



EAST TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

Communication Studies Program

Department of History and Liberal Studies

COMS 1311 Section 04W
Studies in Human Communication
Fall 2025

This course syllabus/schedule are subject to change

Instructor: Lydia Lum

Office: JOUR 126

Office Hours: 2:30 – 4:30 pm, Tuesdays, 3 – 5 pm, Wednesdays, and by appointment. I will announce a drop-in Zoom hour, based on student input, in addition to my in-person office hours.

University Email: Put “Section 04W” in “subject” line of your email – or it will take me longer to answer. I teach 2 sections of COMS 1311 in Fall 2025. My email is Lydia.Lum@etamu.edu

Class Meeting Time: Online Asynchronous

"Having knowledge but lacking the power to clearly express it is no better than never having any ideas at all." -- Pericles

Communication Studies B.A./B.S.

The Communication Studies program is designed as an area of study to apply scholarly communication research for a variety of careers and personal goals in an interconnected world.

Two program goals are:

- Each graduate will be communicatively informed in every communication situation they find themselves in, such as understanding others verbally and nonverbally in professional and personal situations.
- Each graduate will effectively communicate verbally and nonverbally in each communication situation they find themselves in, such as professional and personal contexts. Furthermore, an essential part of effective communication is the ability to communicate strategically verbally and nonverbally to accomplish one's goals.

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbooks: *Both* books are required

1. Valenzano, J., Broeckelman-Post, M., and Parcell, E. (2021). *Communication Pathways* (2e). Top Hat.
Communication Pathways Bundle (ISBN: 978-1-64485-403-7)

(Electronic copy information purchased at bookstore and through Top Hat Publisher)

(Join Code: 469559)

Top Hat Support Team directly Mon – Fri at 1 (888) 663-5491 or support@tophat.com

Always give the support team your Join Code 469559 when contacting them.

2. Furlich, S. (2021). *Sex Talk: How Biological Sex Influences Gender Communication Differences Throughout Life's Stages*. Bowker.

Prof. Furlich donates to charity his book sale royalties from this class. For a list of these charities, email him at Stephen.Furlich@etamu.edu

Required Technology: myLeo D2L Brightspace, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and PDF
Each East Texas A&M University course section has a corresponding course shell in the myLeo online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements.

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

- Use your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course.
- If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu

University Course Catalogue Description

This course addresses theories and related skills for evaluating types of communication including a survey of computer mediated communication, nonverbal communication, political communication, gender communication, small group communication, as well as strategies used in informative, persuasive, and ceremonial communications. Recommended for students pursuing careers in teaching, law, the ministry, politics, event planning, corporate training, upper-management or other professions requiring communication skills.

Student Learning Outcomes: This course explores theory and principles of effective communication while providing an emphasis on skills development. Specific attention is given to the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of communication. At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Apply theory and practice in public speaking.
2. Describe the role of technology in communication.
3. Utilize various fundamentals and tools of effective communication delivery.
4. Critically analyze the content, organization, and delivery of the speeches of others.
5. Distinguish effective skills in different forms of communication.
6. Analyze, evaluate, or solve problems when given a set of circumstances, data, texts, or art.
7. Communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.
8. Understand and practice academic honesty.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of societal and/or civic issues.

Student Responsibilities and Tips to Succeed in the Course

- Check ETAMU email account at least three times a week.
- Check your grades in myLeo DL2 Brightspace,
- Submit assignments through myLeo DL2 Brightspace in Content, Assignments, Appropriate envelopes
- If you're having difficulties, **contact me**. I enjoy helping students but need *you* to keep me informed.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS

Submit assignments electronically through D2L Brightspace no later than **11:59 pm CT on Fridays**, unless otherwise specified. Same for discussion posts and responses to classmates.

- Label homework assignments with your name, course section, and assignment number. Example: Lydia Lum, Section 04W, Paper.
- All written assignments must be double-spaced. Triple-space if you're unsure.
- Submit your homework papers in the correct envelope by accessing Course Shell, Content, Assignments, Correct Envelope.
- Take exams / quizzes by going into Course Shell, Activities, then either Major Exams or Quizzes.
- If you need a homework extension for a major exam, paper, quiz, or the Statement Summary, ask for it. I issue extensions without penalties whenever possible but reserve the right to ask you for either a doctor's note or a funeral announcement.
- Missing work should be completed and submitted within 2 weeks of the original due date, except for Exam #3, which occurs at end of semester. If you expect problems, ask to take the exam early, but you're still responsible for all the material covered on the exam.
- Discussion posts and responses to classmates cannot receive extensions. If this class met in person, discussions would not occur after class adjourns, so manage your time.
- If you participate in university-sponsored activities, such as intercollegiate sports, please contact me with appropriate documentation *before* your absence. You're responsible for all missed work.
- During this semester, I may notify the class that if anyone hasn't submitted *any* homework (or a specific category of homework such as, but not limited to exams and quizzes, by a certain date, then I may deduct at least 10% of the points before grading late submissions.

Grading: The Department of Liberal Studies supports university policies of academic excellence as noted in the student handbook.

- Interpretation of grades should be considered within the university framework: A=excellent; B=good; C=average; D=below average; and F=failing.
- Final semester grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

Course Assignments/Assessments

A = 100%-90%

B = 89%-80%

C = 79%-70%

D = 69%-60%

F = 59% or Below

Note: My grading system has a 5% Quality Effort category. I award your score at semester's end. The more homework you submit, the more points you earn – usually. See below.

Assessments

- Major Exams 40%
- Discussions 25%

- Quizzes 18% -- category may include one-time tasks like the “Help Professor Lum help me” questionnaire that can help boost your total Quizzes grade.
- Paper 10%
- Statement Summary 2%
- Quality Effort 5% -- score is awarded at semester’s end, so it isn’t visible sooner.

As your instructor, I will return your Word Doc attachments with feedback for the paper covering Prof. Furlich’s ‘Sex Talk’ book, but my feedback for major exams, quizzes, and discussions will consist of grades posted.

Statement Summary (2%)

There is a letter in D2L with the title addressing a Statement for Freedom of Thought and Expression. You will write one short, double-spaced paper about the statement’s content.

- The first half of your paper should summarize the statement’s main ideas and suggestions. Underline and **bold** 3 major ideas or themes from the statement.
- The second half of your paper should explain how in the classroom, these ideas and concepts can be applied and prove useful in 3 ways. In this second half, underline and **bold** your 3 major applications or values inside the classroom.
- Outside sources are unnecessary.
- Your paper should be maximum 500 words, double-spaced.
- Use Microsoft Word. Other formats take much longer to grade. Help your cause!
- Submit your paper by accessing Activities, Assignments, then correct envelope.

Major Exams (40%)

Exam questions will come from the assigned chapters as well as any notes sent out. You must take the tests without other people’s assistance.

- Academic integrity is described in the East Texas A&M student handbook. Failure to abide by the rules outline may result in failing this class.
- Exams are timed, but you may use textbooks to help with answers.
- When preparing for exams, study how concepts relate to each other and how they differ. Come up with your own examples of these concepts.
- Exam questions are usually not straightforward definitions but often give an example and ask you which concept the example best represents. If an exam and discussion occur the same week, the discussion topic will not be part of that exam but on the next exam.
- Multiple sections of Studies in Human Communication will take similar exams, so exam answers won’t be given afterward as to which of yours were correct and incorrect. Instead, your scores are the feedback you receive regarding exam performance.

Discussion (25%)

All discussions end at 11:59 pm CT, Fridays. A list of questions for each of the almost-weekly discussions is at the end of this Syllabus, under the week-by-week calendar.

- The first student to post a comment or question for a discussion should consider addressing one of these questions.

- Each of you is required to **post 2 questions, plus respond to 2 other questions** that classmates post each week.
- Post each of your 2 questions separately. Avoid connecting them and avoid connecting them to comments. Separate posts make it easier for peers to see and answer.
- Devise *your own* questions to post. Avoid repeating and/or rewording classmates' questions or those at the bottom of this Syllabus.
- Avoid responding to questions that your peers have fully answered. Our purpose is to expand and apply the course material.

Quizzes (18%)

There are 19 quizzes. Questions for each chapter are on the left side of the course.

- Each week that has a discussion has one or more quizzes that same week.
- The purpose of quiz questions is to learn important concepts for each chapter, which help you prepare for each of the Major Exams.
- I may add to the quizzes category short, one-time tasks such as my "Help Professor Lum help me" questionnaire worth a few points at semester start.

Paper (10%) covering Prof. Furlich's book, 'Sex Talk.'

The purpose of this assignment is to analyze the role of biological sex with gender communication differences. Using Furlich's (2021) book, your goal is to describe in detail the concepts addressing how biological sex influences both what is said and perceived during communication. Prof. Furlich devotes several chapters to the role of biological sex. For your paper, be sure to:

- Address how the same intended message can be communicated differently between a male and a female. Describe specific ways and biological reasons for these differences.
- Describe biological reasons to explain why the same verbal and nonverbal communication received can be understood differently between a male and female.
- Apply what you learned from Furlich's book for better self-awareness when communicating with others. By taking into consideration biological sex influences, what specific things can *you* do to better communicate and understand others?
- Use and underline at least 7 different concepts (ideas, terms) from Prof. Furlich when addressing and applying these areas from above 3 bullet points. Some biological terms should be addressed.
- This assignment emphasizes using terminology and how to apply these ideas.
- Prof. Furlich's book chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12 will help you but you may use other chapters, too.
- Use only Microsoft Word to write your paper. PDFs and other formats take much longer to grade. Help your cause!
- Label homework with your name, course section, and assignment name. Example: Lydia Lum, Section 04W, Paper.
- Write 450 to 750 words, double-spaced. Do not exceed 750.

- Follow homework instructions. Proofread before submitting your paper. **Part of your paper's grade** is based on your following these instructions along with writing mechanics such as grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Submit your paper electronically by accessing Activities, Assignments, correct envelope.
- Prof. Furlich's 'Sex Talk' book has ample information so your paper can easily be unique from others. If your paper closely resembles another student's paper, you may receive an "F" for this entire course.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

For questions about, or difficulties with course material, email me by putting into "subject" line, "Section 04W" – or it will take me longer to answer. I teach 2 sections of COMS 1311 in Fall 2025. My email is Lydia.Lum@etamu.edu

- I check email at least once daily and will reply to yours within 24 hours, weekdays.
- I check email at least once on weekends and if I don't reply then, I will do so on the next weekday, unless it's a university holiday.
- Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Plan B can be an ETAMU campus computer lab, a backup PC at home, work, or a friend's home, your local library, local cafes, and FedEx and similar office service businesses.

Technical Support

- If you're having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, contact Brightspace Technical Support at 877-325-7778.
- Other support options can be found here: <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Student Support

- The [Academic Success Center](#) focuses on providing resources to help you achieve academic success.
- Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software used by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading Word documents for assignment submission, are required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the ETAMU bookstore to see if they have any student copies.

UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.

- If it's appropriate to say to, or in front of your grandma, then it's okay to say it to your classmates and/or to me.

- Consult the Rules of Netiquette for details about how to interact with peers in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

The Code of Student Conduct is detailed in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.etamu.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Academic Integrity

- East Texas A&M University students are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work.
- Do not submit homework for COMS 1311 that you have submitted for another course unless you receive instructor's written permission to do so.
- For details and the definition of academic dishonesty, see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

East Texas A&M University acknowledges there are legitimate uses of **Artificial Intelligence**, ChatBots, or other software that can generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the course instructor.

- Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).
- Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided, the student should assume that **the use of such software is disallowed**.
- You are fully responsible for the content of any assignment you submit, regardless of whether you used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University, Velma K. Waters Library, Rm 162, phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835. Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill -11 (Government Code 411.2031, etal.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so.

- Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M Rule 34.0602R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.
- For a list of locations, refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.
- Web URL:
<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>
- Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses.
- Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students.

- Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145.
- For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, visit <http://www.etamu.edu/counsel>

Course Schedule

This is a tentative schedule for topics that will be explored this semester.

Changes may occur as the semester unfolds.

Plan ahead, keep up with reading, and stay active in class to stay afloat.

Studies in Human Communication Fall 2025

With exception of Week 1, most assignments start Saturday and end Friday.

Most dates are Saturday of each week

Unless specified otherwise, all assignments are due Friday each week at 11:59 pm, Central Time USA

Week 1: Monday, Aug. 25: Read Syllabus, plus **DISCUSSION 1**, Read CHAPTER 1, The Basics of Communication, Political Comm.

Quiz 1: CHAPTER 1: The Basics of Communication

Begin Statement Summary short paper assignment, and for extra points in other categories, Introductions Discussion and the short "Help Professor Lum help me" questionnaire.

Week 1 homework is due at end of Week 2, but Week 2 starts Saturday, Aug. 30

Discussion 1 and Quiz 1 are due Wednesday, Sept.3.

Week 2: Saturday, Aug.30: **DISCUSSION 2**, Read CHAPTER 13: Nature of Formal Presentations

Quiz 2: CHAPTER 13: Nature of Formal Presentations

Also due Friday, Sept. 5 at 11:59 PM are "Help Professor Lum help me" questionnaire for quiz points, Introductions Discussion, plus Statement Summary short paper. You have 2 weeks for these 3 tasks.

Week 3: Sept. 6: **DISCUSSION 3**, Read CHAPTERS 14 and 2

Quiz 3: CHAPTER 14: Organizing your Presentation

Quiz 4: CHAPTER 2: Communication, Culture, and Diversity

Week 4: Sept. 13: **DISCUSSION 4: Intercultural Comm., plus Extra Notes**; Read CHAPTER 16

Quiz 5: CHAPTER 16: Informative Speaking

Week 5: Sept. 20: **Major Exam 1** covering CHAPTERS 1, 2, 13, 14, 16, Political Comm., Intercultural Comm. NO DISCUSSION this week.

Week 6: **DISCUSSION 5**, Quantitative & Qualitative Research, Read CHAPTER 5

Sept. 27

Quiz 6: CHAPTER 5: Language

	I'll open your 'Sex Talk' book assignment paper on Saturday, Sept.27, which gives you about 8 weeks to complete and submit your paper.
Week 7: Oct. 4	DISCUSSION 6 , Read CHAPTER 7: Listening, Business Comm., also CHAPTER 4: Dialogic Communication, CHAPTER 11: Mediated Relationships Quiz 7: CHAPTER 4: Dialogic Communication
Week 8: Oct. 11	DISCUSSION 7 , History, Digital Media & Online World, Speech Anxiety, Support Material Quiz 8: CHAPTER 7: Listening Quiz 9: CHAPTER 11: Mediated Relationships Quiz 10: CHAPTER 15: Delivery
Week 9: Oct. 18	Major Exam 2 covering CHAPTERS 5, 7, 11, 15, Business Comm., Digital Media & Online World, Quant. & Qual. Research, History, Speech Anxiety, Support Material NO DISCUSSION
Week 10: Oct. 25	DISCUSSION 8 , Comm. & Personal Identity, Read CHAPTER 18: Small Group Comm. Quiz 11: CHAPTER 18 Small Group Communication
Week 11: Nov. 1	DISCUSSION 9 , Leadership & Conflict, Motivation Appeals, Small Group Additional Notes; Read CHAPTERS 6, 17, 12, 19 Quiz 12: CHAPTER 6 Nonverbal Communication, Quiz 13: CHAPTER 17 Persuasive Speaking, Quiz 14: CHAPTER 12 Interpersonal Conflict Quiz 15: CHAPTER 19 Leadership
Week 12: Nov. 8	DISCUSSION 10 , the final one in this course. Read CHAPTERS 16, 18. Quiz 16: CHAPTER 8 Relationship Development Quiz 17: CHAPTER 9 Relationship Maintenance Quiz 18: CHAPTER 10 Communication in Intimate Relationships

	If you haven't read Prof. Furlich's 'Sex Talk' book, I urge you to start. Furlich (2021) CHAPTERS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12 can help you complete this week's homework. They also have main ingredients for your paper due 11:59 pm, Friday, Nov.28.
Week 13: Nov. 15	NO DISCUSSION board Interpersonal Research Methods/ Theory
Week 14: Nov. 22	Paper due Friday, 11:59 pm Central time. NO DISCUSSION board Friday, Nov. 28, occurs Thanksgiving holiday weekend. You may prefer to submit your paper sooner. Content from Prof. Furlich's book will appear on Major Exam 3.
Week 15: Nov. 29	NO DISCUSSION , Read CHAPTER 3: Perception & the Self Quiz 19: CHAPTER 3 Perception & the Self due 11:59 pm, Friday, Dec.5.
Week 16: Dec. 6	Major Exam 3 covering CHAPTERS 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 18, 19, Comm. & Personal Identity, Motivation Appeals, Small Group, Leadership/ Conflict, Furlich's 2021 book, Interpersonal, Research Methods/Theory I'll check whether online asynchronous classes like ours are allowed to submit this last exam Friday night, Dec.12, or if we must dial back to an earlier time and/or date of Finals Week, which begins Dec.6. I will notify all of you in advance.

Discussion Questions

Discussion 1

- Are there any jobs that communication is not present or required?
- What are some similarities and differences between giving a speech and having a conversation?
- What does it mean that communication takes place within a system?
- What is the political public sphere? What role does the Internet have with political comm.?
- What role do mass media messages have with political comm. in democracy?
- What role does comm. play with mass movements, such as protests?
- How effective are negative political advertisements and why?
- How is collective language used in political comm.?

Discussion 2

- Why is audience analysis important?
- How to use audience analysis?

Discussion 3

- How does a person acquire culture in their life?
- How does standpoint theory describe cultural influences on people's perceptions?
- Is uncertainty reductions theory a natural occurrence for all people, why or why not?
- How does a speaker decide which delivery style to use (manuscript, impromptu, memorized, extemporaneous)?
- What role does culture have with cultural schema theory?

Discussion 4

- How is culture defined?
- What is a global village?
- What does an informative speech end with?
- What impact does information overload have on an audience?

Week 5: Major Exam 1**Discussion 5**

- How is language arbitrary?
- What are differences and similarities of each person's 'I' and "me" described 'language allows self-reflection' section of Chapter 5?

Discussion 6

- What is the difference between selective listening and defensive listening?
- What is empathy and how does it differ from sympathy when listening?

Discussion 7

- In what ways can the Socratic method be used successfully?
- What are some advantages/ disadvantages of Protagoras' approach to argument?
- How does the media influence society through communication?
- What are some ethical concerns regarding media communication?

Week 9: Major Exam 2**Discussion 8**

- What are differences between groups and teams?
- What are some ways to prevent groupthink?
- Are groups playing an appropriate role in the workplace, too big, or too small?

- How is systems theory understood within small group communication?
- What are some positive/ negative aspects of groups?
- What are some ways to bring a team together through symbolic convergence theory?

Discussion 9

- What role does nonverbal communication play at work, home, and school?
- What are some major points to keep in mind about nonverbal communication?
- How prevalent is deception in our society and how well are people at identifying it?
- Are groups playing an appropriate role in the workplace, too big, or too small?
- What role does meta-cognition play with leadership?
- What role does critical thinking have with leadership?
- How can conflict be defined?
- How can conflict be positive?
- What are some ways to handle conflict effectively?

Discussion 10

- What are some major differences between interpersonal communication and communication in general?
- Are there always turning points in relationships?
- What are some examples of turning points?
- Most scholars who research gender comm. have the same perspective about male and female communication; does this influence perspectives about gender communication in an inaccurate way?
- What are some ways to instill more biological research into comm. research regarding gender comm.?
- Can anything be added to Monroe's motivated sequence to improve it?
- How much of an impact do motivational appeals have versus people's free will to choose or not to choose to buy something?