

Communication 131X: Fundamentals of Oral Communication – Group Context
Syllabus Supplement – Fall 2009

WHY THIS COURSE? WHAT DOES IT COVER?

Communication 131X is a key course in the UAF Core Curriculum, which all students must complete, and which is designed to provide students with a shared foundation of skills and knowledge for further study. The Communication component of the Core Curriculum is designed to provide “multidimensional competency in written and oral English—including comprehension of complex materials and creation of clearly organized presentations of soundly reasoned thought in both oral and written form.” Comm 131X and Comm 141X focus on developing student’s skills in oral communication, while courses like English 111X, 211X, and 213X focus on written communication. The Core Curriculum also involves completing upper division oral-intensive and written-intensive courses to further develop these skills in advanced coursework related to one’s major or minor. By University policy, Comm 131X or 141X must be completed successfully prior to enrolling in upper division oral intensive credits.

Comm 131X focuses on three key areas. **First**, the course focuses on developing skills for working effectively and productively in small, task-oriented groups to accomplish some goal or to address some issue or problem. Much of the work in 21st century organizations is too complex for one person to address, so teams and teamwork are essential. Knowing skills for working effectively in groups or teams is a key factor in using one’s university education to best advantage. **Second**, the course also focuses on developing skills for effectively organizing and presenting information in public settings. One may know a great deal, but without the ability to inform others clearly about what one knows, that knowledge is useless. Being able to communicate well in public situations is one mark of an effective university graduate. **Third**, Comm 131X, like other courses in the Core Curriculum, focuses on developing skills for thinking critically, whether one is designing one’s own presentation, listening to the presentations of others, or evaluating information and solutions in the process of accomplishing a group task.

The skills you will develop and the experience provided in this class are intended to help prepare you not only for further university coursework but also for life experience beyond your education. Corporations and other organizations that recruit UAF graduates have noted that our students are often stranded in entry-level positions due to their lack of understanding about how to participate in group work activities, or to their inability to effectively present their ideas to others. Research shows that nationally, a lack of ability to communicate is the leading cause of career stasis across American businesses. Further, the inability to organize and work together across communication and cultural boundaries isolates both individuals and groups within the fabric of American society.

This course is designed to give students REAL experience at working with real people and real problems. Particularly at UAF one finds students with a range of cultural, age, gender, preference, and racial differences, as well as employment and family responsibilities. In this class, this individual diversity adds to the value of learning how to work together to overcome interference and to accomplish group goals in a satisfying and successful manner. The students,

not the instructor, will achieve the unity that is the measure of success for each group. What you can learn here has importance beyond completing a three-hour requirement for your degree. The knowledge and experience you take from this class will be significant for your career and public life.

Again, Comm 131X is a course focused on developing SKILLS in working in groups, in effective informative presentations, and in critical thinking. Like developing any other skill, one only improves by PRACTICING the skill, and practice, both in and outside of class, is an essential part of doing well in this course. **Do not expect this course to be easy.** The University of Alaska Fairbanks expects that you will spend at least two hours working, reading, and studying outside of class for every hour you spend in class. For a 3 hour, 3 credit class like COMM 131X, that's six hours a week outside of class. Expect to spend at least that much time outside of class as a **minimum** requirement for doing well.

WORDS OF ADVICE:

This course places a major emphasis upon group productivity and 40% of your final grade will be earned through group grades. If this focus on group grading is a concern for you, your alternative is to enroll in Comm 141X.

Also: Please recognize that this course will require group meetings outside of classroom hours. Overcoming personal difficulties in order to participate fully as a group member is an expectation of every student. Each group must deal with its own individual problems in this regard, rather than depending on the instructor to do so.

And: This course requires extensive reading and class participation. If your schedule does not permit you to dedicate time and effort to the course, then please drop this course now. Other students in your group are counting on you to be productive. If you are not, this is a good way to make enemies. In the course, students need to be thinking about their group, as well as themselves. Making effective public presentations and being an effective group member are skills that each student will be developing throughout the semester. Like any skills, learning to deliver an effective presentation and working well in groups take time to achieve. Each student must be prepared to spend that time in class and outside of class.

It is advisable that you check the course catalog for the final drop date for this semester if you anticipate any possibility that this course will require too much time and/or discipline at this point in your academic career.

TEXTS:

Sprague, J., & Stuart, D. (2009). *The Speaker's Compact Handbook* (2nd ed.) with *Speech Builder*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cengage.

Young, K.S., Wood, J.T., Phillips, G.M., & Pedersen, D.J. (2007). *Group Discussion* (4th ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.

Department of Communication (2009). *Comm 131X: Supplementary Information Packet* (19th ed.) Fairbanks, AK (Note that this is a *required text* in the course.)

ATTENDANCE:

This class is carefully designed as a hands-on workshop in public presentation and group interaction. Because of its compressed time structure and the nature of its substance, attendance is simply **mandatory**. Nothing less will be acceptable. Roll will be called at the beginning of each class. If a student is not present, she or he will lose points from the total points earned during the semester. Tardiness is the equivalent of absence in terms of lost points. Come to class ON TIME! **The number of points deducted for each class absence depends on the schedule for the class, as follows:**

For MWF classes: 10 points deducted for each absence

For T/TH classes: 15 points deducted for each absence

For 3 hour evening or Saturday classes: 30 points deducted for each absence

Absence or tardiness on the day of any scheduled presentation will result in a deduction of up to **DOUBLE the number of points listed above. Absence on a day when one of YOUR presentations is scheduled can result in "0" (zero) points for the presentation.**

All students are expected to attend every class and the final exam. You are also responsible for in-class activities (which cannot be made up). There are some circumstances for which absence is unavoidable, such as illness or family emergency. Your instructor must be notified of an absence before or on the day it occurs either through a phone message or via e-mail, and receive documentation of the reason as soon as possible thereafter. There will be no accommodation for students who are absent on the day of the scheduled final exam.

OTHER KEY POLICIES:

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES: In addition to the information in this syllabus, **YOU** are responsible for knowing the information on Department policies with regard to courses that is included on pages 8-10.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION PACKET: **YOU** are also responsible for knowing the information on the course and on assignments that is included in the Supplementary Information Packet, which is a required text for this course.

CELL PHONES & LAPTOPS: Because of the distractions they create, you will need to turn off your cell phone, preferably before you enter the classroom, and in all cases before class actually begins. Laptops are not to be used in class, except by instructor permission or as needed because of a documented disability.

STUDENT SUPPORT: Your instructor will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (203 WHIT, 474-7043) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.

OUT OF CLASS ASSIGNMENTS will be typed and proofread. NO excuses regarding typing or computer problems will be accepted. You are no longer in high school and are required to type and proofread your work. **EXCEPTION:** Note cards for presentations may be neatly handwritten

INSTRUCTOR ASSISTANCE AND THE SPEAKING CENTER:

Asking for help is an excellent idea. In so far as your Instructor can facilitate without interfering with the group dynamic that is a major purpose of this course, she or he is anxious to help students overcome potential problems and difficulties. The time to ask for help is BEFORE the day the assignment is due!

All students have access to the services of the UAF Speaking Center located in room 507 of the Gruening Building. Your instructor will provide you with more information on what the Speaking Center can provide, and the hours it will be open this semester.

POLICIES ON STUDENT PRESENTATIONS:

Never EVER walk into the classroom while a presentation is in progress. Such interruptions can be quite disruptive, particularly for persons who are not comfortable speaking in front of an audience. Be considerate of each other.

As a part of this course, student presentations may be videotaped. Such taping is done as a part of the evaluation of both the individual and groups. Videotapes are considered a part of the educational record and are treated with the same confidentiality as all student records. Nobody else will see except student and instructor or anybody with a valid educational reason within the department.

It is Department of Communication policy that any student failure to give the first, diagnostic presentation will result in the student being dropped immediately from the course. Student failure to give other presentations may result in the student being dropped at the discretion of the Instructor.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS WILL NOT BE READ NOR MEMORIZED! Doing so will result in a SIGNIFICANT loss of points in four of the speaking competencies (numbers 1, 6, 7, and 8). Group members are expected to work together to ensure that this major error is avoided by group members of the group symposium.

All interaction in the classroom is to be consistent with the American Psychological Association standards for ethical behavior with regard to using inclusive language in when interacting with others is expected from each student and the instructor. These guidelines are included in the Supplementary Information Packet, Appendix VI. The topic will also be covered in class. In addition, behavior consistent with the Credo for Ethical Communication of the National Communication Association, which has been adopted by the Department of Communication, and can be found in Appendix IV in the Supplementary Information Packet.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Anyone observed cheating on an examination will receive a “0” for that examination. Anyone found to have used someone else’s work without crediting that person (plagiarizing) will receive an “F” for the course and will face further actions at the discretion of the University. When in doubt, always identify your sources. See the Department of Communication Expectations and Policies, pp. 8-10, for a more complete discussion of plagiarism.

GRADING:

Total points possible (no make-up; no extra credit): 1000 points.

Grade updates are your responsibility, not that of your Instructor. Keep track of your grades throughout the semester on the tracking sheet provided in the Supplementary Information Packet, so you will not need to ask.

Final grades in Comm 131X will be assigned using plus and minus grading, and using the following grading standards:

A+ = (93.0 to 100%)

A = (90.0 to 92.9%) Highly superior performance in every significant way

A- = (87.0 to 89.9%)

B+ = (83.0 to 86.9%)

B = (80.0 to 82.9%) Excellent; well above generally acceptable work or performance

B- = (77.0 to 79.9%)

C+ = (73.0 to 76.9%)

C = (70.0 to 72.9%) Good, solid, generally acceptable work or performance; exceeding minimum standards; where most people fall on the statistical normal distribution curve

C- = (67.0 to 69.9%)

D+ = (63.0 to 66.9%)

D = (60.0 to 62.9%) Minimally acceptable; barely meets acceptable standards

D- = (57.0 to 59.9%)

F = (below 57.0%) Fails to meet even minimum standards

Note: The assumption is that everyone in the class begins at an “AVERAGE” level of expertise. Higher grades are the result of a clear demonstration of student work and consistent improvement of speaking and group skills.

No “Incompletes” are possible for this course due to its developmental nature.

<u>GRADING:</u>	<u>POINTS POSSIBLE</u>
Individual diagnostic speaking assessment	NO POINTS
First graded individual speaking assignment	100 points
Test #1 (or series of quizzes)	100 points
Group Contract (relates to post symposium self assessment of group, below)	NO POINTS
Second graded individual speaking assignment	100 points
Group problem solving exercise	150 points
Feedback on group problem solving	25 points
Group symposium	
Group presentation grade	200 points
Individual presentation grade	100 points
Post symposium self-assessment of group	50 points
Test #2 (or series of quizzes)	100 points
Class is required to meet on scheduled Final Exam Day	
Participation	75 points
(Participation includes performance on “pop,” unscheduled quizzes, quality of questions asked following others’ presentations, verbal in-class interaction that demonstrates up-to-date reading of assigned materials, peer feedback and useful comments in evaluating others’ presentations, etc.)	
TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE.....	1000 POINTS

UNGRADED, INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSTIC SPEAKING ASSESSMENT

This assignment is to enable your Instructor to see where each student is beginning the speaking process and what help each student may need in becoming competent at giving public presentations. Specifically, each student will select a topic of personal interest (see notes below) and be prepared to present that topic to the class in a 5-minute presentation. **Care should be taken in topic selection since the same topic will be refined for a subsequent assignment.** Plan and prepare (including practicing) your presentation very seriously.

As you have seen, speaking competencies are extremely important in terms of gaining employment, keeping that employment, and upward mobility after employment. Beyond that, speaking competencies are each citizen's most important tools for participation in a democracy. Everyone has the right to speak her or his mind, but those who can do so clearly and effectively are the persons who will move others; who will be the leaders in their places of employment, their communities, and their government. Speaking competencies are lifetime skills and should be learned as such. Persons who participate in this class only in terms of "doing assignments" or "getting this required class out of the way" should consider all the "real world" potential they forfeit without these skills.

This is a group context/public speaking course designed to teach each student the important skills necessary for competent and effective communication. This is NOT a public forum as specified in the First Amendment, i.e., all presentations will be informative only. Audience analysis for appropriate topics and appropriate approaches to specific assignments will be determined by your classroom Instructor in advance of any presentation. Presentations that are seen as potential distractions from the primary mission of the class will not be allowed.

Topics for the ungraded, diagnostic speaking assignment and ALL subsequent assignments will be approved by your classroom Instructor within the following guidelines:

- 1) Presentations are to be informative and appropriate for your peers. Do not attempt to be persuasive; simply inform the audience ABOUT your chosen topic.
- 2) It is strongly suggested that you do not use any personal life history as topic. That is to say, the assignment is informative, not narrative.
- 3) In consideration of the many points of view that may be present in your classroom audience, no presentation may be made that teaches, advocates, or attempts in any way to persuade for a particular religious position.
- 4) No presentation will be accepted that advocates for practices or concepts contrary to University Policies (e.g., substance abuse).

NOTE AGAIN: The Instructor may disallow topics that in the Instructor's judgment would be distracting in the context of the class. It is the Department of Communication policy that any student failure to give the first, diagnostic presentation will result in the student being dropped immediately from the course. Student failure to give other presentations may result in the student being dropped at the discretion of the Instructor.

Communication Department Expectations and Policies

The University/student relationship is not one of producer and consumer. When students, parents, scholarships, and/or other funders pay fees in order for a student to attend classes, this obligates the student to a set of educational responsibilities and expectations. Education is a *process* in which critical thinking skills and analysis are concentrated upon throughout one's academic career. Following are the expectations and policies of the UAF Communication Department. These expectations and policies are endorsed by all faculty members and will be implemented in all Communication classes.

1. **Assignment deadlines:** Late assignments will result in the loss of one letter grade per working day that the assignment is late. The **only** exception to this policy is a carefully **documented** emergency or University sanctioned activity (e.g., scholastic conferences, athletics). In cases of life contingencies, arrangements must be made to submit work **before** the deadline date.

2. **Make-up exams:** Make-up exams are only given in Departmentally approved circumstances, as noted above regarding assignment deadlines. Arrangements for any make-up exams must be made **prior** to student's absence.

Note that in all instances, scheduled final exam times will be adhered to; thus it is incumbent upon the student to plan travel times accordingly.

3. **Attendance:** For those classes which require attendance, note that absence means "not present," regardless of "why" you are not present.

4. **Tardiness:** Tardiness equals absence in so far as the attendance record is concerned. Anyone not present when attendance is taken will be listed as absent.

5. **Disruptions:** Don't **ever** enter a classroom while a student presentation is being given. This is rude and unfair to those students who are on time. Such disruption can cause severe speaking apprehension for students who are already less than comfortable in front of a classroom.

6. **Reading:** Getting an education requires **careful, concentrated reading**. It is expected by this Department that students spend at least two hours in reading and/or working on a course **before every class meeting**. This Department views work outside the classroom as a minimal expectation and strongly suggests that you **should not take this class until you are ready to meet this expectation**.

7. **APA:** All assignments **must** be submitted in correct, current American Psychological Association (APA) style. If you are unfamiliar with APA style, manuals are available for study, but not check out, on Reserve Reading in the Library, in the Writing Center, and in the Communication Department Resource Area (Gruening 503). Good writing and proper written form are essential skills of any student of Communication.

8. **Grade Inflation:** The following qualitative guidelines suggest the expectations of this Department regarding grading. This grading policy is adopted from the University's general grading guidelines found in the UAF Catalog (Section on Academic Regulations).
A -- An *honor* grade, indicates originality and independent work, a thorough mastery of the subject and the satisfactory completion of more work than is regularly required.
B -- Indicates outstanding ability above the average level of performance.
C -- Indicates a satisfactory or average level of performance.
D -- The lowest passing grade, indicates work of below-average quality and performance.
F -- Indicates failure. All "F" grades, including those earned in pass/fail courses, are included in the GPA calculations.
9. **Incomplete grades:** The letter grade "I" (Incomplete) is a temporary grade used to indicate that the student has satisfactorily completed (C or better) the **majority** of work in a course but for reasons **beyond the student's control** (such as medical emergencies), has not been able to complete the course during the regular semester. An Incomplete will only be assigned in emergencies and **only when the student is current in the class until at least the last three weeks of the semester**. Negligence or indifference are not acceptable reasons for an "I" grade.
10. **Student Code of Conduct:** All work on assignments and exams, and all participation in classes must conform to the UAF Student Code of Conduct, published in the UAF Catalog. Specifically, the Code **prohibits plagiarism**, which is presenting of the work of others as one's own, whether in writing or in oral presentations. More specifically, plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person without a complete citation of the source of the words or ideas. Paraphrasing another person's work by rearranging their words or summarizing their ideas **also** constitutes plagiarism, unless one provides a complete citation of the source. For courses in Communication, using more than three words in sequence from another source, without citation, constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is a very serious form of academic dishonesty, and will result in a zero grade for the assignment in which it occurs, potentially a failing grade for the course, and the possibility of disciplinary action by the University, as noted in the Student Code of Conduct.
11. **Accommodations:** Any student who has a physical or medically documented learning challenge is invited to contact your instructor early in the semester so that ways to accommodate any difficulties can be anticipated. I will work with the Office of Disability Services (203 Whiting, 474-7043) to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities.

Departmental Policies on Complaints Regarding Instruction

1. **Student complaints.** Any student who might wish to complain about instructional matters regarding a course, a professor, and/or an instructor must follow this formal procedure:
 - a. All student complaints must be discussed **first and only** with the faculty or TA with whom the student has a complaint or problem, **before** such complaints will be addressed by **any other member** of the faculty, including the Department Chair.
 - b. If a student wishes to pursue the issue as a formal complaint, that complaint must be submitted **in writing** to the faculty or TA to whom the complaint is directed **within one week** following any such aggrieved incident and/or occurrence (e.g., grade complaint, procedure complaint, teaching incident, etc.).
 - c. When the instructor receives a student's **written complaint**, s/he will **respond in writing within a reasonable time period** and is required to **schedule a meeting with the student** to discuss the stated complaint. This results in a possible resolution occurring at the level closest to its origination.
 - d. If, after meeting with the instructor to discuss the written statement, the student does not believe that the complaint has been sufficiently addressed, s/he may then request that the instructor schedule a meeting with the **student, instructor, and TA Mentor/Department Chair** (depending on whether the instructor is a TA or faculty member). The hierarchy dictates that the TA Mentor be consulted at this point if the instructor is a TA, whereas the Department Chair be consulted if the instructor is a faculty member.
 - e. Prior to this meeting, the instructor will furnish a **copy of the written complaint and instructor response** to the TA Mentor/Department Chair and schedules a meeting for the three parties. If, after this meeting, the student still does not find that the matter has been sufficiently addressed, then the Department Chair schedules a private meeting with the student. A written report of this meeting will be recorded by the Department Chair/Mentor.
 - f. **Only** after this policy has been followed does the matter proceed beyond the Department.
 - g. These Departmental policies do not contravene UAF formal policy, e.g., student grievance and appeals policies.

Student Information Sheet: (Information for Instructor only; will NOT be given out)

Blind Identification # _____

(Each student creates a five digit number given only to the Instructor by which she or he will be identified for the semester when providing feedback on other student presentations. Create a number that you are sure you can remember!).

Name _____

Address _____

Phone numbers _____

Email address _____

Occupation/Career goals _____

Major _____

Special Concerns or Needs _____

Schedule: Please "X" out the times during which you are unavailable for meetings due to work or school, etc.

	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
8am							
9am							
10am							
11am							
12pm							
1pm							
2pm							
3pm							
4pm							
5pm							
6pm							
7pm							
8pm							
9pm							

I, _____, acknowledge receipt of the Comm 131X syllabus, including the Communication Department Expectations and Policies, and understand what is contained within them. I also understand that there will be consequences for not adhering to the policies/information presented in these and other class handouts.

Sign/Date _____