

COM 101-W1 → SPEECH COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Dr. Brian Heslop • bheslop@coker.edu • Fall 2022 • Required Textbook (free): [click here](#)
Office hours: [click here to check my calendar](#)

A BIT ABOUT THIS COURSE

You may have certain beliefs, attitudes, or fears about this course. For some of you, the words “public speaking” make your skin crawl. Or you might see yourself as one who can confidently stand before a crowd and this course is just a “fluff” class. The truth is, regardless of your strengths and weaknesses, public speaking is something that all of us—including me—can work on, and this class is designed to help you where you’re at.

Specifically, there are three objectives we’ll work toward. *Our first objective* is to develop our rhetoric skills. The goal is to shape the attitude of our audience, and we can do this by appealing to their emotions, or by making complete logical sense, or by using our own character in a compelling way. We’ll practice these tactics in the Persuasive Speech assignment, which might include convincing the class to make life safer for sex workers or to support Colin Kaepernick’s National Anthem protest.

Our second objective is to cultivate our critical thinking skills. What does it mean to think critically? It involves raising questions about the information you hear, considering the limitations of your own knowledge, recognizing how speakers create appealing messages, and making wise judgments about the messages presented to you. You’ll develop your critical thinking skills as you work through points of disagreement in a controversial case. What makes two perspectives clash? How do people push back against arguments? You’ll research a

controversial issue for the Informative Speech. Topics may include Simone Biles’ Olympics withdrawal, voter suppression in Texas, and others.

Our third objective is to foster our delivery skills. On paper, Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech is great, but when you hear him deliver it, that’s when it soars. This class won’t train you to speak like King, but it will help you understand how to physically present messages in an appealing way and empower your “speaking moment.” Also, you might think that you were born a nervous wreck. Did you know that confidence is

actually a skill you can develop? We’ll practice different techniques to build your confidence and deal with nervousness so that you feel more comfortable speaking in front of audiences.

While this is a required general education class and someone said you “had to take it,” I hope you take advantage

of what you can gain from the class. Speech is a skill that you will not only use in all of your other college classes, but for your career. Communication skills are in [high demand](#) by employers. [Research shows](#) most employers want students to be able to demonstrate oral communication, written communication, and critical thinking skills. You might think of this class as exercising specific capacities that help you qualify for a career. Finally, this class matters because you belong to a lot of different communities—family, friends, work, school, neighborhood, church—and speech is a resource that allows you to add value to those communities.



CONTACTING ME

[Research shows](#) that students who have high levels of communication with their professors also perform academically stronger. You can talk to me about anything—even if it’s just partially related to the class. The best way to contact me is through email (bheslop@coker.edu), or you could [set up a virtual meeting through Google Meet](#). In general, I’m usually pretty quick to respond to emails, but please give me a 24-hour response window. I’m officially “off the clock” after 5pm, so you probably won’t hear back from me at night or during weekends (Saturdays or Sundays).

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

Each assignment is satisfactory/unsatisfactory (i.e. pass/fail). On each assignment, I specify what you need to do to achieve a satisfactory level. If your work meets satisfactory standards, you will receive one (1) point. If it is unsatisfactory, you will receive zero (0) points. The points do not have any value to them. Meaning, your grade will not be based on how many points you have. Rather, the points only show your work to be satisfactory/unsatisfactory. For grading, I use “[specifications grading](#)” or specs grading. The table below shows how you will be graded:

A bundle: Two sets of Steps, three Peer Assessments, one Speech, and one Evaluation

The course will include three bundles, meaning six sets of Steps, nine Peer Assessments, three Speeches, and three Evaluations. On top of the bundles, there is a final portfolio.

A	B	C	D
Complete 3 bundles at a satisfactory level	Complete 2 bundles at a satisfactory level	Complete 1 bundle at a satisfactory level	Complete 1 bundle at any level

Those who will not pass the class are those who do not complete a bundle. You can revise and resubmit up to three unsatisfactory assignments for a chance to achieve a satisfactory level. Worried about meeting satisfactory requirements? Submit any assignment at least two days before the deadline and I’ll give you feedback.

I want to point out that this is a judgment free zone. You can choose the amount of work you want to put into the course, whether that is a B, C, or D. Your own personal situation may call for it, or that’s simply the level of effort you want to invest.

A FEW OTHER COURSE POLICIES

I do not accept late work, but I’m willing to work with students who communicate with me. So if you are not able to turn in an assignment by the deadline, please explain the situation to me *before* the deadline (if possible) and we will work things out. That said, meeting deadlines is important, mainly for my own sanity. If there is an unexpected burst of submissions, I get overwhelmed. (I’m sure you know the feeling.) Regardless, any scenario—missing an assignment or otherwise—is better than plagiarism.

[Plagiarism](#) is basically when you use someone else’s work as your own. It happens if you quote or summarize someone’s ideas or writing but don’t cite that person or source. To avoid plagiarism, which is a violation of the honor code (see pages 2 and 3 of the [Student Handbook](#)), make sure you cite the source for any information you’re incorporating into your writing, whether it’s [a quotation](#), [a paraphrase](#), or [a summary](#). I will deal with

incidents of plagiarism on a case-by-case basis, but it could lead to failing the class or being expelled from the program. If you are concerned at all about something counting as plagiarism or not, please come talk to me, and we'll make sure your work is square.