



ANSC 2312
Current Issues in Agriculture
Spring 2017



Instructor

Christopher M. Estep, PhD
Assistant Professor
Office: 103A RAS
Phone: 432-837-8210
Email: cestep@sulross.edu
Office Hours: M,W,F 8:00am – 10:30am
Or by appointment

Time and Location

TR 11:00am – 12:15pm – 130 RAS

Course Description

This course is designed to educate students about major issues in the food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences and to expose students to a variety of methods used to critically evaluate contentious issues and effectively communicate, inform, and influence decisions made about these issues. Additionally, this course explores the impacts agricultural issues have on the agricultural industry and society.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe current contentious issues in the food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences.
2. Recognize and differentiate facts, fiction, and opinion.
3. Facilitate consensus building and conflict management relating to contentious issues in the food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences.
4. Critically analyze the evidence/data pertaining to current issues in the food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences.
5. Synthesize evidence pertaining to current issues in the food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences and draw conclusions based on this evidence.

TEA AFNR Educator Standards

Standard I. The AFNR teacher understands the scope of agriculture...

Standard V. The AFNR teacher understands animal science and animal food processing and applies principles and methods used in animal care, production, and management.

Standard VII. The AFNR teacher has a basic understanding of emerging technologies and understands the use of information technologies in the AFNR industries.

(ANSC) Student Learning Outcomes:

Student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate the basic skills of interpreting research data gathered in an agricultural context,
2. Apply critical thinking skills to mitigate potential challenges in diverse animal sciences and related agricultural industries,
3. Develop problem solving skills, and
4. Demonstrate the ability to communicate through written, spoken, and graphical methods.

Required Texts

Course readings will be assigned by the instructor. They will be made available in class or via the Blackboard course management system.

DESCRIPTION OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Speaker Reflections (20pts X 10 = 200pts)

Following each guest speaker's presentation, you will reflect on the issue and the content provided by the speaker and write a three paragraph reflection. The reflection should not only include content that you learned, but also your view/opinion on the issue and how the information that was presented strengthened or altered your viewpoint.

Reflections will be due at the beginning of class the Tuesday following each speaker's presentation. You will turn reflections in on Blackboard. There will be 10 reflections turned in and each reflection is worth 20 pts. There will be 11 speakers total, so you will have one speaker for which you do not have to write a reflection; you may choose which one.

Remember, this reflection is not a recap of the presentation. In other words, do not say, "The speaker said this..." This reflection exercise is designed to get you to critically evaluate the speaker and their evidence/data, determine whether you agree with the speaker's opinion/viewpoint and why, and develop your own conclusions. Grading will be based on thoughtful reflection that addresses the questions below and writing mechanics (grammar/punctuation/spelling). To write your reflections, please use the following points to guide you:

Paragraph 1 – Analysis

- Describe the important components of the issue.
- Provide a description of the speaker's use of data, opinions, and assumptions.
- Logically indicate how you could support the speaker's conclusions.
- Logically indicate how you could oppose the speaker's conclusions.
- Describe the relevant components of the speaker's arguments.
- Describe the irrelevant components of the speaker's arguments.

Paragraph 2 – Evaluation

- Describe the credibility of the facts, opinions, and assumptions used by the speaker.
- Describe how you think people would react to the arguments made by the speaker.
- Provide supplementary evidence that you think might strengthen the speaker's case.
- Describe what implications you think the speaker's conclusions might have for the future of the agricultural industry.
- Identify the logical strength of the speaker's case.

Paragraph 3 – Inference/Synthesis

- Describe your judgment (do you agree/disagree) based on the evidence provided by the speaker.
- Describe your reasoning that led you to your conclusion.
- Identify the criteria you used to lead you to your conclusion.
- Describe any possible alternative conclusions to consider.
- Indicate any specific implications that might result from your conclusion.
- Provide recommendations or plans to gather more information based on your conclusion.

The following rubric will be used to evaluate your speaker reflections:

	Points
Clearly & effectively responds to assignment and questions.	
Demonstrated thorough understanding and interpretation of the speaker and issue.	
Exceptionally developed reflective thoughts supported by a variety of relevant facts, examples, & illustrations from the speaker and other sources.	
Clarity, organization & structure very evident.	
Correct grammar, word usage, spelling, and punctuation.	
Total	20

Issues Briefing Guide & Presentation

The objective of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to translate information on one of the issues covered in the course into a more understandable form, which can be used by your classmates to grasp the issue. Your target audience for the briefing guide will be your fellow students in this class.

In groups, you will be assigned one of the issues in class to research. Be prepared to lead a discussion the class period prior to the speaker's presentation. **You must provide enough copies of the issues briefing guide for each person in the class (students and instructor).**

Your grade on this assignment will be divided up into two parts: the briefing guide and the presentation. For the presentation you will present the pertinent information to your classmates the class period (Tuesday) before the scheduled speaker. The criteria for the briefing guide paper are as follows:

- 3-4 page double-spaced typed and the layout should be simple to follow.
- Find objective sources of information on the topic (i.e. textbooks, research articles) – this will be the basis of your issues briefing guide.
- You must include relevant research, which could be general background research that adds to the understanding of the issue and its relevance.
- You must use at least 5 scientific, peer-reviewed journal articles as sources and properly cite them. Your reference page does not count toward the page requirement. Cite using APA style. Information on how to use APA can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
- Use bulleted lists to present complex information.
- Use proper grammar and punctuation.
- There will be three sections to your Issues Brief:
 - Background and history of the issue
 - Identify all stakeholders and their points of view about the issue
 - Works Cited

Crisis Communication Plan

Students will assigned an issue and create a strategic communication plan in preparation of a crisis. The objective of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to create a crisis communication plan. Crisis communication plans are often created and sometimes have to be used by different organizations when food, agricultural, and natural resource science issues have to be strategically communicated. Having a good plan "on hand" and ready to use is essential to effectively communicate when a crisis arises.

The following are the components of the crisis communication plan that are required:

- **Cover page**
 - What type of crisis does this plan address?
 - What type of organization is this plan for?
 - Names of persons writing the plan
- **Table of Contents**
- **Introduction**
 - Why should this potential crisis be addressed?
 - Why is this plan important?
 - What issues can arise if this plan is not followed?
 - What are the risk factors associated with this crisis?
- **Purpose and Objectives**
 - Succinctly written statement of purpose for the plan
 - Objectives of plan written in short sentence form, beginning with action verbs
- **Identify Key Publics**
 - External and internal
 - How will these publics be notified, contacted?
 - How will you give each internal audience notice of the crisis?
- **Identify the Crisis Team**
 - What organizational departments should have a representative on your crisis team?
- **Identify a Public Relations Spokesperson**
 - Create at least 5 interview tips for the public relations spokesperson
 - Create 5 possible "trick" questions the media might ask
 - Briefly create answers to each of these questions
- **Identify Experts who could Speak to this Crisis**
 - 3-5 experts
 - Explain why each of these people would be used
- **Develop Key Messages**
 - What statement should the organization put out in the event of this crisis?
 - 4-5 key messages
 - What is the "one-liner" that you want the media to pick up?
- **Dissemination of Key Messages**
 - How will the key messages reach the intended audiences
- **Identify types of Pre-information you should have on hand for this crisis**
 - Create a fill-in-the-blank news release for your crisis
- **Evaluation**
 - How will you evaluate the success of your crisis plan?
 - 3-5 evaluation techniques
 - Brief rationale for each technique

In addition, you will be required to present your crisis communication plan to the class. The length of your presentation will be 15 minutes and visual aids are required. More information will be provided in the crisis communication plan rubric.

Exams

Exams will cover any material taught in class, as well as any information presented by the guest speakers. Exams will be take-home and will not be multiple-choice. All exam questions will be in essay format and will require you to synthesize and evaluate the information from class. Since these are take-home exams, you will be expected to provide sufficient information and documentation to back up your answers.

Participation, Attendance, and other assignments

A high degree of engagement is expected and will contribute to your learning as an active participant. This includes interacting with the instructor, speakers, and other students, completing outside of class assignments and readings, and being prepared to participate in class discussions. This class is the beginning of your journey to becoming a professional. Evidence of professionalism includes attendance, collegial attitude, participation, and punctuality.

Course Assignments	Points
Speaker Reflections (10 x 20pts each)	200
Issues Briefing Guide	125
Issues Briefing Guide Presentation	25
Exams (2 X 150)	300
Crisis Communication Plan and Presentation	300
Attendance/participation	50

Grading Scale

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = below 60%

Attendance and Make-up Exams and Assignments

Students' class attendance and participation are required. All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. No emailed assignments will be accepted and no work will be accepted past the deadline set by the syllabus unless noted by the instructor. No consideration of extending a due date will be considered on the day an assignment is due, students should contact the instructor if they are expecting to be unable to meet a deadline.

Any time instruction is missed, for any reason, it will count as an absence. College approved field trips, and competitive and leadership development events are considered legitimate and with proper documentation will not be considered an absence. However, it is up to the student to inform the instructor before the absence in the form of a professional email. Seeking an extended deadline due to the above mentioned absences should be arranged before missing the course meeting. In case of emergencies, arrangements for completing assignments should be made immediately upon return to campus. Missing an examination for an unexcused absence will result in a grade of zero on the exam.

Use of technology during instruction

This class is part of your journey to becoming a professional, and the use of personal cell phones, iPads, computers, and other electronic devices can distract learning for all individuals and create an unprofessional environment. However, electronic devices can also be powerful tools to be used in the learning process. Therefore, the use of electronic devices for class purposes, such as note-taking and internet searches is allowed. But, remember that you are now a professional and will be required to act accordingly. So, if you choose to use electronic devices in the classroom, please do so in a professional manner.

Academic Honesty

On all work submitted for credit by students in this course, the following pledge is either required or implied: **"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."**

As members of a learning community, all should strive to be honest in all endeavors. A fundamental principle is that the whole process of learning and pursuit of knowledge is diminished by cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, every dishonest act in the academic environment affects other students adversely, from the skewing of the grading curve to giving unfair advantage for honors or for professional or graduate school admission. Therefore, the university will take severe action against dishonest students. Similarly, measures will be taken against faculty, staff and administrators who practice dishonest or demeaning behavior.

Expectations

The purpose of this class is to help you become a professional in the agricultural and natural resource sciences. The information and skills you learn in this course are designed to help you develop your expertise and professionalism. Therefore, the activities you will be required to complete work toward achieving this goal. In line with this, there are some expectations that I have of you, and conversely, there are some expectations that you should have of me. The expectations for this course are as follows:

I will expect you to:

- Complete all assignments thoroughly, in a timely manner.
- Attend all classes, unless there are extenuating circumstances, which you should inform me of as soon as possible.
- Be on time for all class sessions and activities
- Look at each assignment as an occasion for you to learn, and make the most of every learning opportunity.
- Be honest and submit your own original work.
- Participate in class discussions and activities; this helps you as well as all of your classmates.
- Enjoy this class!

You can expect me to:

- Provide learning opportunities that advance your knowledge and development in agricultural education.
- Be available before and after class, during office hours, and at other times (I have an open door policy) to provide assistance and answer your questions.
- Be fair in my grading and assessment of your work.
- Provide you with timely, constructive feedback on your work.
- Enjoy this class!

About Me

I grew up in Elgin, Texas where I was a member of my high school FFA chapter. I attended Texas A&M University and received my BS degree in Animal Science. Afterwards, I worked for HEB Grocery Company for 2 years as a meat processor and then for Ruffino Meats as a sausage processing manager. My love of FFA and agricultural education led me to pursue my Master's degree in AgEd at Texas A&M. I was a high school ag teacher at Greenwood High School in Midland, Texas for three years. I then went to the University of Florida to work on my PhD in AgEd.

Reasonable Accommodation Statement

It is the SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of physical, mental, or learning disabilities, please contact the ADA coordinator in Student Services: Ferguson 112, 837-8203.

ANSC 2312 Course Calendar

Dates	Topics / Learning Experiences	Readings/ Assignments Due
1/17	Introductions/Syllabus/Professionalism/Guest Speaker Interaction	
1/19	What are Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences?	
1/24	Critical thinking – Issues Briefing Guides (draw for topics)	
1/26	Critical thinking – evaluating the evidence	
1/31	Agenda setting and message framing	
2/2	Sustainable Agriculture – <i>Dr. Bonnie Warnock</i> , Professor, Sul Ross State University	
2/7	Agenda setting and message framing	Reflection due
2/9	Water Quality/Water Quantity – <i>Adeline Fox</i> – Project Manager, WaterPR	
2/14	Persuasion	Reflection due
2/16	Immigration – <i>Steven Zahniser</i> – Agricultural Economist, USDA Economic Research Service	
2/21	Research Methods and Public Opinion	Reflection due
2/23	Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) – <i>Jayce Winters</i> , Communications Manager, TCFA	
2/28	Research Methods and Public Opinion	Reflection due
3/2	Supplemental Growth Hormones – <i>Dr. Jamie Boyd</i> – Assistant Professor, Sul Ross State University	
3/7	Exam 1	Reflection due
3/9	Messages about Agriculture – <i>Dr. Joy Rumble</i> – Assistant Professor, PIE Center, University of Florida	
3/13-17	Spring Break – no classes	
3/21	Crisis Communication	Reflection due
3/23	GMOs – <i>Dr. Brian Gardunia</i> – Monsanto	
3/28	Crisis Communication	Reflection due
3/30	Animal Rights/Animal Welfare – <i>Dr. Greg Archer</i> – Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist, Texas A&M University	
4/4	Common Ground/Conflict Management	Reflection due
4/6	Organic Agriculture – <i>Efran Delgado</i> , Owner, Delgado Farms	
4/11	Common Ground/Conflict Management	Reflection due
4/13	Food Safety – <i>Dr. Gary Acuff</i> – Director, Center for Food Safety, TAMU	
4/18	Effectively using social media to convey messages	Reflection due
4/20	Antibiotic use in livestock – <i>Dr. Nicole Sanchez</i> , Research Animal Scientist, USDA	
4/25	Crisis Communication Plan Presentations	Reflection due; CC Plans due
4/27	Crisis Communication Plan Presentations	
5/2	Last day of class – Reflect over the semester	