

# AGEC315: Scientific Writing and Communication for Agricultural Business

## Spring 2021 Syllabus (HY)

### **Course Description:**

Business leaders have made it clear that they feel many incoming professionals lack the skill set for successful communication in a professional environment. This course will cover a wide range of scientific writing and communication topics, encompassing but not limited to data and information literacy, professional/business communication, academic writing and research, and presentation. This course will help students develop communication skills with applications for any career path in the broad agribusiness industry.

### **Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

The primary objective of this course is to help students develop their communication skills (written and otherwise) in the context of agricultural business. This will allow students to be better prepared, more efficient communicators as they enter and navigate the workforce. During this course, students should:

- start to understand how data and other important sources of information can be integrated effectively into documents and presentations;
- improve their ability to better read and navigate a vast (and growing) network of information;
- learn about the different communication tools and the expectations they may face in the workplace;
- expand their knowledge of how to present various types of content (written and otherwise) to various audiences; and
- improve their writing through content creation, revision, and feedback.

### **Instructor:**



Instructor:	Anthony R. Delmond, PhD
Office:	143 Brehm Hall
Phone:	(731) 881-1098
Email:	<a href="mailto:adelmond@utm.edu">adelmond@utm.edu</a>
Website:	<a href="https://utm.instructure.com/courses/26313">https://utm.instructure.com/courses/26313</a>
Class Time:	TR, 2:30-3:45 p.m., Virtual Classroom (to start the semester) [ <i>not all class days will be utilized for class meetings</i> ]
Office Hours:	Class time for any days we do not meet and by appointment
Credit Hours:	3.0
Prerequisites:	N/A

### Course Resources:

Some components of this course are online. Students need access to a reliable computer, internet, document processing software, speakers, etc.

### Recommended Materials:

Text:

- *Economical Writing: Thirty-Five Rules for Clear and Persuasive Prose*, 3rd Edition. Deirdre N. McCloskey. University of Chicago Press, 2019.
- *Doing Economics: A Guide to Understanding and Carrying Out Economic Research*, 1st Edition. Steven A. Greenlaw. South-Western, Cengage Learning, 2009.
- *Agricultural Communications in Action: A Hands-On Approach*, 1st Edition. Ricky Telg and Tracy Anne Irani. DELMAR, Cengage Learning, 2012.
- *The Elements of Style*, 4th Edition. William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White. Pearson, 2000.

### Additional Readings:

Any other literature distributed throughout the semester is considered required unless otherwise stated by the Instructor.

### Course Design:

In a typical semester, we would routinely exchange assignments and review each other's work in person. Feedback is crucial in this course, because it helps students internalize and integrate the course content. Unfortunately, this is not a typical

semester. In order to present the material I want to cover and to provide students with as many benefits as possible from interactive work, we're going to have a different course structure than I would typically employ.

This course will begin fully online, per the university's policy. However, we will stay online for the first month of class and reassess at that time. Sessions will be synchronous, and we will alternate between lecture days and workshop days. Students will need to attend all sessions, and students should plan to use a webcam or smartphone with a microphone for all virtual class sessions.

The structure of the class may be adapted as the semester goes on, but this is how the course will begin.

### **Assessments:**

Assignments and Participation: There are two assignment types for this course: individual and participatory assignments. Participation is mandatory for this course, and it will be considered in this section.

- Individual Assignments: Assignments will be accessible through Canvas. Each Module will have an associated assignment. Individual assignments may vary substantially -- some may be short editing assignments; others may be short written assignments. These are meant to be completed individually and deadlines will be posted (with reminders in class).
- Participatory Assignments: These will be completed during class time (mostly on workshop days). For these assignments, we often will take the individual assignments discussed above and review them together (either as a class or one-on-one with your student peers). This is an opportunity for students to work together to build and integrate their skills and knowledge while having direct access to the instructor for questions. There will be no make-up participatory assignments, and only qualifying absences will be excused on workshop days.

Research Project: Each student will choose one controversial topic in agriculture. The goal of this project is for each student to stick with a single theme and carry it throughout the semester, developing related content for many of the topics discussed in the course (for example, building a related social media post). Project benchmark items will be added throughout the semester. The professor's plagiarism policy is strict. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this or any other assignment, and if discovered it will result in a zero for the course (not just the research paper) and potentially the pursuit of further disciplinary action through the University.

Benchmark #0: Topic Selection. Each student must select a unique topic (that no other student selects). Sign up early to make sure you get the product you want! **Due: Thursday, January 28, 2021.**

Exams: There will be two noncumulative, mid-semester exams and a cumulative final exam. Make sure you prepare adequately for all three exams. The format will be discussed prior to each exam.

**Tentative Exam Dates (subject to change):**

Exam #1	Week of February 15, 2021
Exam #2	Week of March 21, 2021
Final Exam	Tuesday, May 7, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**Grading Policy:**

Assignments and Participation	<b>40%</b>
Research Project	<b>30%</b>
Exams	<b>30%</b>

Course grades will be determined using the following scale:

A	90–100%
B	80–89.99%
C	70–79.99%
D	60–69.99%
F	0–59.99%

Scores will be updated on Canvas on a regular basis.

**Contacting the Instructor:**

Students are encouraged to ask questions in class. This is important as students often have similar questions and this provides the most efficient option for the instructor to

answer questions for the entire class. Students may also ask questions by email or through the Canvas Inbox or attend office hours. **If you send an email, please include “AGEC315” in the subject line.** The instructor will usually answer all emails within one business day (unless I am away from the office). You should try to complete all assignments well in advance of deadlines in case you have questions.

### **Student Expectations:**

Be Prepared: Students are expected to complete any assigned readings (or watch any assigned videos) prior to class. Referring to the readings will give students a better understanding of the course content, will significantly improve performance on assignments, and will make for more active and meaningful classroom discussions.

Be Professional: Each student is expected to be a positive member of and contributor to the class.

Students are expected to be courteous and participate in a manner that facilitates a positive learning environment for everyone. Mutual respect and collaborative effort are essential.

Regarding professional communication, emails (and written class discussions/communications) should *never* include text-like abbreviations or slang (for example, “LOL”). It is beneficial for you as a student to practice formal communication to better prepare for a professional career. An email should include a salutation or greeting, a body with proper and appropriate grammar, and a signature. Given the nature of this course, students may be graded on any communication in this course since that’s a major component of the curriculum. Please practice formal communication with other students and certainly with all of your UTM professors!

Be Honest: In addition to the University policies outlined below, I include a comment on honesty. Cheating will not be tolerated in this course. This includes acquiring answers, using “cheat sheets,” cell/smart phones, or providing answers to others during examinations or assigned work, unless otherwise specified by the instructor. Presenting work or ideas of another individual without giving credit and proper documentation is plagiarism. According to Richard L. Saunders from the UTM Paul Meek Library, “Plagiarism is using others’ ideas or words without clearly acknowledging the source. Boiled down, plagiarism means passing off someone else’s work or ideas as your own, whether or not the source is identified. Copying all or part of a

Website, document, or presenting an image without a correct citation, constitutes plagiarism.”

Consult the following Website if you have questions about plagiarism:

<http://www.utm.edu/departments/library/tutorials/plagiarism/>. Cheating or plagiarism is a serious offense. If you are caught cheating in any form you will receive an automatic failing grade for the course and the case will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

### **Instructor Responsibilities:**

The instructor agrees to be prepared, professional, respectful, honest, and fair. It is the instructor's responsibility to ensure that students have the opportunity to gain a clear understanding of the course material and to be fair and consistent in grading. The instructor agrees to be available for additional help and to be conscious of the learning pace of the class (and adapt the pace as necessary). I am here to help you! Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need extra assistance.

### **Disclaimer:**

This syllabus may be adjusted during the semester at the instructor's discretion.

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## **University Policies & Resources**

**Academic Integrity:** The University of Tennessee at Martin has chosen as its primary objective quality undergraduate education. Commitment to this objective must include an obligation by all members of the University community to promote and protect the highest standards of integrity in study, research, instruction and evaluation. Dishonesty or unethical behavior does not belong at an institution dedicated to the promotion of knowledge and learning. Integrity of the academic process requires fair and impartial evaluation by faculty and honest academic conduct by students. Specific integrity attributes can be found at: [http://www.utm.edu/departments/conduct/new\\_academic\\_integrity.php](http://www.utm.edu/departments/conduct/new_academic_integrity.php) (Links to an external site.).

**Standard of Conduct:** When persons enroll in the University of Tennessee at Martin, they retain the rights and duties of a citizen. Additionally, they must assume the duties and observe the regulations imposed by the University community. Specific conduct attributes can be found at: <http://www.utm.edu/departments/conduct/conduct.php> (Links to an external site.).

**Disability Services:** The University of Tennessee provides reasonable accommodations (academic adjustments and auxiliary aids) to ensure equal access to educational content and university programs for students with disabilities. If you have a

disability that may require assistance or accommodation, or if you have questions related to any accommodations for testing, notetaking, reading, etc., please speak with the instructor as soon as possible. Students who are eligible for and who request accommodations through the Office of Disability Services must provide instructors with a **letter of accommodation** (sent directly from the Student Success Center). If you need a letter of accommodation for the semester or if you think you may have a learning disability, contact the Office of Disability Services located in the Student Success Center, 203 Clement Hall, (731) 881-7605 (<https://www.utm.edu/departments/disabilities/> (Links to an external site.)).

**Emergency Alerts:** Though the probability of incurring a campus emergency is minimal, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with various emergency alerts and evacuation procedures in case of emergency. University alerts and guidelines are available at: <https://www.utm.edu/alerts/> (Links to an external site.) (Emergency Response Plan at <https://www.utm.edu/pdfs/Emergency%20Response%20Plan%20-%20Revised%20Dec%202016%20-%20MEDIA%20Version.pdf> (Links to an external site.)).

**Non-Discrimination Statement:** The University of Tennessee at Martin is an equal employment opportunity institution and does not discriminate based upon race, color, or national origin. The University's Office of Equity and Diversity has adopted a policy and procedures to provide students and employees, who feel that they have experienced discrimination but are uncertain as to whether a complaint is justified or whether they wish to initiate a formal complaint, the opportunity to discuss their concerns confidentially and informally with the Equity and Diversity Officer/Title VI Coordinator for prompt and equitable resolution of discrimination complaints.

All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment and admission without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran status, and parental status. In accordance with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the University of Tennessee at Martin affirmatively states that it does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or disability in its education programs and activities, and this policy extends to employment by the university. Inquiries and charges of violation of Title VI (race, color, and national origin), Title IX (sex), Section 504 (disability), the ADA (disability), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (age), sexual orientation, or veteran status should be directed to the Office of Equity and Diversity, 544 University Street, #303, Martin, TN 38238, telephone 731-881-3505. Requests for accommodation of a disability should be directed to the ADA Coordinator at the Office of Equity and Diversity (<https://www.utm.edu/departments/equalopp/> (Links to an external site.)).

## Useful Resources:

### The Hortense Parrish Writing

**Center** (<http://www.utm.edu/departments/writingcenter/> ([Links to an external site.](#)))

offers free, non-credit, tutorial instruction to UTM students who need help with any stage of the writing process, including brainstorming, outlining, organization, drafting, revision, research, creative writing, source citation, and grammar. Walk-in and virtual tutoring appointments (via Zoom) are available, so feel free to stop by their office located at 209 Andy Holt Humanities Building, or send them a virtual-tutoring appointment request ([owl@utm.edu](mailto:owl@utm.edu)). Questions can be sent to the same email address or you can call (731) 881-7277.

The Paul Meek Library (<https://www.utm.edu/departments/library/information/> ([Links to an external site.](#))) is an excellent resource for students with skilled staff available to help students find what they need.

In addition to your department faculty advisor, the University offers Student Support Resources ([https://www.utm.edu/departments/ecos/student\\_support.php](https://www.utm.edu/departments/ecos/student_support.php) ([Links to an external site.](#))), including help and information on registration, fees, financial aid, and student health and counseling services. You are welcome to talk with your faculty advisor or any instructor regarding issues you may be facing.

### **Lauren's Promise: I will listen and believe you if someone is threatening you.**

Lauren McCluskey, a 21-year-old honors student athlete and the daughter of my PhD committee chair, was murdered on Oct. 22, 2018, by a man she briefly dated on the University of Utah campus. We must all take action to ensure that this never happens again.

If you are in immediate danger, call **911** or the appropriate emergency services number for your area.

If you are experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, and/or stalking, please report it to me and I will connect you to resources or call the Tennessee Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 356-6767, WRAP (Women's/Men's Resource and Rape Assistance Program) at (800) 273-8712, or Pathways Crisis Hotline (800) 372-0693.

Any form of sexual harassment or violence will not be tolerated at the University of Tennessee at Martin. UTM has instituted procedures to respond to violations of these laws and standards, programs aimed at the prevention of such conduct, and intervention on behalf of the victims. [\\* \(Links to an external site.\)](#) [\\*\\* \(Links to an external site.\)](#)



UTM police officers will treat victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking with respect and dignity. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance and UTM police will assist by providing resources to victims. In addition to its law enforcement efforts regarding sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking, UTM police refer victims to the appropriate university and/or local community counseling and other resources devoted to assisting victims.

Advocates help survivors determine their own needs in regards to their physical and emotional health, reporting options, and academic concerns. They connect survivors to campus and community services, and provide accompaniment to important appointments (court, hospital, and police) and support throughout the process. UTM police can also connect you with advocacy services, if desired. The local advocacy group is the [Victim Assistance and Advocacy Project \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Other confidential resources include UTM [Student Health and Counseling Services \(Links to an external site.\)](#). Information shared with UTM counselors will not be provided to UTM police without expressed permission from you. If you are an online student and cannot arrange counselling services at the UTM campus, I would be happy to help you gain access to similar services in your area.