

**COMM 1315 – Public Speaking
Fall 2026
Course Syllabus**

DUAL CREDIT

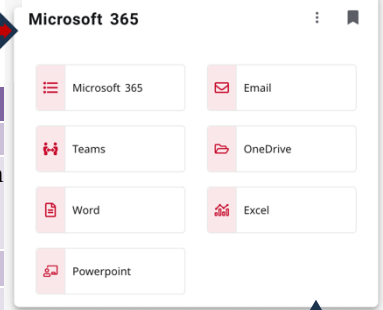
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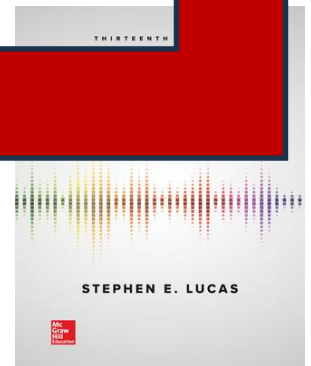
SUL ROSS
The FRONTIER University of Texas

Professor:	Vanessa Agee
Office Hours:	I am glad to meet online with students at their conven Tuesday or Thursday afternoons or Friday morning. I responsive to student emails through Blackboard.
Sul Ross Website:	www.sulross.edu
Email Address:	vanessa.agee@sulross.edu
Class Schedule:	Online Anytime
Classroom Location:	Blackboard - https://www.sulross.edu/bb/
Required Text:	Lucas, S. (2020). <i>The art of public speaking</i> (13 th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
Required Equipment & Software:	Internet connection; computer with webcam & microphone; Microsoft Office (available free to SRSU students via Office 365)



Introduction

My name is Vanessa Agee, and I am happy to help you. Over the span of recorded history, public help humans affect each other in numerous ways, including teaching, persuading, celebrating, entertaining, and more. Whether it is in a courtroom in Alpine, TX, 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 Studies 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 Studies, 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.

2026-2027 Core Assessment (Critical Thinking & Communication):

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:

Critical Thinking. Students will develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.

Communication. Students will develop communication skills to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.

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
Practice Self-evaluation (Informative)	50	C = 695-794
Practice Self-evaluation (Persuasive)	50	D = 595-694
Introduction Speech	25	F = < 595
Oral Reading	50	
Impromptu Speech	25	
Informative Speech	150	
Informative Speech Outline	100	
Persuasive Speech	300	
Persuasive Speech Outline	100	
Final Exam	50	
Total Points Possible	1000	

Introduction 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 Blackboard Collaborate 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?

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 that you would enjoy reading 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.

Practice Speech Self-Evaluation. Effective public speakers improve through practice, observation, and feedback. In a traditional classroom, you would receive feedback from classmates after practicing your speech. Because this is an asynchronous course, you will instead become your own audience and evaluator.

Before submitting your **Informative Speech** and **Persuasive Speech**, you will record yourself delivering a complete practice version of your speech. After recording, you will **watch the entire recording from beginning to end** and complete the Practice Speech Self-Evaluation. As you watch your recording, evaluate your performance as if you were a member of your intended audience. Pay particular attention to both the content of your speech and your delivery. Look and listen for strengths as well as specific areas that you can improve before your final recording.

Your self-evaluation should address questions such as:

- **Organization:** Was my introduction engaging and did it clearly establish my topic and purpose? Were my main points easy to follow? Did my conclusion effectively reinforce my message?
- **Content:** Did I provide appropriate supporting material and explain my ideas clearly?
- **Delivery:** Was my pace appropriate? Was my volume easy to hear? Did I use effective vocal variety?
- **Nonverbal communication:** Did I maintain appropriate eye contact with the camera? Was my posture and body language effective? Did I appear confident and prepared?
- **Fluency:** Did I use unnecessary filler words such as "um," "uh," "like," or "you know"? Did I stumble, lose my place, or rely too heavily on my notes?
- **Audience awareness:** If I were watching this speech as a member of the intended audience, what would make me want to continue listening? What might distract me or reduce my interest?
- **Strengths:** What are two things I did particularly well?
- **Improvement:** What are two or three specific changes I will make before recording my final speech?

Submission

1. Record yourself delivering the complete practice speech.
2. Watch the entire recording before completing your evaluation.
3. Complete the Practice Speech Self-Evaluation form.
4. Identify specific examples from your recording rather than simply stating that your speech was "good" or "bad."
5. Submit your completed self-evaluation through Blackboard. Upload a Word file.

Important: The purpose of this assignment is not to criticize yourself. The purpose is to develop your ability to observe your own communication, recognize what is working, and make purposeful changes. Effective speakers learn to become their own coaches.

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. Your speech must be persuasive.

Choose one of the following prompts, take 3 minutes to write out a persuasive speech on that topic, and record your speech and upload it to Blackboard. Your speech should have an Intro, Body, and Conclusion. If you make a claim, you need to support it with a verbal citation. If so, please also put a link to your citation in the assignment comments when you submit your video. Your speech should be at least 1 minute long.

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| 1. What is the most important book every high school student in America should read? | 5. Should children be told to believe in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy? |
| 2. How long should judges serve on the Supreme Court? | 6. Should single-use plastic be banned? |
| 3. Should voting become mandatory? | 7. What is the most beneficial parenting style and why? |
| 4. Has the popularity of “selfies” increased self-confidence or self-centeredness? | 8. Do ghosts exist? |
| | 9. Boredom is a good thing. |
| | 10. Why is Sul Ross the best university? |

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. Presentations will be made through our Online Classroom. Your presentation must include your face being visible while you are speaking.

Informative/Persuasive Outline. For each major speech, you will need to write a full-sentence outline of your entire speech. Significant points are added for the inclusion of a specific purpose and central idea written at the top (as modeled in the samples provided). You will also include a list of credible references you cited in your speech. If you are using MLA, call it Works Cited. For APA, call it References. For that section, pick a style and stick to it.

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. Still, there’s 30 seconds of grace on the backend, as described for the Informative Speech. You are required to verbally cite a minimum of five credible sources. Presentations will be made through our Online Classroom. Your presentation must include your face being visible while you are speaking.

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 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.

(Online) 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.

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. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

[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

Statement Regarding Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). This course assumes that work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups as directed by class assignment instructions. This policy indicates the following constitute violations of academic honesty: a student has another person/entity do the work of any substantive portion of a graded assignment for them, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, and/or using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT).

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.

All assignments should be fully prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in the skills associated with this course, from student-based brainstorming to project development, will prepare you for success in your degree pathway and, ultimately, a competitive career. Therefore, the use of generative

AI tools to complete any aspect of assignments for this course are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism. If you have questions about what constitutes a violation of this statement, please contact me.

ADA Statement. 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. To help protect confidentiality, students seeking accessibility/accommodation(s) services must submit the [Accommodation Request Form](#) located on our [website](#). Students are welcome to call the Office of Accessibility Services at 432-837-8203 or stop by Ferguson Hall Room 112 if they have any additional questions regarding the process. Our mailing address is PO Box C-122; Alpine, TX; 79832.

Student Responsibilities. 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 him/herself 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!

Course Calendar
(Calendar subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Due or To Do:
One	Aug 24 - Aug 30	Course Introduction Student Introductions		Introduction Speech
Two	Aug 31 - Sept 6	Speaking in Public Ethics and Public Speaking; Listening	Chapter 1 Chapters 2 & 3	
Three	Sept 7 - Sept 13	Giving Your First Speech: Speaking to Inform Topic & Purpose Selection	Chapters 4 & 15 Chapter 5	
Four	Sept 14 - Sept 20	Oral Reading Analyzing the Audience & Researching Your Speech Topic	Chapters 6 & 7	Oral Reading Online Exam 1
Five	Sept 21 - Sept 27	Supporting Materials & Reasoning Organizing & Outlining Your Speech Transitions, Introductions, & Conclusions	Chapter 8 Chapters 9 & 10	
Six	Sept 28 - Oct 4	Outlining the Speech Language & Delivery	Chapter 11 Chapter 12 & 13	
Seven	Oct 5 - Oct 11	Using Visual Aids Informative Self-Evaluation	Chapter 14	Online Exam 2
Eight	Oct 12 - Oct 18	Specific practice: visual aids and citations		Turn in early +2 points? Informative Speech due Nov 1
Nine	Oct 19 - Oct 25	Specific practice: vocalics and gestures		Turn in early +1 point? Informative Speech due Nov 1
Ten	Oct 26 - Nov 1	Informative Speeches Due The Persuasive Speech	Chapter 16	Self-evaluation & Informative Speeches due Nov 1
Eleven	Nov 2 - Nov 8	Making Arguments Impromptu Speeches	Chapter 17	Impromptu Speeches
Twelve	Nov 9 - Nov 15	Persuasive Speeches Persuasive Self-Evaluation		Persuasive Speeches due Nov 29. By Nov 15: +5 points
Thirteen	Nov 16 - Nov 22	Specific practice: Outline revision		Persuasive Speeches due Nov 29. By Nov 22: +2 points
Fourteen	Nov 23 - Nov 29	Specific practice: Call to action		Persuasive Speeches due Nov 29
Fifteen	Nov 30 - Dec 3 Dec 3	Persuasive Speeches Dead Day – Last day work accepted		Persuasive Speeches due Nov 29. Late by Dec 3: -5 points
Sixteen	Dec 3	No formal final exam time is required for this class. Your final is an online exam.		Online Final Exam