



COMM 2381: Oral Communication

Section #
Spring 2026

Instructor	Time and Location	Email Address	Office Hours

About This Course

Communication creates and sustains connections between people. Meaningful communication build families, friendships, communities, nations, and worlds. Your ability to communicate with clarity and conviction is your greatest source of power and fulfillment in personal, professional, and community life. In this course, you will study the theories and principles of effective oral communication and practice applying these principles in a series of presentation and written assignments. By the end of the semester, you should be able to plan and prepare professional presentations; deliver a well-organized speech; analyze and adapt to various audiences; and adjust to different speaking situations, purposes, and contexts. **This course will equip you with the communication skills to foster greater connections with the people and communities you care about.**

What You'll Learn

By taking this course, you will increase your communication competence as you:

- Create messages for personal, professional, and public contexts, using effective verbal and nonverbal communication and utilizing technology appropriately in each setting.
- Examine your communication style, habits, and assumptions to enhance your effectiveness across a variety of contexts.
- Evaluate the influence of relationships on the development, delivery, and reception of messages in personal and public contexts.
- Apply rhetorical conventions and techniques ethically and appropriately to create effective presentations.
- Articulate your ideas to diverse audiences with clarity, precision, and cultural sensitivity.
- Gather, evaluate, and utilize data from multiple credible sources to create cogent and compelling arguments.
- Develop listening skills to facilitate your understanding and critical evaluation of messages.
- Apply the principles of working in groups effectively.

What You'll Need

Our course textbook is **Speech Craft: Second Edition by Joshua Gunn**. You must create an account with *Achieve*, using your University of Memphis official email address. You can do so through the following link (also available under the Course Resources module on Canvas).

- <https://mhe.my.site.com/macmillanlearning/s/article/Students-Register-for-Achieve-courses-via-your-school-s-LMS>.

If you opt to rent or purchase a physical copy through the University of Memphis bookstore, but you must ensure it includes the *Achieve* bundle which grants access to *Achieve* exercises and assignments. Speech assignments will be recorded through GoReact on *Achieve*.



What We'll Be Doing: Course Assignments

We will explore Oral Communication through a mix of speaking assignments, quizzes and exams, written reflections, self-assessments, and in-class activities. Additional instructions are available on Canvas, as well as worksheets your instructor may ask you to turn in to accompany lessons and assignments.

Speaking Assignments = 500 points

- Self-Introduction Presentation = 50 points
For this assignment you will deliver a short (two to three minute) speech to introduce yourself to the class and orient yourself to the task of speaking in public.
- Informative Presentation = 175 points

For this assignment you will learn to refine, research, organize, and deliver a presentation to share information with an audience. You will construct and deliver a 4.5-to-5.5-minute, well-researched informative speech on a topic of your choosing.

Presentation = 125 points

Outline and Reference Page = 50 points

- Persuasive Presentation = 175 Points

For this assignment you will learn to critically construct, evaluate, and deliver effective arguments through various types of appeals and contextual reasoning. You will deliver a 5-to-6-minute, well-researched persuasive speech on a topic of your choosing in which you attempt to move your audience toward an ethical course of action.

Presentation = 125 points

Outline and Reference Page = 50 points

- Mock Interview = 100 points

For this assignment you will learn and practice the unique considerations a speaker must make when communicating online and practice the skills of impromptu speaking and professional communication. You will respond to a series of question prompts to apply your newly honed Oral Communication skills to your career field.

Reflection Assignments = 100 points

- Peer-Evaluation Assignments = 2 x 25 points

For this assignment, you will practice the skills of active and ethical listening by evaluating a classmate's speech performance.

- Self-Evaluation Assignments = 2 x 25 points

For this assignment, you will hone your communication skills by writing a critical reflection of your speech performance.

Quizzes and Exams – 225 Points

- Achieve Learning Curve Activities = 75 points

Learning Curve is an adaptive quiz assignment. Learning Curve activities prepare you for class discussions and activities. Each activity is pass-fail; you will earn full credit as long as you complete the quiz.

Exam #1 and #2 = 2 x 75 points

Exams are an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of course material through multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Self-Assessment Assignments: 50 points

- Personal Report on Public Speaking Anxiety = 50 points total
For this scaffolded assignment, you will assess and track your growth as a communicator through a series of assessment, discussion, and reflection assignments.

In Class Participation and Activities: 75 points

- In class participation and activities = 125 points
Each instructor will assess in-class participation and assign additional graded in-class or virtual activities. This may include discussion boards about speech topics, in-class speaking activities, reflection assignments, and more.

Extra Credit = Up to 40 points

- Writing and Communication Services consultation = 2 x 20
You may earn extra credit by scheduling a consultation through the Center for Academic Success and Achievement on *up to two* of your speech assignments. Consultants can help at any stage of the presentation process, from idea generation, to outlining, to practicing your delivery. **To receive credit, you must upload your client report to the Extra Credit assignment drop box on Canvas.**

How Your Grade Will Be Assessed

Course Grading

Final Letter Grade	Course Points	Expectation
A	900-1000	Far exceeds all standards
B	800-899	Exceeds standards
C	700-799	Fulfills all standards
D	600-699	Fulfills most standards
F	0-599	Standards not met

A Note About Grades:

This class will be different from other courses you have taken because there is a large experiential element. Therefore, you do a significant amount of course learning through presentation, observation, and evaluation of in-class exercises and performances. You will develop communication skills by practicing them.

This is an entirely *points-based* class. If you reach the point threshold for a letter grade, you will earn that grade. There is no math to figure out percentages or weighted assignments. For example, if you are working for an “A” in the class, and you are sitting at 847 points before Exam #2, you will know that you need to score at least a 53 out of 75 on that exam to reach an A. Pay attention to your points throughout and, should you find yourself falling behind where you would like to be, you will know you need to work extra hard at remaining assignments to get to the threshold you are working toward.

There will be no last-minute points boosts in this class, and requests for such are likely to be ignored by your instructor.

The Department of Communication & Film holds the same set of standards for all students in this course. Instructors work to help you aim for (and ideally reach) a certain level of presentation skill. Some students will develop the skills taught in this class sooner than others (just like some students are stronger in math, and others in history, so some are stronger in oral communication). The final grade in this class is *cumulative*, not merely reflective of a student's work during the latter portion of the semester. Just like in any other course, sometimes a student may struggle at the beginning, develop stronger skills throughout the course of the semester, and still earn an overall grade of a "D," "C," or "B." It is important to remember that hard work does not always result in a student's desired grade.

Discussion of Graded Assignments: The procedure for a grade reconsideration begins with a student and the instructor. Success in this course requires thoughtful self-evaluation of your performance. A student wishing to contest a grade must email their professor, with a document attached that includes well-argued case regarding the evaluation **within one week of having received the evaluation**, but **not before 24 hours** have passed. Any request for a grade reconsideration must be related to the assignment as presented and based on how it compares with the criteria for the assignment. In other words, your appeal should not be about how your performance compares with another student, how an assignment grade will impact your final grade or GPA, or how hard you worked on the assignment. Rather, you should make an argument about your speech performance and the rubric, with evidence from the speech video. Once the student has submitted their appeal to the instructor, the instructor will respond in writing within 7 days.

Students are encouraged to meet face-to-face with their instructor to review assignments and discuss ways to improve future assignments/presentations. Please schedule an appointment during an instructor's office hours.

In exceptional cases, you may request that your instructor escalate your grade reconsideration the Oral Communication Course Coordinator.

Discussion of Final Grades: After a grade has been reported to the University, it may not be changed unless an error was made by the instructor. A college or school *may* approve an appeal for a final grade change for a semester prior to the previous long semester, but only for the most compelling non-academic reasons. For more information, please see the [University Grade & Evaluation](#) policies.

Late Work and Makeup Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on the day they are due. If you miss a deadline for quizzes or homework assignments, you have a one-week grace period to turn in the assignment, with a 10% penalty for each day. After one week has passed, no late work will be accepted. Makeups for speech assignments will only be granted with a documented and approved excuse.

Course Policies

Attendance

Because of the unique nature of this course, grades and classroom attendance are closely related. Much of what you will learn will occur through in-class discussion, activities, observation, and speech performances. You are expected to attend every class period. **A class roll sheet will be passed at the beginning of each class. It is your responsibility to sign in. Being present but not signing the roll sheet is the same as being absent.**

Recognizing that students may need to occasionally miss class due to circumstances beyond their control, each student is allotted **one full week of classes** as penalty-free absences over the course of the semester (**three absences in a M/W/F section or two absences in a T/Th section**). These absences may be used for any reason and do not require explanation or documentation.

Once a student exceeds this allowance, **each additional absence will result in a deduction of 5 points** from the student's total course points. These deductions apply automatically and uniformly. Instructors do not evaluate the reasons for absences and do not grant additional excused absences beyond those built into this policy. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes or information from a classmate. If your absence results in missing a graded in-class activity, you will receive a 0 for that activity.

Arriving late to class is disruptive to your instructor and classmates. Students who are chronically late will be penalized. Three late arrivals are equivalent to one absence. In M/W/F sections, students are considered late five minutes after the scheduled start time; in T/Th sections, students are considered late ten minutes after the scheduled start time.

Attendance on Presentation and Exam Days

Attendance on presentation and exam days is required. Absences on these days **are not covered by the penalty-free absences outlined above**. Failure to attend class on a day you are scheduled to present a speech assignment will result in a zero for that assignment. Failure to attend class on a presentation day on which you are not scheduled to present will result in a **10-point deduction** from your total course points for each missed day. Missing an exam will result in a zero unless otherwise specified by the instructor.

University Sanctioned Absences. A student who must miss class due to a university sanctioned absence such as travel for athletics or observance of a Religious Holy Day must notify the instructor in writing at least 14 days prior to the classes scheduled on dates the student will be absent. For absences that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester. Other absences may be excused according to university policy. If you must miss a class, an examination, an assignment, or a project to observe a university sanctioned absence, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Classroom Conduct

A productive learning environment depends on mutual respect between students and instructors. Disruptive such as talking over others, side conversations, inappropriate use of technology, or any behavior that interferes with instruction or classmates' ability to learn will not be tolerated. If a student's behavior is disruptive to the point that it must be addressed by the instructor, the student will be marked absent for the day and may be asked to leave the classroom. Continued disruptive behavior may result in additional penalties or referral to appropriate university offices. **Any behavior that disrupts a classmate's presentation will result in a 5-point deduction.**

Being physically present in the classroom is not the same as being meaningfully present. Students who are in class but are consistently engaged in other work, using electronic devices for non-course-related purposes, or listening to headphones or earbuds during class activities and discussions may be marked absent for the day.

Speech Recording Policy

All speech assignments in this course will be recorded using GoReact, which is embedded within your *Achieve* account. Recording speeches allows instructors to provide more accurate, specific, and equitable feedback than is possible through live observation alone. Recordings also support peer-evaluation and self-evaluation assignments, which are core components of this course. Research in communication studies consistently demonstrates that structured self-evaluation, watching and reflecting on one's own speaking performance, is one of the most effective ways speakers improve delivery, organization, and audience awareness. Recordings also facilitate fair and consistent grading across sections, allowing instructors to review performances carefully, and preserve an accurate record of speech performances. Recordings also serve as documentation in the event of a grade dispute or appeal, ensuring that any evaluation discussion is grounded in the actual performance rather than memory alone.

All speech videos are securely stored within GoReact. Access to recordings is limited to the student and the course instructor assigned to each section. Recordings are not shared publicly and are used only for instructional and assessment purposes within this course. Videos are stored and deleted in accordance with the GoReact's data retention policies. Participation in recorded speech assignments is required to complete the course and cannot be waived, as recording is integral to both the learning objectives and assessment structure of COMM 2381.

Course Resources

Disability Resources: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation. Students should register with [Disability Resources for Students](#) (DRS) to determine appropriate academic accommodations. DRS is located at 110 Wilder Tower and can be contacted by phone at 901-678-2880 or by email at drs@memphis.edu. DRS coordinates all accommodations for students with disabilities. DRS also offers volunteer opportunities for students who provide copies of notes to students who have that as an approved accommodation. Scholarship, community service and volunteer hours can be validated by this service by DRS.

Note: Accommodations cannot be implemented *before* an official Accommodation Letter from DRS is provided to your instructor, nor can accommodations be implemented retroactively. Thus, students are encouraged to be proactive and communicate with DRS early in the semester.

Academic Integrity: The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly. The [Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#) explains what constitutes a violation of our Academic Integrity policy. Please see the Office of Student Accountability's website for more information: <https://www.memphis.edu/osa/>. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited.

Students who violate the academic misconduct policy, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class in addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed through the regular institutional disciplinary procedures.

Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating – A student uses a smart phone to access the internet while taking a quiz.
- Deception – A student gives a dishonest excuse when asking for a deadline extension.
- Fabrication – A student invents data in an academic work.

- Facilitating academic misconduct – A student knowingly allows a portion of their work to be used by another student.
- Plagiarism – A student represents the ideas of another in a paper without citing and referencing the work or a student turns in the same or nearly the same assignment for credit in more than one class.
- Artificial intelligence – Using artificial intelligence such as Chat GPT unless it has been expressly permitted by the instructor.
- Unauthorized collaboration – A student works with other students on an assignment without the specific permission of the instructor.

Support for Writing and Speaking: The Center for Writing and Communication offers assistance in paper/speech development, outlining, and editing. It is located on the ground floor of the main campus library, but is available online, as well. An appointment to meet with a tutor can be made at http://www.memphis.edu/cwc/about/how_to.php

Stress Management: The Relaxation Zone services are FREE to enrolled UofM students. No appointment is necessary; Drop by anytime. Check web site for information: <https://www.memphis.edu/counseling/relaxation-zone/index.php>

Tiger Pantry: The Tiger Pantry is a choice pantry open to current UofM students. The pantry generally carries non-perishable food items, basic toiletries, and basic household items. To access the pantry or to learn more visit Office of the Dean of Students' Student Outreach and Support services, check the web site: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/sos/tigerpantry.php>