Fredonia Foundations | FREDONIA STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The Foundation for Lifelong Learning

COMM 101: Fundamentals of Communication (3 credit hours)
Fredonia Foundations: Critical Thinking and Analysis-Humanities-Civic Discourse
Fall 2025

Course Rationale:
Communication is simultaneously an idea, a practice, a system, a technology, a structure, a mission, a problem. Communication studies are a large discipline covering many areas of study and research. This course will introduce you to the basic concepts and models related to communication subdisciplines such as interpersonal, organizational, rhetorical, and mass communication studies. You will also learn better communication practice by engaging in activities on your own and with small groups.

Course Description:
The course provides a broad introduction to the field of communication focusing on both interpersonal and mediated communication. The course goal is to help one think critically about everyday interactions and to "discover" the degree in which the content and forms of communication contribute to creating meaning, and shaping personal and social realities. The process of meaning-making will be examined to help one become a more effective communicator, especially in situations where communicators experience "difference" with others within and across cultures.

Course objectives:
By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Explain the communication process by identifying its key elements and describing how human communication operates as both strategic (motivated) and automatic behavior.
- Analyze verbal, nonverbal, and listening practices and explain how they shape meaning, relationships, and understanding in interpersonal and group communication contexts.
- Apply rhetorical principles to the design and evaluation of mediated and non-mediated messages, with attention to audience, purpose, context, and ethical responsibility.
- Examine how culture and identity shape communication and how communication practices contribute to the construction of personal identity, social reality, and shared meaning across difference.
- Analyze the role of media and technology in shaping public discourse, acculturation, and perceptions of social reality.
- Demonstrate ethical communication practices, including respectful dialogue, reasoned inquiry, and constructive engagement with disagreement in interpersonal, mediated, and civic contexts.

Fredonia Foundations Student Learning Outcomes
This course meets the SUNY requirements for a Humanities—Critical Thinking & Analysis and Civic Discourse competency course. In-class activities and course assignments promote students' ability to meet the subsequent learning outcomes.

Civic Discourse

Students will demonstrate the discourse skills necessary to participate in civic life, including:

- the deliberation of ideas through reasoned inquiry that seeks new information and considers multiple viewpoints; and
- the ethical practice of advocacy, dissent, and dialogue, which invites disagreement and constructively attends to points of conflict.

Humanities

- Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of at least one of the humanities; and recognize and analyze nuance and complexity of meaning through critical reflections on text, visual images, or artifacts.

Critical Thinking and Analysis

- Read analytically and critically.
- Learn methods to solve open-ended, ill-defined and multi-step problems.
- Identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments as they occur.
- Synthesize information to arrive at reasoned conclusions.

Required: Course Readings & Materials:

Please complete the readings before the assigned class period.

- Anonymous. (2025.) *Communication in the real world: An introduction to communication studies.* LibreTexts. https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Introduction_to_Communication/Communication_in_the_Real_World_-_An_Introduction_to_Communication_Studies
- Journal articles, book chapters, popular press articles, and other required readings are in weekly folders available through FREDLearn.

Course Policies

1. **Attendance:** Because students are more likely to succeed in a class that they attend, my policy states that students are expected to attend class. Class begins promptly at 10:00 AM. I will take attendance at the start of class and keep track of attendance in FREDLearn. Go to Course Tools > Attendance, then click "Class Meetings" to view your attendance. You are responsible for checking your attendance and notifying me of a discrepancy.

   Four actions that will result in being marked as absent even if you attend class: (1) arriving more than 10 minutes late, (2) leaving the classroom for more than 5 minutes during class, (3) sleeping during class, and (4) arriving late (after 10:00 AM) or leaving early five times. You are permitted up to 5 absences. Upon your 6th absence, regardless of reason, your final grade will be reduced by 10 points (1% of final grade) per absence. Students should notify Student Affairs <student.affairs@freodnia.edu> if they will have

three or more consecutive days of absences due to serious health issues or personal reasons.

Excused absences include (1) missing class for a university-sanctioned activity (e.g., artistic performance, attending an academic conference, intercollegiate athletic events, student government, and required class trips) and (2) missing class for a religious observance. Proof of absence for such an activity must be provided at least 48 hours before the event that will cause the student to miss class. Documentation received the day of or after the event will not be accepted. Additionally, if a student misses a class for one of these reasons, the student must submit all required assignments before departing.

2. **Collaborative Dialogue Expectations:** This course emphasizes active, respectful discussion. Students are expected to complete readings and assignments before class and engage thoughtfully with peers. Civic discourse involves sharing ideas, asking clarifying questions, and responding without personal attacks. Disagreement is encouraged as part of learning, but civility and curiosity are required. Challenge ideas, not individuals, using evidence and humility. Everyone's voice matters—listen as attentively as you speak, monitor your speaking time, and ensure space for others to contribute.

3. **Civic Discussion Expectations:** For whole-class discussions, small groups, and assignments involving perspective sharing. This class focuses on analyzing human experiences and values. Your contributions should be grounded in course content and include reasoned arguments, not just opinions. Civic discourse involves expressing your views clearly while listening actively to others. Respectful disagreement is expected and welcomed. Support your position with evidence or logic and remain open to considering different viewpoints. To meet the Civic Discourse learning goal, students will practice accountable talk strategies: cite sources, ask for clarification, build on others' comments, and acknowledge when perspectives shift your thinking.

4. **Late Work:** Assignments are due within the first 5 minutes of class (by 10:05 AM). Deadlines apply even if you are not in class on the day the assignment is due. Turning in an assignment late requires professor approval at least 24 hours before the assignment is due. Late assignments will only be accepted under rare circumstances. Failures of technology (e.g., "I didn't have a way to complete duo security," "My computer crashed," "the Internet was down," "the file wouldn't open," "I forgot my computer in x town and didn't finish it," "the printer was broken") and inability to complete an assignment on time because of one's work schedule, personal life, procrastination, other coursework deadlines, lack of access to the readings, or extracurricular obligations are not considered unique circumstances.

5. **Written work:** Written work will be speech outlines, essays, and discussion questions (5a) Your research should always come from peer-reviewed journal articles, books written by scholars or professionals who are experts in their fields, substantive news

articles that are reliable sources of information on events and issues of public concern, and unbiased websites.

(5b) Students must account for all sources cited in an assignment using in-text citations and including a reference section. Failure to cite sources in-text will result in a significant grade deduction, a sign of plagiarism. Sources only count if cited both in the assignment and the reference section.

(5c) You must use APA 7th edition to cite in-text citations and format reference pages and papers. APA requires that papers align text left, have 1" margins, be double-spaced, have a running head that includes page numbers in the top right corner, and be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font. APA resources are posted on FREDLearn, and Reed Library has copies of the APA manual on the first floor (call number: BF76.7.P83 2010). For APA rules, refer to the American Psychological Association (https://www.apastyle.org/) and Purdue Owl (https://owl.purdue.edu/redirect.html).

6. **Presentation Assignments:** Students should maintain professionalism while preparing and delivering their elevator pitches.

   (6a) If you know you cannot deliver a presentation during the assigned day, you must notify me at least 7 days before the presentation is due. Please do so to avoid a zero for the assignment.

   (6b) If you wake up ill the day you are scheduled to deliver your presentation, you must email me by 8:00 AM. The email should include an attached copy of your presentation outline. This proves that the assignment is complete and that you're feeling ill is not the result of nerves.

   (6c) Students will dress appropriately in business casual attire to deliver all presentations. Students should refrain from chewing gum or wearing hats during their presentations. No illegal or dangerous products, chemicals, or substances are allowed in a presentation (i.e., guns, drugs, alcohol, explosives, fire, illegal substances, etc.). No vulgar language, harassment, or cursing is permitted during any presentation.

7. **Technology:** Course assignments, policies, and expectations will be available through FREDLearn. You are responsible for retrieving documents (assignment guidelines, rubrics, handouts, etc.) from FREDLearn. If you have a tech issue, contact Fredonia's ITS department. They can be reached by phone at 716-673-3407 and on campus at W203 Thompson Hall. If you'd like me to help you troubleshoot a tech issue, you should email me screenshots so I can see the issue.

   You should use your technology to research during class, complete in-class assignments, and contribute to class discussions. However, technology cannot be used to check social media, respond to non-emergency messages, or take pictures of course content projected

or written on the board. You are encouraged to bring laptops or tablets to class.

8. **Communicating with Professor:** I will communicate with you through your Fredonia email. When sending me an email, it should be written using standard professional formatting. This includes a clear subject heading, courteous greeting, proper spelling, mechanics, and grammar, respectful content, and an identifying signature. Email is the best way to communicate with me, and I will check her Fredonia email between 9 AM and 5 PM. Unless I'm traveling, it is the weekend, or Fredonia has a university sanctioned break, I should reply to you within 48 hours.

Course Assignments

Visit FREDLearn to view complete descriptions of course assignments and rubrics.

1. **Cultural Identity & Communication Analysis Presentations** (3 @ 100 points; 300 total points)
   - Humanities SLO 1 & 2, CT &A SLO 1, 2, and 3, Civic Discourse SLO 1 & 2

   Students work in small groups to research and analyze a socially constructed cultural identity (e.g., a community, subculture, or social group). Groups examine how communication practices shape identity, values, norms, and meaning within that culture. Students must consult credible sources, consider multiple perspectives, and present their findings clearly and respectfully to the class. The emphasis of this assignment is not advocacy for or against a culture but rather understanding how communication functions across difference and how perspective influences interpretation and meaning. Through collaborative research and presentation, students practice deliberation, ethical dialogue, and respectful representation, which are key components of civic discourse.

2. **Conflict Analysis: Communication in Action** (1 group presentation @ 200 points)
   - Humanities SLO 1 & 2, CT&A SLO 1, 2 and 3, Civic Discourse SLO 1 & 2

   Students analyze a scene from a film or other mediated text that depicts interpersonal or group conflict. Working collaboratively, students examine how communication behavior, such as listening, language choice, nonverbal cues, power, and emotion, shape the conflict and its outcomes. Rather than taking sides, students focus on process over polarity, identifying how communication practices contribute to escalation, misunderstanding, or resolution. This assignment emphasizes ethical engagement with disagreement and constructive attention to conflict, reinforcing civic discourse skills essential for participation in civic and social life.

3. **Structured Civic Dialogue & Reflection** (2 discussions @ 50 points each; 100 total points)
   - Humanities SLO 1, CT & A SLO 1, 2, and 3, Civic Discourse SLO 1& 2

   Students participate in structured, instructor-guided discussions focused on communication-related issues such as cultural misunderstanding, media influence, listening in relationships, or public communication. Students are expected to listen actively, ask clarifying questions, and engage respectfully with differing viewpoints.

Following each discussion, students complete a brief reflective response analyzing how communication practices shaped the dialogue. This assignment provides direct practice in deliberation, ethical dialogue, and reflective engagement with disagreement.

4. **Reflection Papers** (4 @ 50 points each, 200 total points)
   - Humanities SLO 1, C&I SLO 2 and 3, Civic Discourse SLO 1 & 2

   Students write a series of reflection papers analyzing communication, leadership, or civic experiences through core human values such as justice, responsibility, and equality. Reflections may draw on personal experience, historical examples, or contemporary case studies. Students are expected to critically examine how communication practices support or undermine these values and to reflect on how ethical dialogue, listening, and engagement with differing perspectives contribute to responsible participation in civic and social contexts.

5. **Weekly Reading Checks** (10 @ 20 points each; 200 total points)
   - Humanities SLO 1, C&I SLO 1, 3, & 4 Civic Discourse SLO 1

   Weekly Reading Checks are short, low-stakes assessments completed in FREDLearn that are designed to ensure students engage consistently with assigned course readings and media. Reading Checks may include multiple-choice questions, short responses, or brief applications of key concepts. These checks emphasize **a**nalytical reading, comprehension, and synthesi**s** rather than memorization. Some prompts ask students to identify central arguments, evaluate examples, or connect readings to communication practices discussed in class. When appropriate, prompts also encourage students to consider **multiple perspectives** or reflect on how communication concepts relate to dialogue, disagreement, or civic life.

Course Grading:
Final grades are based on an absolute point total. Your final grade is a function of the number of points earned in the course divided by the total number of points, yielding a percentage. The scale shown below is used to compute final grades. Borderline grades may, at my discretion, receive the next highest letter grade. Borderline cases are scores within two points of the next highest grade (e.g., you earned 898 points but need 900 points to make an A-).

Students must wait 24 hours after a grade is returned before inquiring about it. If you wish to discuss a grade, you must schedule a virtual appointment with me three days after the assignment is returned. Before the meeting, review the assignment and rubric and compare the feedback to your desired letter grade qualifications. A grade will be finalized if unquestioned on day seven after grade distribution. All grades are kept in FREDLearn and updated regularly.

Final Grade Scale:		
Letter Grade	**Points Earned**	**Percentage Range**
A	940-1000	94-100%
A-	939-900	90-93%
B+	899-870	87-89%
B	866-840	84-86%
B-	839-800	80-83%
C+	799-770	77-79%
C	769-740	74-76%
C-	739-700	70-73%
D+	699-670	67-69%
D	669-640	64-66%
D-	639-600	60-63%
F	599-below	59-0%

COURSE ETHICS

Conduct that violates academic integrity includes issues such as fraud, cheating, collusion, and the following:

Dishonesty. This lack of integrity is exhibited through lying, cheating, defrauding, or deceiving. Examples of dishonesty include copying/submitting the work of another, allowing one's work to be copied, completing an exam or other assignment with another person, reading, without my consent, a copy of the examination before the date it is given, submitting the same work in more than one course without the express permission of the professor(s); or disclosing or accepting information if one takes a test at a different time than other students in the same course.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is stealing or using the ideas or writings of another as one's own. It involves failure to acknowledge material copied from others or failure to acknowledge one's indebtedness to another for the gist of important thoughts in a formal statement, written or oral. For instance, copying and pasting directly from a web page without using APA quotations constitutes plagiarism. All work in this class must be the student's original work.

Use of AI. Any use of AI authorship tools, including but not limited to ChatGPT, QuillBot, etc., will violate this requirement and result in a 0 for the assignment and an automatic referral to the college's disciplinary process. Any generative graphic or written content must be clearly identified as AI and credited to the source generator.

Charges for violating academic integrity shall be handled according to established student discipline procedures. When I suspect a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy, I will collect the necessary information and materials related to the offense and then contact the student. If I

find a violation, I will use the Academic Integrity Incident Report Form to report the issue to the department chair. Please see the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures detailed on the "University Policies" website to read about additional action.

SUNY FREDONIA RESOURCES

ITS Service Center offers multimedia support for students. They can be reached by phone at 716-673-3407 and on-campus at W203 Thompson Hall.

The Learning Center provides free, confidential, nonbiased, collaborative tutoring services to enable students to succeed in their coursework. The goal of tutoring is to help you with your assignment in a way that will help you become more successful in all your classes. Learning Center: Carnahan-Jackson Center, Reed Library, Fourth Floor. Phone: 716-673-3550.

Reasonable accommodations are available to students with documented disabilities at SUNY Fredonia. Students requiring instructional and/or examination accommodations should contact the **Office of Disability Support Services for Students** (DSS) on the 4th Floor of the Reed Library (716-673-3270 or disability.services@fredonia.edu). The DSS coordinator will review documentation and determine accommodations on a case-by-case basis. DSS will notify me with an accommodation letter that verifies that the student has registered with the DSS office and describes any accommodations approved for the student. After the student has met with the DSS coordinator, she or he should contact me to discuss any needed accommodations. It is at that point that I will make accommodations. Here's DSS's website.

Your well-being is crucial to your academic success at Fredonia. Any student facing difficulties securing safe and stable housing, enough food to eat, or other basic needs is urged to contact Fredonia's Care Coordinator at care@fredonia.edu and review the many resources available to support you, listed on the Basic Needs Resource Inventory. We are here to help.

Additional resource information can be found on the Enrollment & Student Services page.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

The materials provided by the instructor in this course are for enrolled students. All materials in the course are covered under this statement. Copyrighted course materials may not be further disseminated.

Tentative Course Schedule

The course schedule serves as a general guideline and is subject to change. Any updates or adjustments will be communicated promptly through email and FREDLearn.

Week	Date	Topics Covered	Readings (OER)	What's Due
1	8/26	Course introduction; What is communication?	Ch. 1	
	8/28	History and forms of communication	Ch. 1	
	8/30	Defining communication	Ch. 1	Weekly Reading Check #1
2	9/2	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS		
	9/4	Communication models and meaning	Ch. 1–2	
	9/6	Perception and interpretation	Ch. 2	Weekly Reading Check #2
3	9/9	Perception, bias, and context	Ch. 2	
	9/11	Verbal communication	Ch. 3	Reflection Paper #1
	9/13	Nonverbal communication	Ch. 4	Weekly Reading Check #3
4	9/16	Listening as a civic skill	Ch. 5	
	9/18	Listening, dialogue, and disagreement	Ch. 5	Structured Civic Dialogue #1
	9/20	Culture and communication	Ch. 8	Weekly Reading Check #4
5	9/23	Cultural identity and social groups	Ch. 8	
	9/25	Group workday: CI&CA preparation	Ch. 8	
	9/27	Cultural Identity & Communication Analysis – Presentation #1	—	CI&CA Presentation #1; Weekly Reading Check #5
6	9/30	Interpersonal communication processes	Ch. 6	
	10/2	Communication in relationships	Ch. 7	
	10/4	Cultural Identity & Communication Analysis – Presentation #2	—	CI&CA Presentation #2; Weekly Reading Check #6

7	10/7	Conflict as a communication process	Supplemental	
	10/9	Conflict, ethics, and power	Supplemental	Reflection Paper #2
	10/11	FALL BREAK – NO CLASS		
8	10/14	Civility, incivility, and ethical engagement	Supplemental	
	10/16	Structured Civic Dialogue: Ethical disagreement	Supplemental	Structured Civic Dialogue #2
	10/18	Mass communication and society	Ch. 15	Weekly Reading Check #7
9	10/21	Media, framing, and public discourse	Ch. 15	
	10/23	Group workday: Conflict Analysis preparation	—	
	10/25	Conflict Analysis – Communication in Action	—	Weekly Reading Check #8
10	10/28	Conflict Analysis presentations	—	Conflict Analysis Presentation
	10/30	New media and digital communication	Ch. 16	
	11/1	Digital media and civic life	Ch. 16	Weekly Reading Check #9
11	11/4	Small group communication	Ch. 13	
	11/6	Leadership and problem-solving in groups	Ch. 14	Reflection Paper #3
	11/8	Communication, technology, and civic life	Ch. 15–16	Weekly Reading Check #10
12	11/11	Intercultural communication	Ch. 8	
	11/13	Communication, power, and identity	Ch. 8	
	11/15	Communication ethics and responsibility	Supplemental	
13	11/18	Communication, values, and civic life	Supplemental	Reflection Paper #4
	11/20	Applying communication to civic contexts	—	
	11/22	TBD		
14	11/25–29	THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASSES		

15	12/2	Culture, media, and public communication	Ch. 8, 15	
	12/4	Communication, identity, and civic responsibility	Ch. 8, 15	
	12/6	Weekly synthesis and application	—	
16	12/9	Communication, culture, and public life	Ch. 8, 15	
	12/11	Communication, identity, and civic responsibility	Ch. 8	
	12/13	Workday: CI&CA Final Presentation Preparation	—	
Finals Week	T, 12/17 (8:30–10:30 AM)	Cultural Identity & Communication Analysis – Final Presentation	—	CI&CA Presentation #3 (Final)

Date	**Academic Calendar Deadlines**
Aug. 30	Last day to drop the course
Oct. 17	Mid-semester grades are available to students
Nov. 8	Last day to withdraw from the course
Dec. 26	Final grades are due to the Registrar's Office and available through FREDLearn
Dec. 27	Final grades are available to students through YourConnection