

FNR 4040
Natural Resource Communication
Fall Semester 2007
University of Florida—IFAS Plant City Campus

- Instructor:** Dr. Steve A. Johnson, tadpole@ufl.edu
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- Office hours:** By appointment, or walk in (I maintain an 'open door' policy)
- Office location:** IFAS—Plant City Campus (HCC), PEPC Bldg., Rm 110
- Class Schedule:** Tuesdays 4:30-7:30 p.m., Room 130
- Course Texts:** 1) *Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals*. S.K. Jacobson, Island Press, Inc. (ISBN 1-55963-509-6)
This is a required text.
- 2) *Signs, Trails, and Wayside Exhibits*. S. Trapp, M. Gross, R. Zimmerman, UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc. (ISBN 0-932310-16-8)
This is an optional text—copies will be provided for student use during the semester.

Course description, objectives, and format :

This course will introduce students to the theory and techniques involved in several communication tools widely used in natural resource management. Through lectures, group projects, writing and editing assignments, in-class exercises, guest lecturers, and field outings, the course will explore how communication can affect public opinion about environmental issues. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- 1) state how communication with the public differs from a technical audience;
- 2) craft creative, interesting text for posters and interpretive panels;
- 3) develop and update their CV
- 4) write clear, accurate, technical papers;
- 5) effectively edit technical papers and interpretive text; and
- 6) present well-crafted oral presentations.

Effective communication is a skill required for successful management of natural resources. Natural resource issues are often complex and can be confusing to many people. A lack of thoughtful and easy to understand information available to the public often creates misunderstandings between the public and natural resource managers. This results in an inability or unwillingness of the public to support or act on natural resource issues that may directly impact them. Therefore, strong communication skills are among the most beneficial tools that can be used to resolve resource issues. Additionally, personal ability and intelligence are sometimes judged by one's technical writing and speaking abilities. This further underscores the need to acquire and practice strong communication skills.

Information delivery will consist of lectures, class discussion, assigned readings, in-class assignments, individual writing assignments, group projects, guest lecturers, and field outings. Attendance will not be taken, but students are required to attend lectures, participate in discussions, contribute significantly to group projects, and attend field outings.

Exams and assignments :

Your course grade will be based on individual, group, and in-class assignments, as well as a comprehensive exam. Your major group project will be to develop a proposal for interpretive signage for Nature's Classroom. Several of your independent assignments will be part of this larger project. A detailed description of specific assignments will be provided later—a thumbnail sketch of the assignments is below.

Outline of Assignments (G = group assignments, I = individual assignments)

- 1) **G** Audience Survey/Focus Groups: As a team, you will develop and administer a survey and conduct focus group sessions for the intended audience of the interpretive signage at Nature's Classroom to help define your goals and the design of the interpretive stations.
- 2) **I** Development of Curriculum Vitae (e.g., your professional résumé): Each student will develop and refine his/her curriculum vitae.
- 3) **I** Technical Paper Abstract: You will read a scientific paper then summarize the paper by writing an abstract for the paper.
- 4) **I** Technical Paper: You will write a technical paper summarizing your findings from the survey you develop.
- 5) **I** PowerPoint Presentation: You will make a 15 minute oral presentation.
- 6) **I** Website Worksheet: You will complete worksheets to evaluate web page designs and discuss your findings in class.
- 7) **G** Nature's Classroom Proposal Presentation: Each team will present their ideas for interpretive signage to staff of Nature's Classroom.
- 8) **I** Comprehensive Exam: This will be a take-home exam (open book and notes, but time limited) consisting of short answer questions.

Points and Final Grade:

Points:	1) Audience survey/focus groups	25 points
	2) Curriculum vitae	50 points
	3) Technical paper abstract	25 points
	4) Technical paper	50 points
	5) Website evaluation	25 points
	6) PowerPoint Presentation	25 points
	7) Group Project	100 points
	8) Exam	<u>100 points</u>
Total possible:		400 points

Grades: **A** ($\geq 90\%$), **B** (80-89.9%), **C** (70-79.9%), **D** (60-69.9%), **E** (<60%) Final grades are based on percentages of total points possible. The exam score is not curved.

Class Field Outings:

To expose you to natural resource communication applications in the “real world”, we will visit a large public museum (Florida Museum of Natural History), a regional environmental education center (TECO’s Manatee Viewing Center), and a public school system environmental education center (Nature’s Classroom). During each of these trips, a staff member who is trained in environmental interpretation will give us a tour. Students are expected to ask questions and take notes. Your class project will focus on Nature’s Classroom.

Class Schedule for Natural Resource Communication

<u>Week</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Readings*</u>
1	28 Aug.	Class canceled (Dr. J at IFAS meeting in Gainesville)	
2	4 Sep.	Course introduction; Student introductions Communication basics	SKJ Chp. 1
3	11 Sep.	Environmental interpretation Class project discussion—Nature’s Classroom	SKJ Chp. 5
4 [👏]	18 Sep.	Trip to Nature’s Classroom , meet Karen Folsom-Johnson NC Project Development—site visit, brainstorming	
5	25 Sep.	Identifying your target audience, Focus groups, Developing surveys, Web site evaluation	SKJ Chp. 2, 3 SKJ pp. 169-171
6	2 Oct.	Developing your curriculum vitae	
7 [👏]	9 Oct.	Trip to Florida Museum of Natural History , meet Darcie McMahon	
8	16 Oct.	Communicating with youth, Extension programming Guest lecture by Georgene Bender, IFAS 4-H Agent	
9	23 Oct.	Effective oral presentations, PowerPoint training (meet in GIS Lab 117)	SKJ pp. 210-217
10 [👏]	30 Oct. 3 Nov. Saturday	Technical writing basics, Writing abstracts Trip to TECO’s Manatee Viewing Center (tentative)	
11	6 Nov.	Working with the media Guest lecture by Mickie Anderson—IFAS Media Relations	SKJ Chp. 4
12	13 Nov.	Technical writing	
13 [👏]	20 Nov.	Student PowerPoint presentations <u>Take-home exam distributed in class</u> (meet in GIS Lab 117)	

14	27 Nov.	Preparation for project presentation
15	4 Dec.	Nature's Classroom —Final project presentations
16	11 Dec.	Informal course evaluation and discussion

*Supplemental materials will be distributed in class.

👏 Dates of class outings, class presentations, exams.

Policies on academic honesty, UF counseling services, and software use

UF Academic Honesty

As a result of completing the registration form at the University of Florida, every student has signed the following statement: "I understand the University of Florida 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."

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

UF Counseling Services

Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

1. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575, personal and career counseling;
2. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 352-392-1171, personal counseling;
3. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 352-392-1161, sexual counseling;
4. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 352-392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

UF Computer Software Usage

All faculty, staff and students of the University are required and expected to obey the 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.

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office in Peabody Hall. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.