

Fundamentals of Communication Course syllabus (Fall 2005)

COURSE: Fundamentals of Communication (COMM 1313)

TEXT: Fundamentals of Communication 3rd edition
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McGraw-Hill, Publisher ISBN 0-256-84061-X (Available at the campus bookstores)

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or by appointment

ACCOMODATIONS: If you wish to request accommodation for a documented disability, please contact the Office of DisAbility Services in BH 1007 (the Learner Development Center). Call 479-619-4384 or 479-619-4324 or email mkirk@nwacc.edu to schedule an appointment. After that, please meet with me to discuss accommodations. I'm happy to help!

WEATHER & CLASS CANCELLATION POLICY: In case of bad weather, call the Student Information Line at 479-619-4377 or listen to local TV/radio stations. (Please note: it's possible K-12 schools may be closed but the college will be open. One reason for that the K-12 schools have to consider the road conditions where buses travel.) If the college is open and it's safe to travel, we'll hold class as scheduled. I realize some of you may live in the Far Reaches of Beyond, and may not be able to travel even if the main roads are clear; if that's a problem, we'll work something out. If we can't meet on campus, I will post a notice to our virtual classroom as soon as possible; be sure to log in regularly and check for updates and messages. (We'll discuss this feature in depth in early September.)

Whenever I am physically unable to be in class as scheduled, we'll work online to stay on schedule. Student-use computers with Internet access are available at both the main campus and the Washington County Center.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is an introductory course in human communication. We'll learn about basic communication theories and explore different types of communication, such as interpersonal, small group, and public communication. You'll have opportunities to develop and apply communication skills by completing exercises and assessments, participating in group interactions, and delivering presentations.

Together, we'll work on developing effective critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills. **These skills are essential for success as a communicator.** Wherever possible, we'll connect class discussions and activities to the communication venues that most affect you—the workplace, your home, and your community. The classroom format will combine discussions, presentations, and small group activities.

This course fulfills the basic oral communication requirement for the Associate of Arts and the Associate of Science degree, and will be accepted as transfer credit to state universities and colleges. You'll earn three semester hours' credit for successful completion of this course.

Fair warning: most schools won't accept a grade of "D" as transfer credit, and that grade probably won't count toward graduation, either. If in doubt, check with the Registrar's office. (Of course, the smart thing to do is earn a "C" or better in the course!)

ACADEMIC CREDIT & CAREER INFO:	<p>Have questions about transfer credits, graduation requirements, or degree options? Please visit the academic advisors in the Learner Development Center (BH 1007).</p> <p>Want to know what you can do with a degree in communication? Check out the poster in my office (BH 1063), visit the department website, and check out NWACC's exclusive Virtual Career Center. You're also very welcome to meet with me and discuss career options. For example, there are dozens of academic majors that you can "power up" with an academic minor in Communication. I'm a Certified Global Career Development Facilitator, and eager to help!</p> <p>And start thinking about joining Sigma Chi Eta, the national honor society for communication students in two-year colleges. Membership in a professional organization like Sigma Chi Eta is a definite résumé-booster and a great networking resource for you. If you're interested in future membership, let's talk!</p>
INTENDED OUTCOME & ASSESSMENTS:	<p>Students will develop effective oral communication skills. We may conduct pre- and post-testing and compare aggregate data to assess student skill development. (Aggregate data means you can't be identified by name.)</p>
OBJECTIVES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Familiarize students with basic communication theory ● Encourage learning by participation, discussion, and reflection ● Assist students in conducting research, writing, and verbally presenting ideas ● Enhance speaking skills of an interpersonal and public nature ● Develop high-demand workforce skills valued by employers
GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES:	<p>Please read the General Education Outcomes included in the current College catalog (available online and in print). Our work together in this course will help you develop the skills necessary to achieve these outcomes.</p> <p>The National Communication Association emphasizes the scope and significance of communication as a General Education Outcome. Here's an excerpt of the NCA policy statement to help you better understand the structure of this course as it fits within your total college education experience:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To become competent communicators, students must understand the role of their communication choices and behaviors within their social context, whether public or private, with large audiences or with individual partners, within cultures and across cultures. In addition, they should understand the factors that influence their decision-making, and the factors that affect the potential success or failure of their communication efforts. They will need to learn how to translate their goals as communicators into effective messages. Contemporary students need to be aware of the potential of new media and emerging information technologies both to enhance and impair the quality of communication. Above all, it is imperative that students are introduced to the complex ethical issues that will face communicators in a multicultural and technologically complex society. (National Communication Association, 1996, p. 1)</p>
RIGHTS & GRIEVANCES	<p>I'll make every effort to provide you with the tools you need to meet your educational goals in this course. You're expected to adhere to the guidelines for student conduct and academic honesty stated in the College Catalog. If you have any complaints or grievances, please follow the procedure outlined in the Catalog.</p>
RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEARNERS:	<p>NWACC is a Learning College. You, the individual learner, are a full partner in the learning process, and assume primary responsibility for your educational choices, actions, and decisions.</p> <p>During this course, I'll create options for learning and will design collaborative learning activities to help you achieve your goals.</p>

**RIGHTS &
RESPONSIBILITIES
OF LEARNERS:
(continued)**

We work hard to uphold our reputation as a high-caliber community of learners. Please read (and heed!) this Statement of Rights & Responsibilities, written by NWACC faculty and students:

1. Students have the right to expect instructors to meet class regularly & to follow the college calendar.
 - Faculty have the right to expect students to attend class regularly.
2. Students have the right to expect instructors to be prepared & organized for class.
 - Faculty have the right to expect students to be equally prepared and organized.
3. Students have the right to expect faculty to hold scheduled office hours.
 - Faculty have the right to expect students to keep appointments made with the instructor & to use scheduled office hours as a time to discuss any concerns about the class with the instructor.
4. Students have the right to expect faculty to return graded assignments & tests within a reasonable time period.
 - Faculty have the right to expect students to turn in assignments on time.
5. Students and faculty have the right to expect respect from one another & the responsibility to show respect.
 - Faculty have the responsibility to model behavior which illustrates the value of higher education; students have the responsibility of keeping an open mind so that they may learn the value of higher education.

Check out this attribute list of successful students—how many are part of your academic work ethic? Successful students:

- Acknowledge their personal responsibility for academic success
- Establish educational and career goals
- Understand the classroom is part of your “real world”
- Commit to attend class as scheduled and actively participate
- Communicate and behave with honor and professional courtesy
- Ask questions and share ideas
- Work well with others
- Appreciate differences as well as similarities
- Manage their time effectively
- Study, discuss, and learn course material
- Are responsible, actively engaged, and interested!

ETHICS:

Academic Dishonesty: The College’s Academic Dishonesty policy is stated in the College Catalog (available [online](#) and in print). Violation of this policy is grounds for grading sanctions, admonition or probation, and/or suspension or expulsion.

I’ve found many students don’t understand what constitutes plagiarism, and consequently don’t understand how to avoid it. Saying “I didn’t know,” “I didn’t mean to,” or “I forgot” does not excuse you from taking credit for someone else’s work.

If you use an idea, a phrase, an illustration—anything that’s not your original contribution—you must acknowledge the source. Failure to do so is an act of plagiarism. Please read the College Catalog carefully, and understand your obligations as a learner. This is a non-negotiable issue.

Ethical learners understand the importance of citing sources. Doing so demonstrates your ability to find information, evaluate its usefulness, and use it properly in the context of your own work. By citing your sources, you’re demonstrating your skill as a scholar.

ETHICS:
(continued)

By the way, many students often believe that listing references at the end of your assignment is enough, but that's **not** sufficient; you must include in-text citations as well. You may use either APA or MLA style. NWACC's Library provides excellent resources to help you learn how to properly cite your source of information.

A short refresher: if you use something verbatim (word for word), indicate this by using "quotation marks" around the quote, and use the appropriate in-text citation. If you paraphrase information you've found (that is, you put their ideas into your own words), you must acknowledge the source with an in-text citation, as well. Whether you paraphrase or quote others, remember to use both in-text citations and include your source in your reference list at the end of your document. Once you get in the habit of citing your sources, it just becomes a habit (a good one!) that takes no effort at all. I'll bring examples of properly cited materials to class, and am happy to direct you to other resources to learn more.

Learning how to properly acknowledge the source of your information is an essential skill all learners must develop. I choose to believe all my students are ethical, responsible learners, but my "Pollyanna" psychological operating software does have a reality chip installed. I (sadly) realize a tiny percentage of students will cheat. So fair warning: I consider plagiarism to be theft of property. It's an unlawful, criminal act, and I **will** pursue all judicial options. You'll earn a grade of zero for the assignment, face dismissal from the course with a failing grade, or be referred to the judicial committee to face possible expulsion from school. Don't risk your reputation and your future!

**ATTENDANCE &
CONDUCT**

By registering for this course, you entered into a contractual agreement as a learner. **As a full partner in the learning process, you assume primary responsibility for your educational choices, actions, and decisions.** The Schedule of Classes clearly states the dates and times this class meets. Please be on time for each class.

As your learning facilitator, I've committed to being in class as scheduled, to the best of my ability, and fully expect you to honor the same commitment. If you're not here, you can't participate in our collaborative learning process, and your absence affects everyone in the course.

It's no coincidence that the #1 reason students fail a college class is that—oops—they don't go to class! Academic transcripts don't distinguish between "F" for non-attendance and "F" for failing to master the material. And even if you take the course again and pass, that "F" is a permanent mark on your transcript. Now, what do you think future employers think when they see you failed Communication? (And when you consider that communication skills are consistently rated among the top five most important and valued skills in the workplace...)

I've designed the class sessions to help you comprehend the academic concepts, with many opportunities built in for skill acquisition and demonstration. That's why it's important you attend class, and to behave professionally while you're here. Behaving in an unprofessional manner is **not** part of our Learning College culture.

Here's an **incomplete** list of unacceptable behavior:

- Disrespectful and hateful language
- Violent and/or threatening conduct
- Disruptive cell phone use
- Activities not related to the course (for example, pager/email communication, text message, or your math homework!)

About phones: I realize you may need to have your phone on. If you have children, for example, or ailing family members, of course you'd want to be available. If this or something similar is true for you, let's discuss it, and switch your phone to "vibrate" instead of ring. (I'll do the same, and let you know at the start of class if I have my phone with me.) If you absolutely must take a call while in class, please do so with the

**ATTENDANCE &
CONDUCT**
(continued)

minimum of interruption to the group. Step out of the class and go out into the main hallway to take your call, for example. The same holds true for my office, by the way.

In addition to in-class activities, you also have the option to participate in Service Learning. While you are engaged this project, I'll expect the same level of professional behavior. Our partner agencies perceive Service Learning participants as representatives of NWACC, so please dress and behave as a professional.

On rare occasions, illness or another situation may prevent you (or me) from attending as planned. In that event, please submit appropriate documentation from your healthcare provider or employer. I do, however, understand that life's obligations may interfere with your planned attendance, so you can miss 10% of the course without academic penalty. (That means you can miss 4 days for MWF classes.) Three late arrivals equal one absence. (I take roll at the start of each class, each day starting at a random spot on the course enrollment list. You're late if you arrive after I've called your name.) **Please anticipate traffic delays and parking challenges, and plan accordingly to arrive on time.** Each absence beyond the 10% allowed will result in a zero for that day's discussion grade.

If you can't attend class, email me (sholmes@nwacc.edu) or call 479-619-4126 and leave a message to let me know, then contact a classmate to learn what you missed in class. Time constraints simply won't allow me to repeat class presentations, homework instructions, or exams. I am available to help you in your learning journey; my office hours, however, are not a substitute for our time together in class.

You're responsible for learning what you missed. Please take the initiative and ask your classmates for this information. (In fact, I strongly encourage you to exchange names, phone numbers, and/or email addresses with other students.) **Please do not contact me to ask "Did I miss anything important?"** (Take a moment and consider what that question implies, and I think you'll appreciate my attitude!)

Week-by-week* course schedule:

Week 1 8/22/05 – 8/26-05	Welcome & orientation Intro to communication * Civic engagement & Service Learning
Week 2 8/29/05 – 9/2/05	The communication process Critical thinking * Service Learning Fair W-R * Student Success Week * Intercultural opportunities on campus
Week 3 9/5/05 – 9/9/05	Introductory "mini-presentation" speeches Listening * w: My NWCC Connection
Week 4 9/12/05 – 9/16/05	Verbal & nonverbal communication Critical thinking * M: Service Learning contracts due to Service Learning Coordinator BH 1007
Week 5 9/19/05 – 9/23/05	Interpersonal communication Emotional intelligence
Week 6 9/26/05 – 9/30/05	Relationships & communication * M: instructor off-campus (class continues online)
Week 7 10/3/05 – 10/7/05	Small group communication Styles & structures

Week 8 10/10/05 – 10/14/05	Small group communication Teamwork Group presentations
Week 9 10/17/05 – 10/21/05	Small group communication Group presentations * M: instructor off-campus (class continues online)
Week 10 10/24/05 – 10/28/05	Online communication * M&W: instructor off-campus (class continues online) * T: Service Learning timesheet due to Service Learning Coordinator BH 1007
Week 11 10/31/05 – 11/4/05	Workplace communication * F: last day to withdraw with “W” on transcript
Week 12 11/7/05 – 11/11/05	Public speaking * T: election day
Week 13 11/14/05 – 11/18/05	Public speaking Informative speech presentations
Week 14 11/21/05 – 11/25/05	Public speaking Informative speech presentations * W-F: Thanksgiving Break (no class!)
Week 15 11/28/05 – 12/2/05	Public speaking Persuasive speech presentations * F: Final exam Part I due
Week 16 12/5/05 – 12/9/05	Persuasive speech presentations Communication revisited * W: our last day of class!
Final Exam Schedule	9:00 AM MWF Class:12/14/05 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. 10:00 AM MWF Class: 12/9/05 10:00 a.m. – Noon * Grades due to Registrar 12/19/05

*I reserve the right to change this schedule to meet the learning needs of the class.

Course Activity Grades	% Grade
Participation & homework	10%
GP credit (ask!)	5%
Collaborative exams	10%
Intercultural interviews	10%
Introductory speech (self-graded)	5%
Informative presentation	10%
Persuasive presentation	10%
Small Group Presentation	10%
Final exam	15%
Service Learning <u>or</u> Media Project	15%
TOTAL:	100%

Assignment Overview*

Participation (including quizzes) & homework (10% total grade):

Because lecture without interaction is the least effective means of facilitating learning (it puts you in a passive, receive-only mode), I rarely use it. On those limited occasions where I feel compelled to talk “at” you, I’ll use my 11-minute lecture approach. I’ll ask you to engage your brain while I cover what I can in 11 minutes. Most of us have a 20-minute information saturation point. After 20 minutes, we just don’t process information as effectively, and some don’t process at all! So I’m asking you to engage, process, and listen for just half that time.

The rest of our class time will be spent in discussions, activities, and group work—all designed to help you explore some concept of communication and become personally involved in the learning process. Some of the things we’ll address will seem blindingly obvious to you, so jump in and take the lead, to help the others in your group understand and apply the information. Other times, you might feel like an English-only speaker at a European film festival where there are no subtitles. When that happens, you’ll probably be more comfortable as a follower. Even then, you can’t wilt into the woodwork—you’ll just need to practice some different communication skills, such as listening, reflecting, and requesting clarification.

If your body is in class but your mind isn’t, you limit your contribution to our collective learning, and hurt your participation grade in the process. And of course, if you’re not in class at all, you can’t earn credit.

Bottom line: show up, tune in, and challenge yourself to learn something new every single day.

Homework is due by the start of class on the date due. I don’t accept emailed or handwritten work. Fair warning: anticipate that you’ll encounter broken printers, corrupt files, and lost computer disks—have a backup plan ready. Late homework won’t be graded unless the circumstances are exceptional. Computer problems are not exceptional, but you might get away with pleading alien abduction, nuclear war, or having puppies. No “drop and go” homework submissions, either (that is, please don’t come to class just to submit homework and then leave, which makes me feel as though I went to graduate school just to end up taking coins in a toll booth). I require paper homework because we’ll use it in the classroom, and you’ll use the homework for quizzes and exams in this course. You’ll also use your homework in course projects. So it’s in your best interests to complete work as assigned! By the end of the semester, you will have developed an impressive collection of demonstrated communication competencies!

My rationale for this course policy is simple: college coursework **is** part of your “real world” and consequently shares many of the same standards and requirements you’ll find in the workplace. Employers aren’t impressed by missed quotas, late reports, or substandard performance. In fact, you could easily be demoted, or lose your job altogether! By earning good grades in your college classes, you’re demonstrating to current/future employers that you are professional, know how to get your work done, and how to do that work well. So think of this as a way to “supersize” your resume!

Important note: in case of bad weather, the due date for homework will be moved to the next regularly scheduled class day following its original due date. Ditto if I can’t get to class.

Quizzes: My former students will tell you I love to ask the same two questions over and over: **What did you learn? Why does this matter?** I often ask these questions for quiz credit. (I ask other questions, too, drawn from homework and in-class discussions.) In answering these questions, you’re actually practicing three essential skills of an active learner: reflection, critical thinking, and application.

- By reflecting on the course content, you’re reviewing what’s been addressed (a novel way to study without cramming, by the way).
- You’re practicing critical thinking when you analyze the information and evaluate your efforts to master new knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- You demonstrate application of what you’ve learned when you apply what you’ve learned to your daily life at home, on the job, and in the community.

GP credit (5% total grade):

Learning is a lifelong habit for me, and I’m currently pursuing my Ph.D. in Education (special emphasis: Community College Leadership). My academic studies and professional research efforts often overlap with work you do in COMM 1313. This semester, for example, I’m exploring how students in online courses develop their public speaking skills. Consequently, I may ask your opinions of teaching

strategies, learning patterns, or anything related to my research. I might also ask you to complete brief inventories or online assessments, or ask you to talk with others about a given topic.

Any feedback I ask of you will be short (say, 1-2 paragraphs on average), take very little of your time, and your answers will always receive full credit. GP credit also applies to some of the work I'll ask you to do through our new web portal; more info about this later.

Of course, if you choose not to submit anything, you can't earn any credit. Your participation helps me refine our collective approach to teaching communication, both online and on campus, which helps both you and all future students.

This is my own version of "extra credit" and will save you the stress of panicking at the end of the term and wracking your brains to figure out what you might do to boost your grade. So think of this as my own personal 5% grade booster for you!

Collaborative exams (10% total grade):

The true purpose of exams in this college course is demonstration—you'll have the chance to demonstrate the degree to which you've mastered the concepts and skills addressed in the course. Because we don't communicate in a vacuum, it seems unreasonable to ask you to complete an exam in a vacuum. That's why course exams are collaborative in nature, meaning you'll be able to discuss the exam material with others in this course. I'll randomly assign students to groups throughout the semester.

Fair warning: don't assume your group members will have all the answers! Collaborative exams do not excuse you from the obligation to study and learn. Your grade is absolutely dependent on the work you submit.

Intercultural interviews (10% total grade):

Find a person within the college, your workplace, or your community whose culture is different from yours. Spend a minimum of 45-60 minutes talking and interacting with this person. Your goal is to learn about a different culture, and in particular to learn more about the way people from different cultures communicate. When talking with this person, be sure to ask open-ended questions and listen carefully to their responses. In an essay, summarize what you've learned and submit that essay for assignment credit. (Be sure to properly cite the interview as a source; ask for details.) You'll also have the opportunity to share what you've learned during class with your fellow students. (More details will be provided in class.)

Introductory speech (5% total grade):

This self-graded "mini-presentation" assignment gives you the opportunity to practice your presentation skills, identify your strengths, and initiate a skill development plan. Your topic is Service Learning, and you may choose either an informative or persuasive speech presentation. You'll find support for this topic online through NWACC's Career Services website, as well as various local and national websites dedicated to non-profit agencies. (And take advantage of the on-campus agency fair!) The topic is Service Learning, not volunteerism—the difference is important! For-profit organizations and religious institutions (including those non-profits affiliated with religious institutions) are excluded.

The accepted length of this speech is 3-4 minutes. (Aim for 4 minutes, and you'll be fine. I'll stop you at 5 minutes.) A minimum of 2 sources are required, and you may use yourself as one source if you so desire. Handouts or other visual aids are welcome but not required. If you wish to use PowerPoint, the Internet, or some other computer-related resource, please discuss this with me at least two weeks before your presentation date. (Unfortunately, I can't guarantee access to these items, as we share these resources with every other class on campus, and reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.)

You're grading this speech, which gives you the chance to reflect, think critically, and evaluate your efforts. (Sound familiar?) It's entirely possible—in fact, downright likely—each student will take a unique approach in their self-evaluation. And that's great! We'll use this part of the assignment as a springboard to develop the rubrics (more on this later) for speech presentations. Remember, everything we do in this course is designed to help you achieve the intended learning outcome, which is to develop effective oral communication skills.

Informative presentation (10% total grade):

Speech criteria

- Select a topic from one of these categories:
 - Communication
 - Community Service & Civic Engagement (Service Learning)
 - Education
 - Health & Public Safety
 - Technology
 - Science & the environment
- Submit your topic choice for approval. Topic must be approved in advance; you may present only the approved topic (no changes).
- Length of speech: 5-7 minutes. Points deducted for shorter or longer lengths. You'll be stopped at 8 minutes.
- One visual aid required (you may not use yourself as the only visual aid!)
- Five **credible** sources required: website; personal interview; scholarly journal article; and books. Your personal experience and the textbook will not be counted as part of the five required sources. Further, you may not use more than two websites, but you are welcome to use more than five sources for your total speech. Sources must be cited properly in both the submitted written material and orally in your speech.
- Submit a speech outline for each speech (you'll find an example of a speech outline on pages 431-433 of your text and in the supplemental outlining material provided.) Be sure to include your bibliography, identifying **all** the sources you used in developing your speech. Remember that your sources must also be cited orally during your presentation.
- Please review the information about academic honesty and plagiarism. Failure to include a bibliography and/or failure to cite sources orally during the presentation is academically dishonest. The instructors reserve the right to apply any and all academic sanctions.

Persuasive presentation (10% total grade):

A persuasive speech is intended to change or reinforce the audience's attitudes, beliefs, values, or behaviors. There are three categories of persuasive speeches: propositions of fact; propositions of value; and propositions of policy. (See your text for detailed information.)

- Select a topic from within one of these categories:
 - Government & political affairs
 - Education
 - Health & public safety
 - Technology
 - Science & the environment
- Submit your topic choice for approval. Topic must be approved in advance; you may present only the approved topic (no changes). Please note: you'll earn zero credit if you present an unapproved topic. There's a minimum 20-point deduction if you fail to present your speech when scheduled (barring emergencies, of course).
- Length of speech: 7-8 minutes. Points deducted for shorter or longer lengths. You'll be stopped at 9 minutes.
- One visual aid required (you may not use yourself as the only visual aid!)

- Seven **credible** sources required: website; personal interview; scholarly journal article; and books. Your personal experience and the textbook will not be counted as part of the three required sources. Further, you may not use more than two websites, but you are welcome to use more than seven sources for your total speech. Sources must be cited properly in both the submitted written material and orally in your speech.
- Submit a speech outline for each speech. Be sure to include your bibliography, identifying **all** the sources you used in developing your speech. Remember that your sources must also be cited orally during your presentation.
- Please review the information about academic honesty and plagiarism. Failure to include a bibliography and/or failure to cite sources orally during the presentation is academically dishonest. The instructors reserve the right to apply any and all academic sanctions.

Small Group Presentation (10% total grade):

Groups will be randomly assigned for this assignment. Your group will choose a communication concept or skill to explore in detail. Your objective: develop an interactive presentation for the class so that all of us learn about your chosen concept or skill. This presentation will require you to develop information to share, but also some activity which allows us to explore and develop the concept/skill.

This assignment requires groups to work together to: a) choose a concept; b) research the topic (which may require interviewing others); c) plan, develop, and conduct the interactive presentation. The total length of your group's presentation (including the completion of the activity) should be 30-40 minutes. You'll also need to develop a presentation critique for the class to complete following your presentation.

Each group must submit a presentation plan (detailed outline) with references. Individual group members must also submit a written statement (2-3 pages max) summarizing their individual contribution to the group. Specifically, you must analyze your contribution to the group's decision-making and research processes, presentation planning and development, and the actual presentation. Attach a reference list (works cited) page to your summary, including **only** those sources you yourself contributed to the group.

Service Learning or Media Project (15% total grade):

This assignment (whichever option you choose) gives you the opportunity to explore, engage, and evaluate the use of communication concepts, strategies, and skills in your life.

Service Learning is an opportunity to extend your learning environment beyond the classroom into the community and by serving others you can earn course credit. In this assignment, you'll use your oral communicative skills while contributing your time and attention to meet the needs of a local non-profit community agency. This course has a 10-hour Service Learning option (which comes out to about an hour each week through the semester). See the list of partner agencies on NWACC's Career Services website. Please note that all publicly funded K-12 schools are eligible sites, even if they're not specifically listed as a Service Learning partner. Not eligible: religious institutions (including those non-profits affiliated with religious institutions) and for-profit organizations.

The work you undertake must be specifically related to our course objective (that is, it must allow you to use your oral communication skills). Don't confuse this program with volunteer activities, or activities that don't include communication. For example, you might volunteer at the recycling center, but you can't earn Service Learning credit in this course for sorting cans, bottles, and papers. A good test for site eligibility is to complete this statement: "I will use my oral communication skills at this agency when I ..." If you need help deciding if a site is suitable for this class, just ask.

Some students have the chance to earn Service Learning credits in two or even three classes each semester. You're welcome to use a single site for more than one class, provided you log separate hours for each course and, of course, the site must be relevant to both course objectives. By the way, each course requires a completed timesheet signed by an approved agency supervisor—see Eric Vest, our Service Learning Coordinator, for more information.

In addition to completing the hours with the agency, you'll also maintain a Service Learning Journal—don't panic, it's not an essay! In fact, you'll probably even like this part. For each hour you spend at the agency, you'll need to write 2-3 paragraphs describing your communication experience during that time. Wherever possible, link your experiences to the concepts and skills we've explored in the course.

Quality, not quantity, matters most, as does your ability to connect course concepts to your Service Learning activity. (I'll provide examples in class.) Each hour will have its own journal entry, even if you spent 4 hours in a row at the agency. (Note: this does require you to pay attention while you're there, but you have an efficient brain that can easily multi-task!) So for 10 hours, you'll have 10 separate journal entries, each about 2-3 paragraphs. (Typed, of course; I recommend scribbling notes as you go, then typing it up as you can.)

Your Service Learning project must be completed by 10/25/05, and your journal is due NLT 11/15/05. Your grade will be based on the quality, coherence, and degree of depth (as related to course content) demonstrated in your journal

Fair warning: you must submit your completed Service Learning contract to Eric Vest, Service Learning Coordinator & Career Advisor, in BH 1007 by 9/12/05 in order to earn Service Learning credit for this course. (That contract requires three signatures: yours, your site supervisor's, and my own signature. You must have the site supervisor's signature before I will sign your contract.)

Further, you must have a signed, completed time sheet indicating at least 10 hours' service by 10/25/05. The Service Learning coordinator will send timesheets to the participating SL sites upon receipt of your contract.

If you miss the deadline for either of these, you cannot earn Service Learning credit for this course, and must instead complete the Communication Project, even if you've already completed some Service Learning hours.

Service Learning is an option, but is not a required element of this course. If you choose not to participate in Service Learning, you will instead complete a Media Project.

Media Project Option

Let's face it: Service Learning isn't the ideal learning environment for everyone. And that's okay! In this course, you can choose a Service Learning project, or a Media project.

What is the Media Project?

The Media Project allows you to track a topic of interest to you personally over the course of 8 weeks. You'll demonstrate critical thinking and reflection skills as you analyze and evaluate information. Further, you'll demonstrate your ability to synthesize information through your journal entries.

You can choose credible sources online, in print, or via television to use each week. Whenever possible, at least one of the three articles each week should come from a scholarly or education-focused source. You do not have to use the same sources each week. Variety is good!

Select a topic to follow over a period of 8 weeks. You must submit your topic for approval no later than 9/12/05. Email me with your preferred topic, and I'll let you know by return email if the topic is acceptable for this assignment. **Fair warning: be sure to email me with your requested topic well before the deadline!** It's highly doubtful I'll log onto the school server during the evening of 9/12/05 (I'll be working on my own homework!), so plan to submit your request at least two days before your deadline. If you don't secure approval by 9/12/05, you won't be able to earn full credit for the assignment.

Choose a topic from within one of the following categories:

- Communication
- Government & political affairs
- Education
- Health & public safety
- Technology
- Science & the environment

Sports and entertainment are prohibited topics.

Each week, you'll need to scan multiple sources online and in print and find three articles related to your topic. Then, complete a journal entry for each article. These entries should be a minimum of one full page in length for each of the three articles. (Standard submission rules apply. If in doubt, check the

“How do I...?” page.) Include the link for the article’s online source. If the item was televised, state the name of the program, date/time and channel/network on which the program aired. If you include a print article, you’ll need to photocopy the article and include a photocopy of the newspaper or magazine’s cover/front page, showing the title and date.

Some folks like to get all their news from a single source, or a single **type** of source. Frankly, that’s boring, and won’t give you access to diverse opinions and stories. (Ever noticed how many of the alleged “mainstream” media sites all carry the same stories, right down to the same titles?) So spend some time browsing the world around you (and that includes on-air and in-print as well as online!) and see what you can find. And don’t limit yourself to one country, or even one continent. Can you read a language other than English? Put that skill to work for you! And even if you limit yourself to English, that doesn’t have to mean limiting yourself to American sites.

Here’s an example of a media project:

Let’s say I choose to track the marketing of hybrid SUVs. I’ll scan the online news sites, environmental news sites, and I’ll probably check sites related to the auto industry. I know the auto industry has its own agenda in marketing hybrids (they want to sell their products, after all, so you can’t expect them to provide objective, critical reviews), so I’ll off-set that potential bias by cross-referencing any information I find there with another site. Here are three I routinely read:

- Union of Concerned Scientists' website: www.ucsusa.org
- When I need up-to-the minute (and I mean that literally!) ideas, facts, and opinions about science and technology, I check out www.physorg.com to see what’s happening
- Grist magazine is a student-centered site, available online at www.grist.org

The overall goal for the journal is to track, over time, what’s happening with your selected topic and how that development is being addressed in the media. Each journal entry should, at a minimum, provide a brief summary of the article, as well as your opinion of the information, to include the manner in which it’s presented. Be willing to honestly consider the potential bias of the source. (Back to my hybrid SUV example: what bias might there be if I found a website and discover it’s financially supported by Exxon?) Support your opinion with concrete examples.

Your completed media project is due on 11/15/05. **Fair warning: late submissions will not be accepted.**

*Additional details for each assignment will be presented in class.