

Agricultural Communications 5308  
***Utilizing Online Media in  
Agricultural Communications***

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TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY  
Department of Agricultural  
Education and Communications

**Instructors**

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Office hours: Open door policy and/or by appointment

**Class Website:** <http://acom5308.wordpress.com>

**Meeting day, time and location**

Summer II, MTWRF Noon-2pm  
116 Ag Ed Building

**Description**

The convergence of multiple forms of media – newspaper, video, radio, and photojournalism – on the Internet is impacting how agricultural communicators provide information on various topics. The increasing presence of social media also impacts how agricultural messages are communicated. Agricultural communicators should understand how audiences in agriculture and natural resources utilize online media and for what purposes.

**Objectives**

After this course, you will be able to:

- Identify appropriate technology needs for agricultural and natural resources audiences
- Evaluate multi-media websites based on usability and design principles
- Create a website with blog in WordPress
- Recognize trends in online media
- Understand different types of social media and how each could be used in agricultural communications
- Develop develop a proposal for research related to the topics discussed in class OR a social media plan for an organization.

**Methods for Assessing the Learning Objectives**

The expected learning outcomes for the course will be assessed through participation; WordPress website proposal; WordPress website; AgChat reflection post; blog posts; social media in the news post; final project proposal; and final project. Rubrics to evaluate assignments are posted on the class website.

## Materials

### Required

- Jump drive or external hard drive at least 2MB in size.

### Blackboard (<http://www.blackboard.ttu.edu>)

Blackboard *may* be used to post all grades for the class. **Links to the videos of class lectures will also available here (if Blackboard is used).**

### Suggested – Tutorials from Lynda.com

Lynda.com is a wonderful resource for learning more about the software introduced in class. Access to Lynda.com is absolutely free from anywhere on the TTU campus.

Distance students can sign up for an account for as little as \$25 a month. **This is not required**, but if you want to learn more about technology, Lynda.com has more than 1,900 video tutorial courses to help.

### Readings

Completing any assigned reading before class is very important to your success in this class. Readings will be posted as links on the class WordPress site on the “Readings” page. You will be told in class about upcoming readings.

## Policies

### Technology Assistance

If you encounter issues with your computer or accessing Blackboard, please contact Texas Tech IT Help Central at 806-742-HELP(4357) or [ithelpcentral@ttu.edu](mailto:ithelpcentral@ttu.edu).

### Academic Integrity

It is the aim of the faculty of Texas Tech University to foster a spirit of complete honesty and a high standard of integrity. The attempt of students to present as their own any work that they have not honestly performed is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense and renders the offenders liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension. Additional information can be found on page 51 of *The Texas Tech University Catalog* regarding cheating, plagiarism, and software use.

As a result of completing registration at Texas Tech University, every student agrees to the following statement: “I understand that Texas Tech University expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty, and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”

- Respect copyright policies for images placed on your WordPress site. Violation of copyright laws is considered plagiarism. You may be asked to show where you downloaded your stock photos, graphics, and unusual fonts. If you are unsure, ask about it FIRST.
- All writing assignments must be your own and not derived from other sources.

- Any violation of academic honesty will result in a **0** on the assignment and you will not have the opportunity to make up the points. Serious offenses (as determined by the instructor) will be taken to the Student Judicial Programs.

**Students with Disabilities**

Any student, who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements, should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor’s office hours. Please note, instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, you may contact the Student Disability Services office at 335 West Hall or 806-742-2405.

**Software Use**

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

**Attendance**

On-Campus Students	Distance Students
<p>Attending each class meeting is a crucial element for success in the course. Much of the class is designed around discussion and participation. The course is most beneficial when all students attend and actively participate.</p> <p>If a student will be absent, he or she must notify the instructor PRIOR to the absence either by telephone or e-mail. Students are responsible for obtaining any information they miss; ask a fellow student for notes.</p> <p>If you know you will be gone and have prior instructor approval, you can complete the discussion question online to earn participation points.</p>	<p>Your participation in the course will be assessed through your responses to daily discussion questions posted to the class blog. You are required to post a response to the question and/or provide a response to someone else’s comment. This dialog is the cornerstone of social media. Your responses should be several sentences long to demonstrate your grasp of the topic and ability to provide thoughtful input.</p> <p>Only one discussion question will be posted each day so you cannot post earlier than when the question is made available.</p>

*All Students*

If a student will be absent or unable to participate, he or she must notify the instructor PRIOR to the absence either by telephone or e-mail. Students are responsible for

obtaining any information they miss; ask a fellow student for notes. Only students with excused absences are allowed to make up points for discussion/participation. If you are ill or an emergency occurs, contact the instructor prior to the scheduled class time.

#### Excused Absences:

- Absences will be excused for official university activities and religious observances with at least two weeks prior notice (p. 50-51 of *The Texas Tech University Catalog*). The student is required to provide written notification and is responsible for any work missed.
- Absences due to extended illness, injury, or immediate family deaths require notification from the Center for Campus Life (p. 50, *The Texas Tech University Catalog*). It is always the students' responsibility for missed class assignments and/or course work during their absence. The student is encouraged to contact the faculty member immediately regarding the absences and to provide verification afterward.

#### Late Work Policy

To receive credit, assignments must be submitted **on or before** the due date that is described on the assignment rubric or on this class syllabus. **No late assignments** will be accepted without prior approval of the instructor. As a professional in the agricultural communications field, you will be required to work with many deadlines. It is imperative that you start learning how to manage your time. For this reason, **late assignments will not be accepted**. Do not ask for an exception as it will not be granted. If you know you will be absent the day an assignment is due, turn it in **before** you leave. Technology-related excuses will not be accepted. You must plan adequate time to trouble-shoot. **Always test your website and files before they are due.**

If an emergency arises that will require students to turn an assignment in late, or if a student will be absent for a university approved function, he or she must submit documentary proof of the emergency or the university function. If an emergency does arise, students should call the instructor immediately (806-742-2816). For absences related to university functions, students must work with the instructor at least one week in advance to develop a plan to complete any missed work.

#### Classroom Conduct

To foster an ideal learning environment, students are expected to be punctual, courteous, and respectful. Students are expected to share their opinions and feedback in a manner that is constructive and beneficial. It is expected that students will attend class with a positive attitude and eagerness to help each other succeed in the course.

**No cell phone use – including texting –will be permitted. Please leave your cell phones in your office or in your bag. There is no reason to have them out in class (unless Dr. Meyers says it pertains to the topic).** While it is tempting to check e-mail, Facebook, or surf the Web, these activities will not be permitted during class lectures, unless specifically asked to do so as a part of the course discussion or assignments.

## Grades

A total of 700 points are possible in this class. The following grading scale will be used in this class: 90-100% = A; 80-89% = B; 70-79% = C; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F

## Assignments

**Class Discussion** – Your participation is a crucial element to your success in this course. On campus students will earn discussion points for their attendance and participation in each class period. You cannot earn participation points if you are not in class or if you do not contribute to discussion. If you have an excused absence, you can earn points as a distance student; the deadlines still apply.

Distance students will earn these points by responding and interacting to the discussion question posted each day to the class blog. Replies to the discussion question or fellow student comments must be posted within 24 hours of when the question was provided. For example, if a question is posted at 3 p.m. on Friday, you have until 3 p.m. on Saturday to respond. In these posts, feel free to include links to additional content and respond to what other students have posted. It is recommended that you type your responses in Word before posting them in WordPress in case you encounter computer issues. (17 days X 10 points = 170 points)

**WordPress Proposal** – The first part of this course is to help you develop a website and blog in WordPress. The proposal helps you think about your audience, purpose, design, and content for the site. This should be no more than two pages, double-spaced. (25 points)

**Final Project Proposal** – The final project is a major portion of your grade in the course. The proposal is meant to provide some insight into what you are planning to do so you can receive feedback early in the development process. (30 points)

**WordPress Site** – This site should reflect your personality, interests, and future goals. You are required to have a Home page, Blog, and at least two additional pages of your choice. Although it is expected you will make additional changes and additions to the site during the course, this site will be graded as you have it on Friday, July 19. (75 points)

**Social Media Tool Identification Activity** – New social media tools are constantly being created and it seems impossible to keep up. For this assignment, you will each be assigned a specific tool that you will research, learn how to use, and share your evaluation with classmates via the class blog. (25 points)

**Social Media in the News** – Select a current event (since June 1, 2013) that has addressed social media content. Provide a copy or link to the original story and write a brief summary. (25 points)

**Ag Chat Discussion Post** – Follow, possibly even participate in AgChat, an online conversation via Twitter (<http://twitter.com/agchat>), each Tuesday from 7-9 p.m. (CST). You are required to follow one AgChat session; however, you are encouraged to follow

each week. You will provide a reflection of your experience as a “comment” to a discussion question posted on the class WordPress site. (25 points)

**Blog Posts** – Each week you will provide your response to a specified topic. You will provide your response on your own blog that you developed in WordPress. Each blog post is due by midnight on the date specified on the schedule (applies to on-campus and distance students). It is recommended that you type your responses in Word before posting them in WordPress in case you encounter computer issues. (25 points each, 75 points total)

- First topic – Find 10 blogs on the Web that you like and write a brief paragraph (2-3 complete sentences) for why you like each one. Include a link to that blog within your post. At least one of these blogs should address a topic related to agriculture, food, natural resources or the environment.
- Second post – Find 10 examples of good social media use in agriculture. This can be Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, YouTube Channels, etc. Include a link to each and post a description (2-3 complete sentences) explaining why each one is a good example.
- Third Post – What are the three most important concepts, ideas, or principles you have learned in this course? Explain what they are and why each one is so important. If applicable, provide links to examples to make your point. Each point should be at least 100 words in length.

**Final Project (250 points) Choose ONE of the following options:**

*OPTION 1: Social Media Plan* – Many organizations understand the value of using social media, but most do not adequately plan for its use. For this assignment, select an organization (ideally where you work) and develop a social media plan for either a specific event or the organization in general. This can be an individual assignment or completed with a partner. The plan is limited to 20 pages (double-spaced), which does not count a cover page or references. [If you would rather develop a PowerPoint, please discuss with Dr. Meyers.]

*OPTION 2: Research Proposal* – Develop a proposal for a study related to online marketing or social media use in agricultural communications. Please seek approval for your research idea prior to beginning the assignment. This proposal can be for a larger research project (paper, thesis, dissertation) or can be a smaller project that may lead to a research poster. The proposal for the research study will consist of three parts. The first will be an introduction to the study and development of research questions or objectives. Part two will be a review of literature and theoretical base for your proposed study. Part three will be the methodology you will utilize to answer the research questions or accomplish the research objectives. Proposal must follow APA format. This can be an individual assignment or completed with a partner. You can ask your adviser for ideas or help, but you (and your partner) must complete the secondary research and writing. The proposal is limited to 20 pages (double-spaced), which does not count the cover page or references. Additional details will be provided in class.