

AGEC 3020
Practice Makes Perfect:
Applying Principles of Economics to Current Agricultural and Agribusiness Problems
Spring Semester 2015

Professor Nicole Ballenger/ Office: AG 210/ Email: nicoleb@uwyo.edu

Class Time: MWF 11:00 – 11:50 am

Location: AG 328

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 3-5 pm. Other times by appointment.

Email me anytime with questions or to arrange alternative office hours. And feel free to stop by my office and stick your head in.

Prerequisites: AGECECON 1020 and AGECECON 1010, or equivalent Principles of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics courses. Satisfactory completion of English 1010 (COM1) and Math 1400 (College Algebra). COSC 1200 is highly recommended.

Required Books:

Barkley, Andrew and Paul W. Barkley. 2013. *Principles of Agricultural Economics*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York. ISBN: 978-0-415-54070-4.

Fulwiler, Toby and Alan R. Hayakawa. 2008 (third edition). *Pocket Reference for Writers*. Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. ISBN: 0-13-614237-0.

Beebe, Steven A. and Susan J. Beebe. 2015 (fourth edition). *A Concise Public Speaking Handbook*. Pearson, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. ISBN-13: 978-0205897216; ISBN-10: 0205897215.

Other readings (typically on line) will be assigned to accompany specific sections of the course.

Course description: This COM2 course is designed primarily for Agricultural Business majors¹ who have completed AGECECON 1010 and AGECECON 1020 (Principles of Macro and Micro Economics) and have not yet taken 4000-level courses in the major. However, it is also open to students with other majors who have met the prerequisites. The class is limited to 24 students.

The purpose of the class is twofold:

- To practice applying concepts, tools, and models from principles of economics to real-world problems and issues affecting agriculture and agribusiness; and
- To develop foundational written, oral, and digital communication skills for sharing information about agricultural economic issues.

¹ The Agricultural Business major includes four options: Agribusiness Management, Farm and Ranch Management, International Agriculture, and Livestock Business Management.

Learning objectives: The course is designed to meet the seven USP 2015 learning outcomes for Communication 2 (COM2) courses:

1. Develop and share written, oral, and digital messages through **a variety of assignments**.
2. **Find, analyze, evaluate, and document information** appropriately using a variety of sources.
3. Understand the different purposes of written, oral, and digital messages and employ appropriate **organizational strategies**.
4. Make effective use of a **writing process** and **collaboration** in the achievement of a final work of communication.
5. Observe accepted **conventions** including spelling, grammar, organizational structure, punctuation, delivery and documentation in oral, written, and digital messages.
6. **Deliver prepared presentations** in a natural, confident, and conversational manner.
7. **Interact effectively** with audience members, engage opposing viewpoints constructively, and demonstrate active listening skills.

Grades will be based on the following:²

- Written communication of economic information and analysis (3 individual assignments) (45%)
- Oral and digital communication of economic information and analysis (individual contributions to 2 team assignments) (40%)
- Completion of a number of in-class practice exercises (15%). To receive credit, assignments must be turned in by the due date, must be complete and largely correct, and must be neat and readable.

The grading system is as follows:³

A	90-100 percent	B	80-89 percent	C	70-79 percent
D	60-69 percent	F	Below 60 percent		

Attendance policy: Attendance at every class period is expected. This course is very intensive. It covers a lot of ground, including many technical concepts from economics, and numerous principles of written, oral, and digital communications. Keeping on top of all of the material is essential in order to do well on individual assignments, and to be an effective and full-fledged contributor to team assignments. **I am not willing to repeat course material presented in class during an absence except in the case of University-excused or other legitimate absences.** Legitimate absences include University-excused absences (e.g. for traveling sports teams), illness or injury, or inability to get to class due to unsafe or closed roads. I expect to be notified by email ahead of class about excused or legitimate absences. If you must miss class you should work with a classmate to obtain class notes and stay up to date on assignments.

² Grading rubrics will be provided along with each assignment.

³ If a majority of the class prefers, the grading scale may be revised to allow for plus and minus grades.

Course Outline and Schedule:

*The course will be organized into three application-centered modules, each 5 weeks long. Each module involves investigating, analyzing, and communicating about one real-world economic issue important for the agricultural or agribusiness sector.*⁴

An outline for the class follows, but is subject to modification as needed.

Module One:

Required reading: Chapters 1-6, Barkley and Barkley

Proposed rule:

<http://wyowool.com/NewsandInfo/2015/04%2014%202015%20Proposed%20Herder%20Rule.pdf>

Week 1 (January 25-29):

- Overview of the class
- Introduction of the first application: **The H-2A sheepherder program**
- Review print and web-based communications that illustrate various perspectives on the issue
- Breakdown the problem: Begin review of concepts from economics that can be used to analyze the issue

Week 2 (February 1-5):

- Breakdown the problem: Continue review of concepts from economics that can be used to analyze the issue
- Data needs, data sources, and effective presentation of pertinent data
- Search the economics literature for relevant analyses

Week 3 (February 8-12)

- Writing and oral communication: skill development and practice

Week 4 (February 15-19):

- Develop an economic analysis of the issue
- Discuss the outcomes of the analysis. What did we learn? Who wants to know or should know this information? How do we communicate with these audiences?

Week 5 (February 22-26):

- Oral presentations by two teams (all team members must participate)

⁴ The agricultural and agribusiness sector is broadly defined to encompass agricultural and food businesses and markets; natural resource management associated with agriculture, ranching, and agribusiness; and rural community economic development and wellbeing.

- Informal assessment of presentations by audience
- First writing assignments are due

Module Two

Required reading: Chapters 7 and 8, Barkley and Barkley

Week 6 (February 29-March 4):

- Introduction of the second application: **Will a fat tax make us skinny?**
- Review print and web-based communications that illustrate various perspectives on the issue
- Breakdown the problem: Begin review of concepts from economics that can be used to analyze the issue

Week 7 (March 7-11):

- Breakdown the problem: Continue review of concepts from economics that can be used to analyze the issue
- Data needs, data sources, and effective presentation of pertinent data
- Search the economics literature for relevant analyses

Week 8 (March 21-25):

- Digital communication: skill development and practice

Week 9 (March 28-April 1):

- Develop an economic analysis of the issue
- Discuss the outcomes of the analysis. What did we learn? Who wants to know or should know this information? How do we communicate with these audiences?

Week 10 (April 4-8):

- Oral presentations by two teams (all team members must participate)
- Informal assessment of presentations by audience
- Second writing assignments are due

Module 3

Required reading: Chapters 9-13, Barkley and Barkley

Week 11 (April 11-15):

- Introduction of the third application: **Easing restrictions on U.S.-Cuba agricultural trade**
- Review print and web-based communications that illustrate various perspectives on the issue
- Breakdown the problem: Begin review of concepts from economics that can be used to analyze the issue

Week 12 (April 18-22):

- Breakdown the problem: Continue review of concepts from economics that can be used to analyze the issue
- Data needs, data sources, and effective presentation of pertinent data
- Search the economics literature for relevant analyses

Week 13 (April 25-29):

- Develop an economic analysis of the issue
- Discuss the outcomes of the analysis. What did we learn? Who wants to know or should know this information? How do we communicate with these audiences?

Week 14 (May 2-6):

- Oral presentations by two teams (all team members must participate)
- Informal assessment of presentations by audience
- Third writing assignments are due

Finals Week (May 9-13)

During the two-hour final exam period, each team will have 15 minutes to present its digital communication of its assigned issue. (There are two teams for each issue, for a total of six teams.) Each team must submit signed statements that describe each team member's contribution to the digital product. Attendance during the entire 2-hour period is required in order to receive credit for the digital product.

Description of written, oral, and digital communication assignments

Written communication assignments:

For each of the three application modules, each student will be assigned one of the 3 written communications formats (OUTCOME 1). In a class of 24, for each module, eight students will have format 1, eight will have format 2, and eight will have format 3. At the end of the third module, each student will have a portfolio that includes each form of written communication. Assessment and feedback on the written assignments will follow each applications module. Students are encouraged to make revisions based on the feedback, and the final assessment will be based on the complete, revised portfolio compiled by each student. The written communication formats are as follows:

Format 1: A "text box" to be incorporated into a Principles of Economics textbook. The text box will explain how one or more basic economic concepts can be used to analyze the issue we are studying. (Data or digital materials, such as a link to a video or website, may be incorporated in the text box.)

Format 2: A short “issue brief” written in memo form to a decision maker (e.g. a legislator or a company executive). The memo should, for example, help a legislator understand the economics of the issue we are studying and how her constituents may be affected.

Format 3: A short “storytelling with data” piece. This piece should present economic data in an effective format (e.g. table, chart, or graph) and use text to explain what the data tell us about the issue we are studying.

Each writing assignment will be evaluated based on content, use and documentation of sources (OUTCOME 2), effective organization and integration of data or digital materials (OUTCOME 3), and accepted conventions for written communications (OUTCOME 5).

Oral and digital communication assignments:

Students will be grouped into **six teams of 4 members each**. Two teams will have responsibility for oral and digital communications associated with module one; two for module two; and two for module three. Each group has two formal oral and digital communication assignments related to its module (OUTCOME 1). The assignments are as follow:

1. Develop an oral presentation that communicates about the issue, the analysis, and the findings. Examples include a panel discussion by experts, a Congressional hearing, a structured discussion between a professor and students, or a town hall meeting with a politician. There must be a clearly defined and documented role for each member of the team as well as overall presentation cohesiveness. Presentations will be assessed based on an oral communications assessment rubric, as well as content.
2. Develop **and orally present** a website or other digital product (such as a blog site, or video) that communicates about the issue, the analysis, and the findings. There must be a clearly defined and documented role for each member of the team as well as overall project cohesiveness. Digital products will be assessed based on a digital communication assessment rubric, as well as content. The presentations of the digital products will be assessed based on an oral communications assessment rubric.

The first assignment will be presented and evaluated informally by peers and formally by the instructor during the last week of the team’s assigned module (that is, in week 5, 10, or 14). The second assignment (the presentation of the website or other digital product) will be presented and evaluated during finals week. (There are no exams in this class.)

Oral and digital communication assignments will be evaluated based on use, documentation, and organization of analytical content (OUTCOMES 2 and 3), accepted oral and digital communication style conventions (OUTCOME 5), effectiveness of delivery and presentation (OUTCOME 6), and effectiveness of interactions with team collaborators and audiences (OUTCOMES 4 and 7).

Student Portfolios:

Each student will develop a portfolio of communication pieces, for final evaluation by the instructor.

The portfolio includes:

- Three short writing assignments (which may incorporate digital communications)
- Documentation and personal assessment of contributions to the group's oral communication product.
- Documentation and personal assessment of contributions to the group's digital communication product.

Academic Dishonesty. Presenting as one's own work the work or ideas of another is considered academic dishonesty (as is assisting another student in such misrepresentation). The university may assess serious penalties for engaging in academic dishonesty (UNIREG 802, Revision 2). Please ask if you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism or how to credit a source. Students who submit plagiarized work (individually *or* collaboratively) will receive an 'F' for the course.

<http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/support/clean%20uw%20regulations/UW%20Reg%206-802.pdf>

Class Conduct. UNIREG 29, section III:D states, "[A student] has no right to impinge upon the instructor's freedom to teach or the right of other students to learn. The instructor shall establish reasonable standards of conduct for each class . . . and the instructor may, through orderly procedures, dismiss any student who violates such standards." Class participation is encouraged, but the contributions should be thoughtful, relevant, and respectful. Unnecessary talking, texting, sleeping, or reading of unrelated material during class is often rude and disruptive.

Disability support services. UW offers a variety of services and information to support students with disabilities. Please don't hesitate to ask about them early in the course. University Disabilities Support Services (UDSS) is located in the Student Educational Opportunities (SEO) office, rm. 330 Knight Hall.

The website is accessible at: <http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/UDSS/>.

Organization of Written, Oral, and Digital Communication Assignments

Team	Writing Assignments (due at end of each module)	Speaking Assignment (presented in last week of module)	Digital Assignment (presented during final exam period)
Brown1 (4 members)	Module 1: Text box Module 2: Issue brief Module 3: Data story	Module 1	Module 1
Brown2 (4 members)	Module 1: Issue brief Module 2: Data story Module 3: Text box	Module 2	Module 2
Brown3 (4 members)	Module 1: Data story Module 2: Text box Module 3: Issue brief	Module 3	Module 3
Gold1 (4 members)	Module 1: Text box Module 2: Issue brief Module 3: Data story	Module 1	Module 1
Gold2 (4 members)	Module 1: Issue brief Module 2: Data story Module 3: Text box	Module 2	Module 2
Gold3 (4 members)	Module 1: Data story Module 2: Text box Module 3: Issue brief	Module 3	Module 3

Team	Student members (4 per team)
Brown1	
Brown2	
Brown3	
Gold1	
Gold2	
Gold3	