COMM 1320.001 –Business & Professional Communication
Spring 2026
Course Syllabus

Professor:	**Joseph Velasco, Ph.D.**
Office Hours:	MW, 10-11am & TTh 2-4pm, or by appointment.
Office Location:	LH 307
Telephone:	432-837-8370
Email Address:	jvelasco@sulross.edu
Class Schedule:	11-11:50am, MWF
Classroom Location:	LH 309
Required Text:	Miller, K., & Wahl, S. T. (2023). Business and professional communication: Keys for workplace excellence 5th ed.). London: Sage.
Required Equipment & Software:	Internet connection; computer with webcam & microphone; Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint (available free to SRSU students via **Office 365**)

Introduction

My name is Dr. Joseph Velasco (most students call me Dr. V), and I am happy to be on this professional journey with you. Corporate employers demand effective communication and presentation skills. As a future professional, you will not only be expected to be a confident speaker, but also to organize and prepare clear, concise, and interesting written documents and presentations. Further, you will be expected to work well with others, handle challenging situations including conflict, asking for a raise, interviewing (others), participating (and leading) meetings, and more.

This course is designed to help you develop in many ways to genuinely increase your chances of selecting the right career for you, getting hired, thriving in the workplace, and effectively managing your work-life balance. Developing your self-awareness and increasing your professionalism are vital. Further, this course is designed to develop communication skills within multiple interpersonal business contexts. This course is taught from a communication perspective that is firmly rooted in research yet is balanced by practical experience.
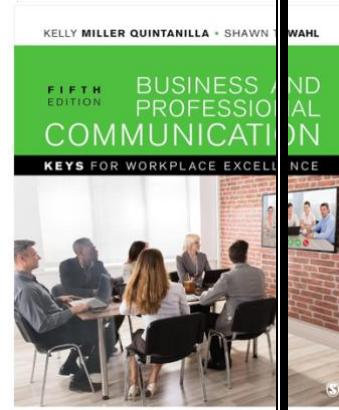
Section I. Student Learning Outcomes

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.

Section II. Course Learning Objectives

The general objectives for this course are to *enhance your competence and knowledge of business and professional communication*. As a student, your learning objectives are to:

Course Learning Objectives	How Evaluated…
CLO 1: Identify and overcome common obstacles in group meetings	Class discussions, Quizzes
CLO 2: Write several types of professional written communication	Resume, Cover-letter
CLO 3: Compose and perform a professional persuasive speech using technology	Persuasive Presentation, Speech Outline
CLO 4: Interview for a job	Quizzes, Mock Interview
CLO 5: Develop self-awareness	Personality Assessments, Mock Interview, Cover-letter, Resume

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	Grade Description (Points)
Quizzes (5)	250	
Job Announcement	50	A = 895-1000
Résumé	100	B = 795-894
Cover Letter	100	C = 695-794
Mock Interview	100	
Persuasive Presentation	300	D = 595-694
Persuasive Presentation Outline	100	F = < 595
Total	1000	

Quizzes. In this course **reading is necessary**. As with most courses, learning is greatly enhanced when students internalize the material. Five quizzes will assess your understanding of course concepts. Each quiz will have ten questions worth five points each. You may be quizzed on reading and lecture material.

Job Announcement. This assignment requires you to find an actual job or internship announcement. It may be part of an active search, or it may be an older archived copy. The idea is to find a likely target employer

while you are at SRSU or just beyond graduation. This announcement will guide three assignments: the resume, cover letter, and the mock interview.

Résumé & Cover Letter. For these assignments, you will use the job announcement (referenced above) and create a résumé and cover letter as if you are applying for this position. Submit a copy of the job announcement along with these assignments. You are allowed multiple submissions throughout the course to encourage revision. The latest revision replaces the previous grade. In this way, I can track your learning, encourage a process approach to writing, and you can end up with your best work. It's rigorous for me as a professor, but your learning is worth it. Please respect my time by offering your best work. **Submissions accepted until 5pm on Dead Day**.

Mock Interview. For this assignment, you will find a job announcement that is ideal for you presently or possibly in the future. You will use this announcement as your objective when preparing your responses for the interview. I expect you to prepare responses to a list of typical interview questions which I provide. I will interview you in front of the class. The questions I will ask you are already posted and viewable on Blackboard. You will be graded on how well you handle the live interview without any scripted responses in front of you.

Persuasive Presentation. The Persuasive Presentation asks you and possibly a partner to use your persuasive and creative skills to sell an idea or a product. Through brainstorming and other creative strategies, you and your partner will develop a marketing proposal to pitch to the class. The persuasive power and creativity of your proposal is key. To that end, you will develop a compelling and unique pitch and convince us in your 10–15-minute presentation that it is the best choice. You and your partner receive the same grade on this assignment, worth a total of 300 points. If you choose to work alone, your presentation must be 5-10 minutes in length. Each presentation must verbally cite a minimum of four credible sources. A slideshow presentation (e.g., PowerPoint) with a minimum of 5 slides is required.

Section V. 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 have reliable internet service 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.

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.

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 the 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 an accommodating response.

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 SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email 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

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/. 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), 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/ or ask a librarian by emailing 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. 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 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

Calendar

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Due or To Do:
One	Jan 12 Jan 14 Jan 15	No Classes – Day before spring semester Course Introduction Excellence at Work	 Chapter 1	
Two	Jan 19 Jan 21 Jan 23	Dr. MLK Day – No Class Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Online Quiz & Personality Assessments – No Class	 Chapter 2 N/A	 **Quiz 1** https://www.sulross.edu/student-life/career-services/assessments/
Three	Jan 26 Jan 28 Jan 30	Listening & Interview Qs More on Interviewing *Scripting Interview Responses*	Chapter 3	Job Announcement
Four	Feb 2 Feb 4 Feb 6	Interviews & Résumés Research & Professional Writing Online Quiz – No Class	Chapter 4 Chapter 9	Résumé & Cover Letter **Quiz 2**
Five	Feb 9 Feb 11 Feb 13	Interview Peer Evaluation Interviews (Sign-up on Blackboard) Interviews	N/A N/A N/A	
Six	Feb 16 Feb 18 Feb 20	Diversity in the Workplace Work Relationships Online Quiz – No Class	Chapter 5 Chapter 6	 **Quiz 3**
Seven	Feb 23 Feb 25 Feb 27	*Discuss Personality Assessment Results* Strengthening Teams & Meetings ***Team Meetings***	N/A Chapter 7	
Eight	Mar 2 Mar 4 Mar 6	Leadership & Conflict Management Professional Public Speaking Informing & Persuading	Chapter 10 Chapter 11 Chapter 11	
Nine	Mar 9 Mar 11 Mar 13	Making Arguments ***Team Meetings*** ***Team Meetings***	Chapter 11	
Ten	Mar 16 Mar 18 Mar 20	Spring Break – No Class Spring Break – No Class Spring Break – No Class		
Eleven	Mar 23 Mar 25 Mar 27	Two different Outlines: Writing your Speech Peer Review in Small Groups Online Quiz – No Class		 **Quiz 4**
Twelve	Mar 30 Apr 1 Apr 3	Designing a Speech Professional Delivery ***Team Meetings***	Chapter 12 Chapter 13	
Thirteen	Apr 6 Apr 8 Apr 10	Technology & Professionalism ***Team Meetings*** ***Team Meetings***	Chapter 8	
Fourteen	Apr 13 Apr 15 Apr 17	Finding Balance Duo Speech Presentations Duo Speech Presentations	Chapter 14	**Quiz 5**
Fifteen	Apr 20 Apr 22 Apr 24	Duo Speech Presentations Duo Speech Presentations Duo Speech Presentations		
Sixteen	Apr 27 Apr 29	Duo Speech Presentations Duo Speech Presentations		
Seventeen	May ?	**Final Exam – 10:15-noon**		**Final Exam**

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