

STANDARD POLICIES AND STATEMENTS FOR
COMMUNICATION AS CRITICAL INQUIRY (COM 110)
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Miriam Wolff

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Office: Fell Hall 450

Office Hours: T Th 10:00am-12:00pm; 1:00-3:00pm

(in person or by appointment)

Section:

Classroom:

Meeting time:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Communication as Critical Inquiry (COM 110) improves students' abilities to express and interact with others in various communication settings. Effective oral communication is viewed as an essential life skill that every person must possess to function and thrive. This course emphasizes participation in a variety of communication processes – to develop, reinforce, and evaluate skills appropriate for public, small group, and interpersonal settings. The course content and experiences will enable students to assume their responsibilities as speaker-listener-critic in a culturally diverse world. In short, the course is designed to make students competent, ethical, critical, confident, and information literate communicators.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are 2 materials you need for class. Please read through the following carefully.

1) **TOP HAT eBOOK** (This is NOT a physical textbook – only a digital ebook.)

Citation: Simonds, C. J., Hooker, J. F., Hunt, S. K., & Kaufmann, J. J. (2025). *Communication as critical inquiry: Student workbook*. Stipes Publishing.

Directions: This will be sent in an email.

2) **COM 110 WORKBOOK** (This IS a physical book.)

Citation: Simonds, C. J., Hunt, S. K., & Simonds, B. K. (2018). *Engaging communication*. (Top Hat ebook version). Fountainhead Press.

BUY THIS WORKBOOK ASAP: YOU NEED THIS FOR CLASS.

Directions below:

Workbook Purchasing Procedures. Students will purchase a physical student workbook (COM 110 Communication as Critical Inquiry) from the publisher, Stipes, who will then mail the workbook directly to you.

Order at the following address: <https://buy.stipes.com/products/isu-com-110-fa25>

Course Material Assistance. If you have concerns about being able to afford the materials for this class, there are options for you.

- First, talk with your instructor ASAP. As early as possible, let your instructor know if the cost of the materials will be a barrier to your success in class. Your instructor will be able to point you to resources that may assist you.

ABOUT ME (MIRIAM)

My Teaching Philosophy

Education is a transformative practice. Education is empowering. My desire is to build collaborative, student-centered classrooms where I serve not only as an educator but as a co-investigator alongside my students. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire writes, “One cannot impose oneself, nor even merely co-exist with one's students. Solidarity requires true communication...only through communication can human life hold meaning.” Learning flourishes when students feel safe to be vulnerable, ask questions, and connect course concepts to their lived experiences. I aim to cultivate classroom climates that honor diverse methods of knowing and encourages students to develop their voice. Through dialogue and critical reflection, students can discover themselves as confident creators and communicators - individuals capable of not just understanding their world but reshaping it.

Communicating with Me

Email Policy:

pls dont email like u txt.

Emails should contain:

- **SUBJECT LINE** (class-section: topic)
 - Ex: COM 110-15: Group Speech Question
- **GREETING**
 - Ex: Hi Miriam,
- **A CLEAR, SPELL-CHECKED MESSAGE**
 - Ex: I was wondering, is it okay if I use this visual for our group speech?
- **CLOSING**
 - Ex: Thanks, Makayla

EXAMPLE EMAIL FORMAT

To Miriam Wolff <mewolf1@ilstu.edu> ×

COM 110-15: Group Speech Question

Hi Miriam,

I was wondering, is it okay if I use this visual aid for our group speech?

Thanks,

Makayla

All messages should be sent through an ISU email address!!!! I will NOT reply to a gmail account or canvas messages, etc.

If you contact me through email, please be patient and allow 24 hours for a response during the week (Monday through Thursday) and 48 hours on weekends (Friday through Sunday).

Office Hours: I will be holding office hours in-person in my office (**Fell Hall 450**) on **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00am-12:00pm and 1:00-3:00pm**. During this time, students can come to my office to ask me questions about assignments, seek help, review previous homework/grades, or even just sit and chat. If this period does not work for you, I would be more than happy to schedule a meeting time that works for both of us.

My Communication Promise to You

Communication in this classroom will be open, honest, and often. As I mentioned above, I will try my best to return your emails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. I encourage you all to have a healthy balance between school and social life. Following my own advice, I will aim to only be checking emails Monday-Friday until 7pm, and sporadically on the weekends/holidays. However, don't be surprised if I reply to an email or two at 1:00am, eek!

Learning can only be facilitated if all participants feel welcome, included, and safe. Therefore, please advise me of any name change and your pronouns (e.g., he/him, she/her, they/them, etc) in any way that you are comfortable with, such as via email, meeting, or in class. I will try my best to honor and respect you as I hope you would me. Together, we will create and maintain a learning environment in which each and every one of us are upheld fairly and equally.

COMMUNICATION AS CRITICAL INQUIRY (COM 110) COURSE GOALS

COM 110 addresses the following General Education outcomes:

II. intellectual and practical skills, allowing students to

- a. make informed judgments
- c. report information effectively and responsibly
- e. deliver purposeful presentations that inform attitudes or behaviors

III. personal and social responsibility, allowing them to

- a. participate in activities that are both individually life-enriching and socially beneficial to a diverse community (civic knowledge and engagement)
- b. demonstrate ethical decision making
- c. demonstrate the ability to think reflectively

IV. integrative and applied learning, allowing students to

- a. identify and solve problems
- b. transfer learning to novel situations
- c. work effectively in teams

ASSIGNMENTS

Main Three Speeches:

- **Informative speech** (5-7 minutes, no more than 7:30; at least 4 sources must be cited in the presentation and in the references)
 - Self-evaluation
 - Peer-evaluation

- **Group speech** (20-25 minutes depending on the number of members, each member speaks about 5 minutes consecutively, at least 10 sources must be cited in the presentation and in the references)
 - Group Contract
- **Persuasive speech** (5-7 minutes, no more than 7:30; at least 6 sources)

Introduction Speech:

- **Any Old Bag** (1-2 minutes; You will complete an introductory ice-breaker speech that will help myself and your other classmates get to know you. You will do this by bringing a special bag with three items that represent you)

Impromptu Speech:

- **Impromptu** (1-2 minutes)

All three main speeches (Informative, Group, and Persuasive) must be completed to pass the course. You CANNOT pass this course without completing all 3 main speeches. Each speech will be evaluated on content and delivery. Specific details will be clearly outlined in class. Typed outlines and references are required for each (examples will be provided). If you have any concerns about your ability to meet the requirements of this course, please come and see me to discuss your concerns.

Participation (Daily Speaking Opportunities)

Because Communication as Critical Inquiry is a skills-based, developmental course, participation is essential. It is important that you get these daily speaking opportunities to increase your confidence with your classroom audience. Participation is a function of attendance, demonstration of having read the material, asking questions that extend the thinking of the class and instructor, contributing relevant examples, and demonstrating respect for the contributions of classmates.

***IMPORTANT NOTE:** Group speech groups are dictated by attendance and participation. If you attend class and participate consistently, you will be put with others who also do so. If you attend moderately and participate sub-par, you will also be put with those who do so. And so on. Something to think about.

- **Preparing to Participate (P2Ps) (5 points per chapter):** Your participation in the course will, in part, be determined by your completion of “Preparing to Participate” (P2P) assignments. Each is worth five points. P2P’s are completed through Canvas.
- ***Attendance/Participation (3 points per day):** You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss course material and participate in activities associated with the readings. We will synthesize the material you read into discussion and activities in which your preparedness will play a large role. You are responsible for all materials distributed in your absence and should ask your peers for notes and other assignments from missed class periods. If you are involved in university-sanctioned activities that will cause you to miss class, such as athletics or debate team, you must discuss these planned absences with me ahead of time, so that we may discuss alternative assignments and arrangements. Students should be ready to participate and interact with other classmates during discussions. At the end of every class period, students will complete and turn in a participation log that states the points they feel they deserve for the class period and their level of participation. *More details about attendance policy below.

“Portfolio”

Students will write one paper and one speech towards the “portfolio” in the course. The “portfolio” is collection of your work in this course over the semester. It will represent your insights, observations, experiences, and reflections that illustrate course content. Detailed assignment guidelines will be provided

on Canvas and in your workbook. The final product will consist of your Communication Improvement Profile (CIP), your speeches, evaluations from me, your peers, and yourself and a final synthesis speech.

- **Communication Improvement Profile (CIP) Paper:** A paper assigned at the beginning of the semester which you will discuss and reflect on your own communication habits and determine three specific communication improvement goals for the semester.
- **Synthesis Speech:** You will complete a final speech that discusses how your communication has changed throughout the semester. You will use your previous assignments as evidence for how your communication has changed throughout the semester.

EVALUATION

Category	Assignment	Point Value
Speeches	Introduction (Any Old Bag)	10
	Informative Speech	100
	Group Speech	100
	Persuasive	100
	Impromptu	10
Self/Peer Evals	Informative (self)	10
	Informative (peer)	10
Portfolio	CIP Paper	32
	Synthesis Speech*	25
Participation	P2Ps	90
	Attendance/Participation**	129
Other Assignments	Creating A Search Strategy	8
	Choosing Search Tools/Sources	8
	Annotated Bibliography	8
	Syllabus Contract	10
	Group Contract	5

**Sometimes attendance/participation may fluctuate due to snowdays, class cancellations, etc.

*Synthesis speech included in speech point percentage breakdown

Out of 690

At least 50% of the participation grade will be based on daily speaking opportunities (participation in class) for each student. The combination of the portfolio and participation grade will not exceed 100 pts. without an additional, graded speaking opportunity. Assigned grades for speeches must comprise at least 50% of the overall grade.

The grading scale is a standard ten percentage point scale:

90-100% = A; 80%-89.9% = B; 70%-79.9% = C; 60-69.9% = D; below 60% = F

COURSE POLICIES

Illinois Articulation Initiative (C2900). The Illinois Articulation Initiative is designed to allow students to transfer course credit between institutions. The IAI requires that all COM 110 students present at least three speaking opportunities that include research and are five minutes, or longer, in duration. Additionally, these presentations and speaking opportunities (participation) must comprise at least 50% of the overall grade.

Attendance

- You are expected to be in class every day. There will be frequent in-class participation points that you will not be able to make up, so skipping class will affect your grade directly in loss of participation points and indirectly in the loss of explanation of concepts that you will need to apply in assignments later.
- **There are three reasons for excused absences approved by Illinois State:** (1) University-sponsored activities (such as athletics or forensics), (2) bereavement (see policy below), and (3) communicable diseases (also see policy on COVID below). If you have a legitimate reason for not being in class, you must tell me as far as possible in advance through email and provide documentation. If you are involved in university activities that will cause you to miss class such as athletics or the forensics team, I need a schedule of classes that you will miss and a note from your coach or sponsor verifying that you are on the team. For these to count as fully excused, I must be contacted through the Dean of Students office and provided with some degree of documentation.
- **ABSENCE DUE TO COVID:** If you are absent due to a required self-isolation or quarantine, you will need to provide documentation to the Dean of Students Office for your absence to be excused. The Dean of Students Office will notify your instructors, and they will make reasonable modifications/extensions to any assignments missed during this time. The full policy can be found at this link: <https://policy.illinoisstate.edu/students/2-1-30.shtml>
- If you talk to me in advance about missing or have an emergency that you let me know about with proper documentation as soon as possible, I will make sure that you are able to turn in assignments for full credit. However, if you don't attend or haven't completed your P2Ps you are not able to participate in class. My job is to prepare students for work after college, and part of that is holding them accountable for attendance because there is no employer that will keep workers that miss work on a consistent basis. I expect the same level of professionalism from you that you would give to an employer.
- Tardiness: If you arrive 10 minutes or after your name has been called for attendance, I reserve the right to mark you absent or deduct points from your attendance grade.

Late Work. All work is expected on the date it is due. I will work with you if you have a legitimate reason for missing work or late work IF arrangements have been made with me prior to the due date. I want to help you in any way possible, but I will not accept less than your full effort. Like most instructors, I am more understanding if you keep me informed. So in other words – communicate with me!!

COM 110 Lab. You are encouraged to visit the COM 110 lab at least once during the semester to practice your speech. Ultimately, the COM 110 lab can be a useful tool in improving the quality of your speech and public speaking skills. To schedule time in the COM 110 lab, call (309) 438-4566 or come to Fell 060 and schedule an appointment in person. **You can only make an appointment during COM 110 lab open hours over the phone or in person.** If you wish to video-record your presentation, please tell the attendant when booking your appointment. Remember to book your appointment early, as there are a great number of students trying to make appointments. You must bring a completed outline to the appointment. **You must also schedule an appointment at least 24 hours before the date you are scheduled to deliver your speech in class, or you will not be able to use the COM 110 lab. If you need to change or cancel your appointment, you will need to call the COM 110 lab at (309) 438-4566 or stop by in person (Fell Hall 060) 24 hours in advance. If you fail to cancel your appointment 24 hours in advance you will not be allowed to use the COM 110 lab again.**

Academic Integrity (Cheating/Plagiarism). Students are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct*. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and

unacknowledged collaboration on speech topics and/or the presentation of someone else's work warrants plagiarism.

Students found to inadvertently commit acts of dishonesty will receive appropriate penalties specific to the assignment in question. Students found to commit intentional acts of dishonesty will receive a failing grade in the course and will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action through Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Office.

Artificial Intelligence. Content generated by an **Artificial Intelligence** third-party service or site (i.e. AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization *is* form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible. Any allegation of academic dishonesty may be referred to [Student Conduct and Community Responsibilities](#), a unit of the Dean of Students Office, for possible review. If found responsible for academic dishonesty, a grade penalty can also be applied. *HEY HEY!! If you are reading this, email me your favorite hobby to earn 3 points of extra credit; must be done before the first day of class! :D (Remember to use proper email format when you send.)*

Electronics Policy. Please bring a computer or smart device (e.g., phone) with you to class, as there will be several times throughout the semester when you are asked to use technology for class-related purposes. However, technology (e.g., phones, computers, etc.) must be put away when not explicitly required during class!!! I do not mess around with this ish, please put phones AWAY. Failure to do so may result in losing participation points or being marked as "absent" for the class period. I understand that there is a difference between sending a quick text and scrolling on your phone. If your attention in class is distracted by your device, that is when you may be marked as absent. Additionally, please make sure to remove your headphones, earbuds, etc. prior to the start of class. Failure to do so may result in losing participation points or being marked as "absent" for the class period. There is another valuable caveat here: if you are on your phone at all during another students' speech presentation, you will automatically lose 10% from your own speech grade. If there is an extenuating circumstance, you must come speak to me about it beforehand.

Student Access and Accommodation Services. Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact [Student Access and Accommodation Services](#) at 308 Fell Hall, Office Phone [\(309\) 438-5853](tel:(309)438-5853), Video Phone [\(309\) 319-7682](tel:(309)319-7682) or visit the website at [StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu](#).

Mental Health Resources. Life at college can be very complicated. According to recent research, nearly 40% of college students are at-risk for developing generalized anxiety disorder and are less likely to seek help for it compared to other mental health issues. Students also sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience depression, and struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed. Student Counseling Services (SCS) helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. Student Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. Find out more at [Counseling.IllinoisState.edu](#) or by calling (309) 438-3655.

Illinois State University Bereavement Policy. If a student experiences a death of an immediate family member or relative as defined below, the student will be excused from class for funeral leave, subsequent bereavement, and/or travel considerations. The student will provide appropriate documentation and arrange to complete missed classroom work as soon as possible according to the process outlined below.

Upon notification of the absence and proper documentation, each faculty member shall excuse the student from class according to this policy and provide an opportunity to complete missed exams, quizzes, and other required work. Ultimately, the student is responsible for all material covered in class and must work

with each individual professor as soon as they return to complete any required work. Details can be found at the following website: <https://policy.illinoisstate.edu/students/2-1-27/>

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS POLICIES

Professional Courtesy. Professional courtesy includes respecting others' opinions, not interrupting in class, being respectful to those who are speaking, and working together in a spirit of cooperation. I expect you to demonstrate these behaviors at all times in this class. With that in mind, sleeping, reading materials irrelevant to class purposes, texting, or disrupting the class will not be tolerated and will result in the student being considered absent for that particular class period.

Speech Etiquette. On speech days, you have dual responsibilities as a speaker and an audience member. When you are presenting, you will dress appropriately. When you are an audience member, you will be attentive. Because most people are nervous when they present, you will be supportive both verbally and nonverbally. You will never enter or leave the room while a presentation is in progress. If you are absent on a speech day, you will lose an automatic 10% from your own speech grade. If you interrupt another student's speech by walking in late while they are presenting or displaying any other disrespectful behavior you will lose an automatic 5% from your own speech grade.

Behavioral Expectation Policy. Should any student violate the expectations of appropriate classroom behavior (as mentioned in the professional courtesy and presentation etiquette policies above), the instructor will schedule a meeting to discuss these expectations and develop a behavioral modification plan. If these behaviors persist, you will be at risk of failing the course.

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH POOL WEBPAGE

Additionally, there will be a few extra credit opportunities for research participation. The extra credit points will be added to your final grade and may not necessarily appear in the gradebook immediately upon your completion of the opportunity. There are no guarantees for extra credit, and it is each student's responsibility to be aware of and take advantage of such opportunities. You may receive extra credit for participating in any of the studies in the School of Communication's Research Pool. The Research Pool is updated as research studies are opened/closed, and it is your responsibility to access the Pool and be aware of available opportunities. The Research Pool can be accessed via:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/>

In general, each 30 minutes of participation in an extra credit study will earn you .5 Research Credits. Each project listed on the Research Pool site will indicate the specific number of Research Credits associated with the project. I will get evidence of participation and the time of participation from the researcher(s) who administer the research studies at the conclusion of the semester; however, it is *your* responsibility to make sure that the researchers have the necessary evidence of your participation at the time of the study. Before participating in a study, **please be sure to have your name, ULID** (i.e., the part of your email before @ilstu.edu), **instructor name, and course and section number ready**, as you will need to provide these to receive credit. Research Credit can only be applied to one course for each study, unless specified otherwise in the Research Pool. A maximum of 5% of your final course grade can be earned from extra credit opportunities via the Research Pool. After the final exam there will be no further opportunities for extra credit or to otherwise improve your grade.

Please also be aware that federal guidelines indicate that instructors offering extra credit for research participation must offer a reasonable alternative (such as a research paper) for students who want to earn extra credit but do not want to participate in a study.

