

COM 110: COMMUNICATION AS CRITICAL INQUIRY

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Meeting time: T/Th 3:35-4:50 p.m.

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TEXTS

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

Simonds, C. J., Hooker, J. F., Hunt, S. K., & Kaufmann, J. J. (2026). *Communication as critical inquiry: Student workbook*. Stipes Publishing.

COURSE MATERIALS

COM 110 Top Hat eBook. You are required to have an eBook for COM 110, which you will access through the interactive platform Top Hat. This platform will allow you to engage with the textbook and complete assignments for the course. You may purchase the eBook access directly from Top Hat or at the bookstores. You will receive an invitation from Top Hat to register your book with your section of the course. You may also purchase the ebook through our course Canvas site. Just click on the Top Hat navigation button in the course. **It is important that you do not enroll directly in the Top Hat course; rather, use the Top Hat link in our Canvas course navigation to create a student account or log in to an existing account using your Illinois State email (ilstu.edu). Do NOT use the Top Hat mobile app to sign in/make purchases/enroll in the course, use a desktop browser. Once your account is set up, you can access it via the mobile app if desired. Not following these steps may cause you to be removed from our course during the nightly roster sync, requiring you to follow these steps again to re-enroll.**

Workbook Purchasing Procedures. Students will purchase the student workbook (COM 110 Communication as Critical Inquiry) from the publisher, Stipes, who will then mail the workbook directly to you. Please order at the following address:

<https://buy.stipes.com/products/isu-com-110-26-27>

The packet will cost \$39.95 plus tax and shipping. When you order, be sure to include the **billing address** for the credit card you are using and also the **shipping address** for where you want the workbook sent. If you have any issues with this process, please contact the publisher directly at orders@stipes.com

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

- First, talk with your instructor. 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.
- Check Milner Library. Through Milner Library you can access course materials using their course reserve service. These materials can be used for two-hour time blocks inside Milner Library. You can also [ask a librarian](#) for assistance with this process.
- Contact your academic advisor. Your [advisor](#) is knowledgeable about your academic goals and will assist you in navigating your academic experience.
- Reach out to the Financial Aid office. Make an appointment with a [financial aid counselor](#) and specifically mention you are seeking help paying for course materials. The Financial Aid office can ensure students are using all forms of available aid and will investigate options for students, such as a [Short-Term Emergency Student Loan](#).

Also required:

- Access to a personal or public printer
- Access to our course on Canvas.IllinoisState.edu
- An ilstu.edu email account that you check regularly
- Access to Zoom

Suggested materials:

- Notecards (4"x 6" or smaller)
- A stapler

COMMUNICATION AS CRITICAL INQUIRY (COM 110) COURSE GOALS

Communication as Critical Inquiry (COM 110) seeks to improve students' abilities to express themselves and to listen to others in a variety of communication settings. Effective oral communication is viewed as an essential life skill that every person must possess to function in today's society. The course emphasizes participation in a variety of communication processes to develop, reinforce, and evaluate communication 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.

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

Speeches. Each student will present three speeches:

- a. Informative speech (5-7 minutes, no more than 7:30; at least 4 sources must be cited in the presentation and in the references)
- b. Group presentation (25-35 minutes depending on the number of members, each member must speak at least 5 minutes consecutively, at least 10 sources must be cited in the presentation and in the references)
- c. Persuasive speech (5-7 minutes, no more than 7:30; at least 6 sources)

All three speeches must be completed to pass the course. Each presentation will be evaluated on content and delivery. Specific details will be clearly outlined in class. Typed outlines and references are required for each (a sample 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. Once speech topics are selected and turned in, they cannot be changed. **Speech days are mandatory attendance days for all students. Unexcused absences on a speech date will result in an automatic 10 point deduction PER DAY to speech grade.**

Participation (Daily Speaking Opportunities). Because Communication as Critical Inquiry is a skills-based, developmental course, participation is essential. Your success in this course depends on your active engagement with the material and your classmates. What you will take away (transferable skills, knowledge, interesting information, etc.) is based on your willingness to be critically and creatively engaged with the material. 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.

Attendance. Attendance is required for this course; however, I understand that sometimes life happens. Therefore, you are allowed two “unexcused absence days” throughout the semester that will not affect your attendance grade --- but be sure you are in an academic position where you can afford to miss the participation points for the day! Attendance is worth 25 points. After the second absence, points will be deducted **per day**. Absences made via the Dean of Students Office (e.g., medical/illness leave, family emergency, bereavement, etc.) or for a university-related activity with required documentation are excused and will not negatively affect your grade. The chart below provides an example of how unexcused absences affect your attendance grade. **Please note, speech days are mandatory attendance days and unexcused absences are not permitted.**

Total Number of Absences	Points Deducted from Attendance Grade
3	-3
4	-5
5	-7
6	-9
7	-11
8	-13

9	-15
10	-17
11	-19
12	-21
13	-23
14	-25

Preparing to Participate (P2Ps). Students are expected to complete all P2Ps (via Top Hat eBook) throughout the semester.

Communication Improvement Profile Presentation. In this presentation (3-5 minutes), you will analyze your own communication style, strengths, and weaknesses, as well as discuss what your goals and expectations for improvement are for this course. This presentation will be recorded and submitted on Canvas.

Final Synthesis Presentation. The final synthesis presentation (2-4 minutes) will allow you to reflect on your progress in this course.

Other Activities/Quizzes/Speeches. Throughout the semester, other activities will be assigned that will be designed to help you synthesize or practice the skills and concepts used in this 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.

For each research study you participate in, I will award 2 points of extra credit (up to 10 total points).

EVALUATION

The grading scale is a standard ten percentage point scale:

90-100% = A; 80%-89% = B; 70%-79% = C; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F

Speeches and Presentations

<i>Informative Speech</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Group Presentation</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Persuasive Speech</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Any Old Bag Speech</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>CIP Presentation</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Synthesis Presentation</i>	<i>30</i>

Participation/Attendance

<i>Attendance</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Class participation</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>P2Ps (5x18)</i>	<i>80</i>

Assignments

<i>Class survey and syllabus contract</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Milner informative assignment</i>	<i>TBD</i>
<i>Milner group assignment</i>	<i>TBD</i>
<i>Milner persuasive assignment</i>	<i>TBD</i>

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.

TOTAL ~500

****Assessments and point values subject to change.****

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.

COM 110 Lab. You are encouraged to visit the COM 110 lab at least once during the semester to practice your speech. It is also recommended that you plan a visit to the COM 110 lab at least one week before your speech so you have enough time to synthesize the feedback received from the attendant and incorporate it into 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.

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.

Content generated by an **Artificial Intelligence** third-party service or site (**AI-generated content**) without proper attribution or authorization is another 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 the [Student Conduct Office](#), a unit of the Dean of Students Office, for possible review. If found responsible for academic dishonesty, a grade penalty can also be applied.

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, Video Phone (309) 319-7682 or visit the website at StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu.

Mental Health Resources. Life at college can get 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 with a little help. 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/>

Tardiness. Please note that coming to class on time is also imperative. If you arrive after attendance is taken, you will be marked as late. If you are late three times, that will count as an absence. **If you walk in late while another student is presenting, you will lose an automatic 10% off your speech grade.**

Zoom. *These expectations apply if we have to pivot to Zoom class at any point in the semester:* Cameras on! Much of our course involves communicating with one another during class. Having cameras on will allow for better community-building in our class, something that happens naturally in an in-person class setting, as well as helps the instructor watch for nonverbal cues of understanding, confusion, or contribution. In addition, having your camera on will be an expectation of you in a professional setting--so practice now! For students not wanting to share their background environment, there are [Zoom backgrounds you can download](https://alumni.illinoisstate.edu/gear/zoom/) (<https://alumni.illinoisstate.edu/gear/zoom/>) from the University. I encourage you to use those backgrounds if it helps raise your comfort with having a camera on. If there are days/reasons when your camera needs to be off, communicate with me.

Illness. As responsible adults investing in their future, Illinois State University students are encouraged to take control of their own education, especially when life and health challenges interfere with the planned process. When students need to have an extension, break from class, etc. due to illness, they must be swift and proactive in working with their instructors to take advantage of learning opportunities, develop mastery of course materials, meet the learning objectives as outlined in the course, and prepare themselves for more advanced learning.

Essentially, as an adult learner, you are responsible for reaching out to me immediately if an illness interferes with your participation in the course. I want to work with you to ensure that you are successful as a student. Concerns will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Electronics Policy. During class time, students will be allowed to use a laptop or phone to access Top Hat and P2P answers, or when working on speeches or other assignments during class time. **This is the only permitted use of phones or laptops in this course.** Any time the class is working on any material or activity besides those outlined above, laptops should be shut and phones put away. The use of laptops or phones for non-class material will result in loss of participation points for that day for every offense. After three offenses, you will no longer be allowed a laptop or phone in the class and will be required to print and bring physical copies of the P2P answers to class. **Any use of cell phones or laptops while your classmates are giving speeches or presenting information of any kind will result in an immediate 10% deduction off your speech grade.** If your phone rings during class, I reserve the right to answer it. If I see you texting during class, I will have you put your phone on the table in the front of the classroom. Please make sure to remove your headphones, earbuds, etc. prior to the start of class. Failure to do so will result in you being marked "absent" for the class period.

Assignment Due Dates. All assignments must be completed on the due date. **No late work will be accepted.** If you are unprepared to turn in an assignment or deliver a presentation on your assigned day, you will receive a ZERO for that assignment unless an alternate due date has been previously approved or documentation has been provided for extreme circumstances. Further, technical problems such as power outages, erased/lost disks, downed systems, malfunctioning printers, or email glitches are not legitimate excuses for late or missing work. Always make a backup copy of your work (and carry it with you on the due date) and make use of University

computer labs if necessary. You may want to consider purchasing a flash drive or using online storage. In emergencies, I will make other arrangements with individual students, but such cases are relatively rare. Also, give yourself ample time to complete assignments. **Please note: it is not my responsibility to track down your late or missing work.** You must take responsibility and ownership of your assignments.

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.

Presentation Etiquette. On presentation 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 and ask challenging but constructive questions when the presentation is finished. 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.

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 for failing the course.

Email Policy. While I encourage you to email me with questions, don't let email replace good communication between us. I encourage you to arrange to meet with me in person. While a quick response is likely, please keep in mind that I am not always on email; therefore, I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. **Note:**

Professionalism in email communication is demanded. As a student of higher education, it is expected that all communication be of professional quality. When writing your emails, please identify yourself and the class for which you have an inquiry. Please be sure to address me in a professional manner.

Rough Drafts. While I am always willing to read through rough drafts of assignments for this class, any rough draft must be submitted no later than **one week before the assignment is due**. This allows me to provide you with constructive feedback on the assignment and gives you time to synthesize and incorporate my feedback as well. Any rough drafts submitted less than a week before the assignment is due will not be read unless previous arrangements have been made with the individual student.