

**Com 015-2: Public Speaking** **Spring 2026**  
 TuTh 3:15-5:05 in Winter Hall 212

Professor: Dr. Lesa Stern  
 Student Hours: M 2:00- 3:00p. Tu 1:15-2:45. Th 1:30-2:45  
 & by appt

Office: Deane Hall 107A  
 Phone: (805) 565-6138  
 Email: Lstern@westmont.edu

Welcome to Public Speaking! First and foremost, this class is designed to be a challenging and fun experience that helps you to become more comfortable with public speaking and better at it. I hope that all of you bring a positive attitude toward learning. Have FUN. Yes, FUN! ☺ Please bring that expectation to class with you. I will.

More importantly, this class attempts to assist you in cultivating habits that characterize the good person speaking well-- a speaker both wise and eloquent. History witnesses the power of the spoken word – great orators can move armies and change the course of civilization, for better or for worse. Words empower as well as wound, edify as well as silence.

I am here to help you and get to know you. **I hold student hours so that you can:** stop by and say hello, discuss class readings you found interesting or challenging, discuss something in your life that is impacting your well-being, questions on upcoming assignments or a grade you received, etc.

**There is also the “take your professor to lunch” program** where I can get to know you better outside of the office and talk about all kinds of topics such as our favorite sports teams, making friends, how God is working in us, hobbies, church, books, podcasts, Netflix, struggles with God, etc

**Required Texts/Materials:**

- Lucas, S. E. (2015). *The art of public speaking* (12th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Articles, websites, speech links (etc) posted on Canvas, ...

Resources that you will need to access for the course: APA (7<sup>th</sup> ed) or MLA manual

**Public Speaking: Course Objectives:**

This course is an introduction to the *theory and practice* of public communication. It focuses on cultivating the character, knowledge, skills and practice vital in preparing, delivering, analyzing, and critiquing public speeches.

1. Knowledge of effective public speaking principles (theories, concepts, etc)
2. **Students will effectively communicate orally as informed by rhetorical situation, audience, genre, and purpose.**
3. Cultivating effective listening, understanding, and appreciation of others' views

**Commented [LS1]: #6**

Communication Studies' Program Learning Outcomes			
COM Program Outcomes → Course Outcomes	Employ COM theories, perspectives, & principles knowledgeably	Apply ethical & biblical principles and practices*	Create effective oral & written messages*
Knowledge of effective speaking principles	Exams/lectures/ activities	Lectures	Outlines/paper
Effective public speaking	Speeches	Speeches	Speeches
Effective listening, understanding, appreciation	Exams/lectures/ activities	Speeches and class participation	Listening to speeches and participation

\* these Communication Studies PLOs support Westmont College learning outcomes

**Course Assignments**

	<b>500 Points total</b>
Personal Narrative Speech/Crit	60
Informative Speech /Outline/Crit	90
Persuasive Speech /Outline/Crit	120
Interpretive Speech	50
Rhetorical Paper & Present	25
Homework/Impromptus	55
Exams	100

**Grading Scale**

90-100% (450-500) = A-/A/A+  
 80-89% (400-449) = B-/B/B+  
 70-79% (350-399) = C-/C/C+  
 60-69% (300-349) = D-/D/D+  
 0-59% (0 - 299) = F

## Course Policies & Norms

1. Let's talk about policies related to **professionalism and responsibilities as a student**:
  - a. Check Canvas AND SYLLABUS daily for announcement/assignments. *Set canvas notifications to "instantly" for announcements*
  - b. You are responsible for completing all work on time = 3:15pm on the due date. Coming late to class means your assignment is also late. Late assignments lose 10% per day (or one point/day minimum on assignments less than 10 points). If you have an *emergency*, contact Dr. Stern **prior to** class to receive approval to defer the due date. I do understand that "Life Happens" and at times we need some flexibility—I can consider your situation (and we can brainstorm too!!) if you talk to me before/during your issues, not after the fact as an excuse.
  - c. Students are responsible for the *professionalism* of their papers, outlines, and speeches. Use APA or MLA for all formatting, citations, references (etc). The library has a copy of these style guides or you can access them online at Owl Purdue. Include your name on all documents!
  - d. **On Speaking days wear professional attire = business casual** (as if you were going to a job interview at a professional office). Practically speaking, that means: No jeans/ shorts/ tennis shoes/ flip flops or too short dresses or crop-tops/ t-shirts, sleeveless dresses (etc)... Men should wear a button up shirt.
  - e. Attendance is required on all **speaking** days; any student who is not in attendance the entire period (as a listener of speeches) will lose 10 points! If you are absent on the day you are to present a speech, you can earn up to 50% of the speech points.
  - f. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on an exam, copying papers or summaries (or parts thereof) will receive a failing grade on the assignment or the course and be reported to Westmont administration. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools: (a) A student should NOT substitute AI-generated text for original academic work. (b) Do not use AI tools for editing or another assignment-related tasks.
2. We want to cultivate positive interpersonal habits and respectful attention to those with whom we are interacting; turn off your notifications during class and put away cell phones and laptops – please take notes via paper so that you do not get distracted.
3. *Students with Disabilities*: Students who have been diagnosed with a condition that meets the criteria of a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by ARO. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. Please email ARO@westmont.edu and see the website for more information <https://www.westmont.edu/accessibility-resources> The ARO director is Seth Miller.
4. If you want to dispute a grade, submit a written justification within one week of receiving the graded material. We will then discuss the matter and you will receive a written response from me within one week of our meeting.
5. Contacting Dr. Stern: Come to my student/office hours when you have a question that isn't a quick (one sentence) answer (Plus, I enjoy having you come in). If you have a quick question, you can email me. Please note that I will respond to email within 24 hours after you send it (Mon-Thurs). If you email after 5pm, I will not receive it until the next day. **Email me directly (not thru canvas)**.

**Grading Expectations:** C's are earned when ALL instructions are followed, errors are minimal, and you have demonstrated understanding and skill, but the work is largely descriptive, lacking in analysis/insight. Bs are earned when the work fulfills ALL the requirements, offers insights, the argument is well constructed, and speech is presented well. A's are earned when the work is outstanding, the speech is clear, the argument is well structured, the evidence is rigorously tested and presented, the thesis is compelling and worth investigating, and the delivery is exceptional. (see rubric below). ALL sources must be correctly cited in your speech to avoid plagiarism.

If your work is incomplete, offers little in the way of analysis, and does not evidence understanding of your sources or the assignment, you are working at D or F level. See: [westmont.edu/\\_offices/registrar/academic\\_policies/grades.html](http://westmont.edu/_offices/registrar/academic_policies/grades.html).

		<i>Strong/Excellent</i>	<i>Adequate/Acceptable</i>	<i>Inadequate</i>
<b>Knowledge</b>	<b><i>Thesis</i></b>	Highly adapted to audience	Appropriate for audience	Inappropriate to audience
	<b><i>Reasons</i></b>	Well-tied to claim	Relevant	Unclear or Poor
	<b><i>Evidence</i></b>	Persuasive	Basic/Sufficient	Inadequate
<b>Organization</b>	<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	Compelling	Clear	Abrupt uninteresting
	<b><i>Structure</i></b>	Well Ordered	Discernible	Disconnected
	<b><i>Transitions</i></b>	Flowing	Present	Missing or awkward
	<b><i>Conclusion</i></b>	Compelling	Adequate	None or Inadequate
<b>Presentation</b>	<b><i>Poise</i></b>	Imperturbable	Composed	Anxious
	<b><i>Fluency</i></b>	Consistently Fluent No/few fillers	Fluent at times, disjointed at others Some fillers	Inarticulate/ Disjointed; many fillers
	<b><i>Word Choice</i></b>	Striking/varied	Clear but ordinary	Dull or vague
	<b><i>Creative Engagement</i></b>	Innovative	Routine	Minimal
	<b><i>Eye Contact</i></b>	Direct EC to all audience	Makes EC some of time	Sporadic or no EC
	<b><i>Gestures</i></b>	Varied & effective	Adequate	Wild, Stiff, or None
	<b><i>Appearance</i></b>	Professional	Appropriate	Unprofessional
	<b><i>Vocal Variety &amp; Energy</i></b>	Dynamic	Modulated	Disengaged
	<b><i>Visual Aid</i></b>	Enhancing	Supportive	Distracting

## Course Assignments

## 1. Personal Narrative Speech (5 minutes in length)

This speaking assignment requires telling the class a value you live by (or want to live by). Tell the class about the principle you value most. Explain why you think this value is important, how you have tried to live your life according to this principle, and offer a defense of this value against potential criticism. Incorporate ONE credible sources. Take this speech as an opportunity to get to know yourself and your audience, reduce speech anxiety, and practice good delivery techniques and listen well to others.

**Speech Prep:** complete your argument sheet. Fill out a 4x6 notecard to bring up with you during the speech.

**Speech Critiques:** You have TWO days after your speaking day to complete the critique forms (yours and assigned student)

Commented [LS2]: #1 #2 #3 #5

Commented [LS3]: Part of all speech grades are being a good/active listener. (#4)

Commented [LS4]: #5

## 2. Interpretive Speech (4 minutes in length) &amp; Rhetorical Context Paper

The interpretive speech requires you to identify a great speech then memorize and deliver it to the audience. *Choose a speech that has a message that you believe in, admire, or that could even make a difference today.* You will have to “justify” your choice of speech—as to why it is significant and why you want to deliver/embodiment it. First person to claim it on Canvas gets it. Delivery wise, you are to make this speech “your own;” that is, deliver it in a way that suits the message and *your personality* (you do not mimic the original speaker). If you choose a speech that is longer than 4 minutes, you will be allowed to skip *sections* that do not change the message/intent of the speaker.

\*\*The speech must be from a REAL person who delivered it to an audience; NOT from a movie or book (or equivalent)

Commented [LS5]: #3

**Rhetorical Context paper** (2-3 typed, double spaced pages). First, you will do background research on the speech you have selected—the speaker, audience, historical, cultural, and social context of the speech. **Ultimately, this paper identifies and supports the main controlling elements of the speech (your thesis).** See the [rhetorical context paper guidelines](#) posted on canvas for requirements. Make sure to cite every piece of information in MLA or APA. You will share highlights from your rhetorical paper with the class.

## 3. Informative Speech/Outline/critique (5 minutes in length)

Pick a topic that you are truly passionate about; then then learn something more about it. Ultimately, share something with us that you love; but modify your speech goals/content to meet the “audience analysis” requirements. Students must consult and receive approval of their topic from Dr. Stern (ONE student can claim a specific topic, so the first person to claim it on the correct discussion link will get it).

A **full sentence, typed preparation outline** must be submitted [on paper](#) to Dr. Stern on your speaking day (so she can follow along with it during the speeches). Students will be marked down 5 points (and sent to print it off) if you arrive to class without a print out on your speaking day. Print it out the NIGHT BEFORE or early in the morning to avoid printer issues (they always happen at the worst time, don't they?)

**Speech Prep (Worksheets):** complete argument/research sheets, indie app with Dr. Stern, 4x6 notecard for speech

**Speech Critiques:** You have TWO days after your speaking day to complete the critique forms for you and assigned student

Commented [LS6]: #1 #2 #3 #4

Commented [LS7]: #5

Commented [LS8]: #1 #2 #3 #4

## 4. Persuasive Speech /Outline (6 minutes in length)

**Focus: Persuading students to change their behavior on an issue of regional, state, country, or international significance.** To be “cutting edge” you will conduct scholarly research for new and up-to-date information on your issue to establish the problem and the solution. This assignment requires you **persuade students to change their behavior in meaningful/impactful ways** that will help deal with the problem you established. You will be assessed on various elements of public speaking such as thorough research, making effective claims, avoiding fallacies, using principles of effective language, and effective delivery (in addition to a correct preparation outline) of the speech. Use **Monroes Motivated Sequence or Problem-Solution Format**. A print out of your **full sentence, typed preparation outline** (see Lucas for exact requirements) must be submitted to Dr. Stern on your speaking day (so she can follow along during your speech). Outlines not printed at 3:15p on your speaking day will incur a 5 point deduction and you will be asked to skip the first speech and print it out!

**Speech Prep (Worksheets):** complete argumentation/research sheets and fill out your 4x6 notecard

**Speech Critique:** You have TWO days after your speaking day to review speeches & complete the critique forms (yours/1 peer)

Commented [LS9]: #5

## 5. Impromptu Speeches: small low stakes practice speeches that allow students practice specific techniques, receive feedback, develop the important skill of thinking on their feet, become more comfortable, and view public speaking as an enjoyable activity. Each week, I hope to get you up front to practice your speaking. Also create a podcast.

## 6. Homework: You will be completing critiques of your own and other students’ speeches (within one week of your speaking date), individual meetings with Dr. Stern (“Indies”) and a couple argumentation sheets that help you build out your speeches.

TENTATIVE schedule for Public Speaking **Tu/Th 3:15-5:05p***Note: additional readings or video links are posted to canvas that are not listed here*

	Topic covered	Lucas (textbook)	Other assignments due (see Canvas)
<b>Jan 13</b>	Intro to course; Importance of public speaking;	1	Introduction speeches
15	Narrative paradigm; COM model; Sticky stories; functions of COM;	2, 4	Current event speech
20	<b>MONDAY schedule</b>	R	Choose interpretive speech
22	Argumentation; audience analysis; Building out your PN speech	6	Memorize 15 seconds of interpretive speech
27	Listening well; information literacy; rhetorical paper explained	3	Continue memorizing interpretive each day!
29	Peer review outlines; practicing introductions	R	
<b>FEB 3 5</b>	<b>Personal Narrative Speeches</b>		Listening Attendance mandatory.
10	Effective research and supporting your ideas; Feedback on memorized	7, 8	
12	Present rhetorical paper; Marking your transcripts; effective delivery	13, R	Rhetorical paper (present 3-5 min)
17	<b>4 day holiday</b>		
19	Indies with Dr. Stern (in lieu of class—see sign up times)	R	
24 26	<b>Interpretive speeches</b>		Listening Attendance mandatory.
<b>Mar 3</b>	<b>Exam 1 (3:15-3:45p) :</b> Lecture 3:50-5:05 Effective outlining; aud analysis for informative	9, R	
5	Make an Arg sheet; Effective language: concrete, credible, emotional	11, 12 R,	
10	Effective introductions/conclusions; supporting your claims	10, R	
12	Visual Aids & common pitfalls	14, R	
16-20	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		
24	Individual meetings w/ Dr. Stern (in lieu of class-outline due via paper)	R	Print out of Outline
26	Delivery (once again!)	13, R	
<b>31 Apr 2</b>	<b>Informative speeches</b>		Listening Attendance mandatory.
7	Start Persuasion- models, theories; persuasive start arg sheet	15, 16, R	Start research on Persuasive
9	Persuasive Claims and avoiding Fallacies;	R	
14	building out persuasive arguments (argument sheet)	R	
16	Persuasion theory – targeting goals. Building Intro and Conclusion	R	
21	Individual meetings w/Dr. Stern (outline due via paper)	R	Body of speech printed out
23	Effective verbal citations	R	Upload videotaped speech for peer review
28 30	<b>Persuasive Policy speeches</b>		Listening Attendance mandatory.
<b>Exam 2</b> <b>Thurs May 7th @ 3:00p</b>			

R= find &amp; read credible sources for speech/paper and work on speech