
COMM 286S: Business & Professional Communication



Course Syllabus | Summer 2018

Instructor:

Email:

Phone:

Office Address:

Office Hours:

Location of Virtual Office Hours:

Course Description and Objectives

Employers often identify “good communication skills” as a requirement in job descriptions and help wanted ads. But what does it really mean to have good communication skills? In this class, you will develop and refine communication skills that you will be able to apply in your workplace interactions. But achieving “good communication” in organizational contexts depends upon far more than organizational members’ possession and execution of these not-as-simple-as-they-seem skills. Therefore, as you develop your basic communication skills set in this course, we will examine communication issues that are important to contemporary organizations, as well as the communication-based problems with which they grapple. You will have the opportunity to excel beyond simple awareness of communicative skills and strategies to become communicatively competent, a real advantage in any business environment.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Use theories and concepts to advance your understanding of communication
- Use theories and concepts to expand your communicative repertoire to help you successfully navigate professional life
- Develop/enhance your ability to research, organize, and deliver professional oral presentations
- Develop/enhance impromptu speaking skills
- Develop/enhance teamwork skills and specific strategies to work effectively in teams
- Use theories and concepts to understand and intelligently discuss communication issues and challenges in contemporary professional life

Required Reading:

Adler, Elmhorst, & Lucas (2013). *Communicating at work: Strategies for success in business and the professions*. [Customized e-textbook for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln].

Lincoln, NE: McGraw Hill.

The required text for this course is a custom package found only through the University Bookstore on campus or directly from McGraw-Hill online. In addition to the text chapters that have been drawn from multiple texts, the faculty have included content in the textbook package necessary for success in this course. Further, the faculty have worked directly with the publisher to provide a cost-effective package to UNL students in the e-book format. Students taking this course are expected to utilize the components of the package available in the bookstore or online.

Required Electronic Resources:

Connect Public Speaking Access. This online package enables you to upload recorded speeches required for this class and gives you access to specific digital lectures required for this course. Your pass code is included in your textbook package. If you need to purchase it separately, you may do so through the University bookstore or through the publisher (McGraw-Hill). The link will be provided in your Canvas course.

Assignments & Tests

Your final grade will be determined based on your performance on the following. Full details for each assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Scavenger Hunt (10 points). You will complete tasks and answer questions in order to help you become familiar with the online learning environment.

Case Analysis Paper (50 points). In this assignment you will write a paper in which you evaluate a professional case study in which you apply the concepts from your reading and lecture to analyze the organization's culture and make recommendations based on what you are learning.

Oral Self-Critique (55 points). You will carefully critique your verbal and nonverbal communication patterns and identify a specific habit that you should work to improve in order to maximize your professional communicative competence.

Team Strategic Plan (25 points). Your team will engage in purposeful planning and reflection on how to employ course concepts to facilitate success as a team in completing the final project. This will involve formal logistical planning of team meetings and a consideration of how the team will think through developing a positive, productive climate.

Outline of Informative Speech (50 points). You will conceptualize, develop, research and organize an outline for an informative presentation. Your delivery of this presentation will be graded separately.

Delivery of Informative Presentation (100 points). You will research, organize, and deliver professional oral presentations that focus on business-related issues. These must be extemporaneous nature rather than manuscript or memorized. These will be audio and video recorded speeches.

Contribution to Team Final Project Individual Speech Outline and Delivery. (100 points for outline and delivery). You will develop and deliver a speech centered on the key content-based contribution that you will make to your team's final team communication consultant plan paper. After researching one area of this paper, you will discern the overall claim that you can make regarding this portion of the paper and will support that with three key main points. You will develop this into a formal, full sentence speech outline and deliver it extemporaneously.

Team Communication Consultant Plan Paper (100 points). With your teammates, you will research and develop a comprehensive, professional, cohesive team paper that identifies and analyzes a real world problem that a specific industry or organization is currently facing. You will consider that problem from a communication standpoint and propose a communication-based solution to the problem using your own research as well as insights and vocabulary from our lectures and textbook.

Essay Questions (60 total points). In this class, you will be responding to an essay question provided by your instructor for each learning unit. This is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have read, watched, and understood all the assigned material as you identify and define relevant concepts. You will be asked to connect concepts from the assigned lecture to concepts from the reading as respond to the essay question prompt provided by your instructor for each learning unit. 7 total prompts will be given, each worth 10 points. The lowest essay response will be dropped (total of 60 points).

Expectations

Academic Dishonesty and Student Misconduct. Just as ethics are important in business, they also are important in educational settings. Therefore, academic honesty and integrity **are** expected in this course. Any student who is found to have engaged in an act of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, complicity, misrepresenting excuses for missing class **or** turning in late work) will automatically fail the assignment and the case will be reviewed to determine whether the student will fail the course. **Plagiarism is any act of submitting another person's work as your own work. Please note: It is possible to plagiarize yourself.** You may not submit work that you completed in a prior semester (for this or any other class) for a grade in the current semester. ***Doing this constitutes self-plagiarism.*** If you have questions about this, please talk with your instructor.

The Department of Communication Studies is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity. The Department adopts the campus definition of academic dishonesty in the Student Code of Conduct (Article 3, Section B-1) including cheating, fabrication or falsification, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), abuse of academic materials, complicity in academic dishonesty, falsifying grade reports, impermissible collaboration, and misrepresentation. The instructors will meet with the student and if they determine that academic dishonesty or misconduct has occurred, the instructor will prepare a written account and file a "Misconduct Referral Form" with the Office of the Dean of Students. The full "Academic Dishonesty and Student Misconduct" policy is linked to the department's website: <https://comm.unl.edu/forms-and-policies>

Grading as a part of Learning and Instruction. Instructors assess work in this course in accordance with how well it demonstrates student mastery of the course content (reading, lectures, instructor classes and meetings, instructor feedback, etc). Students should strive to demonstrate mastery of these concepts in all aspects of their work. As a part of the learning process, instructors provide feedback when they grade to help students improve their skill and understanding as they move forward. Students are expected to review and incorporate this feedback in their future work.

24/7 Rule. Given the role of grading in the teaching and learning process, it is vital that students actively review their feedback and stay engaged in the process throughout the semester. If a student has a question or concern about feedback and/or the grade on a particular assignment, they are expected to take 24 hours from the time of receiving the feedback to consider it and determine how they can incorporate it into their understanding moving forward. If, after considering the feedback in depth, they have continued questions about the assessment, they should address those questions with the instructor within 7 days of receiving the feedback to ensure a productive conversation and the opportunity to learn from the feedback and assessment as they move forward in the class.

Grade Appeals Process. If a student has continued concerns after clarifying the feedback, they can consider initiating a grade appeal on the assignment. The Department of Communication Studies “Grading and Grade Appeals” policy document is linked to the department’s website: <https://comm.unl.edu/forms-and-policies>

Responsibility for Personal Learning. This course is being taught online. You will be required to stay on task and take responsibility for your own learning as you work through the course. Please note that this also plays into your group work. Please remain communicative with your group members, and be sure to ask questions if you are not clear on anything within the course.

Recorded Presentations. You will be required to record yourself delivering your speech (video and audio) in front of an audience of at least 5 people (you may select and gather them on your own). You will need to first span the audience so I can see your audience and count the number of people present. Then, you will record your speech, making certain that I can clearly see you and evaluate your nonverbals and speaker presence. Then, you must span your audience again so I can count the number of people present. This will be uploaded to Speech Connect for my review. I also must be able to clearly hear your presentation in order to grade it effectively. Please test these things out before you post your final speech by the deadline to ensure that your recording is visually clear and is clearly audible. ***It is your responsibility to ensure you have posted a compatible, accessible video recording that can be clearly heard and viewed so it is accessible for grading before the due date.***

Team Collaboration. You are required to collaborate online with a team to complete required projects. You are expected to be a responsible and ethical team member. This includes fulfilling agreed upon tasks, being flexible with your schedule, and being respectful in all interactions. ***You will need to be proactive as a team member from the first day of class through the end of the course.*** Since we never meet in person for class, you will need to develop a set of expectations within your group for the timely completion of your group work, demonstrating a clear respect for each group members’ need to complete the work

within a specific timeframe. Communication among group members is essential! Be certain that you are responsive to your group members to avoid the development of frustration within your group.

Assignment Turn In. All assignments must be submitted through Canvas as explained in each assignment description. Assignments will not be accepted via email or any other format. It is your responsibility to use Canvas effectively to turn in your assignments and to ensure that your assignment is properly submitted before the assignment due date according to course specifications. PLEASE NOTE: Your assignments MUST be Microsoft Word documents. If you are saving your assignments on your MAC, you must add the .doc or .docx file extension to your document in order for it to be accepted.

Deadlines. Meeting deadlines is very important and a mark of professionalism. All assignments are due on the assigned day, no later than 11:59pm CST. **Please pay attention to due dates and make sure that you complete all tasks due for each Learning Unit by the specified due date. It is your responsibility to make sure your assignment has been successfully turned in according to class expectations before the due date.** You will want to be sure to check Canvas to be sure your assignment was successfully submitted before the due date has passed. You have flexibility in posting your assignments at any time during the learning unit that is assigned. I encourage you to post your work early when possible, and check to be sure it was properly posted. This will help you avoid issues that can result due to unexpected illness or personal emergencies that could result in late work. Waiting until the last minute leaves room for you to turn in late work due to unexpected situations that might arise, such as illness.

Late Work. If you do miss a deadline, a late penalty will be applied to your work. If you miss the assignment deadline, you may submit your assignment within 2 days of the due date (up to 48 hours late) for a 25% deduction, within 3-4 days (48-96 hours late) for a 50% deduction, and within 5-6 days (96-144 hours late) for a 75% deduction. An assignment posted more than 6 days late will not be accepted for credit. Please note that the late policy also applies to assignments that were not submitted properly according to course expectations before the due date.

Turning Work in Early. You are welcome to turn your work in early. However, please note that your written assignments will not be graded until the assigned due date.

Written Work. The work you turn in should reflect your professionalism. All written assignments must be typed and proofread for errors. Your work should be written as you would write any formal document, free of “text speak” and other commonly used shortcuts in electronic communication.

Incompletes. Incomplete grades are rarely assigned in this class. Please plan to complete all work for the course within the semester you are taking it. In the event you experience circumstances that you see as potentially warranting an incomplete, please note that you must have completed at least 75% of the work in the course and you must approach your instructor before the last week of classes with a proposal for completion of the work. ***Instructors generally do not approve these requests given the nature of the course and its focus on team collaboration.***

The Human Connection

Although you are taking this course in an online format, I want you to remember that your computer is only the *channel* of your instruction, not your instructor. I am a real person on the other end of your Internet connection who cares about your learning experience and is willing and able to assist you. As your instructor, I will be responsible for giving you feedback on your assignments, responding to your questions, and monitoring online activities. Please email me, meet with me via Skype, or schedule a face-to-face meeting in my office to discuss any concerns you have.

Statement on Special Needs Accommodation

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate fully in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, (402) 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same accountability and the same support applied to offenses against other protected categories; such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, UNL offers several resources for reporting and support (<https://www.unl.edu/equity/title-ix>). Located in Canfield Administration 128, Tami Strickman is UNL's Title IX coordinator. Her contact number is 402-472-3417. In the Student Union, Jan Deeds runs the Women's Center and is supervisor of PREVENT (the on campus student organization aimed toward sexual assault awareness and bystander intervention). Her contact information is jdeeds1@unl.edu, and 402-472-2598. Also located in the Student Union, Voices of Hope provides support in answering questions and guidance in reporting options. Please find the many resources offered by Voices of Hope at <http://involved.unl.edu/gender/advocate>. Additional support is offered through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) located in the University Health Center on the second floor. The contact number for CAPS is 402-472-7450.

ACE Credit

COMM 286 satisfies ACE Outcome 2A: demonstrate competence in communication skills by making oral presentations with supporting materials. In this course, you will develop professional communication competence across interpersonal, small group, and public contexts with a particular focus on learning how to effectively develop and deliver professional business presentations. Course content includes developing and delivering prepared speeches (including research, organization of material, delivery, visual aids). Competency in ACE 2A will be assessed using two signature assignments: the individual informative speech presentation outline that allows students to demonstrate their capacity to develop, organize, and support oral presentations with credible research as well the individual delivery of this prepared informative outline.

Mission of the Department of Communication Studies

The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts. The department's research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

My Grades
(* = Group Grade)

	Possible	My Score
ASSIGNMENTS		
Engage Points (Essays, Blogs, or Quizzes)	60	_____
Scavenger Hunt	10	_____
Case Analysis Paper	50	_____
Oral Self Critique	55	_____
Team Strategic Plan	*25*	_____
Outline Communication in Workplace Presentation	50	_____
Delivery Communication in Workplace Presentation	100	_____
Contribution to Team Project Presentation	100	_____
Team Communication Consultant Paper	*100*	_____
TOTAL POINTS	550	_____

Course Grading Scale

A = 93%+	B+ = 87-89.9%	C+ = 77-79.9%	D+ = 67-69.9%	F = <60%
A- = 90-92.9%	B = 83-86.9%	C = 73-76.9%	D = 63-66.9%	
	B- = 80-82.9%	C- = 70-72.9%	D- = 60-62.9%	