

Department of Communication



Student Standards and Expectations

Department of Communication

Student Expectations

Welcome to the Department of Communication. Listed in this document is what your faculty expects of you in your classes. Know that you are pursuing a degree in Communication, which encompasses a wide variety of skills. Expect to write papers, give presentations, learn new technologies, develop your argumentation skills, conduct sound and extensive research, and build skills that will prepare you to succeed in an increasingly diverse and global workplace.

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Day to Day Course Mechanics

Get to know your syllabus and reading/assignment schedule. Always have it available for reference. Your syllabus is your contract with your instructor. While your instructor may change assignment schedules from time to time, this document will have the important rules and regulations, major assignments, and schedule of readings and assignments.

It is your responsibility to know the course policies for each class in which you are enrolled. Read the syllabus carefully for policies such as late work, reporting absences, etc. Not all professors have attendance policies, and not all require you to contact them if you will be absent. But that does not mean that your professors do not notice your absence. Know the attendance policies and avoid being unpleasantly surprised when it is too late to do anything about it.

Read all materials that you are assigned. Your instructors expect you to have read all assigned material before you come to class. Because of the textbook rental system, you cannot write in your books. This means that you need to take comprehensive notes over all of your readings so you can come to class prepared and ready to contribute to the collective learning of your courses. Reading is not optional!

Departmental Citizenship

Get to class on time, and plan to stay for the entire class period. Arriving late, leaving early, and packing up early causes unnecessary disruptions.

The classroom learning environment is a co-production. When members of the class are contributing ideas during discussions, listen to their comments. Listening to classmates is just as important as listening to instructors.

Be proactive in your education. You need to ask; you will not be told everything. Especially in your upper-division courses, your professors will assume you understand what is going on in class unless you tell them otherwise. To that end, take advantage of your professors' office hours. Office hours are provided for you to have one-on-one time with your professors, and this is a valuable tool for your education.



Papers, Projects, Exams and Syllabi

Start early on everything. Take assignment deadlines seriously. Know each faculty member's policy on late work and follow it. Do not expect exceptions to be given. Learn both time management and project management skills as both will assist you in your education and in your life.

Assume quality of writing always counts. Papers take time, they take academic research, they take proofreading, and they take attention to detail. If you want or need help, see your instructor early.

Protect your academic integrity above all else. If you ever doubt that what you are considering constitutes plagiarism, or other unethical conduct, ask first! Plagiarism is serious unethical conduct and getting caught (which you will!) can result in consequences that will haunt you for the rest of your academic career and could impact your professional career.



Plagiarism is an attempt to pass off someone else's words as your own. It can be as "minor" as an unattributed quote, and as major as putting your name on someone else's paper or speech. The most common type of plagiarism we see as professors is students copying and pasting large blocks of text from the Internet or some other source. Remember that your professors are very adept at catching plagiarism and the consequences can be devastating to you. Do your own work; it's just not worth it to do otherwise.

Learn how to cite sources appropriately for the type of writing you are doing. If need be, learn how to write a bibliography or works cited page. You can find multiple guidebooks that will help you with MLA and APA citation systems. Hunter Library has a special page with some basic rules for citing your research work. A number of stylebooks are accessible. You should have a copy of the AP Stylebook for use in any type of media writing. If you have trouble with writing a research paper, see the staff in the Writing and Learning Commons in Belk 207 for help.

Writing assignments should be original works for each course. It is not acceptable to turn in a paper that was completed for another course. If you have an idea that you would like to continue to develop for another course, contact your instructor about the feasibility of an ongoing project.

Get to know the library – both the brick and mortar building, and the on-line databases.

Wikipedia and Google do not constitute academic research.

Exams will likely include information from your readings, class notes, class discussions, videos, activities, etc. Assume everything is on the exam or quiz. Learn to study productively for exams. Study groups give you an opportunity to verbalize concepts from class rather than memorizing them. **Don't assume the instructor will provide a study guide for a test.** You are responsible for taking notes. The ultimate goal is to apply the knowledge you gain in class to the larger world, not just to do well on an exam.

The first day of class your instructor will go over the syllabus for the class. The syllabus outlines the specific expectations and “rules” for the class. This includes the use of cell phones, computers and other equipment found in the department. Even though you see technology as a priority need, you need to learn that it can be very disruptive and even rude. This is true as you find yourself in more and more contact with professionals and clients.

The department has worked hard to provide you with the best equipment so you can become proficient. The rules for the use of this equipment are set to control damage and loss.

The class syllabus also may name non-acceptable behaviors, i.e., chatting in class, leaving class for a bathroom break. You are not in kindergarten. Those types of behaviors are very disruptive for the instructor and classmates. If you have a specific problem, speak to the instructor before class.

Bottom line: Your instructor will outline specific rules and technology rules for the use of cell phones, computers and equipment in the syllabus. You are expected to follow those rules. If not, there will be some sort of consequence. If you are serious about your career then learning to be professional is a major part of that learning curve.



Communication: The Big Picture

Getting involved and being active in the department are opportunities for you to make application of course concepts. There are opportunities for you to attend various department events (Advising Day, outside speakers, etc.), join service and professional organizations (such as Catamount Communications and PRSSA and the Society of Professional Journalists), and enter communication contests.

You are learning materials in your courses that build upon each other. Bring your knowledge from one class to the next. Look for, and expect to find, connections between your classes. This will enrich your educational experience immensely.

Department of Communication Standards

To promote student academic achievement, the faculty of the Department of Communication has adopted challenging standards for students in the following educational categories: academic writing, reading comprehension, and presentational skills. The ability to communicate clearly – to read, write, speak, and listen – forms the core of human culture. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills are essential tools for learning, for success in the workplace, for enriching and expanding our lives, and for responsible citizenship. In an attempt to help facilitate student enhancement of these vital tools, the faculty have agreed to hold our students to the following expectations as they relate to the skills and knowledge base for communication students at Western Carolina University. Please read them carefully.

Academic Writing Standard

In college, in the workplace, and in the community, writing is the primary basis upon which your work, your learning, and your intellect will be judged. Your writing expresses who you are as a person, makes your thinking visible, and promotes your ability to pose worthwhile questions. The following standards will be used to govern student writing throughout their academic career.



Superior Writing

Superior writing demonstrates critical thinking and exceeds the basic requirements of the assignment. Work that meets the basic requirements of an assignment is considered adequate. Do not assume that turning in acceptable work is the same thing as turning in superior work. A superior written assignment features insightful development of ideas and robust, well-reasoned analysis. Writing demonstrates a very strong understanding of concepts or the problem at hand. It features a clear argument (thesis statement when appropriate), persuasive reasoning, and good support and examples. Ideas are clearly organized and transitions help the writing flow smoothly from one idea to the next. The paper has obviously been proofread and spellchecked. There are almost no errors in grammar or spelling. All appropriate information is cited/documentated using either MLA or APA stylesheet. If the assignment is media writing AP Style is correctly used.

Adequate Writing

Adequate writing meets the basic requirements of the assignment and is considered satisfactory. Writing demonstrates understanding of concepts and the problem, but does not display novel or particularly insightful approaches. Analysis is superficial and often amounts to little more than casual regurgitation of previously stated facts and material. There is an argument (or the thesis statement makes a claim), but support, though present, may be sketchy or underdeveloped. Transitions are somewhat awkward, and limited errors in grammar or spelling are present.

Unsatisfactory Writing

Unsatisfactory writing fails to meet the basic requirements of the assignment. Significant shortcomings include one or more of the following: writing demonstrates problems in understanding concepts or the purpose of the assignment. The argument (thesis statement) is absent or does not make a clear claim, and/or renders support not well-connected to the central claim. Examples may be irrelevant, and errors in logic may be present. The writing is disjointed and may have many distracting grammar and spelling errors, and it is possible that an assignment might be deemed unsatisfactory simply based on grammar and spelling issues. Uncited information may be cause for plagiarism.

Reading Standard

Completing assigned reading is a key to academic success. Reading provides an essential foundation for classroom lectures, discussions, and activities. Attending class without your foundation will dramatically decrease your chances for success. Your professors utilize classroom time to build on the foundation you have already developed; therefore you should make sure that foundation is solid.

Minimally Acceptable Reading

Accept that you will not be able to get a grade better than a “C” in a course if you do not read the assigned reading, and occasionally engage in appropriate outside reading. Your professors have a number of tools at their disposal that encourage you to keep up with your daily reading assignments. Some of these tools include:

- ✓ Quizzes at the beginning of class that are based on various reading assignments.

- ✓ Exams that are designed so that, at a minimum, 30 percent of the questions require knowledge of the readings.

- ✓ Design of class activities that are based upon reading assignments.

- ✓ In-class writing assignments that require use of concepts from the readings.

The bottom line is that keeping up with your assigned reading is part of taking responsibility for your education.



Presentation Standards

Formal presentations given in the classroom setting should be considered professional. These presentations should incorporate the content particular to each course assignment with the skills learned in the basic public speaking course. Those skills will be important not only for your future career but they will be beneficial in all academic presentations you will be required to give as a student.

Student presentations in all courses should meet the following standards:

- ✓ Students should forward their own arguments with appropriate paraphrasing and summary of supporting material.
- ✓ Students should incorporate material from various appropriate sources, using proper verbal citations.
- ✓ Students should use evidence, reasoning and motive appeals when speaking persuasively.
- ✓ When appropriate to the assignment, students should prepare and use visual aids that promote clarity and interest.
- ✓ Students should organize their message effectively and logically.
- ✓ Language use should be appropriate to enhance understanding and effect the desired result.
- ✓ Students should be able to establish credibility by demonstrating knowledge and analysis of the assigned topic.
- ✓ Presentations should be delivered effectively and extemporaneously. This may include but is not limited to good eye contact, vocal clarity and variation, strong posture and physical delivery.
- ✓ When presenting in groups, students should integrate all group materials and group members seamlessly during the oral presentation, in written supplementary materials, and visual aids.

Course Grading Standard

Each faculty member will determine the means by which the final grade will be computed, which may include exam scores, oral presentations, written assignments, laboratory exercises, practical examinations, class participation, laboratory participation, and other means of evaluation. However, the faculty members of the Department of Communication believe that in the pursuit of fairness to our students, there should be some uniformity in grading, and we support the following guidelines.

A (Superior)

Students who receive a grade of “A” have content mastery and are able to move beyond the content. Students are able to combine content from multiple courses or concepts, critique and in some other way demonstrate critical thinking, and extend/apply course material. Students should be able to demonstrate a consistent level of high intellectual excellence.

Work is not only clear, precise, and well-reasoned, but insightful. Basic terms and distinctions are learned beyond the level of memorization, but rather at a level that implies insight into concepts and principles.

An ability to intelligently discuss material is a great indicator of student understanding. Students receiving an “A” often raise important questions and issues during class. They analyze key questions and problems clearly and precisely, recognize key questionable assumptions, clarify key concepts effectively, use language consistent with educated usage, frequently identify relevant competing points of view, and demonstrate a commitment to reason based on the premises in the subject.

Students who wish to receive an “A” should:

- ✓ Attend all classes for their entirety.
- ✓ Get help before they need it.
- ✓ Make studying and preparing for class their job.
- ✓ Spend three hours/week for every hour in class/week.
- ✓ Read assigned material prior to class.
- ✓ Complete all assigned work consistent with the course schedule.
- ✓ Reflect on feedback and utilize evaluations to improve work product.
- ✓ Take personal responsibility for their success.



B (Above Average)

Students who receive a grade of “B” typically have mastered the content for the course. Students should grasp course material and make occasional connections to other concepts and courses and demonstrate some critical thinking, and application of course material. Students should be able to demonstrate content competency and occasional intellectual strength.

Work is clear, precise, and well-reasoned, but does not have depth of insight. Basic terms and distinctions are learned at a level which implies comprehension of basic concepts and principles.

An ability to occasionally discuss material in an intellectual way is a great indicator of student understanding. Students receiving a “B” often raise questions and issues during class. They attempt to analyze questions and problems clearly and precisely, recognize some key questionable assumptions, clarify key concepts competently, typically use language consistent with educated usage, sometimes identify relevant competing points of view, and demonstrate the beginnings of a commitment to reason based on the premises in the subject.

Students who wish to receive a “B” should:

- ✓ attend all classes for their entirety.
- ✓ settle with their present level of ability.
- ✓ make studying and preparing for class their priority.
- ✓ three hours/week for every hour in class/week
- ✓ read a large portion of the assigned material prior to class.
- ✓ complete most assigned work consistent with the course schedule.
- ✓ focus on their grades rather than reflect on feedback and utilize evaluations to improve work product.
- ✓ take some personal responsibility for their success.

C (Average)

Students who receive a grade of “C” typically manage to develop a basic understanding of course material. They have not developed a mastery of content.

Work is inconsistently clear, lacks precision and reasoning. Their work does not display depth of insight or even consistent competence. Basic terms and distinctions are learned at a level which implies the beginnings of, but inconsistent comprehension of, basic concepts and principles. An ability to regurgitate the basic material is a great indicator of student understanding.

Students receiving a “C” sometimes raise questions and issues, occasionally recognize a few key questionable assumptions, clarify some concepts competently, inconsistently use language

consistent with educated usage, sometimes identify relevant competing points of view, but do not demonstrate a clear commitment to reason based on the premises in the subject.

Students who wish to receive a “C” should:

- ✓ attend most classes for their entirety, and some partially.
- ✓ settle for their present level of ability.
- ✓ make studying and preparing for class their job.
- ✓ two hours/week for every hour in class/week
- ✓ read or skim some of the assigned material prior to class.
- ✓ complete most assigned work consistent with the course schedule.
- ✓ focus mainly on their grades rather than reflect on feedback and utilize evaluations to improve work product.
- ✓ invest too much time in social activities.
- ✓ blame others for their course performance.

D (Below Average)

Students who receive a grade of “D” typically are unable to develop a basic understanding of course material. Students demonstrate a rote recall for some of the basic understanding of the course material.

Work is typically unclear, imprecise and poorly reasoned. Their work only demonstrates competence on the lowest order of knowledge performance. Basic terms and distinctions are often incorrectly used and reflect a superficial or mistaken comprehension of basic concepts and principles.

An inability to even regurgitate the basic material is a great indicator of student understanding. Students receiving a “D” rarely raise questions and issues, do not recognize their assumptions, only partially clarify concepts, rarely use language consistent with educated usage, rarely identify relevant competing points of view, and shows no understanding of the importance of a commitment to reason based on the premises in the subject.

Students who wish to receive a “D” should:

- ✓ attend classes when convenient.
- ✓ try to simply get through assignments.
- ✓ study and prepare for class immediately prior to class.
- ✓ one hour/week for every hour in class/week
- ✓ rarely read assigned material prior to class.
- ✓ complete a portion of assigned work without much consideration for the course schedule.
- ✓ only pay attention to the grade on returned assignments and ignore the feedback.
- ✓ invest too much time in social activities.
- ✓ blame others for their lack of success.

F (Unacceptable)

Students who receive a grade of “F” typically are unable to develop an understanding of course material. They have not developed an understanding of the content. Students attempt to demonstrate a rote recall for little of the basic understanding of the course material.

Work is regularly unclear, imprecise and poorly reasoned. Their academic work does not demonstrate competence. Basic terms and distinctions are regularly incorrectly used and reflect a mistaken comprehension of basic concepts and principles.

An inability to internalize or regurgitate the material is a great indicator of student understanding. Students receiving an “F” do not raise questions or issues, do not recognize their assumptions, do not clarify concepts, do not use language consistent with educated usage, confuse their point of view with truth, and show no understanding of the importance of a commitment to reason based on the premises in the subject.

Students who wish to receive an “F” should:

- ✓ attend classes only when convenient.
- ✓ try to simply get through assignments.
- ✓ study by cramming for tests.
- ✓ avoid reading assigned material prior to class.
- ✓ complete a portion of assigned work without much consideration for the course schedule.
- ✓ only pay attention to the grade on returned assignments and ignore the feedback.
- ✓ blame others for their lack of success.

Final note

As a major/minor in Communication you should expect to be challenged in countless ways. While you will find your studies challenging, the Communication faculty feel that the standards we have set forth provide a strong and clear foundation for success in our program. We strongly encourage you to retain a copy of this document and refer to it throughout your academic career. We are confident in your ability to work hard and to meet and exceed these standards.

