLINE ABSENCE REPORTING SYSTEM**

The university has implemented an online absence reporting system. Please note that this system does not excuse your absence – it merely documents. It is still up to the instructor to excuse the absence. For more information please see: <http://wiu.edu/oars>. The Student Health Center will no longer issues absence forms. Excessive absences will result in failure of the course.

## **SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS**

If you need special accommodations, please feel free to stop by and discuss your needs or contact Disability Support Services at 298-2512.

## **PROJECTS**

**Day with a Salesperson Project:** Through this project, the student will directly observe a sales professional at work for an entire day. The student will be expected to arrange this observation day (with instructor approval), complete it, and write a report on the experience. This project will give the

student a feel for what it is like to be a salesperson. In addition, it will provide the student with professional contacts for summer employment, internships, and full-time employment.

The report should be a minimum of **5 typed pages, double-spaced**. Use a 12-point font (preferably Times Roman) and 1 inch margins. It should also include a title page (not included in the 4 page count). There should be no grammatical errors. Questions to consider asking during the daylong experience include, but are not limited to: (more detail will be provided in class)

- What does the salesperson consider to be the most/least important part of his/her job? What does the salesperson spend most of the time doing?
- What is the firm's philosophy?
- What does the salesperson think are the most important attributes to have and why? What is the most challenging part of their job?
- What is the most frustrating part of their job?
- What is the salesperson vision of the future in his or her area of agribusiness?
- What is the firm's market area?
- What are the firm's products and/or services offered? Who are the firm's competitors?
- Is their customer base growing?
- What type, if any, of incentives do they offer their customers?
- What is the typical buying behavior of their customers?
- What type of training program do they offer to new employees?
- How often do they communicate with others in the firm including other salespeople? How do they handle adverse situations?

**Team Project:** Students will be divided into teams. Each team will identify an agricultural firm of interest to the group. With instructor approval, the team will research the firm in terms of location, market territory, products and services, financials, customer base, etc. The team will then develop a sales plan and presentation for an agricultural product or service and present the team's sales plan to the class.

**Team Presentation:** Each team will be given up to 20 minutes to present their team project. The presentation will be graded on style, content, and effectiveness of the sales presentation. This presentation will be done using PowerPoint (with added sound) or by recording and uploading a video. Instructions on how to do this will be provided.

**Report on Team Presentation:** This 3-5 page (double-spaced) report will be an overview of the company along with a summary of your team's sales plan and presentation (one per team) -- what would your team change from the preparation activities, what went well with the presentation, what went poorly, how would the team handle objections in the future, etc. This should be relatively easy to write. The paper must be well organized, following good essay format and use of the English language. **The paper must be grammatically correct.** Use a 12-point Times Roman or Letter Gothic print-type and one-inch margins on all sides. The 3-5 page requirement relates only to the text -- title page and other attachments are not included in the page requirement. **The report is due 2 class periods after your classroom presentation.**

#### **USE OF TOBACCO:**

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

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **I. What is Selling and How People Buy**

A. What is AgriSelling?	Chapter 1
B. The Sales Profession	Chapter 2
C. Code of the Ethics	Appendix A
D. Rewards of Agricultural Selling Career	Chapter 3
E. Why People Buy	Chapter 4
F. How People Buy	Chapter 5
G. Working at Farm/Trade Shows	Appendix B

### **II. Customer Value and Your Role**

A. Customers Buy Value	Chapter 6
B. The Market System	Chapter 7
C. Selling with a Strategy	Chapter 8

## **MIDTERM EXAM**

### **III. Effective Selling Skills**

A. Prospecting	Chapter 9
B. Planning and Organizing for Success	Chapter 10
C. Building Customer Relationships	Chapter 11
D. Identifying Customer Needs and Values	Chapter 12
E. Presenting Your Value	Chapter 13
F. Dealing Resistance	Chapter 14
G. Closing the Sale	Chapter 15
H. Planning and Preparing for Customer Meeting	Appendix E
I. Handling Customer Complaints	Appendix C
J. Collecting Accounts	Appendix D
K. Creating Customer Satisfaction	Chapter 16

## **FINAL EXAM**

## **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 or stick with the anticipated number of exams. Any deviations from the syllabus will be announced as soon as possible.