

COM-138-1 – International Rhetoric (Fall 2025)

*"The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own
serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary."*
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "The Solitude of Latin America"

Professor: Dr. E. Gardner
Class Period: Monday/Wednesday/Friday – 12:45-1:50pm
Class Location: Voskuyl Library, Room 104
Office Location: Deane Hall 105
Office Hours: Mon. 3-5pm; Thurs. 1:15-3:15, Fri. 8-9am (sign up at <https://calendar.app.google/YAt2iCk8cq6oPzCe7>).
Phone Number: 805-565-6275
Email: egardner@westmont.edu

Course Description: This course will examine how communication patterns and commitments build and reflect peoples and cultures. How do cultures use public speaking, stories, presence, and even silence to create shared meaning? How does context and power influence these exchanges? How do these cultural norms reflect shared commitments within the group and build expectations for engagement with other groups? With attention to how our own cultures affect our studies, we will explore the similarities and differences in rhetorical traditions in regions around the world, recognize our interconnectedness in a global context, and develop our abilities to engage within and across these contexts.

Course Learning Outcomes: What You Will Be Able to Do

At the completion of the course:

- Students will be able to recognize rhetoric as a cultural practice that develops and functions in a situated context.
- Students will be able to reflexively identify the ways in which their own background affects their communicative interactions in order to thoughtfully and respectfully approach and engage rhetorics beyond their own.
- Students will be able to articulate how a particular topic or connection is approached across cultural or regional boundaries. [This outcome aligns with the [General Education "Thinking Globally" requirement](#).]
- Students will develop an appropriate sense of the limits of their global understanding.
- Students will be able to recognize global inequities and injustices and commit themselves to thoughtfully respond in line with their Christian faith.

These Course Outcomes align with three Program Learning Outcomes in Communication Studies:

Course Outcomes	Employ COM theories & perspectives knowledgeably	Apply ethical & biblical principles and practices	Create effective oral & written messages
Cultural Practice	Culture Asgmts, Exam, Project	Participation, Reflexivity Asgmts	Culture Asgmt, Project
Reflexivity	Reflexivity Asgmts, Project	Participation, Project	Culture Asgmts, Project
Differences	Culture, Exam, Project	Participation, Culture Asgmts	Culture Asgmts, Project
Humility	Reflexivity, Participation	Reflexivity Asgmts, Participation	Reflexivity Asgmts , Culture Asgmts, Project
Faithful Action	Reflexivity, Participation	Discussion, Project	Culture Asgmts, Project

COM 138 satisfies the General Education curriculum's "Thinking Globally" requirement.

This course also satisfies the General Education curriculum's "Justice, Reconciliation and Diversity" requirement. In line with that, by the end of the course

- Students will analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways.
- Students will identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God's loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Commented [MOU1]: To be added to the syllabus if approved for the JRD.

Course Reading Materials

- Course packet to be purchased through the campus bookstore
- Stillion Southard, Belinda. *How to Belong: Women's Agency in a Transnational World*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018.
- All other readings will be posted or linked on Canvas

Course Requirements: What You Commit To

Course Citizenship (about 15%): This category is made up of several components:

1. Presence (Attendance and Attention): I will take attendance daily. Please let me know ahead of time via e-mail if you need to miss class and why. Each student may miss three class sessions without a penalty on his or her grade. These three class sessions include excused absences, so they should not be thought of as "freebies." Save them for when you really need them—e.g., sickness, emergency, a field trip for another class, etc. If a student misses a fourth class session his or her grade will be penalized (except in extraordinary circumstances). If you have reason to anticipate excessive absences (more than three), please come talk to me about this as soon as possible. Your attendance should include arriving to class with sufficient time to be ready when class begins (habitual tardiness will affect your attendance grade).
2. Preparation: Discussion will be a large part of our class. In order for these discussions to be productive, everyone needs to come having read the assignment and being ready to participate. Whether we're reading a chapter, a journal article, or a speech, be sure that you have a copy of the reading on hand for our discussions. I reserve the right to evaluate preparation in a number of ways, including homework assignments, unannounced quizzes, etc.
3. Participation: I'm looking forward to the conversations that we will have. The communication scholar John Durham Peters argues that communication is the project of reconciliation of self and other. If as a group we're not willing to contribute, engage, interact, ask questions, and try out ideas, this course is going to fall short of our course goals and the project of communication. We're dealing with a new and potentially contentious content area (e.g., race), so we might misstep along the way. Therefore, we need to cultivate humility and grace as we learn about rhetoric beyond our own norms. To pave the way for open and fruitful discussions, though, we also need to establish a foundation of mutual respect. We'll be analyzing potentially controversial topics. It's good to challenge each other, but we should first listen and always be prepared to provide evidence and reasons to support the claims we're making. In all things, we need to be sure always to treat each other as we would like to be treated. Whether addressing our peers in class or engaging with authors through their readings, I would like our class to

consider Romans 12:10 - “Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.”

4. **Technology:** Cellphones should always be on silent and tucked away out of sight during class. Laptops are NOT allowed in class unless you have special permission to use one.

Culture & Reflexivity (about 30%): There will be a range of assignments interspersed throughout the semester that have you explore a new culture or reflect on your own (e.g., My Single Story, My Culture, Cultural Artifact, Stories in the News).

Exams (about 30%): There will be a midterm and final exam in this course that will prompt you to demonstrate an understanding of the different cultures we have studied as well as an understanding of rhetoric as a cultural practice.

Cultural Rhetoric Project (about 25%): In a semester-long project, you'll choose a culture to study in depth. You'll be researching this context and its local rhetorical norms and reflecting on your own responses to this new material. Your final submission will be a briefing geared to a Westmont audience that would prepare a group to travel and interact with that cultural group.

Course Communication

Office Hours: Every professor has “office hours,” but it might not always be clear what this means. Here's my approach. Each week I'm available to chat with you outside of our official class time. Here are a few reasons why you might swing by my office hours:

- If you want to drop by to say hi so we can just get to know each other a bit better early in the semester (this is part of my job that I enjoy!)
- If you're having a difficult time making sense of some of our course readings
- If you're intrigued by a topic we've covered and want to keep discussing it
- If you're struggling to keep up with the course
- If you still have questions about what's being asked in an assignment after you've read the assignment description
- If you had did poorly on an assignment and want to understand why and how you can do better
- If something is going in your life outside of class that's affecting how you're doing in class

Go ahead and use the link to my Google Calendar listed with my office hours above to schedule a time to come by. If none of those times work with your schedule, send me an email, and we can find a time.

Communication: I will be using Canvas to post announcements, to provide feedback on assignments, and to track your course grades. Be sure that you are checking or getting updates from Canvas daily. You'll need to set your notification settings at the start of the semester. Be sure to also check your email daily.

When Life Happens...: Send Me an Email. Sometimes it's difficult for me to be aware of how students are doing outside of class. If you are facing challenges securing food, housing, or internet access that may affect your performance in the course or other large life events, I encourage you to contact the Student Life office for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable doing so. Your forthrightness will enable me to connect you with resources available to you on campus and to provide support in any other way I can.

Assignment Guidelines

Commented [MOU2]: Related to the 3rd certification criteria related to modeling Christ-like dialogue.

Commented [MOU3]: This assignment prompts students to name and unpack their identity, building off of conversations about race and culture.

Commented [MOU4]: This assignment prompts students to analyze news coverage with attention to orientalism and postcolonialism.

Commented [MOU5]: Exam questions will assess student learning on the first (biblical) and second (race) certification criteria, in particular.

Commented [MOU6]: The final project prompts students to be self-reflexive about Westmont's culture and dynamics of power and belonging when a U.S. audience engages abroad.

Submissions: You must submit assignments on Canvas by the time listed on the COM-138 site unless otherwise noted in class and online.

Style: All submissions should be in 12 point, Times New Roman font, double spaced, and with 1" margins. Be sure to carefully follow MLA formatting and citation rules. There are several helpful online sites like [Purdue's Online Writing Lab](#), and you can also check the MLA style manual in the library. Remember to carefully proofread your assignments before submitting them!

Late Work: Assignments will be penalized 20% if they are submitted late and 10% for each additional day that they are late. If you have a valid excuse (e.g. major illness) for missing a class deadline, you need to notify me in advance and to provide documentation of the extenuating circumstance that kept you from getting your work in on time. If you do not show up for class on the day of an exam or presentation, then you automatically will lose 50%. Be sure to be saving and backing up copies of your work as you go along.

Grade Reviews: If you would like to dispute a grade you received, you need to fill out and email to me the Grade Review Request within one week of receiving the grade. This form is in Canvas under the file tab.

Grading Policies

I will compute your final course grade using the following scale:			
A+	97% +	C+	77-79.99%
A	93-96.99%	C	73-76.99%
A-	90-92.99%	C-	70-72.99%
B+	87-89.99%	D+	67-69.99%
B	83-86.99%	D	63-66.99%
B-	80-82.99%	D-	60-62.99%
		F	0-59.99%

Keep in mind the following guidelines:

- "A" work is superior on the general criteria and special emphases, demonstrating an ability to take the concepts of the course to your own independent use.
- "B" work shows a thorough familiarity with material of the course and in general meets the general criteria and special emphases above.
- "C" work shows an uneven mastery of the material of the course. There is clear achievement in some ways but deficiency in others.
- "D" work shows evidence of learning but struggle with mastery of the course material.
- "F" work shows a failure to advance knowledge.

College Resources & Policies

Writing Support: Writers' Corner, Westmont's writing center, is a creative space where student writers can find friendly "test readers" as they develop projects for professors, employers, and others. Peer tutors coach and collaborate with students as they mature into more skillful and confident writers. Come visit us in Voskuyl Library 215 or request an online tutorial. Clients with appointments are given first priority; drop-in clients are also welcome. All tutorials are free of charge. Make an appointment here: <https://westmont.mywconline.com/>

Accessibility and Accommodations: Westmont is committed to ensuring equal access to academic courses and college programs, and individuals with diagnoses that impact major life activities are protected from

discrimination and are entitled to reasonable accommodations. Students who choose to disclose a disability are encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible in the semester to discuss potential accommodations for this course. Accommodations are designed to ensure equal access to programs for all students who have a disability that impacts their participation in college activities. Email aro@westmont.edu or see westmont.edu/accessibility-resources for more information.

Academic Dishonesty: Dishonesty of any kind will generally result in loss of credit for the work involved and the filing of a report with the Provost's Office. Major or repeated infractions may result in dismissal from the course with a grade of F. Be familiar with the College's plagiarism policy, found at:

<https://www.westmont.edu/office-provost/academic-program/academic-integrity-policy/students>

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools: 1. A student should NOT substitute AI-generated text for original academic work. 2. A student should seek permission from an instructor PRIOR to an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule below reflects when we'll be looking at specific topics and readings. If this schedule needs to change, I will announce these changes over Canvas.

	Class Period	Due
Week 1		
Sept. 1	Introduction to the Course	
Sept. 3	Single Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the Syllabus * Submit: A Single Story of Me *
Sept. 5	Culture & Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hall, <i>Representation</i> (1-36)
Week 2		
Sept. 8	Culture & Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crouch, excerpt from <i>Playing God</i>
Sept. 10	Culture & Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tatum "The Complexity of Identity" (18-29) Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race" (191-203)
Sept. 12	Culture & Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edmondson and Brennan, excerpt from <i>Faithful Anti-Racism</i>
Week 3		
Sept. 15	Naming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charles & Rah, "The Doctrine of Discovery..." (13-23) * Submit: My Culture *
Sept. 17	Naming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lyons, "Rhetorical Sovereignty" (1-12) DeGraff, "As a Child in Haiti..."
Sept. 19	Cultural Appropriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black, "The 'Mascotting' of Native America"
Week 4		
Sept. 22	Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen: Roanhorse, "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience TM" Alexie, "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel"
Sept. 24	Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achebe, <i>Home and Exile</i> Chumash "Rainbow Bridge"
Sept. 26	WEIRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Henrich, excerpt from <i>The Weirdest People in the World</i>

Commented [MOU7]: Examines facets of identity and how our communities shape these understandings. Introduces race as a social construct, traced through key U.S. legal decisions.

Commented [MOU8]: Situates race within a biblical and theological foundation.

Commented [MOU9]: With discussion of Mignolo's *The Idea of Latin America*, considers the imperialism/violence in founding narratives and the role of the church in this history.

Commented [MOU10]: Short assignment that prompts students to continue to grow in awareness of their own cultures as a foundation before learning about other cultures – invoking Robert Chao Romero's "glory and honor" as well as sins/impurities.

Commented [MOU11]: Disciplinary conversation tied to power – example focuses on the forced education/rhetorical training of American Indians.

Commented [MOU12]: Sets up a conversation about the essentializing of cultures through mascots (beginning with the U. of Florida's mascot).

Commented [MOU13]: Considers stories of culture in conversation, being essentialized, and impacts of narratives.

Commented [MOU14]: Establishes the role of stories (prominent as well as "quiet") that shape culture with attention to a specific Chumash story and its implications for how people dwell, relate, and be.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chao Romero, ““The ‘Glory and Honor of the Nations’” <p>* Submit: Cultural Rhetoric Proposal *</p>
Week 5		
Sept. 29	Reflexivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royster, “When the 1st Voice You Hear” Collier and Muneri, “A Call for Critical...”
Oct. 1	** Cultural Artifacts **	
Oct. 3	** Cultural Artifacts **	
Week 6		
Oct. 6	Cultural - Nonverbals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anderson, “Nonverbal Comm Across Cultures” <p>* Submit: Stories in the News *</p>
Oct. 8	Cultural - Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbaugh, “I Can’t Do That!” Harman, “In Kabary, the Point is to Avoid the Point”
Oct. 10	Cultural - Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Richards & O’Brien, excerpt from <i>Misreading Scripture</i>
Week 7		
Oct. 13	Fall Break	
Oct. 15	Cultural – Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lahiri, <i>Translating Myself and Others</i>, pg. 1-3; 9-22
Oct. 17	Cultural - Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nisbett, <i>The Geography of Thought</i>
Week 8		
Oct. 20	Cultural - Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levine, <i>The Geography of Time</i>
Oct. 22	** Midterm Exam **	
Oct. 24	Rhetoric – Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enos, “The Art of Rhetoric at Rhodes”
Week 9		
Oct. 27	Rhetoric – Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Olson & Casas, “Felipe Guaman Poma de...”
Oct. 29	Rhetoric – Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The Instructions of Ptah-Hotep”
Oct. 31	Rhetoric – China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Analects</i>
Week 10		
Nov. 3	National Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen: “Americanish”
Nov. 5	National Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nehru, “A New Star Rises” (1947) Nkrumah, “Midnight Speech” (1957)
Nov. 7	National Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mao, “On the People’s Democratic
Week 11		
Nov. 10	National Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Xi, “Centennial of CCP” (2021)
Nov. 12	National Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yu Hua, <i>China in Ten Words</i>
Nov. 14	National Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “World Social Forum: Arundhati Roy” (2003) Cowan, “The Constitutive Rhetoric of Late Nationalism”
Week 12		
Nov. 17	National Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lee, “Semioscapes, Unbanality...” Beason, “Art Tours Position Latinos...”
Nov. 19	Semioscapes and SB	* Submit: The U.S. in 1 Word *
Nov. 21	Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stillion Southard, Introduction to <i>How to Belong</i>

Commented [MOU15]: Presentation focused on self-reflexivity.

Commented [MOU16]: Building off of a discussion of postcolonialism and orientalism, prompts students to examine U.S. news coverage of a region/event to examine how actors, agency, and culture are constructed.

Commented [MOU17]: Discussion of values and norms in public speaking growing out of culture, with attention to the Blackfeet people.

Commented [MOU18]: The course lecture this day draws on Miroslav Volf’s *The Home of God* to consider the theme of belonging in a theological framework.

Week 13		
Nov. 24	Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stillion Southard, Ch. 1 "Belonging as Denizenship"
Nov. 26	Thanksgiving	
Nov. 28	Thanksgiving	
Week 14		
Dec. 1	Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stillion Southard, Ch. 2 "Belonging as Cosmopolitanism"
Dec. 3	Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sirleaf, "Inaugural Address" (2006)
Dec. 5	Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stillion Southard, Ch. 3 "Belonging as Connectivity" & "Conclusion"
Week 15		
Dec. 8	The Pull	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rushdie, "The Courter" (Canvas)
Dec. 10	The Call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garber, excerpt from <i>Visions of Vocation</i>
Dec. 12	Course Wrap-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nieves Rodriguez, "Community is Our Best Chance" in <i>All We Can Save</i>
FINAL:	Dec. 16	12-2pm

Commented [MOU19]: Students are prompted to be reflexive in their journal entries, considering how their racial and national identity and concepts like post colonialism and orientalism come into play as they learn about another cultural context.