

# Communication 336: Business Communication, Spring 2019

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**Class Time:** M/W/F: 10:00-10:50  
**Classroom:** Science Center B012

## **Introduction**

Welcome to COMM336, Business Communication! Communication Studies addresses critical thinking, communicative concepts and skills and relational and participatory effectiveness in personal, public and professional spheres. Business Communication is an elective course that presents basic oral and written communication skills necessary for career planning and greater career success.

## **Required Readings**

**You can access your readings for COMM336 through [this link](#).** This class is listed as an [OER](#) course, which means that the material draws from Open Education Resources – in short, **the readings are free!** Rather than assign one book, I've compiled a selection of readings for you that I feel cover key concepts of business communication in a useful and user-friendly way.

Given the ease of access of these materials, I am fully expecting you to have **read the materials before coming to class.** That way, the lecture is actually your second exposure to the concepts. You will also periodically be asked to read outside case studies prior to class. These will be short, used for opening discussions, and found in the Links tab on the course website.

## **Class Website**

While OnCourse is where you will be submitting some individual assignments and checking your Gradebook, all other course materials will be available to you on our [class website](#). For your convenience, there is also a link to the class website and its pages on OnCourse.

## **Course Structure**

This class will be conducted primarily in a discussion format with some brief lectures that cover key components from the readings. With this in mind, it is imperative that you read the pertinent units prior to coming to class, as the lectures will not “teach the book.” Team discussions, group projects, individual journaling exercises and a number of writing assignments will form the basis of this course. Preparation, accountability, critical thinking and willingness to engage are key. This is a college course, but our classroom will be a business environment. Just as you wouldn't expect to keep a job if you carried on private conversations during a meeting, sat and texted while your boss was talking, or showed up unprepared for a business proposal, similar behaviors will be detrimental in this class.

## Course Learning Objectives and Learning Outcomes

**Learning Objective #1:** Students will develop competencies in business skills important to early career success.

*Learning Outcome #1:* Students will be able to work collaboratively as a team to prepare selected written assignments and an oral presentation. This Learning Outcome will be measured through team assignments and team discussion leading.

*Learning Outcome #2:* Students will practice time management and prioritization skills to achieve identified goals. This Learning Outcome will be measured through submission of group assignments by the deadline and participation in group meetings and preparation of group assignments.

**Learning Objective 2:** Students will develop competencies in preparing for their career search.

*Learning Outcome #3:* Students will be able to prepare for future job opportunities by creating a cover letter and resume. This Learning Outcome will be measured through the creation of the necessary materials (for a hypothetical application) for a job/internship posting of their choosing, developing a cover letter and resume designed specifically for the job posting, obtaining feedback from the group on resumes/cover letters and obtaining feedback on an individual basis from the instructor (as needed).

*Learning Outcome #4:* Students will be able to represent their talents and skills in a mock job interview situation. This Learning Outcome will be measured through a team assignment and practicing presentations with group members.

**Learning Objective 3:** Students will develop competencies for business writing and speaking.

*Learning Outcome #5:* Students will be able to write effectively (format and content) for a business or professional audience. This Learning Outcome will be measured through writing individual journal responses, writing individual papers, compiling a portfolio and writing group assignments.

*Learning Outcome #6:* Students will be able to distinguish different forms of communication and the appropriate time to use each. This Learning Outcome will be measured through preparing individual and group essays, preparing a group presentation and revising negative messages written in letter format.

## Assessment and Grading

There will be quizzes, individual assignments, individual journal responses, team presentations and team assignments in this class. Your grade will be figured by dividing the number of points you have earned by the total number of possible points for this class (350) and then applying the appropriate letter grade to the percentage. Extra credit will be available to everyone through a bonus assignment at the end of the semester.

Once you have calculated your percentage, you can determine the letter grade you will earn in the class.

**This is of critical importance:** Your grade will be calculated by what is posted in the OnCourse grade book. Due to glitches within all computerized systems and the possibility of human error, it happens, on occasion, that a grade is not accurately recorded or reflected. While I try to monitor for such mistakes, ***it is your responsibility to check your grade book regularly and report any errors you find to me.*** Once reported to me, I will fix it immediately. However, if it is not caught and your final grade is calculated with this error, I cannot go back to fix the final grade once it has been submitted to the university at the end of the semester. Just like it is your responsibility to check your bank account after depositing money to make sure that the deposit goes through, you must also check your grade book.

***Please note that I use a typical grading scheme found at SUNY Fredonia:***

A	100 – 93	B+	89 – 86	C+	79 – 76	D+	69 – 66	F	59 or less
A-	92 – 90	B	85 – 83	C	75 – 73	D	65 – 63		
		B-	82 – 80	C-	72 – 70	D-	62 – 60		

Here is a list of assessments and points possible:

ITEM	POINTS	TOTAL
Team activities	(5 @ 20 points)	100
Team presentations	(2 @ 25 points)	50
Portfolio projects	1. Introductory email (1 @ 20 points) 2. Resume & cover letter packet (1 @ 50 points) 3. Wildcard assignment (1 @ 20 points) 4. Team evaluation (1 @ 10 points)	100
Reflections (11 opportunities; 1 dropped)	(10 @ 5 point)	50
Quizzes (you'll receive 6 quizzes and your 1 lowest score is dropped)	(5 @ 10 points)	50
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>350</b>

### A note on teams

At the beginning of the semester, I will be dividing you into teams. These teams will be chosen randomly, and no swapping is allowed. This is meant to replicate a more realistic working environment, in which you are placed with the same people with whom you must work on projects, communicate, and quite simply, get along. You may establish a close relationship with your team by the end of the semester. You may find you remain “work friends” only. That is okay. It is not necessary to *like* everyone you work with, nor is it plausible that you will. However, you must learn to work *well* with one another. Disagreements should be dealt with professionally and maturely. Social loafing should not be tolerated by you or your group. However, you should deal with these conflicts yourself. You would not expect an employee to run to his/her boss because someone in accounting didn't do their part. You would expect that that employee would find a way to communicate with that individual the importance of their participation, and you would expect that individual to realize s/he had been slacking, and pick up the pace. This is all part of *business communication!*

### Team activities

You will be working on five [activities](#) over the course of the semester with your team. The items should follow the guidelines below, but the subject is entirely your choosing. You will be working with the same team throughout the entire semester. These projects will entail a bit of problem-solving, working together and creativity. Therefore, it's helpful that you're hitting the ground running each time by working with the same people.

The basic plan for your Team Activities is below. Additional directions will be given that day in class. For each project, your team should submit a one-page [SWOT Analysis](#) of your project. This should be stapled (or otherwise attached) to the BACK of your assignment.

1. Develop an idea for your business and submit a **detailed outline** of your business and your fleshed-out ideas for items 2-5.
2. Craft a “**letter to the audience**” or “**about us**” feature.
3. Develop a **persuasive element**.
4. Draft a **proposal** for some new element.
5. You're hiring! Craft a **job description** complete with responsibilities and requirements.

Here are some examples. 1) A restaurant: a letter containing the history of the restaurant to be printed on menus and on the website, an advertisement, a proposal to your boss for new seasonal menu items, a job description for a host or chef. 2) A music studio: a holiday letter to clients thanking them for their business, a sales flyer for a new album in production, a proposal for the purchase of new equipment, a job description for a new accountant.

### Team Case Study/Discussion Presentation

Your team will also prepare two professional, entertaining presentations of a real-world case studies. You can find more information on the course website [here](#), and we will also be discussing them more in depth during class. Your presentations should be prepared and rehearsed well in advance of your presentation dates. The presentation portion should last no fewer than 10 and no more than 15 minutes and will be followed by 10-15 minutes of a carefully thought-out class discussion. I will not be moderating these discussions – it's all on you!

A discussion should not be confused with a “question/answer” session. It is not enough to simply pose a question to small groups of students, hear their answer and say, “Very good – who else?” Your discussion should be a lively forum. Believe me – it’s tough to get a room involved and talking. This is good practice for your career, whether that be in the private sector or in academia. Everyone must take an equal role in this discussion leading. It is not sufficient to merely be the person clicking through the slides or smiling in front of the class while your team mates speak. You all must play active roles as part of a presentation team.

As with your Team Assignments, one grade will be given to the whole team. You can view the rubric I’ll use to assess your discussion presentations [here](#). A part of this course will entail you to individually assess your team mates. The only time an individual may get a different grade from the rest of their team is if the rest of the team unanimously nominates one member to receive extra points based on extraordinary contribution, or if the rest of the team unanimously claims that one member drastically underperformed.

### **Reflections**

On Team presentations days, you will submit a Google Form response that simply asks for 2-3 sentences of feedback to the presenting team as well as a 2-3 sentence answer to one critical thinking question. That’s it! I will collect your team feedback, wipe your names from it, and distribute it to the presenting team (teams will only get feedback, not the answers to the critical thinking questions). Once during the semester (Team Day) you will be presenting feedback that will *not* go to your teams; this will only be read by me and will just be your reactions to the events and activities of Team Day. You will have 11 discussion response opportunities; I will drop your one lowest score. You must be present in class to participate in these reflections. The dates you can expect a Discussion Reflection are noted as “R” on the syllabus under the Due Dates column.

### **Quizzes**

The quizzes may contain 1 or multiple questions and may be short answer or MCQ/TF. They are designed to “spot check” your mastery of the material. They may be given at the beginning of class, in the middle or at the end.

### **Portfolio**

Your portfolio will consist of individual written assignments given to you during class over the course of the semester. These tasks are going to vary in length and detail, and thus will vary in points. The largest assignment will be the crafting of a resume and cover letter, which will be peer reviewed prior to turning it in. The remaining assignments will be smaller – but still valuable – writing exercises. The portfolio will not always be hard copy; therefore, the term “portfolio” will not refer to an actual binder, but rather, to a collection of items united by the core concept of strengthening your business writing on an individual basis.

**Introductory email:** Send me a professionally written email adhering to the guidelines discussed in the texts and class. Your email must not be too long or too short; it should be free of spelling or grammar mistakes; it should not contain inappropriate elements (OMG, cuz u srsly need to b professional here. =D LOL) and should contain a [signature](#). Introduce yourself and tell me what you hope to gain from this course. **Your email subject MUST read: COMM336 Introductory Email (FULL NAME).**

**Wildcard assignment:** Choose **one** of the three options provided for you on this [Google Form](#).

**Resume and cover letter:** Draft a resume and cover letter for a job (based on a real job posting) that you would imagine yourself applying to (or might actually apply to) upon graduation. More detail will be provided in class. On “Resume Day” (see schedule) you will have the opportunity to glean peer feedback from your team. ***Your final submission must contain your rough draft with edits as well as a pristine final copy.*** These items should be housed in an appropriately addressed A4 envelope (9”x12”, not tri-folded).

If you're feeling stumped, check out the [Interesting Stuff](#) I posted on crafting resumes and cover letters.

**Team evaluation:** Use a Google Form (to be posted later) to evaluate your team members. Do not start this assignment until you get the go-ahead in class.

### **Assignment policies and procedures**

Each assignment takes about a week to evaluate and grade. Late work will take longer. All assignment due dates are posted in the syllabus.

In-class assignments are to be turned in as a hard-copy. All assignments **must** be typed but as they are heavy in design element, you must design them to be easy to read and aesthetically pleasing. No 12-pt Times New Roman here! Plan ahead to print in color when you can; maximize the visual element of these assignments!

Individual journals are to meet the word-limit indicated on the course website and are to be submitted electronically. Please submit them on OnCourse using the Journal tool. A step-by-step guide for this process can be found on OnCourse and on the course website. **You can only submit a journal entry ONCE! Do not ask to re-submit an assignment!**

You are expected to complete assignments by the due date indicated on the course schedule. Late assignments will receive an automatic **30% grade reduction** and will **only be accepted up to one week** after the due date. Therefore, it is recommended that if you anticipate missing a class in which work is due, come to see me during my office hours prior to your absence and turn your work in early. This late work policy is necessary so that I can return graded assignments in a reasonable amount of time.

### Course Policies

**Accountability:** It is your responsibility to monitor your progress on the course website, follow along in the syllabus, know when assignments are due, and to check your school email daily.

**Attendance:** As much of the success of this class relies on group preparedness and interdependence, please note the following attendance policy: While you should try to be in class for every session, life happens, and **you are permitted up to 5 absences**. Understand that this does not free you from responsibilities – if you miss a quiz or reflection, you cannot make it up; if your team is working on a project, you must find a way to contribute – but you will not be directly penalized for the *absence itself*, nor do I need to see documentation.

However: **Upon your 6<sup>th</sup> absence, regardless of reason or excuse, your final grade will be reduced by a half a letter** (a B becomes a B-, a C- becomes a D+). Note that six absences equate two weeks of class. This is a hefty amount of time missed, and thus, this number of absences, regardless of the reason, will have a direct effect on your grade. For each ensuing absence beyond your sixth, your grade will continue to drop in half-letter increments.

The last page of the syllabus gives a detailed course schedule indicating what will be covered each day, as well as which days we have off. The first day of class is on January 23. The last day to add the class is January 31. **If you add the class on January 31 and start attending on February 1, you will have missed four class meetings. These will count toward your absence tally.** To avoid a loss in grade points, please be mindful of your absences for the rest of the semester if you register and begin attending the class once the semester is underway.

**An attendance sheet will be passed around in class. It is your responsibility to make sure you get it and sign it as this will be the primary method I will use to determine your attendance.**

**If you miss a quiz, you will not be allowed to make it up.** However, I will be giving you six quizzes and dropping your one lowest score. If you miss a quiz, that zero will be dropped, and all of the remaining five you take will be counted toward your score.

**If you are absent on a day that your team works on an in-class team assignment**, communicate with your team and balance out the work among yourselves. If a member was absent, give him or her an additional task to help complete to make up for his or her absence to your team during the in-class time. In this way, you may “make up” for your absence. *I will not organize this make-up – it is up to you and your team to come to a mutually-beneficial agreement.*

It is your responsibility to follow through to get assignments and materials missed.

**Punctuality:** Please be on time. While “life happens” and accidental lateness happens to everyone on occasion (myself included), chronic lateness is disruptive, disrespectful, unprofessional and will not be tolerated. You are expected to be in the classroom and seated prior to the start time of class. This also enables you to take a quiz should it occur at the start of class. **If you come in late and miss a quiz, you cannot make it up.**

**If you are going to be more than 10 minutes late, please do not come into the classroom. You have missed class for that day.**

**Etiquette:** *Please silence your cell phones before coming to class and unless you’re using them to take notes, put them AWAY.* While laptops/tablets are welcomed in the classroom as note-taking devices, using them to browse Facebook,

check email or other non-class-related stuff is **not** welcomed. **Please remove and put away all headphones or earbuds prior to the start of class.**

**Classroom condition:** Please practice carry-in/carry-out when you are in the classroom. If you bring food to class, please make sure we do not hear it or smell it!

**Respect:** Although you can expect some lively discussion in this class, students are expected to respect gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion and other similarities and differences.

### **Department of Communication Philosophy**

*Communication does not exist outside of relationships. With this in mind, the faculty of the SUNY Fredonia Department of Communication believes that all communicators, whether in the classroom, on the air, or within created works, have a responsibility to themselves and their audience.*

*The faculty believes that it is our responsibility to provide perspective and structure as students make choices about their work, and consequently, about themselves and who they are as adults and scholars. We encourage students to make the effort to consider the consequences of their choices for themselves, for others, and for those relationships.*

*The faculty encourages projects and behaviors that are undertaken with thoughtful respect and consideration for others. We support and encourage work that is both ethical and enriching to the students' community and to personal and professional relationships. All students should review the Department of Communication Ethical and Professional Standards at <http://www.fredonia.edu/department/communication/standards.asp>.*

### **My Personal Statement on Academic Dishonesty**

Plagiarism can entail an act as rash as purchasing a paper or project, to as seemingly incidental as copying a line or two from an online source and plugging it, uncited, into your application assignment. Plagiarism is when you take someone else's idea or words and pass them off as your own. **I am very good at catching plagiarism.**

If I discover that you have committed an act of plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty, the very least that will happen, depending on the [severity](#) of the act, is that you will **earn a zero for that assessment**, and we'll discuss the incident and work to prevent future occurrences. The very most that will happen is that you will be **expelled from SUNY Fredonia**. I take cheating seriously. Do your own work. Even if you're running out of time and you know it's last-minute and not your best.

## Course schedule

This schedule is subject to change based on the needs of the students and/or the instructor's discretion. Please read the Unit Readings prior to coming to class. Additionally, you will occasionally find very short case study readings noted for that day as "Case," and also found [here](#). These are used to open class with a discussion.

■ = Individual Portfolio item   ■ = Team Presentations   ■ = Team Projects   R = Reflection

	DATE	TOPIC	TEAMS	CASES	DUE DATES	R
1	W 01/23	Course Introduction				
	F 01/25	Unit 01: <a href="#">Effective Business Communication</a>		<a href="#">Case 01</a>		
2	M 01/28	Unit 02: <a href="#">You-Attitude &amp; Positive Emphasis</a>				
	W 01/30	Unit 03: <a href="#">Understanding Yourself &amp; Others</a>			Take <a href="#">MBTI</a> for Friday's class	
	F 02/01	<b>TEAM DAY</b>			ID cards due today	R1
3	M 02/04	Unit 04: <a href="#">Teamwork &amp; Leadership</a>				
	W 02/06	Unit 05: <a href="#">Making Presentations</a>				
	F 02/08	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 1 (A)		Intro email due Sat 2/9 by 11:59pm	R2
4	M 02/11	Unit 06: <a href="#">Using Visual Aids Effectively</a>		<a href="#">Case 02</a>		
	W 02/13	<b>In-Class Project</b>	Project #1			
	F 02/15	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 2 (A)			R3
5	M 02/18	Unit 07: <a href="#">Analyzing your Audience</a>			Project #1 due at the start of class	
	W 02/20	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 3 (A)			R4
	F 02/22	Unit 08: <a href="#">Document Design</a>		<a href="#">Case 03</a>	Wildcard due Sat 2/23 by 11:59pm	
6	M 02/25	<b>In-Class Project</b>	Project #2			
	W 02/27	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 4 (A)			R5
	F 03/01	Unit 09: <a href="#">Communicating Persuasively</a>			Project #2 due at the start of class	
7	M 03/04	<b>In-Class Project</b>	Project #3			
	W 03/06	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 5 (A)			R6
	F 03/08	<b>Presentation A Feedback</b>			Project #3 due at the start of class	
8	M 03/11					
	W 03/13	<i>Spring Break – No Classes</i>				
	F 03/15					
9	M 03/18	Unit 10: <a href="#">Preparing to Write</a>				
	W 03/20	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 1 (B)			R7
	F 03/22	Unit 11: <a href="#">The Writing Process</a>				
10	M 03/25	Unit 12: <a href="#">Revising &amp; Presenting Writing</a>				
	W 03/27	<b>In-Class Project</b>	Project #4			
	F 03/29	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 2 (B)			R8
11	M 04/01	Unit 13: <a href="#">Searching for a Job</a>		<a href="#">Case 04</a>	Project #4 due at the start of class	
	W 04/03	Unit 14: <a href="#">Building Resumes</a>		<a href="#">Case 05, 06</a>		
	F 04/05	Unit 15: <a href="#">Writing Job Application Letters</a>				
12	M 04/08	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 3 (B)			R9
	W 04/10	Unit 16: <a href="#">Interviewing</a>				
	F 04/12	<b>RESUME AND COVER LETTER DAY</b>			5 copies of resume/letter for class	
13	M 04/15	<b>INTERVIEW ACTIVITY DAY</b>				
	W 04/17	Unit 17: <a href="#">Succeeding in Your Job</a>			Resume/Letter packet due in class	
	F 04/19	<i>Reading Day – No Classes</i>				
14	M 04/22	<i>Travel Day – No Classes</i>				
	W 04/24	<b>In-Class Project</b>	Project #5			
	F 04/26	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 4 (B)			R10
15	M 04/29	Unit 18: <a href="#">Informative/Negative Messages</a>		<a href="#">Case 07</a>	Project #5 due at the start of class	
	W 05/01	<b>Presentation</b>	Team 5 (B)			R11
	F 05/03	Unit 19: <a href="#">Intercultural Business Comm.</a>				
16	M 05/06	<b>Presentation B Feedback</b>				
	W 05/08	<b>REAL CASES ACTIVITY</b>				
	F 05/10	<b>BONUS ACTIVITY</b>				





