



**COMM 1311.003 – Introduction to Speech Communication**  
**FALL 2016**  
**Course Syllabus**

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**Professor:** Joseph Velasco, Ph.D.  
**Office Hours:** TTh: 2-3pm; MW: 9am-11am; 2-4pm, *or by appointment*  
**Office Location:** FAB 206B  
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**Email Address:** [jvelasco@sulross.edu](mailto:jvelasco@sulross.edu)  
**Class Schedule:** 9:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday  
**Classroom Location:** MAB 301  
**Required Text:** Pearson, J., Nelson, P., Titsworth, S., & Harter, L. (2013). *Human communication* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

*Always bring applicable reading material to class with you.*

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### **Introduction**

Communication is largely unavoidable in our everyday lives. Generally, humans send and receive messages both verbally and nonverbally every day. As humans, it is practically impossible for us to not communicate. Understanding human communication can be useful to everyone no matter what field they intend to study. The knowledge and skills you acquire in this course have the potential for developing and assisting you in numerous ways. Throughout this course you may become a more critical receiver of messages, you may gain insight on how to improve your relationships, you may become a better citizen, and you may increase your confidence.



This course is designed to introduce you to the major areas and skills of the broad discipline of communication. As your instructor, I will assist you in increasing your knowledge about and skills in employing verbal and nonverbal messages in a variety of settings (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and public contexts). By studying the processes of communication and applying communication theory and principles to diverse real-life situations, you will have an opportunity to practice and analyze communication skills in various contexts.

In addition, this course is designed to compel you to enter the field of communication. For those of you who decide not to enroll in any further communication courses, this course will provide you with a thorough foundation in research, theory, and skills of this essential social science. For those of you who will take advanced courses in communication and possibly begin a major in communication, this course will provide the essential foundation for more advanced and specialized study.

## Section I. Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading

Assignment	Points Possible	Grading Scale
Exam One	50	A: 1000-900
Exam Two	50	B: 899-800
Peer Evaluation (informative)	50	C: 799-700
Peer Evaluation (persuasive)	50	D: 699-600
Interview Speech	25	F: 599-0
Oral Reading	50	
Impromptu Speech	25	
Informative Speech	150	
Informative Speech Outline	100	
Persuasive Speech	300	
Persuasive Speech Outline	100	
Final Exam	50	
Possible Points	1000	

**Exams.** There will be two exams in this course. Exams cover assigned reading and lecture material. The exams likely will include a mix of matching, multiple-choice, and short-answer items.

**Peer Evaluation.** It is my view that people often improve their public speaking skills when given appropriate and immediate feedback. You will find that the most important feedback (in life) is from that of your audience. Before you present both your informative and persuasive speeches, you will have the opportunity to practice your speech during class for an audience of around two other students. While one student listens to you and provides eye contact, the other will fill out a peer evaluation form. Each of you will take turns practicing, being the captive audience, and writing feedback on a peer evaluation form.

**Interview Speech.** One important function of this course is to build your confidence when speaking publicly. This speech is designed to build your confidence by giving you an opportunity to practice in front of an audience; however, you won't be alone. For this assignment, you and a partner will interview each other according to a set of questions that I will give you to guide your interview. The two of you will then be able to go to the front of the room together and introduce each other.

**Oral Reading.** You will need to select a piece of literature, poem, sonnet, song (within reason), or a selection from a speech. What I am looking for is for you to bring something to read in front of the class. The purpose of this assignment is to further acclimate you to the world of communicating with others. Your selection, when read, must not exceed three minutes, **cannot be read from a screen**, and must be at least one minute in length.

**Impromptu Speech.** There are three different types of public speaking: 1) extemporaneous, 2) manuscript, and 3) impromptu. Impromptu speeches involve little or no preparation. For this

speech, you will likely choose a topic from a hat (or an Ultimate disc) and have about 5 minutes or less to prepare. Your speech must be persuasive.

**Informative Speech.** This will be your first of two major speeches. For this speech your specific purpose will be to inform the audience on a particular topic. You will be required to speak for at least 4 minutes, but no longer than 7. For every 30 seconds you speak over 7:30 minutes (e.g., I give a 30-second pad on the back end), I will deduct 10 points from your grade. For every 30 seconds you go under 4 minutes, I will deduct 10 points from your grade. This rule applies to both major speeches. You are required to verbally cite a minimum of three credible sources.

**Persuasive Speech.** This will be your second and final major speech. For this speech your specific purpose will be to persuade the audience on a particular topic. You will be required to speak for at least 4 minutes, but no longer than 7. You are required to verbally cite a minimum of 5 credible sources.

**Final Exam.** The final exam is quasi-comprehensive. It will largely cover the chapters not tested for in the previous exams; however, it will also cover chapters throughout the semester.

## **Section II. Policies**

**Attendance.** I expect you to be in class. You are responsible for everything that goes on, including announcements, lecture material, assignments and modifications to the course schedule – *this includes required reading in subsequent class meetings*. Arrange with someone in the class wherein you will notify each other of relevant items in the event that one of you must be absent.

Attendance is essential to your success in this class; therefore, excessive absences will be reflected in your grade. All students are expected to attend all classes. Absences will reduce your score since you will be actively participating in activities (e.g. giving presentations, being an audience member, etc.) during every class session. Attendance will be recorded at **the beginning** of every class session. Fifty points will be taken away from your final grade for every **unexcused** absence after two unexcused absences have been recorded. Therefore, I am giving you two unexcused absences before you begin losing points. For example, if you record five unexcused absences, your grade will be reduced by 150 points (essentially a letter grade). “Excused absences” are those that have approved documentation (e.g. certified doctor’s excuses that specifically cite the class date, time, and reason for the missed day). With that said, **DO NOT SCHEDULE DOCTOR’S, DENTISTS, CHIROPRACTORS, MECHANICS, FAMILY REUNIONS, OR ANY OTHER TYPE OF APPOINTMENTS DURING THIS CLASS.** Thank you.

**Classroom Demeanor.** I expect the environment during class meetings to be conducive to learning. I have little tolerance for students talking among themselves when they should be listening to someone else speak. It is particularly disturbing when students talk among themselves when one of their classmates is presenting a speech, giving a report, making a comment, or observing or asking a question. I understand that some comments pertain to class

material; I encourage you to share these comments with the class as a whole. Also, I would rather that cell phones, pagers, etc. **not** disrupt class – make sure your communications technology is **shut down** when class begins. If you do have a communication device that rings, beeps, vibrates, or in any other way disturbs the class, you may be asked to leave. If you choose to send text-messages during class, you may be asked to leave. If these types of disturbances become in any way chronic, routine, or repetitive, you may be dropped from the course entirely. If you feel that you need special consideration due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. your wife may go into labor soon, you anticipate a family emergency, you are acting as a ‘phone-a-friend lifeline’ on *Millionaire*, etc.), see me beforehand.

**Academic Integrity.** I expect and assume that as students you conduct yourselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Sul Ross State University reserves the right, through due process, to place on probation, suspend or expel any student who violates academic integrity and regulations by *plagiarism, classroom misdemeanor, or academic dishonesty*. Plagiarism includes doing and/or taking credit for someone else’s work, presenting the ideas and work of others as your own, and not citing your sources if you utilize the ideas of others. Classroom misdemeanor includes cheating, allowing others to cheat, and interfering with others’ ability to succeed in the course. Academic dishonesty includes procuring examination materials illegally, doing unauthorized group work, and handing in your own work for which you have already received academic credit (see Student Handbook, p. 39-40). I consider all forms of academic misconduct to be insulting, unacceptable, and inexcusable. These things simply do not belong on a campus of higher learning. If I find any of this, I will exercise my right to do what I can to see that the maximum penalties are levied against you. That said, I am not looking to bust you; I just want you to have a positive, honest experience. So if you are in a gray area on one of these points, see me.

**Grading.** Different assignments require different grading procedures. Exams and quizzes are not curved.

**Missed Exams.** In my experience exams are *always* given on the date that it says on the schedule (unless we negotiate a schedule change as a class). Accordingly, the rule on missing an exam is, simply: If you miss an exam, then you get a zero. If you produce documentation, through the Vice President of Academic Affairs, that missing the exam could reasonably be excused, then you will be able to make up the exam (possibly by taking an incomplete for the course and taking a makeup exam sometime after the semester). If you are to miss an exam because you are representing the University in some official capacity, then you are allowed to make it up – but this likely means that you will take the exam *early*, not late. See me well in advance of any exam you will have to miss, and I will try to work it out with you.

**Late Work.** *You are responsible for handing in assignments when they are due.* While I am willing to “hear you out” when unforeseen and/or difficult circumstances impede with your course work, I do not generally accept late work, *and especially* if you have not notified me that you’re having problems before the due date arrives. If you miss a due date, you will be given full credit *only* if the assignment was missed because of a University-excused absence – which includes hospitalization or a *serious* medical condition, a family or personal *emergency*, or a University-sponsored activity. In order to be able to make up the assignment, you must notify me

beforehand *and* have supporting documentation from a relevant authority that the situation or event occurred. *NOTE: There is nothing in this syllabus that requires me to accept late work; if you submit work late, then receiving credit depends on my allowing you to turn it in. If I do accept late work, it will likely be at half-credit.*

### **Section III. Notes on University Programs and Policies**

**ADA.** It is Sul Ross University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the ADA coordinator for Program Accessibility located in FH 112 or call 837-8691.

### **Section IV. Course Objectives**

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. To understand and demonstrate writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, and presentation.
2. To understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices.
3. To understand and appropriately apply modes of expression (i.e. descriptive, expository, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive) in written, visual, and oral communication.
4. To participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
5. To understand and apply basic principles of critical thinking, problem solving, and technical proficiency in the development of exposition and argument.
6. To develop the ability to research and write a documented paper and/or to give an oral presentation.

### **Section V. Program Learning Outcomes**

This course is designed to meet one or more of the program learning outcomes applied to all Communication majors:

The graduating student will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Competently deliver public presentations, including the use of presentation technology such as presentation software, video, and audio.
2. Analyze communication content for argument, including identification of major elements, such as claims, warrants, data, etc.
3. Complete appropriate discipline specific writing assignments.
4. Apply communication theory to the analysis of communication situations appropriate to each degree specialization.
5. Demonstrate competent use of media technology including video, audio, and internet-based technology.

Calendar  
(This calendar is subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Chapter	Assignment/Activity
One	Aug 23	Intro. To Course	N/A	Introductions
	Aug 25	Intro to Human Communication	1	Interview Speech
Two	Aug 30	Perception, Self, and Comm.	2	
	Sep 1	Listening and Critical Thinking	5	
Three	Sep 6		N/A	Oral Reading
	Sep 8	Language and Meaning	3	Exam 1
Four	Sep 13	Informative Presentations	14	
	Sep 15	Topic Selection & Audience	10	
Five	Sep 20	Source Credibility & Evidence	11	
	Sep 22	<i>Library Workshop –Arrive Early</i>		
Six	Sep 27	Organizing Your Presentation	12	
	Sep 29	Delivery & Visual Resources	13	
Seven	Oct 4			Exam Two
	Oct 6			Peer Evaluation
Eight	Oct 11			Informative Speeches
	Oct 13			Informative Speeches
Nine	Oct 18			Informative Speeches
	Oct 20			Informative Speeches
Ten	Oct 25			Informative Speeches
	Oct 27			<i>Independent Research</i>
Eleven	Nov 1	The Persuasive Speech	15	
	Nov 3	Chapter 15 Continued	15	
Twelve	Nov 8			Impromptu Speeches
	Nov 10			Peer Evaluation
Thirteen	Nov 15			Persuasive Speeches
	Nov 17			Persuasive Speeches
Fourteen	Nov 22			Persuasive Speeches
	Nov 24	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class</b>		
Fifteen	Nov 29	<b>LAST CLASS</b>		Persuasive Speeches
	Dec 1	DEAD DAY – No Class		

The Final Exam is scheduled for Dec 5<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.