

**COMM 1315.001 – Public Speaking  
Spring 2026  
Course Syllabus**

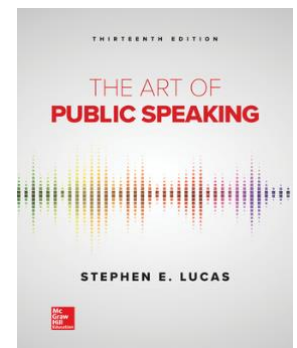
<b>Professor:</b>	<b>Joseph Velasco, Ph.D.</b>
<b>Office Hours:</b>	MW, 10-11am & TTh 2-4pm, or by appointment.
<b>Office Location:</b>	LH 307
<b>Telephone:</b>	432-837-8370
<b>Email Address:</b>	jvelasco@sulross.edu
<b>Class Schedule:</b>	9:00-9:50am, MWF
<b>Classroom Location:</b>	LH 309
<b>Required Text:</b>	Lucas, S. (2020). <i>The art of public speaking</i> (13 <sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
<b>Required Equipment &amp; Software:</b>	Internet connection; computer with webcam & microphone; Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint (available free to SRSU students via <b>Office 365</b> )

- RESOURCES
- Bookstore
- Graduate Student Center
- Human Resources
- Library
- Lobo looka t
- Lobo Pass
- Office 365



**Introduction**

My name is Dr. Joseph Velasco (most students call me Dr. V), and I am happy to be on this public speaking journey with you. Over the span of recorded history, public speaking has been valued for its ability to help humans affect each other in numerous ways, including teaching, persuading, celebrating, entertaining, and more. Whether it is in a courtroom in Alpine, in the public assembly (the Ekklesia) in Athens, around a campfire in Botswana, in a locker room in Odessa, or on the tundra of Alaska, across every culture of the world, public speaking helps people make an impact. This course is designed to unlock the science and art of public speaking, building on nearly 2,500 years of philosophy, practice, and research.



In addition, this course is designed to compel you to enter the discipline of Communication Studies – a discipline that moves way beyond public speaking to consider the many ways that humans communicate. Regardless of your decision to enroll in more Communication courses, this course will provide you with a solid foundation of speaking, writing, and research skills to benefit you throughout your college experience and the rest of your life. 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 Objectives**

After successfully completing this course, you will be able:

1. To demonstrate information literacy by verbally citing credible sources.
2. To specify a central idea and specific purpose for speaking in an audience-centered way.
3. To write informative and persuasive speeches.
4. To effectively perform informative and persuasive speeches to a live audience.
5. To analyze informative and persuasive messages for logical development and support.
6. To conduct secondary research using university library resources.

**Section II. Student Learning Objectives**

This course is designed to meet one or more of the student learning outcomes applied to all

Communication majors:

**SLO 1: Students will be able to analyze communication content for argument, including identification of major elements, such as claim, warrants, and data.**

**SLO 2: Students will be able to effectively construct messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context; including electronic media technologies.**

SLO 3: Students will be able to apply Communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts to the analysis of communication situations.

**2025-2026 Core Assessment (Personal & Social Responsibility):**

In addition to other outcomes listed here, as required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), I will promote and assess the following in this class:

**Personal Responsibility:** Students will develop principles of personal responsibility for living in a diverse world; to include intercultural competency, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional and global communities.

**Section III. Marketable Skills**

This course offers you the opportunity to develop the following skills:

- Informative and Persuasive Speaking
- Audience-centered Writing
- Critical Analysis
- Research
- Effective Message Construction Using Technology

**Section IV. Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading**

Assignment	Points Possible	Grading Scale
Exam One	50	A = 895-1000
Exam Two	50	B = 795-894
Peer Evaluation (Informative)	25	C = 695-794
PitchVantage Practice (2 times @ 10 pts each) – INF	20+	D = 595-694
PitchVantage Practice (3 times @ 10 pts each) - PER	30+	F = < 595
Peer Evaluation (Persuasive)	25	
Interview Speech	25	
‘More About Me’ Speech	25	
Oral Reading	50	
Impromptu Speech	25	
Informative Speech	150	
Informative Speech Outline	100	
Persuasive Speech	300	
Persuasive Speech Outline	100	
Final Exam	50	
<b>Total Points Possible</b>	<b>1000</b>	

*Connecting with Students for Success*

As a part of a research study, I am committed in this course to the following:

I will know your name	I will provide user-friendly, timely feedback on your assignments	I will hold high standards and support you to achieve them	I will hold an individual meeting with each student during the semester
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**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 will introduce yourself to the class on Zoom by responding to the following prompts:

1. What's your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. What do you do for fun?
4. What is your major?
5. What is your biggest fear?
6. Who/what inspires you?
7. What was your most embarrassing moment?

**'More About Me' Speech through PitchVantage.** The Interview Speech (listed above) will be performed for the class, but the 'More About Me' Speech will be for an audience of one – me. This speech will accomplish two goals: (1) It will give you an opportunity to tell me more about yourself beyond what was covered in the Interview Speech, and (2) it will get you using a very important tool for practicing speeches – PitchVantage. Use this opportunity to use this online tool to tell me anything about you. For example, this might be a good opportunity to tell me about your fears and concerns regarding this class. Remember to have fun with this, so you can get very personal, or you can keep it light and silly. I'll award full points for speaking for at least 1 minute.

### About PitchVantage and How to Get Started:

**PitchVantage is a speech simulator (with a simulated environment and audience) that records video and audio of your practice sessions so that you can watch and hear yourself present. The cloud-based software also automatically analyzes the tone of your voice, your pauses, your pace, and several other delivery elements, provides both real-time and instant follow-up feedback to help you identify weak points in your delivery, and makes suggestions on how you can improve them.**

**How to register: look for a registration link in Blackboard under your course section. The best way to use this tool is to practice, pay close attention to the feedback, review your videos, and apply the feedback in your next practice. To improve your speech delivery, you must rehearse anyway; you might as well do so using a tool that gives you feedback about how to improve. This interactive approach has shown to more rapidly and dramatically improve your skills than practicing without feedback.**

**If you run into any issues, please check the [support website](#) for solutions or reach out directly to PitchVantage at [support@pitchvantage.com](mailto:support@pitchvantage.com).**

**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 and must be at least one minute in length. Points will be deducted for reading from a screen or a textbook.

**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. All exams will be done through Blackboard.

**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 in class with two of your peers. While one student listens and evaluates, 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. You will share written feedback with

the person you evaluated, and they will share their evaluation of you. Submit the form to me for a grade on the day you perform your speech.

***Impromptu Speech.*** There are four different modes of public speaking: 1) extemporaneous, 2) manuscript, 3) memorized, and 4) impromptu. Impromptu speeches involve little or no preparation. For this speech, I will likely assign you a topic, and you will 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 five credible sources. Presentations will be made in class.

***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**

***Basic Class Expectations:*** It is expected that you spend at least a few hours each week to complete the course readings and assignments. Since this class has online resources, I expect that you are able to access Blackboard and that you check your university email at least once a day. It is also recommended that you set up course notifications in Blackboard to receive alerts (e.g., email, text, etc.) when I post announcements, grades, or other course-related items. See instructions in Blackboard.

***Technology Use in the Classroom:*** Except for students with university-documented accommodations, electronic devices with screens, cameras, audio recording or audio playback (e.g., phones, laptops, tablets, earbuds, headphones) are not permitted during class, and **notes should be taken using non-electronic methods.** Because public speaking is a shared responsibility between speakers and audiences, this policy supports focused attention, respectful listening, and a classroom climate of trust that enhances learning and the exchange of ideas.

***Classroom Demeanor:*** Communication issues tend to be emotionally charged. It is highly unlikely in a class this size that everyone will share your personal values, beliefs, and opinions. Believe it or not, this is a good thing! The presentation of varying perspectives will help all of us to learn. This can be accomplished if ideas, beliefs, and opinions are presented in a respectful way. I will be expecting all students to follow basic ground rules for our interactions whether they are face-to-face or virtual. We will discuss and establish these ground rules in class.

***Academic Integrity.*** Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources unless permission is expressly given for an assignment or course. Violations of academic

integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

***In this course, every element of class assignments must be fully prepared by the student. The use of generative AI tools for any part of your work will be treated as plagiarism. If you have questions, please contact me.***

***Late Work:*** All assignments for the entire course will be posted and available as soon as the course is open. It is expected that all assignments are completed by the stated deadlines. Please plan your time carefully. If something does come up, prompt and clear communication will facilitate my response which may (or may not) include an accommodation.

***Classroom Climate of Respect.*** Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack.

[Texas Senate Bill 17](#), the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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

**ADA.** SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartz Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu) or [ronnie.harris@sulross.edu](mailto:ronnie.harris@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832. **Please note that instructors are not permitted to provide classroom accommodations to a student until the appropriate verification has been received.**

**SRSU Student Responsibilities Statement:** All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the [Student Handbook](#) and the [Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog](#) and for abiding by the [University rules and regulations](#). Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

**SRSU Distance Education Statement:** Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. **Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.** Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

**Technical Support.** SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support: Toll Free: 888.837.6055.  
Email: [blackboardsupport@sulross.edu](mailto:blackboardsupport@sulross.edu)

**SRSU Library Services.** The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu/](http://library.sulross.edu/). Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or by phone (432-837-8123). No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting [library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/](http://library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/) or ask a librarian by emailing [srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu).

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

**Counseling.** Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting [Timelycare/SRSU](http://Timelycare/SRSU). The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

[The Lobo Den Tutoring Center](#) offers FREE tutoring support to help you excel in your courses. Whether you need assistance in Writing, Math, Science, or other subjects, we're here to help!

#### **Important Information:**

- **Drop-in and Scheduled Appointments:** Flexible options to fit your needs.
- **Hours of Operation:** Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM.
- **Workshops:** Attend our regularly hosted academic workshops on STEM topics and professional development, often in collaboration with specialized faculty.
- **Location:** BWML (aka the library) Room 128.
- **Contact Us:** For more information or to book an appointment, email [tutoring@sulross.edu](mailto:tutoring@sulross.edu) or call (432) 837-8726.

#### **Looking for additional support?**

- Tutor.com offers FREE 24/7 online tutoring in over 200 subjects, including specialized support for ESL and ELL learners with native Spanish-speaking tutors.
- Access Tutor.com via Blackboard: Log in to your Blackboard account to get started anytime, anywhere.

Take advantage of these valuable resources to boost your confidence and performance in your classes. They look forward to helping you succeed!

#### **Important University Dates:**

- 1/14, First day of SRSU classes
- 1/19, MLK, Jr. Holiday, no SRSU classes
- 1/20, Last day for registration and schedule changes
- 1/30, Last day to drop a 16-week class without a record
- 3/9-3/13, Spring Break (No Classes)
- 3/30, Registration for Summer & Fall 2026 opens
- 4/2, Last day to register to vote in May elections
- 4/3, Last day to withdraw with a "W" (16-week classes)
- 4/29, Last SRSU class day before finals
- 4/30, Dead day
- May 1, 4-6, Final Exams

Course Calendar  
(Calendar subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Due or To Do:
<b>One</b>	Jan 12 Jan 14 Jan 15	No Class – Classes start on Wednesday Course Introduction Student Introductions		Register for PitchVantage (PV) <b>Introduction Speech</b>
<b>Two</b>	Jan 19 Jan 21 Jan 23	<i>Dr. MLK Day – No Class</i> Speaking in Public Ethics and Public Speaking; Listening	Chapter 1 Ch. 2 & 3	<b>‘More About Me’ Speech (PV)</b>
<b>Three</b>	Jan 26 Jan 28 Jan 30	Giving Your First Speech: Speaking to Inform Topic & Purpose Selection Oral Reading	Ch. 4 & 15 Chapter 5	<b>Oral Reading</b>
<b>Four</b>	Feb 2 Feb 4 Feb 6	Analyzing the Audience & Researching Your Speech Topic Online Exam 1 – <i>No Class</i>	Chapters 6 Chapter 7	<b>Online Exam 1</b>
<b>Five</b>	Feb 9 Feb 11 Feb 13	Supporting Materials & Organization Introductions, & Conclusions <i>PitchVantage Practice – No Class</i>	Ch. 8 & 9 Chapter 10	
<b>Six</b>	Feb 16 Feb 18 Feb 20	Outlining Your Speech Using Language Work on Speeches – <i>No Class</i>	Chapter 11 Chapter 12	
<b>Seven</b>	Feb 23 Feb 25 Feb 27	Delivery Using Visual Aids Online Exam 2 – <i>No Class</i>	Chapter 13 Chapter 14	<b>Online Exam 2</b>
<b>Eight</b>	Mar 2 Mar 4 Mar 6	Informative Peer Evaluation Informative Speeches Informative Speeches		Peer Evaluation Informative Speeches Informative Speeches
<b>Nine</b>	Mar 9 Mar 11 Mar 13	Informative Speeches Informative Speeches Informative Speeches		Informative Speeches Informative Speeches Informative Speeches
<b>Ten</b>	Mar 16 Mar 18 Mar 20	<i>Spring Break</i> <i>Spring Break</i> <i>Spring Break</i>		
<b>Eleven</b>	Mar 23 Mar 25 Mar 27	Informative Speeches Informative Speeches Informative Speeches		Informative Speeches Informative Speeches Informative Speeches
<b>Twelve</b>	Mar 30 Apr 1 Apr 3	The Persuasive Speech Making Arguments Impromptu Speeches	Chapter 16 Chapter 17	Impromptu Speeches
<b>Thirteen</b>	Apr 6 Apr 8 Apr 10	Persuasive Peer Evaluation Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches		Peer Evaluation Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches
<b>Fourteen</b>	Apr 13 Apr 15 Apr 17	Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches		Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches
<b>Fifteen</b>	Apr 20 Apr 22 Apr 24	Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches		Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches
<b>Sixteen</b>	Apr 27 Apr 29	Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches – <b>Last Day of Class</b>		Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Speeches
	May ?	<b>Final Exam Day &amp; Time TBA</b>		<b>Final Exam</b>