

Executive Summary for COMM 1323 Rhetoric and Public Speaking

The academic study of human communication dates back centuries. The ancients studied rhetoric—the art of persuading others through public speaking. They believed understanding rhetoric was a necessary part of every citizen’s education. The Greek rhetorician Isocrates summed up the importance of public speaking in his famous treatise *Antidosis*: **“There is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish.”**

HCU’s Rhetoric and Public Speaking course is unique in that it integrates faith and learning in line with Dr. Perry L. Glanzer’s proposal of **“Christ Animated Excellence”**. It provides learning experiences that instill in students a passion for **“excellence”** or **“arete”** as **“image bearers of God”**. In short, it teaches the communication skills that enable students to become better friends, spouses, parents, neighbors, professionals, and citizens.

The course begins by introducing humans as image bearers of God and celebrating human dignity through knowledge and understanding of “the human communication process”. Various aspects of the human communication process are introduced, and the concepts of “perception” and “self” are examined for their effects on this process. The course also celebrates human dignity through an in-depth look at how humans use “language” and “nonverbal communication” to create meaning. Finally, the importance of “listening and critical thinking” in this process is emphasized.

The course then investigates and celebrates our human interdependence through knowledge and understanding of the “interpersonal communication” context. This helps students become better friends, spouses, parents, and neighbors. Additionally, the course examines the unique nature of the “intercultural communication context” found in many friendships, marriages, families, and neighborhoods. To complete this investigation, students complete the first ***Signature Assignment: The Intercultural Interview Essay and Presentation***. In this assignment, students complete a face-to-face interview with another HCU student who is from a different culture and then speak and write about that interaction in an oral presentation and a written essay. Students discuss differences in language, nonverbal communication, religion, and interpersonal relationships with the interviewee.

The second half of the course celebrates human flourishing by effectively developing and critiquing speeches in our democratic society as good professionals and citizens. Students engage in “topic selection” and “audience analysis” for these speeches and the importance of “credibility” and “evidence” is stressed. Students learn strategies for effective “speech organization” for the content of their speeches. Additionally, the “delivery” of a speech and the use of “visual resources” is explored. Students apply their knowledge of the speech development process by completing the second ***Signature Assignment: The Informative Speech*** and the third ***Signature Assignment: The Persuasive Speech***. In both speeches, students demonstrate their skill in audience analysis; in the selection, research, and organization of a topic; and in the delivery of 5–7 minute speeches.