

WAYLAND BAPTIST UNIVERSITY
PLAINVIEW CAMPUS
SCHOOL OF CREATIVE ARTS

Wayland Mission Statement: Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging, learning-focused, and distinctively Christian environment for professional success, and service to God and humankind.

Course Title and Number: Speech Communication (COMS 1301)

Term: Fall 1st 8WKS 2025 VC

Name of Instructor: Yahui Zhang, Ph.D.

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Office Hours, Building, and Location:

Hours: Virtual

Office: Virtual

Class Meeting Time and Location:

Blackboard

Catalog Description: Survey of basic processes, theories, and skills focused on developing competence in various levels of human interaction. Emphasis on research, organization, presentation, and evaluation of oral messages and presentations.

Prerequisites: None

Required Textbook and Resource Materials:

Adler, R. B., Rodman, G., & du Pre, A (2024). *Understanding human communication* (15th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

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This course participates in WBU's Automatic eBook program. A digital copy of your textbook is provided for in Blackboard, and the cost of your textbook is charged to your student account.

Course Outcome Competencies:

1. Synthesize theories, principles of communication, and research into the successful preparation and delivery of presentations.
2. Demonstrate understanding of the self-concept, perception, and culture in communication on various levels in a variety of contexts.
3. Develop and apply effective verbal and nonverbal communication in interpersonal conversations, in group interactions and discussions, and in making formal speeches.
4. Understand and practice good listening.
5. Use effective interviewing skills and techniques.
6. Manifest understanding of and ability to apply persuasion theory and principles.
7. Understand and apply ethical communication principles.
8. Use research based principles to cope with communication apprehension.
9. Analyze and apply group communication theories and skills.
10. Use effective systematic problem solving skills and procedures.
11. Demonstrate effective selection and use of technology.
12. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of presentations.
13. Demonstrate well-designed and well-executed writing.

Attendance Requirements: Class attendance is mandatory. Three unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade. Any student who misses 25% or more of the regularly scheduled class meetings will receive a grade of 'F' in the course.

An excused absence includes illness, family emergency or funeral (call or email the professor to let her know what is happening), attendance at an approved WBU event such as athletic team competition or academic conference (bring the notice from the appropriate sponsor), or unavoidable company travel for full-time employees. No absence will be excused without the professor's approval.

Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Wayland Baptist University observes a zero tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty. Per university policy as described in the academic catalog, all cases of academic dishonesty will be reported and second offenses will result in suspension from the university.

Generative AI tools usage is encouraged and may be assigned in coursework.

- Use of generative AI tools for assignments in brainstorming, content understanding, or revision to work is perfectly acceptable if cited and referenced properly in any submitted work for the course.

- Use of generative AI is encouraged as long as students understand the use of generative AI in the course is to be an assistance tool and not the generator of assignments and submitted work. Ultimately, all submitted work must still reflect student's own work, understanding, and analysis.
- Any use of generative AI tools outside of the approved instructor parameters will be considered a form of plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Disability Statement: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of Wayland Baptist University that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university. The Disability Services Coordinator and Academic Coach serves as the coordinator of students with disabilities and must be contacted concerning accommodation requests [office (806) 291-1057]. Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodations.

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:

1. **Quizzes and Final exam** (20%): There will be 8-10 quizzes and the final exam. Quizzes and the final will cover materials in lectures, class discussions, and the textbook. A Study Guide for final will be provided in week 7.
2. **Speeches** (45%)
(Note: **Encyclopedias and dictionaries do not count as sources.**)

Self-Intro Speech (5% – 10 points): This is a practice speech that will help us build an online learning community. Please make you memorable by telling us something unique about yourself, for example, your passion, dreams, failures, values, etc. Your speech should be between 2-3 minutes long.

Informative Speech (15% – 40 points: 30 points for presentation and 10 for outline): In this presentation you will inform the class about an object, procedure, person, event, or idea. Your topic should interest both you and your audience. Conduct research on that topic and develop a 5-minute speech on that particular subject matter. **Points will be deducted if it is not between 4:30-5:30 minutes long.** You are to cite a minimum of 3 credible sources such as journal articles or books and 2 should be within the last four years. The delivery of the speech should be extemporaneous. You will also turn in your outline with a reference page following either APA or MLA style.

Persuasive Speech (15% – 40 points: 30 points for presentation and 10 for outline): This presentation will be delivered extemporaneously and be 5-7 minutes long. Please select a controversial topic of local, state, national, or international significance. You must

attempt to persuade your audience on a proposition of fact, policy, or value. Research will help you build speaker credibility and develop your points. Therefore, you are expected to use a minimum of 4 sources for this speech. you will also turn in your outline with a reference page.

Practice Sessions (10%): For each speech assignment, you are required to practice in PitchVantage. The cliché “practice makes perfect” still holds true. You will earn 10 points if you spend 40 minutes with at least 5 practice sessions; 9 points for 30 minutes with 4 practice sessions; 8 points for 20 minutes with 3 practice sessions; 7 points for 15 minutes with 2 practice sessions; 6 points for 10 minutes with 1 practice session; 0 point without practice.

All presentations will be recorded and turned in PitchVantage.

PitchVantage is an oral communication simulator (with a simulated environment and audience) that records video and audio of your practice sessions so that you can watch and hear yourself present. The cloud-based software also automatically analyzes the tone of your voice, your pauses, your pace, and several other elements, provides both real-time and instant follow-up feedback to help you identify weak points in your delivery and content, and makes suggestions on how you can improve them.

How to register: look for a registration link in Blackboard under course Week 1.

The best way to use this tool is to practice, pay close attention to the feedback, review your videos, and apply the feedback in your next practice. To hone your oral communication skills, you must rehearse anyway; you might as well do so using a tool that gives you feedback about how to improve. This interactive approach has shown to more rapidly and dramatically improve your skills than practicing without feedback.

If you run into any issues, please check the [support website](#) for solutions or reach out directly to PitchVantage at support@pitchvantage.com.

How to correctly understand PitchVantage AI scores?

Most students in PitchVantage start in the 40s and 50s, then put in efforts to work their way up. Consistently hitting 90+ for longer presentations is highly challenging simply because oral communication is a form of science as well as performance art, and your performance is not as consistent as you thought it is.

You have your own journey to improve and this is what matters. With considerable effort, most students can get to 70 which is considered to be above average. So, in PitchVantage, 90 does not translate into an A in class, 80 does not translate into a B, etc. You should focus on improving from, say, 60 to 70. Don't stress out on getting a 69 V.S. a

70. As long as you are serious about practicing and improving, PitchVantage will give you useful feedback to hone your oral communication skills; it's NOT meant to grade you.

Advice: Do not dwell on PitchVantage scores, instead really focus on its feedback and reasoning to seek personal improvements. The AI score is simply there to let you know where you stand now and what to aim for in your next practice. The feedback breakdown is the gold mine that tells you what each element means, WHY you performed well (or not), what it measures/the reasoning behind, and one or two things you can do differently to make a change in the next practice. Follow this approach, and you will do great.

3. **Self-evaluation** (5%): You will need to answer two questions in Week 7 to reflect on your weaknesses and strengths as a public speaker and how the principles and/or theories we cover in this course have helped you become a more effective public speaker

FORMAT OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: All work must be typed. Outlines should follow APA style, have one-inch margins, and use a standard 12-point font (Times New Roman, Calibri, or Ariel). Please proofread your work carefully for spelling or grammatical errors. You will lose points for excessive grammatical or spelling errors. Please turn in your outlines in the designated weekly folders. ***DO NOT email your outlines to the instructor or attach them on Discussion Board.***

4. **Blackboard Discussion** (20%): Besides the presentations and exams described above, there is one Discussion Board assignment for each week of this semester. Each DB assignment is worth 10 points (8 for your post and 2 for your response to at least two fellow classmates post).

All discussions and activities should be completed by 9:00 am ***Central time the following Monday*** except Week 8.

Your answer to each question should be at least 50-60 words long and in complete sentences following the convention of good writing (4 point); and demonstrate level-two or level-three thinking (4) – you have to show your competency in applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. You will earn 5 (acceptable), 6 (proficient), 7 (advanced), or 8 (superior) depending on the quality of your writing and thinking.

5. **Small Groups** (10%): Throughout the semester, you are randomly assigned to 4 groups (participation in each group assignment is worth 10 points). Small groups make it possible to get to know your classmates on a personal level. For **Week 1, Self-Intro Video Small Group**, your job is to post your self-intro video and comment on at least 2

two classmates' videos to get to know them. For **Week 4, Informative Speech Small Group**, you will post your informative speech video and you are also required to comment on two classmates' videos to help one another to become better public speakers. Likewise, for **Week 6, Persuasive Speech Small Group**, you will post your persuasive speech video and comment on two classmates' videos. For **Week 7 Debate Critique**, your group will critique the first round of a debate from [Open to Debate: America's Leading Platform for Debate](#) to get ready for the sample speech analysis section on the final exam.

6. **Missed assignments and late work**

Makeup opportunities for assignments/speeches are only offered in the case of ***excused absences with legitimate extenuating circumstances***. Makeup assignments must take place or be handled within **1 week** of the original presentation date or due date, or you will receive **0 points** for that assignment. ***When you miss class for an unexcused absence, no makeups are offered.***

Students shall have protection through orderly procedures against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to realistic academic standards, just evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course by using the student grade appeal process described in the Academic Catalog. Appeals may not be made for advanced placement examinations or course bypass examinations. Appeals are limited to the final course grade, which may be upheld, raised, or lowered at any stage of the appeal process. Any recommendation to lower a course grade must be submitted through the vice president of academic affairs to the Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee for review and approval. The Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee may instruct that the course grade be upheld, raised, or lowered to a more proper evaluation.

Tentative Schedule:

Please note that this is a tentative schedule for topics that will be explored this semester. Slight changes may be made as the semester progresses.

Weeks	Topics	Assignments
1	Ch. 1 & 6	DB 1 Self-intro Speech
2	Ch. 5 & 7	DB 2
3	Ch. 12 & 13 & 14	DB 3
4	Ch. 15	DB 4 Informative Speech
5	Ch. 2 & 3 & 4	DB 5
6	Ch. 8 & 9	DB 6 Persuasive Speech
7	Ch. 10 & 11	DB 7 Self-Evaluation
8	Final exam	DB 8 & Final Exam

Additional Information:

Email: Your Wayland email address is the official line of communication between you and the university. You must make sure your email address is established, functioning and is also **monitored at least once a week** as you will receive important information about your classes, financial aid, billing, emergency situations, etc. through this email.

Blackboard: Please check your grades regularly on the Blackboard throughout the semester and report any discrepancy you find promptly to ensure accuracy of the grade book.