

Syllabus Project

EAD 876  
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Speech and Communications 101

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### **Purpose and Course Overview**

Welcome to Speech Communications 101, a course that aims to develop your communication skills. Because everyone communicates all the time, the content of this course will be relevant to you after you graduate, as well as today. In this course you will become more aware of how you communicate and better able to communicate effectively. The course combines theory and practice, giving you the opportunity to apply what you have learned.

Goals:

1. Understand the communication process and communication principles
2. Gain insight into your perception of self and of others
3. Learn how to effectively communicate both verbally and non-verbally
4. Practice listening and responding
5. Communicate across cultures
6. Understand interpersonal relationships
7. Communicate in groups
8. Public speaking

These topics may seem intimidating, exciting, or completely unknown to each of you. Take some time at the outset of this course to really think through which of these areas you most want to focus on. You probably already have in mind a few topics that have either piqued your interest or you want to try to avoid entirely. My goal is to assist you in seeing how all of these pieces work together for effective communication. Because whether you are working in the business community, strengthening your personal relationships, or simply seeking to increase your comfort in reaching out to others as a whole, effective communication is your bridge from potentially hazardous misunderstandings to personal – and professional – success.

### **Course Test**

The course text is *Communicate* by Rudolph F. Verderber (Wadsworth, 1995). Reading assignments should be done before coming to class. Please bring your text with you to class, as regular discussions of the text will occur during class.

### Course Assignments

In this course, assignments are handled differently: you select the work you will complete, with one exception: all students must give an informative or persuasive speech. Bear these two rules in mind as you review the options that follow next:

1. At least 50 percent of the total points possible for each individual assignment must be earned; otherwise *no points* will be recorded for the assignment.
2. Once the due date for an assignment has passed, that assignment cannot be completed.

### Exams

1. Test 1: a multiple-choice and essay exam including material from class and the text (80 points possible)
2. Test 2: a multiple-choice exam including material from class and the text the day they are assigned.

### Presentations

1. An informative or persuasive speech (five to seven minutes long) and a speech preparation sheet. **This is the only required assignment in the course.** (50 points possible for the speech; 10 points possible for the prep sheet)
2. Interviews (ten to twelve minutes long) conducted by classmates representing hypothetical corporations and organizations with open positions. You select the positions of interest and are interviewed by the group. See Small-Group Experience 2, in the next section, for more details on the groups. (Two interviews, 15 points per interview, each summarized in a short paper, plus 5 bonus points if you get the job.)

### Small Group Experiences

1. Test 2 Study Group. Be a member of a five- to seven-person study group who will jointly prepare for Test 2. After taking the exam individually, the group will convene and complete a group exam. Group exam scoring options will be described on a handout. (15 points possible)
2. This assignment also includes a three-page typed paper that analyzes what happened in the study group in terms of (a) what the group did or didn't do that contributed to its success (or lack of success) and (b) what the individual group members did that contributed to the group's success or lack of it. **Note: this paper must be completed if exam bonus points are to be awarded.** (30 points possible for this paper)
3. Interview Group. With five to seven other classmates, be employees of a hypothetical corporation that will write a job description, prepare interview questions, and interview

up to eight candidates for a job. A group grade will be based on a final report that includes (a) the job description, (b) interview questions, (c) a summary of interviews conducted, (d) justification for the person hired (30 points possible), and € and assessment of how well the group conducted the interview based on feedback from those interviewed (10 points possible). In addition, individual members' contribution to the group will be assessed by other members. (20 points possible; this makes the interviewing part of the assignment worth up to 60 points total)

### **Learning Log**

This assignment encourages students to explore how the course content relates to their individual communication skills. Each entry is written in response to a series of questions provided by the instructor. Entries should one page, typed, double spaced. Collections of entries are due on the dates specified in the course calendar. You may prepare all, one, or some of the entries. However, once a due date is past, those entries may not be submitted.

Entries are graded using the following criteria: (1) their completeness (meaning all the questions for a particular entry are addresses); (2) the level of insight and reflection (evidence of thoughtful responses); (3) the support provided for the observations and conclusions; and (4) the extent to which relevant course content (from class and the text) is integrated in the entries. (10 points possible per individual entry).

### **Speech Critiques**

You will provide constructive feedback to eight classmates on the informative speeches. You will us a form provided by the instructor, and after your critiques have been graded, they will be given to the presenter. **Note: You must do all eight critiques.** (80 points possible)

### **Participation**

Using the class-authored participation policy and a set of individually generated goals, your contributions to class will be assessed. **Note: participation cannot be added as an assignment option after February 3.** (50 points possible)

This assignment also includes a five-page typed participation analysis paper submitted in the following three installments on the due dates indicated on the course calendar:

*Installment 1:* on page that reacts to and assesses the class-generated policy in which you generate your participation goals for the course.

*Installment 2:* three pages, on of which is a letter to your designated partner providing feedback on his or her participation as you have observed it and two pages consisting of a mid-course progress report.

*Installment 3:* on page that contains a final assessment of you participation in the course (a more detailed handout describing the assignment will be distributed later)

**Note: all three installments of this assignment must be completed if points for participation are to be earned.** (50 points possible for the paper)

### Bonus Points

1. On several unannounced days, attendance will be taken. Those present will receive 5 bonus points. (up to a maximum of 25 points)
2. Additional bonus point options will be offered at the discretion of the instructor.

### Tips

For the purposes of planning, fill in the points for the assignments you are considering and then total the points possible. Be realistic. It is highly unlikely that you will get all the points possible for the assignments. Check your total with the point totals needed for each grade (as listed in the next section). Be sure that you're planning to do enough assignments to get the grade you desire in the course. Keep track of your points as the course progresses, so that you will know if you need to add more assignments.

Assignment Name	Points Available	Planned Assignments	Earned Points
Test 1	80 points		
Test 2	80 points		
Information or Persuasive Speech and prep sheet	60 points		
Interviews	30 points		
Study group test bonus	15 points		
Study group analysis paper	30 points		
Interview group experience	60 points		
Learning Log: 22 entries at 10 points per entry	220 points		
Speech critiques	80 points		
Participation	50 points		
Participation analysis paper	50 points		
Attendance bonus	25 points		
<b>Total</b>	<b>765 points</b>		

### Grades

Grades for this course are assigned according to the following scale:

525 and above = A  
499-524 = A-  
482-498 = B+  
465-481 = B  
448-464 = B-  
413-447 = C+

378-412 = C  
343-377 = C-  
309-342 = D  
292-308 = D-  
291 and below = F

*Note:* A day by day calendar of all scheduled course meetings follows. It lists content topics, activities scheduled for the class session, reading assignments, and assignment due dates.

## **Course Policies**

### **Submitting Assignments**

Unless otherwise stated, all written assignments will be turned in in class on the assigned due date. Work submitted late will result in a 5% deduction per 24-hours of the final grade for each assignment.

A note on APA (6th ed.) style. APA style is the structural convention used for written assignments in this class. I will be relatively strict about your use of APA style and will not negotiate on miss points connected to APA style deductions. There will be some leniency on your first assignment, but you will be expected to attend well to APA matters from that point on.

### **Grading Policy**

I will determine individual grades by assessing your performance on assignments, as well as your participation and engagement in the course. During the processes used throughout the course, you should expect to receive feedback from peers and me about your performance. Feedback will focus on what you have done well and will raise questions for you to consider in relation to your performance. You can expect feedback from me within two weeks of assignment due dates, though feedback may come sooner than that.

### **Academic Integrity**

The Academic Freedom Report states: “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” Therefore, you are expected to produce original work supported with proper citation of sources used to support your final product. You may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Students who violate regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

For my syllabus, I chose to utilize Weimer's syllabus from *Learning Centered Teaching* while making a few adjustments of my own. For the syllabus, I start with an introduction and goals for the course. As Weimer points out, "a good introduction also identifies some common ground shared by the two people" (p. 118). I want my students to understand that communication is key to success and that we all have a common ground of having some areas of communication that are easier and harder for us than others. But even more than just providing a good introduction I wanted to ensure that I am working backward. As pointed out by Bain, "The best teachers plan backward; they begin with the results they hope to foster" (p. 50). By planning the end goals first then defining the activities that assist in achieving the goals, I am able to ensure that backward planning occurs.

Next, I want to ensure that the syllabus "is a contract between you and your students. But the contract is not one sided" (Sviniki and McKeachie, 21). By providing an explanation to the students that they are expected to do the work but that they are given the choice to decide which work they complete allows the students to engage in the contract process with me as an instructor. Further, Sviniki and McKeachie point out that "alternative assignments can help. Students who have options and a sense of personal control are likely to be more highly motivated for learning" (p. 15). I want for the students to understand from the outset that a variety of assignments will be provided to them so that as they discover how they are most comfortable presenting the material they are afforded the opportunity to utilize these different methods. And, I fully agree with the idea that "The most successful teachers vary their methods to suit their objectives" (p. 16).

Moving to the exam section of the syllabus, I struggle often with providing simply a multiple choice test for students to simply regurgitate facts. Bain says that "the best teachers

expect more than some rote memorization of correct answers. Instead, they want to know how to help their students reason toward those answers” (p. 51-52). I have always hated standardized testing, because I agree with Weimer that “research continues to document that when faced with a blizzard of information, students memorize, give back the details on exams, and then mostly forget them” (p. 119). I do not want to have students that only memorize facts for a test and then forget the facts two weeks later. I want to foster the learning process so that students are able to understand the reasons for the answers more than just the rote memorization of facts. This is why I greatly appreciate the concept of the study group project that allows students to work together and reason towards their answers. By creating a study group project that allows students to work together, it creates “an environment in which students can reason together and challenge each other” (Bain, 53). Further, the overall goal is to ensure that students “understand content so that it is more likely retained and more easily applied” (Weimer, 123). By having the students work in study groups, it allows for deeper discussion and understanding of the text.

The small group experiences do more than just assist in creating meaningful learning around the facts needed to pass the test. By creating groups that must meet and work outside of the classroom, the course is answering Bain’s question of “what can we do in class to help students learn outside of class?” (p. 52). Palmer points out that “only when people can speak their minds does education have a chance to happen” (p. 78). Having group activities that allow the students to speak their minds and bring their ideas to the table assists in fostering this level of education. Further, the classroom “must also be a place in which the group’s voice is gathered and amplified, so that the group can affirm, question, challenge, and correct the voice of the individual” (p.78). By allowing the groups to work together but also requiring the students to reflect on the effectiveness of the group, the course ensures that the appropriate level of



questioning and affirmation is achieved. In some areas of my teaching, I have often tried to avoid group work because group work often leads to conflict. However, for this course, I believe that having the group work is key to ensuring student success. Bain states “The very best teachers find ways to build conflicts into the structure of the class” (p. 54). By allowing my students to work in groups, provide feedback to each other, and face conflicts head on it allows the students to learn from each other more than by just working through an individual text. As Weimer points out “sometimes the messages about how to learn are more effective when they come from someone other than the professor” (p. 134-135).

However, all learning cannot be completed in groups. Nor do all students work best in group settings. Sviniki and McKeachie point out that “not everyone learns in the same way, and having choices about the way that you receive information is a great way to help students” (p. 12). I know from my own experience in teaching that some students tend to shy away from group work. Also, Palmer points out that “learning demands solitude – not only in the sense that students need time alone to reflect and absorb but also in the deeper sense that the integrity of the student’s inner self must be respected, not violated, if we expect the student to learn” (p.79). This is why the use of learning logs is included within the syllabus. Students need a way in which they can enter into solitude, reflect on their learning, and express that learning. To me, I appreciate that each learning log are the shortest of the assignments, because they are not forcing the students to go into a complete research paper to complete the work and reflect on their learning. Svinicki points out that students are often engaged in many classes at one time and that you really only have “between six and ten hours of your students’ time to allocate to learning on your course, including class time” (p. 14). If I am to maximize the amount of time that students have available to devote to my class, I want to ensure that they spend some of that time in quiet

reflection on what they have learned. Bain states that “if students can’t learn to judge the quality of their own work... then they haven’t really learned” (p. 59). It is my belief that by having the students reflect on both their learning as well as giving reflective pieces that go along with their other assignments that students will begin to learn to judge the quality of their own work.

To the point of students judging their own quality of work, I especially enjoyed the piece of being able to predict grading ahead of time. By allowing the students to see all of the assignments, and put all or the points outlined for them, it assists in having the students work through not only how many of the assignments that they need to complete, but also causes them to reflect on how well they think they will be able to perform on the assignment. Sviniki and McKeachie found that a “detailed syllabus convinced the students that the instructor was interested in their learning... and gives them the security of knowing where they are going” (p. 15). I want all of the students to understand that I am interested in ensuring that I meet them with assignments that are interesting to them and that they have control of where they are going within the course. I want to ensure that the students are engaged on their level but also allow them to see exactly where they stand and how to reach their goals. “Teaching is engaging students, engineering an environment in which they learn” (Bain, 49). By allowing the students to see each of the environments available to them, I hope to engage them on a level that they are most comfortable with.

On a final note, I think that my favorite part of this syllabus is that it is very learner centered rather than teacher centered. If I were indeed teaching this course, I would want to provide my students with a detailed calendar of exactly what they need to do and by when, but most importantly, the calendar would include the pieces of class discussion and areas for group involvement more so than just having a lecture format. The assignments laid out in the syllabus

are designed to support the thought that this is meant to be a class in which students direct the learning rather than having the professor do so. It would be my goal to ensure that the classroom remains learner centric. Because as pointed out by Weimer, “often when I teach less, I find that I actually teach more” (p. 142).

## References

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