

**Point Loma Nazarene University**  
**Department of Communication & Theatre**  
**COM 485-2 Communication, Values, and Society**  
**Spring Semester, 2017**

---

Professor: Walter O. Williams, Ph.D. [wwilliam@pointloma.edu](mailto:wwilliam@pointloma.edu)  
 Office Hours: M: 1:30-3:30, R: 2:00-3:30

Office: Cabrillo 207  
 Phone: 849-2724

---

**EXORDIUM**

Of all things the measure is man, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not.  
 (Protagoras)

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent.  
 (John Donne)

He who asks questions is a fool for five minutes; he who does not ask a question is a fool forever.  
 (Chinese proverb)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.  
 (Proverbs)

*Man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door to his prison and run away.*  
 (Plato)

*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.*  
 (ancient Egyptian saying)

*Carpe diem, quam minimum credula postero.*  
 (Horace)

*This above all, to thine own self be true.*  
 (Shakespeare)

Man is by nature a political animal.  
 (Aristotle)

To succeed in politics, it is often necessary to rise above your principles.  
 (anonymous)

Honesty is for the most part less profitable than dishonesty.  
 (Plato)

A lie told often enough becomes truth.  
 (Lenin)

The ends must justify the means.  
 (Matthew Prior)

*The mind of each man is the man himself.*  
 (Cicero)

*It is the man's own mind, not his enemy or foe, that lures him to evil ways.*  
 (Buddha)

*Man is a reasoning animal.*  
 (Seneca)

*Ours is not to reason why; ours is but to do and die.*  
(Tennyson)

*Wisdom begins in wonder.*  
(Socrates)

Man is  
the symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal  
inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative) separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own  
making  
goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order)  
acquiring foreknowledge of death  
and rotten with perfection.  
(Kenneth Burke)

Technological progress has merely provided us with a more efficient means of going backwards.  
(Aldous Huxley)

*What a piece of work is man!  
how noble in reason!  
how infinite in faculty!  
in form and moving how express and admirable.  
in action how like an angel!  
in apprehension, how like a god!*  
(Shakespeare)

*What is man that thou art mindful of him,  
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?  
Yet thou hast made him little less than God,  
and dost crown him with glory and honor.  
Thou hast given him dominion over  
the works of thy hands;  
thou hast put all things under his feet, . . .*  
(King David)

*Is man an ape or an angel?*  
(Disraeli)

Justice consists of doing no injury to men; decency in giving them no offence.  
(Cicero)

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.  
(Jesus)

The only thing worse than suffering an injustice is committing an injustice.  
(Plato)

Our character is what we do when we think no one is looking.  
(H. Jackson Browne)

That which does not kill us makes us stronger.  
(Neitzsche)

I want mercy not sacrifice.  
(Jesus)

*The person who aims at nothing is sure to hit it.*  
(anonymous)

*I drank WHAT?*  
(Socrates)

## OVERVIEW

What does it mean to be a human, a communicator, and a Christian? Symbolic interaction, or language usage, plays an integral role in our understanding of our selves, and why we do what we do. The language of the exordium quotations is essential in constructing reality according to many different culturally and temporally situated perspectives. Each represents a particular ethos. It is important that we each understand our own perspectives, our own ethea, within the context of our chosen fields of communication endeavor. As we enter the 21st century marketplace of ideas, it is imperative that we learn to identify the myriad global perspectives under which humans initiate communication actions. To that end, the major portion of this course is devoted to the examination of the perspectives, or the spheres of influence through which we interpret our social environments and ourselves, and how those influences affect our communication actions. I intend the course to posit relevant questions regarding life experiences and the meanings we derive from them, and to encourage you to examine and express those ideas/answers in a cogent and compelling manner.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will consider the responsible and ethical practice of their disciplines in the community at large.
- Students will display communication competence both verbally and nonverbally.
- Students will pass a comprehensive oral examination

## COURSE PROCEDURES

- This course will be modeled as a seminar oriented toward the Socratic/dialogic approach. This is not, in other words, a lecture course. I will act as a moderator, a facilitator, a primer of the pump, if you will. It is essential that you all actively participate in class discussions. In other words, the more you participate in the discussion the greater your benefit. You must, therefore, **read the material** and be prepared not only to critically discuss it, but to relate it to your own experience as well.
- Because we represent a number of distinct but related areas of the communication arts (i.e., Organizational & Management Communication, Media Communication, Applied Communication, Mass Communication, Societal Communication, Theatre, Rhetoric, etc.), we will adopt an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge. Interdisciplinarity may be defined as "a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single track, discipline, or profession" (Thompson & Newell, 1998). Interdisciplinary learning may then be defined as "inquiries which critically draw upon two or more disciplines and which lead to an integration of disciplinary insights" (Newell & Green 1998).

### Student Responsibility:

*It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), the student has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university), not the instructor. Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) may easily result in a grade of F on the official transcript.*

## **REQUIRED BOOKS:**

- Buber, Martin. I and Thou. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.
- Buechner, Frederick. Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy & Fairy Tale. San Francisco: Harper, 1977.
- Lewis, C. S. The Abolition of Man: How Education Develops Man's Sense of Morality. New York: Macmillan, 1955.
- O'Connor, Flannery. Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1969.
- Percy, Walker. The Message in the Bottle: How Queer Man is, How Queer Language Is, and What One Has to Do With the Other. New York: Picador, 1975.
- Said, Edward. Representations of the Intellectual. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Each of you will be responsible for one presentation (25 minutes for single, 35 for double). The presentation will incorporate several components: 1) a discussion of the author (This only applies to the first presentation per book\*) with **sensory aid(s)** (e.g., TV clips, film clips, recorded interviews, etc.) that both **contextualizes** him/her in an historical setting and **draws inferences** as to how that context influenced him/her; 2) an insightful **synthesis** of the reading's main points. Start from the understanding that all your classmates have read the material too, so you don't need to "teach" it. Please do not present an outline of the material; rather, personalize the ideas/arguments of the author and present them to us in a dialogic manner (what is he or she saying to me here and now); 3) additional **sensory aid(s)** (e.g., TV clips, film clips, recorded interviews, artworks, etc.) that you feel exemplify the context and perspectives of the work (**Not** directly about the work, but how does it analogically speak to you; and 4) several (i.e., 2-3) **questions for class discussion**: These questions are meant to get the discussion started, not test you classmates.

In addition to the presentation, you each will bring in and present one current news article that you feel relates to that week's readings. The articles should incite discussion regarding the ethical situations involved as they relate to the readings and current concerns of the class members. You will need to **apply** class readings to your everyday life and class discussion in a meaningful and compelling manner. The news stories need not be about the author or his/her material directly, but need somehow to explore the issues being raised in their context today.

Toward the end of the semester, you will each undergo a **comprehensive oral examination**. This entails me asking you dialogic questions related to the readings and you answering those and any follow-up questions without the aid of notes. The subject of the oral exam will be the material from the six books read and discussed in class. The exam will be 30 minutes.

## **GRADE BREAKDOWN**

As I have detailed above, the grading for this course will be determined in the following manner:

News Discussions. . . . .	10%
Oral Presentation . . . . .	40%
Life of Class . . . . .	10% **
Oral Exam . . . . .	40%

\*\* The participation grade is based on how fully you involve yourself in the life of the class.

## **GRADING SCALE**

**A:** Indicates exceptional work that reflects deep thinking, superb creativity, individual incentive, and an extremely high level of intellectual attainment.

**B:** Indicates very good work that reflects a thorough understanding of theory and practice, but is somewhat lacking in strong individual incentive, thinking, and/or creativity.

**C:** Indicates work that reflects a satisfactory completion of the assignment as directed, but is lacking in thoroughness, individual thinking, and/or creativity.

**D:** Indicates work that, although passing, reflects a lack of understanding of theory and/or fails to fulfill the assigned tasks.

**F:** Indicates work that reflects an inability or unwillingness to do the assigned task.

## **Major Perspectives in Moral Reasoning**

- I. ***Moral Relativism***: the belief that what is right and wrong depends on and is determined by one's group or culture.
- II. ***Utilitarianism***: Based on the *principle of utility*, which suggests we need to maximize happiness and minimize unhappiness (minimax), is concerned with the consequences of actions and decisions.
- III. ***Duty Theory***: We do what is right because it is our moral duty, even though it may cause great personal pain.
- IV. ***Divine Command Theory***: When duty has been commanded by a higher authority, it becomes command theory
- V. ***Virtue Ethics***: Focuses not on what to do but how to be.
- VI. ***Narrative Ethics***: An intersubjectively created ethic based in the metanarratives of a given culture.

## **Academic Accommodations:**

*While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.*

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>	<u>News Presenters</u>	<u>Presenter &amp; Topic</u>
1/12	Course introduction		Syllabus
1/19	Presentation 1 *	1.	1. <u>C.S. Lewis</u> <u>AM</u> "Men"
1/26	Presentation 2	2.	2. <u>AM</u> "Way" & "Ab"
2/2	Presentation 3 *	3.	3. <u>Percy</u> <u>Message</u> 1,2
2/9	Presentation 4	4.	4. <u>Message</u> 3,4,6
2/16	Presentation 5 *	5.	5. <u>Buechner</u> <u>TT</u> (All)
2/23	Presentation 6 *	6.	6. <u>O'Connor</u> <u>M&amp;M</u> (63-86;143-190)
3/2	Presentation 7 *	7.	7. <u>Said</u> <u>RI</u> 1-2
3/16	Presentation 8	8.	8. <u>RI</u> 3-6
3/23	Presentation 9 *	9.	9. <u>Buber</u> <u>I &amp; Thou</u> "First Part"
3/30	Presentation 10	10.	10. <u>I &amp; Thou</u> Parts 2 & 3
4/6	Oral Exams	4:00 _____ 5:00 _____	4:30 _____
4/20	Oral Exams	4:00 _____ 5:00 _____	4:30 _____
4/27	Oral Exams	4:00 _____ 5:00 _____	4:30 _____