



EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences

COMM 2025  
Fundamentals of Communication  
Sections: COMM 2025-910, 911, 912  
FALL 2021

Department of Communication & Performance

Mission Statement:

The Department of Communication and Performance advances the understanding of communication by focusing on the ways people communicate with each other personally and professionally, embracing the complexity of human diversity, and examining the ways in which identity and meaning are created through the stories we tell and the stories we are told.

## Syllabus

### Contact Information

**Instructor:** Thomas W. Townsend (Mr. Townsend, he/his)

**Email:** townsendtw@etsu.edu

### Instructor Availability

**Online Office Hours:** **Please email to request an online appointment.**

**If you email me using you ETSU email, I do my best to respond within 24 hours on weekdays. I cannot respond to non-ETSU emails regarding university or class business.**

### Meetings and Location

Online only. Check D2L daily for updates and assignments.

**Class Meeting Schedule: Class is on an online schedule. This course is asynchronous online. We will not meet live in person or online nor will you be required to meet live for any component of the course. You will be required to video record yourself for specific presentations.**

# Course Information

## Credit Hours

3.0

## Course Description and Purpose

This course provides a thorough foundation of communication theory, research, and skills as they relate to intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, and public communication contexts, emphasizing both verbal and nonverbal messages. This course will be an intensive study of human communication from both theoretical and performance perspectives.

## Course Goals

- Recognize communication as a science, as a process, and the foundation for all learning
- Prepare and deliver effective oral presentations
- Learn and apply research skills
- Demonstrate verbal and nonverbal communication competencies
- Display an understanding, appreciation, and application of fundamental communication principles.

## Course Objectives

### By the end of the course you should be able to:

- Understand and apply communication theories to the following areas:
  - Intrapersonal communication
  - Interpersonal communication
  - Group communication
  - Public communication
- Demonstrate verbal and nonverbal communication competencies in:
  - Listening
  - Message construction
  - Message presentation
- Assess different communication events/situations and identify communication behaviors appropriate to each
- Display an understanding, appreciation, and application of fundamental oral communication principles.
- Make responsible communication choices that are mindful of human diversity (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
- Exhibit an acceptable level of competence as a communicator.
- Demonstrate research competency to develop oral presentations.
- Prepare and deliver effective oral presentations
  - Per PAF on Organization, Body, and Language & Delivery

# Course Requirements

## Textbooks and Readings

**Required Text:** *Communication in the Real World*, (<https://open.lib.umn.edu/communication/>)  
Digital textbook and all required readings will be provided on D2L.

**Required Supplement:** registering and using Packback online platform (discussed below and on D2L)

**Required Materials:** (Suggested: notebook (for taking notes), highlighters, pens.

## Technical Requirements

- This is a HYBRID course which means some communication will be completed in a virtual environment and some will be live. We will have some virtual meetings at your class time which you are required to be online with the instructor, cameras on, somewhat dressed, and participating. **You will need reliable access to a computer, WIFI, and a webcam.** A smartphone, webcam, or built-in laptop camera will be sufficient for this requirement. ETSU should help you access these materials if you do not already have them.
- As part of this class is offered online, you will be expected to have a working knowledge of Desire2Learn (D2L) and your ETSU email. I will post a video on how to work D2L. The University Advisement Center (UAC) should also be available to assist you with the technological components of this course.
- ALL online communications with your classmates or your instructor must be conducted through these venues. Do not email your instructor or classmates from a personal email unless a technological malfunction necessitates that action (ETSU's email server will often mark outside emails as spam so I may not receive your message).
- Your instructor will contact you via D2L and your ETSU email account. You will be notified of routine updates about the course on D2L newsfeed for this class.. **You will be notified of significant changes to the syllabus, course schedule, assignments, or course content via an email and a D2L homepage News post. check email and D2L regularly.**
- The start of the first of the semester is to be a meeting in the assigned classrooms starting in October. Those dates and times will be posted on D2L. This is subject to change per ETSU policy and the state of our health in the pandemic.
- When we are live in class, please wear a mask or other appropriate Face Covering to class. Wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth communicates the care and respect you have for yourself, the care and respect you have for those you live with, and the care and respect you have for other members of this classroom community. The best evidence we have, from public health professionals, is that wearing masks is one of the best ways to protect against the spread of COVID-19 and other airborne illnesses. Students with medical

conditions that inhibit their ability to wear masks should register through disability services by contact Disability Services by telephone at 423-439-8346 or by email at [littleme@etsu.edu](mailto:littleme@etsu.edu) to request an accommodation. A link to the policy may be found [here](#).

## Course Policies and Expectations

### Classroom and Communication Policies

#### Online Communication Rules

1. When YOU Email your INSTRUCTOR:
  - a. Always use your ETSU email address or the D2L email function.
  - b. Always include a subject line about the topic which you are emailing about.
  - c. Always include in the subject line the section number of your course (the number after the dash in the course number, for example COMM 2025- 922).
  - d. Always include a proper greeting and use proper grammar when composing an email.
  - e. Remember that without facial expressions some comments may be taken the wrong way. Be careful in wording your emails.
  - f. Use standard fonts.
  - g. Respect the privacy of other class members.
  
2. When Posting in Discussion groups:
  - a. Review the discussion threads thoroughly before entering the discussion.
  - b. Try to maintain threads by using the "Reply" button rather than starting a new topic.
  - c. Do not make insulting or inflammatory statements to other members of the discussion group. Be respectful of others' ideas.
  - d. Be patient and read the comments of other group members thoroughly before entering your remarks.
  - e. Be cooperative with group leaders in completing assigned tasks.
  - f. Be positive and constructive in group discussions.
  - g. Respond in a thoughtful and timely manner.

#### Attendance and Participation

Attendance in this class is important. You are expected to check D2L regularly and complete your assignments on-time. You are also expected to attend our virtual class meetings to further your learning and communication/connection with me and your classmates. If you have any serious situations happening that will interfere with your attendance this semester, let me know in advance.

If you miss more than three classes, we will set up an appointment to discuss your course progress to help ensure your success in the class.

Attendance in this course is determined by your presence in the required Zoom meetings, participation discussion boards, and the timely submission of weekly assignments. You

must attend class to be reported as attending to the university. If you are reported as not attending class, your financial aid can be severely affected.

I try to be understanding during these unusual and difficult times. Be honest with what you are dealing with and forthcoming about the reasons you are late or absent and we will deal with those with compassion and understanding.

### **Tardy Policy:**

If you are 10 minutes late to class or to a Zoom meeting you are tardy. If you are tardy, you must email or talk to the instructor by the end of the Zoom meeting or class. Together, we will deal with each tardy on a case-by-case basis at the instructor's discretion. Three unexcused Tardies is equal to one unexcused absence.

### **Meeting Day Absence Policy:**

To determine whether an absence is excused or unexcused, the student must email or talk to the instructor as soon as possible whether prior to or as soon after the absence as possible. If an absence is excused (other than for university related absences) is at the discretion of the instructor. Three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by one letter grade.

### **Zoom Meeting Policy:**

Being present on Zoom meetings is mandatory. Please contact me if you are having issues finding an internet signal, you are hesitant about sharing where you be live online, or other mitigating circumstances. Zoom cameras need to be on. You need to set up Zoom account to have your picture, your name, and your pronouns. I will ask you specifically to do so for an assignment grade. Your success in the course depends on you being live online with the class.

In another vein, class time is my time to work with you on the concepts. You will be talking and will be in small groups with your fellow students. Be ready to talk, avoid careless behavior, and make sure the camera is showing us what you want us to see (not other people in the room, you in bed, etc.)

### **Departmental Presentation Day Policy**

You are expected to be present on Presentation Days. The absence policy for those days is as follows:

- Foreseeable absences should be arranged with me in advance. "Foreseeable" includes university-approved absences (athletic obligations), doctor's appointments, or court dates. These absences must come with proper documentation (e.g. schedule of classes to be missed signed by pertinent athletic director) and must be approved by me before the missed class.
- In all cases, contacting your instructor in advance of the absence is preferred. That said, you will only be allowed to make-up a missed presentation if the absence was unforeseeable,

unpreventable, urgent in nature that necessitated missing class. You must document the event with the instructor within {24} hours of the missed class.

This includes virtual attendance. You will be assigned a day to attend a Zoom meeting and perform your speech. If you can't attend that meeting due to the above unforeseen circumstances, you will need to follow the above policy.

## Submission Guidelines

1. You **MUST** have reliable access to the Internet.
2. You **MUST** have access to a video recording device (laptop webcam, video recorder, smartphone, etc.). **You will submit speeches as directed in each assignment details.**
3. **Submit all documents in a .doc or .docx format** WITH YOUR LAST NAME then FIRST NAMEN and assignment as the file name. **Example: SmithJacobDraftInformativeOutline.docx.**
  - a. In other words, please submit work in a format a Windows computer can use (the document files created in the Pages on Mac and iOS devices are not compatible with D2L, so please change the format of your work to .doc or .dox when you save it).If you submit in an non-Microsoft Office format (formats other than Word or PowerPoint, etc.,) you will receive an automatic 0 on the assignment until you resubmit the assignment in the correct format.
  - b. Microsoft Office suite for both PC and Mac is available from ETSU as part of your student fees. Contact IT services for instructions on downloading the programs to your computer.

## Assignment Descriptions

### I. Discussion Boards on Packback (25pts)

Participation is a requirement for this course, and the Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask open-ended questions to build on top of what we are covering in class and relate topics to real-world applications.

Packback Requirements:

Your participation on Packback will count toward 5% of your overall course grade.

There will be a Weekly Friday at 11:59PM EST deadline for submissions. In order to receive full credit, you should submit the following per each deadline period:

- 1 open-ended Question every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50, worth 4pts of each assignment grade
- 2 Responses every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50, worth 6pts of each assignment grade
- Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum curiosity score.

### How to Register on Packback:

An email invitation will be sent to you from [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co) prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam), you may register by following the instructions below:

1. Create an account by navigating to <https://questions.packback.co> and clicking "Sign up for an Account"

Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can log in with your credentials.

2. Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Looking to join a community you don't see here?" section in Packback at the bottom of the homepage.

Community Lookup Key: **0b9a22dc-623c-4514-a8a4-d39293b963ff**

3. Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

Packback may require a paid subscription. Refer to [www.packback.co/product/pricing](http://www.packback.co/product/pricing) for more information.

### How to Get Help from the Packback Team:

If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at [help.packback.co](http://help.packback.co). If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co).

For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: [vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions](https://vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions)

## II. Informative Speech with Outline & Critique (125 pts)

### *Informative Speech [75pts]*

This is a 3 to 5-minute informative speech about your future career, major, minor, or professional area of interest. You will design an **Informative** speech where you will educate your audience about your topic.

1. Performance Assessment Form on D2L
2. Full sentence outline and presentation are due on the same day that you give your speech.
3. **Bibliography** of at least 3 sources is to be included along with your outline
4. Speeches without credible sources may receive an automatic failing grade.

### *Full Sentence Outline [15pts]*

- a. Introduction
- b. Conclusion/Summary

- c. Full sentences
- d. Connectives/transitions
- e. Sources cited **with Author, Title, and Year for EACH source**
- f. References

*Presentation Outline (10 pts)*

- g. Use the presentation outline template on D2L to create speaking notes

*Peer Critiques & Self Reflection [25pts]*

1. **Peer Critique-** Locate the Presentation Assessment Form (PAF) on D2L to evaluate 1 speaker of your choice. Write in Full Sentences.
2. **Self-Reflection-** Complete the Informative Speech Self-Reflection under Assessments on D2L. This will open after Informative Speeches have been submitted.

### III. Small Group Unit (50pts)

The purpose of this unit is to allow you to investigate the workings of small groups through both study of principles and practice. **Equal participation is required. "Social Loafing" or failure to participate adequately will result in significant reduction to your grade or an automatic failing score in this project.**

- a. Group Analysis [40pts]  
You will work with a small group of classmates to create a virtual presentation. Topics and details will be posted on D2L when groups are assigned.
- b. Group Project Reflection [10pts]  
Once the group projects have been submitted, each group member will complete the Group Project Reflection describing how your group worked together.

### IV. Persuasive Speech with Outline (125pts)

*Persuasive Presentation [75pts]*

This is a 4 to 6-minute persuasive presentation. You will identify at least ONE theme from the reading you'd like to address in a **Persuasive** presentation. You can address racism, weaknesses/strengths of the justice system, civil rights reform, or other topic. **The instructor must approve your topic before you begin working on your presentation.** Assignment details will be available on D2L.

1. Performance Assessment Form is on D2L
2. Full sentence outline and Presentation outline are due on the same day that you give your speech.
3. Bibliography of at least 5 individual sources is to be included along with your outline.
4. Speeches without credible sources may receive an automatic failing grade.



### *Skeleton Outline [25pts]*

The skeleton outline template is available on D2L. To receive full credit, students must use the Motivated Sequence format and include/identify the following elements:

1. Introduction
2. Conclusion/Summary
3. Connectives/transitions
4. Sources cited **with Author, Title, and Year for EACH source**
5. References

### *Peer Critique & Self-Reflection [25pts]-*

**Peer Critique- Peer Critique-** Locate the Presentation Assessment Form (PAF) on D2L to evaluate 1 speaker of your choice. Write in Full Sentences.

**Self-Reflection-** Complete the Informative Speech Self-Reflection under Assessments on D2L. This will open after Informative Speeches have been submitted.

## **V. Knowledge Assessments (100pts)**

There will be four online exams (EXAM I, EXAM II, EXAM III, AND EXAM IV).

## **VI. Assignments (75pts)**

- a. There will be several small weekly assignments throughout the course of this semester. The assignments will be used to teach content and to evaluate comprehension.
- b. **These assignments cannot be made up.** They are due by the dates on the syllabus and must be completed fully to be considered for credit.
- c. These assignments may not seem to be worth many points apiece, but **each assignment is designed to target a specific skill that you must have in order to complete a major assignment such as a presentation or an exam.** Take these seriously.
- d. These assignments build Reading skills, Critical Thinking skills, and allow you to test your abilities for college level work. These are used to identify any problem areas and to provide practice for major assignments.

## **Late and Missing Submission Policy**

The reality is that life is complicated, and things happen. Ideally, you should be as prepared as possible and submit your work on time. However, computers have glitches, people get sick, childcare falls through, etc. I get it...I've been there.

So, the late work policy is simple. If you are turning something in late, email me and let me know. You have 3 days from the due date to submit the assignment. *No questions asked, no points deducted.* Submissions after this 3-day period will only be accepted at my discretion. For example, I won't accept an outline that you are submitting two months late because you forgot to turn it in. However, I will consider providing more of an extension on an assignment if an urgent medical matter is happening and you communicate with me about it the week the assignment is due.

Keep in mind, however, the sooner you turn in an assignment, the better. For example, if you turn in a rough draft outline late, we will already be moving onto presenting speeches. That won't be enough time for me to give you adequate feedback and you to make edits for your presentation. So, it is in your best interest to submit your work on time.

## Testing Policy

Tests will be offered in the Evaluation > Assessments tab in D2L. Please contact your instructor if you have any difficulty finding your exams. We will go over study habits and test-taking skills in class.

## Late and Missing Submission Policy

1. **Your work is due on time regardless of circumstances.** The instructor's discretion will be used in determining if the work will be accepted.
2. **Technological malfunctions will rarely count as extenuating circumstances due to the abundance of time given to submit any assignment.** If you choose to wait until the last minute to submit your work, and your technology malfunctions, that will not serve as an excuse for a time extension. However, if you are in contact with the instructor well **before** the deadline in question, there will be more flexibility in working with you.

## GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If you have concerns about this course or the instructor, you should take the following steps.

### 1. Discuss the matter *first* with the course instructor.

Talk with your course instructor about your concern. If your concern is unsatisfactorily addressed with your instructor, you can then take your concern to Step 2 below.

### 2. Discuss the matter with the Department Chair.

After you have attempted to work with your instructor on the matter, if a satisfactory resolution is not found, you can then contact Dr. Amber Kinser, Chair of the Department of Communication and Performance [kinsera@etsu.edu](mailto:kinsera@etsu.edu). Be prepared to discuss what steps you have taken with the instructor. Except in confidential matters, the Chair will confer with the faculty member and review the course policies as stated in the syllabus to determine an appropriate response. If your concern is unsatisfactorily addressed with the Department Chair, you may then take your concern to next step, which the chair can identify for you.

I don't anticipate anyone needing to use this policy, especially if all parties strive to be professional and respectful. My hope is that each student will discuss grievances directly with me. I am accessible during office hours and via email ([townsendtw@etsu.edu](mailto:townsendtw@etsu.edu)).

## Grading Policy

Assignment	Percentage	Points
Discussion Boards through PackBack (25pts)	5%	25
Small Group Presentation & Reflection (50pts)	10%	50
Informative Public Speaking (125pts/total)		
Speech	15%	75
Outline	5%	25
Peer-Critique	5%	25
Persuasive Public Speaking (125pts/total)		
Speech	15%	75
Outline	5%	25
Peer-Critique	5%	25
Knowledge Assessments (125pts/total)		
Exam I	5%	25
Exam II	5%	25
Exam III	5%	25
Exam IV	5%	25
Assignments (75pts/total)	15%	75

### Grading Scale

A 93-100	A- 90-92	
B+ 88-89	B 83-87	B- 80-82
C+ 78-79	C 73-77	C- 70-72
D+ 68-69	D 60-67	F 59 and below

### Points Achieved Grading Scale

A 465 or above	A- 450-464	
B+ 440-449	B 415-439	B- 400-414
C+ 390-399	C 365-389	C- 350-364
D+ 340-349	D 300-339	F 299 and below

## Student Services and Technical Resources

### Student Services

The [ETSU Services webpage](#) includes a comprehensive list of services available to all ETSU students.

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

It is the policy of ETSU to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law and the University's commitment to equal educational access. Any student with a disability who needs accommodations, for example arrangement for examinations or seating placement, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Faculty accommodation forms are provided to students through Disability Services in the D.P. Culp Center, Room 326, telephone 423-439-8346.

[Visit the Disability Services webpage for more information.](#)

## Technical Resources

### Help Desk

The Information Technology Services (ITS) Help Desk is the best resource for most technical problems. Find answers to common questions on the [Help Desk website](#), call, email, or stop in to see them on the first floor of the Sherrod Library. Phone: 423-439-4648 Email: [itshelp@etsu.edu](mailto:itshelp@etsu.edu)

### **Desire2Learn (D2L) Online Help**

Many answers to D2L related questions can be found on the [D2L Help Student Home](#). If you are still having trouble finding what you need, contact the Help Desk.

### **Microsoft Office Software**

Microsoft Office productivity applications, including Word, PowerPoint, Excel, OneNote, and more, are available free for students through the University's Office 365 campus agreement. For instructions on how to obtain the software, see the [Office 365 page of the ITS Help Desk website](#).

### **Turnitin Plagiarism Detection**

Turnitin is a plagiarism detection service available to students and faculty at ETSU. This tool compares student written work against a comprehensive database of other work as well as various internet sources. Faculty may employ this service for some or all written assignments, in order to help students learn to cite sources accurately and to ensure academic integrity. Learn more on the [Turnitin home page](#).

### **ETSU Technical Resources**

Many other technical resources can be found on the [Online Help webpage](#).

## University Information

### Syllabus Attachment

The [ETSU syllabus attachment](#) includes important material such as permits and overrides, advisement, hours, dates and other ETSU information.

### ETSU Catalogs

[Current Undergraduate Catalog](#)

[Current Graduate Catalog](#)