

# Fundamentals of Communication

CMST 1061

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## Required Texts:

Crick, Pecchioni, and Butcher, *Deconstructing Communication: An Introduction to Rhetorical, Performance, and Communication Theory* [Pearson E-Text]

Various other readings to be posted on Moodle

## Course Goals:

This course should help you read, write, and think critically. The goal is NOT simply to memorize terminology. You should certainly learn and understand the key concepts, but you should also know how to use the concepts and relate the concepts to other subjects and other areas of life such as your personal life (know how to interpret and understand a dramatic performance), your social life (use the concepts to help you relate to others), and your professional life (help you communicate more effectively in the workplace).

## General Education Statement:

CMST 1061 may be used to partially fulfill General Education requirements in the humanities area. This course introduces students to the fundamental concepts of communication. The areas of rhetoric, performance, and communication theory each provide insights into human interaction. Human beings create messages that enable us to express, criticize, and even negotiate our values – our core ideals about what we consider intrinsically right or wrong that show us how to conduct our lives.

In this course, we will explore how we, as human beings, create socially significant messages which help us shape our identity, persuade others to take action, and shed light on the value systems of our culture. We will learn how individuals create and use messages to generate common meaning with others, to facilitate cooperative action, to perform social and cultural roles, and to reinforce or alter prevailing attitudes in our society.

This course will provide us with a variety of lenses through which to view and examine the communication process. At the end of the semester, we should have a richer understanding of the similarities and differences between the areas of communication and have acquired practical knowledge of the communication process itself.

**Assignments:**

The course is divided in to five sections, each revolving a particular aspect of the communication act:

- 1) Defining Communication
- 2) The Agent
- 3) The Message
- 4) The Meaning
- 5) The Audience

Most of these segments will involve a reading from the Crick/Pecchioni/Butcher chapter after which they are named as well as readings from other sources that either discuss or execute the theory under scrutiny.

**Absences/Late Work:**

If you're going to miss a major assignment, let me know ahead of time. To make up a missed assignment (i.e. any of the speeches you'll be giving) for full credit, you will need to provide documentation of the emergency that kept you away from class. This can be a doctor's note, an obituary, a letter from a coach, etc. If you miss an assignment for a non-emergency reason (like sleeping through it), come talk to me and we'll discuss making it up for a maximum grade of a C. Life happens, after all, but not without some consequences. In order to make up an assignment after an unexcused absence, you must be in overall good standing in the course. You must also present an outline proving that you were, in fact, ready to make your presentation that day, and you must schedule your make-up assignment within one week of missing class.

I will not accept late written work after the day it is due. If you miss turning an assignment in during the class period you're supposed to have it ready, you can turn in in (paper copies only) by 5pm that day for increasingly reduced credit. After 5pm, work will no longer be accepted without proof of extenuating circumstances (see above).

**Academic Misconduct:**

Don't plagiarize. Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either downloaded from the Internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. You can find the official LSU policies on plagiarism here: <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html>. Your work would be considered plagiarism in part or entirely if it involves any of the following:

- Submitting work that was written by someone other than you (an online source, a friend, etc.).
- Submitting work in which you use the ideas, metaphors or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references. Simply rewording a sentence does not make work your own.
- Submitting work in which you "cut and paste" or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references.
- Submitting work that you have written together with a friend as if it was solely your own intellectual property.
- Submitting work for COMM 3060 that you wrote verbatim for another class.

**Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states: "If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations can be arranged. After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

**Grading:**

The class is based on accumulation of up to 1,000 points rather than on any kind of weird system of weighted percentages. Think of each assignment like getting achievements in a video game. Over time, you'll earn the appropriate number of achievements to get to your goal grade. (Or not, I suppose. And in this game you don't get to repeat levels until you beat the boss. It's a one-shot deal.) Here, so you're aware, are the point amounts for each of your graded assignments. In-class presentations are indicated by italics:

Quizzes (n = 10): 100

Poetry Interpretation: 100

Film Probe: 50

Baton Rouge Exploration: 50

Silent Banquet Response: 100

Midterm Exam: 200

*Murder Mystery Response*: 100

*Individual Presentation*: 100

Final Exam: 200

<b>Day</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Of Interest</b>	<b>Homework</b>
<b>Th: 1.16</b>	Course Introduction		Crowdsource "Communication"
<b>Te: 1.21</b>	Defining Communication		Read Peters, "Communication with Aliens" [Moodle]
<b>Th: 1.23</b>	Defining Communication	Quiz	Read CPB Section 1
<b>Te: 1.28</b>	"The Agent"		Read Thurber, "University Days" [Moodle]
<b>Th: 1/30</b>	Personal Narrative	Quiz	Read Kondo, "How the Problem Emerged" [Moodle]
<b>Te: 2.4</b>	Roles/Fragmented Selves		Read Goffman, "Introduction" [Moodle]
<b>Th: 2.6</b>	Literary vs. Everyday Performance	Quiz	Group Work
<b>Te: 2.11</b>	Performances		Read CPB Section 3
<b>Th: 2.13</b>	"The Message"	Quiz	Read Baggini & Fosl 1.1 – 1.7 [Moodle]
<b>Te: 2.18</b>	Argument		Read McLuhan Ch. 8 [Moodle]
<b>Th: 2.20</b>	Words	Quiz	Watch Sherlock Jr. [YouTube] / Answer Prompt
<b>Te: 2.25</b>	Nonverbals		Read Nietzsche, "Communication and Consciousness" [Moodle]
<b>Th: 2.27</b>	Silence	Quiz	Explore Baton Rouge Silence / Answer Prompt
<b>Te: 3.4</b>	NO CLASS	Mardi Gras Break	
<b>Th: 3.6</b>	Silent Banquet		Silent Banquet Essay
<b>Te: 3.11</b>	Midterm Review		Study!
<b>Th: 3.13</b>	Midterm Exam		Read CPB Section 4
<b>Te: 3.18</b>	"The Meaning"		Read FanFiction [TBA]
<b>Th: 3.20</b>	Content and Relational Meaning	Quiz	Read Sedaris, "Jesus Shaves"
<b>Te: 3.25</b>	Social Knowledge		Presentation Proposal
<b>Te: 3.27</b>	Murder Mystery	Quiz	Read CPB Section 2
<b>Te: 4.1</b>	Murder Mystery		Murder Mystery Essay
<b>Th: 4.3</b>	NO CLASS	SSCA	
<b>Te: 4.8</b>	"The Audience"		Read Husserl, "The Problem of Experiencing Someone Else" [Moodle]
<b>Th: 4.10</b>	The Other	Quiz	Get Ready to Present!

<b>Te: 4.15</b>	NO CLASS	Spring Break	
<b>Th: 4.17</b>	NO CLASS	Spring Break	
<b>Te: 4.22</b>	Presentations		Get Ready to Present!
<b>Th: 4.24</b>	Presentations		Get Ready to Present!
<b>Te: 4.29</b>	Presentations		Study!
<b>Th: 5.1</b>	Final Review		Study!
<b>Finals Week</b>	Final Exam During Assigned Time		

## Poetry Interpretations

*Points:* 100

For this exercise, the class will be divided into five groups of roughly five people each. Each group will be assigned a poem to stage. In fact, each group will be assigned the same poem to stage.

The constraints for this assignment are that

- 1) Each group member must speak at least once
- 2) The group must use the entire space available (i.e. move around)
- 3) Each group must decide on a setting in which their interpretation is taking place, and behave appropriately for that setting
- 4) Each group member must adopt a particular persona according to that setting, dressing, behaving, and speaking accordingly
- 5) Each group must employ at least one prop
- 5) Group members will be provided with the opportunity to evaluate each other at the conclusion of the exercise

Beyond that... let your creativity travel wherever it wants to. Keep the function of the agent in mind, and make sure your interpretation represents a unique agency that has its own identity that you think best gets the message across.

**Film Probe: *Sherlock, Jr.***

In one brief paragraph, summarize the plot of this film:

In another brief paragraph, describe the personality of one of the characters based on the nonverbals they display throughout the film.





## **Essay: Silent Banquet Response**

*Length:* 3 pages, double-spaced

*Font:* Times New Roman

*Header:* Your name, the course name and number, and the assignment name, single-spaced

*Points:* 100

*Citation Style:* APA

Prior to writing this, you enjoyed a nice meal with your classmates in complete silence. The exercise was meant to provoke your ability to get a message across through various media, including the written word, nonverbal communication, and the emotional exchange of silent communion. In this essay, I'd like for you to reflect on your experience (feel free to write in the first person). Please cite at least two of the readings we've done in class for this unit in your analysis.

Drawing on our class discussions, please include the following concerns in your musings, giving examples of each:

- Visual engagement
- Action and movement
- Emotional exchange
- Reasoning and argumentation (how were they performed without words?)
- The constraints of silence
- The options for creativity in silence
- Ultimately: Do you think that human communication is possible in silence? Why or why not?

## **Essay: Murder Mystery Response**

*Length:* 3 pages, double-spaced

*Font:* Times New Roman

*Header:* Your name, the course name and number, and the assignment name, single-spaced

*Points:* 100

*Citation Style:* APA

Our Murder Mystery Party was meant to be fun, and I hope you enjoyed employing your persona toward finding meaning in a chaotic situation. But underneath the fun you should be able to find undercurrents of the communication practice at work.

This essay, like the last one, is an opportunity to reflect on your experience. This time, I'd like you to pay particular attention to the constrained communication of yourself and those around you as actors as well as in the roles you played. Discuss the following:

- The specific context of the game – How did it constrain what you could say or do?
- The exigence – What was the motivation for your communication? How did it influence your behavior?
- How did your character blend content and relational levels of meaning as they interacted with the other people in the room? (Or did they?)
- How did you perform objective, symbolic, and emotional meaning?
- How did your communication help solve the puzzle?

## Speaking Assignment: Individual Presentation

*Length:* Between 5 and 6 minutes

*Value:* 100 points

For this last assignment, you're going to be getting up and giving a presentation by yourself in front of the class. And it is going to be awesome.

You have three options for the format of the presentation, each of which is detailed below. Each has its own material requirements and its own expectations, but they all have the same time limit. Choose only one style of presenting, and make sure that it's the one that embodies your communicative strengths, which hopefully this class has helped you illuminate. If you're having trouble deciding, think about various activities we've done together, consider which ones stood out to you as the most pleasurable, and then choose the format that seems the most like those activities.

The premise of our presentations is this: The President of LSU has proclaimed that houndstooth-print clothing should be banned from our campus on the grounds that it represents Alabama paraphernalia and therefore cuts down LSU school spirit. (If you are unfamiliar with the houndstooth-Bama connection, a quick Google search should illuminate things.) You (in a happy imaginary world – the kind where word problems make sense and professors feel omniscient) have been granted an audience with the President, and you must communicate to him EITHER your APPROVAL or DISAPPROVAL of this measure. Now is not the time to sit on the fence. Take a side.

During your 5 – 6 minutes in front of the President, you may do one of the following: 1) A persuasive speech for or against his anti-houndstooth initiative, 2) A performance piece that expresses your opinion artistically, or 3) A PSA-style commercial elaborating the implications of the President's decision. Again, you can only choose one of these. The requirements for each option are listed below.

### 1) A Persuasive Speech

**Required materials:** your **keyword speaking outline** on either handwritten notecards or on an 8 ½ x 11" printed page; an **APA-style bibliography of at least two sources**; all submitted in a **two-pocket folder**

#### **General Description:**

The goal of this speech is to be like an octopus: think tentacles. You'll start with an idea that you're pretty sure that your audience (the President) already agrees with (the body of the octopus). This can be a public issue, or it can be a value that ties into public life. Your goal is to persuade each member of your audience to rally around that idea, and then do something to take it public (the tentacles). That is, the President can directly take action himself or he can prod others to take action. At the end of your speech, the President must have a very clear idea of what you want him to think or do. Make a statement. There is no room for back-door persuasion in this kind of speaking.

In order to do this effectively, you'll need to bolster your own credibility. People will not do what you want them to unless they think you're worth listening to. As such, you'll still be

citing at least two sources in this speech. These sources still need to be cited in-speech. Again, the speech will also have to be clearly organized so that it's easy to follow. It will need to incorporate an introduction that grabs attention. It should also include a conclusion that winds the speech down and gives it a sense of closure. In between, there should be 2 main points arranged in a logical format. These points should be cohesive, topical, and should transition effectively from one to the next.

The speech should be delivered from a keyword speaking outline. If you are unfamiliar with that format, please see me and we'll go over it. You'll be turning in a copy of your outline at the end of your speech. Pay attention to delivery as well – you should appear poised and professional throughout.

## 2) A Dramatic Interpretation

**Required Materials:** The **script** you've memorized – it shouldn't go to the front of the room with you, but I'd like a copy to grade with

For this option, you may select an already-written piece of literature that speaks to our dilemma, memorize it, and perform it. This may be an excerpt from a novel, which you should cut and arrange in a way that will make sense for the stage, a poem or series of poems, or a part of a monologue or play that was already written to be performed. There may be multiple characters involved, but be aware that if you're portraying multiple people each one must have a distinct voice and distinct mannerisms.

Having selected your piece, make sure that you've blocked specific movements for yourself that accentuate what you're saying and use the space you're provided with well. Creativity here is good, but make sure that your movements are a complement to the piece rather than a distraction.

You should also consider costuming. If the piece doesn't call for a great deal of characterization, consider subdued tones that let your face and voice become the center of attention. If you are playing a defined character (and only one defined character), feel free to adopt a costume appropriate to that persona.

The piece, in the end, should have a clear plot, with rising action, a climax, and a sense of resolution. You should begin your presentation by telling us the name of the piece, who wrote it, and one sentence about how it relates to the dilemma facing LSU in our scenario. The end should be indicated by you dropping out of character, looking at the audience, and offering them a simple "Thank You" before you take your seat.

## 3) A Public Service Announcement

**Required Materials:** A 3-4 minute long YouTube **video** to be presented in class; a copy of a **script** of the PSA including the searchable title of the video

For this option, you get to make a video. You may either use your own equipment/software or visit Studio 151 (Coates 151) to borrow cameras from them and use their editing resources. Before you go to make your video, watch a few PSAs to get a feel for their aesthetic and their sequencing. Your video should mimic their usual style as closely as possible, including tone, layout, and editing techniques.

You are free to ask colleagues or friends to perform in the video with you, but you must be in total control of the camera and editing process, and you must appear on-screen at least once. If other people contribute, be sure to include a credits reel at the conclusion of the PSA to give them explicit appreciation.

After you show your video to the class, you should spend at least one minute (as long as you have left) explaining to the President why your presentation should really hit home with him personally. Give him reasons to approve of your stance based on his own self-interest, his respect for the students, and his love of the whole LSU community. Close with one final (catchy, memorable) statement about why he should either continue his houndstooth ban or end it.

