

CMST 3321: Business and Professional Communication

TT – 12:30 AM – 1:50 PM, CAS 106 , CRN #21132

University of Texas – Tyler, Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Erik Gustafson

Office: CAS 229

Office Phone: 903-566-7099

Email: egustafson@uttyler.edu

Office Hours: T/Th 10:30am-12:30pm or by appointment

Course Description

Consistently, employers rank communication skills among the top, if not *the* top, skill that they look for in prospective employees. Yet, employers also state that communication skills is one of the areas in which college graduates continually fall short of expectations. To address this demand in the job market the present course combines theory and practical applications to develop interpersonal skills that are necessary for success in professional settings. Topics include verbal and non-verbal messages, the appropriate use of technology, listening for content and relational meanings, interviewing, networking, teambuilding, problem-solving, and conflict management. Overall, this course is designed to give you the tools to become an exceptional communicator in a variety of professional settings while exposing you to real-world scenarios both in and out of the classroom.

Pre-requisites: N/A

Course Materials (Optional)

Chesebro, J.L. (2014). *Professional communication at work: Interpersonal strategies for career success*. Routledge.

Learning Outcome

To communicate more effectively in written, verbal, and technologically mediated interactions within professional contexts.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, a student will

- Understand theoretical underpinnings of interpersonal communication theories
- Apply interpersonal theory to practical business interactions and operations
- Practice effective verbal and written message design
- Demonstrate successful networking and interviewing skills

Course Policies and Expectations

Description of Instructional Methods: Instruction will be student-centered and require the development of theoretical knowledge and the demonstration of practical competence in professional interpersonal communication through a variety of instructional methods. The tools implemented include, but are not limited to, textbook readings, supplementary readings, PowerPoints, online exams/quizzes, independent and guided research, individual and group presentations, and written documents.

Communication: *The best way to reach me will be via email. Do not use the messenger app in Canvas.* During the work week (M-F 9:00am – 5:00pm) I will respond to emails within 48 hours. If you do not receive a response from me within this time frame please send another message. Response times are subject to delay on the weekends and evenings.

Attendance & Participation: You will be expected to attend class in-person (there will not be an option to Zoom in). In the workplace, unexplained absences are not tolerated. This class will adopt a similar policy. You are allotted two “freebies” each semester in which you can miss class without penalty. Regardless of whether you are using your freebie or have another excused absence, you should notify me prior to the class period. After your three freebies, you will be docked 5% from your overall grade for each additional absence.

In addition to attending class, you are responsible for actively participating during in-class activities. You are expected to engage with in-class discussions, written activities, and presentations both independently and as a group. The activities we will complete in class are meant to prepare you for specific responsibilities and interactions you will have in the workplace.

Late Work & Make-Up Assignments: As a rule of thumb, I do not accept late-work. In the workplace, you will be expected to complete your assigned work by the date it is required. This class will mirror that expectation. Of course, I do understand that life happens. If something comes up, *please contact me prior to the assignment deadline to discuss your options.*

Technology Use: During our class sessions we will do a variety of activities that will require you do research, craft documents/written materials, and create presentations. Thus, you should have at least one device capable of connecting to the internet (phone, tablet, laptop, etc.) and at least one form of writing and recording information (notebook, laptop, etc.).

While we will use technology in the classroom quite a bit, it is important to note that even with the ubiquity of such devices, they should be used primarily for course-related activities. Any egregious use of devices for activities unrelated to the course (texting, doom scrolling, snapchatting, watching Netflix, etc.) are subject to disciplinary action.

Classroom Etiquette: During the course of the semester, you all will be tasked with completing both written and verbal work independently and with groups. You are expected to be cordial and cooperative with your group mates. Any disrespectful or malicious behavior towards classmates will not be tolerated and is subject to disciplinary action and/removal from the course.

University Policies

UT-Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT-Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the Student Conduct and Discipline policy (Links to an external site.) in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to: copying from another student's test paper; using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test; failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test; possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test; using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program; collaborating with or seeking aid from another

student during a test or other assignment without authority; discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination; divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student; substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment; paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program; falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit; taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

“Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

Artificial Intelligence Usage

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools’ ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler’s Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler’s Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, AI usage will be permitted on a case-by-case basis as indicated by the instructor. In the process of prospecting, networking, designing interview materials (i.e. resume/cover letter/etc.), researching people/organizations, and other organizational activities, AI can be an extremely helpful tool. However, when used improperly, reliance on AI for research and creation of materials can inadvertently demonstrate inexperience, laziness, and unsuitability for a position. We will carefully examine the AI’s usability in the workforce throughout the term.

The UT-Tyler Writing Center

The Writing Center provides professional writing tutoring for all students in all disciplines. If you wish to use the Writing Center, you should plan for a minimum of two hour-long tutorials per assignment: the first to provide an initial consultation and drafting plan, and the second to follow up. Be prepared to take an active role in your learning, as you will be asked to discuss your work during your tutorial. While Writing Center tutors are happy to provide constructive criticism and teach effective writing techniques, under no circumstances will they fix, repair, or operate on your paper. Appointments: 903.565-5995, writingcenter@uttyler.edu

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application.

The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, #3150 or call 903.566.7079.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated (September 3, 2021). Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at <http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar>. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract. The Census Date (September 3, 2021) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.

- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date).
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a "W" grade).
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment.
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

Final Exam Policy:

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members are required to maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy:

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in lieu of a grade only when all of the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average for a student.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to complete all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has not been assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or to NC if the course was originally taken under the CR/NC grading basis.

Grade Appeal Policy:

UT Tyler's Grade Appeal policy requires the completion of a Grade Appeal form for this action to take place. The grade appeal begins with the instructor of your course. If you do not agree with the decision of the instructor, you may then move your appeal to the department chair/school director for that course. If you are still dissatisfied with the decision of the chair/director, you may move the appeal to the Dean of the College offering that course who has the final decision. Grade appeals must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade. The Grade Appeal form is found on the Registrar's Form Library.

Withdrawing from Class:

Students may withdraw (drop) from this course using the Withdrawal Portal. Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions on using the Withdrawal portal.

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped include those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. CAUTION #1: Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. CAUTION #2: All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. CAUTION #3: All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. CAUTION #4: All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the Military and Veterans Success Center.

*Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities:

This course follows the practices related to approved absences as noted by the Student Manual of Operating Procedures (Sec. 1 -501 ([Links to an external site.](#))).

Absence for Religious Holidays:

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious holiday are requested to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of the semester.

FERPA:

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in University Policy 5.2.3 ([Links to an external site.](#)). The course instructor will follow all requirements in protecting your confidential information.

Military Affiliated Students:

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with me if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in

your academic progress. It is important to make me aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. I am willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. Campus resources for military affiliated students are in the Military and Veterans Success Center (MVSC ([Links to an external site.](#)) The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu, or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

UT Tyler Resources for Students:

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)

Brief Description of Assignments

Syllabus Contract (15 points): Fill out, sign, and submit syllabus contract to Canvas.

In-class Assignments (150 points): Throughout the course of the semester we will practice the skills and apply the theories that we read about during our class sessions. A significant chunk of your grade will come from different exercises completed during class. This will include, but is not limited to, the production of written documents, oral presentations, online engagement, and assorted interactions.

Resume (25 points): In many cases, the first “look” employers will have at you is through your resume. For this reason, it is integral that you spend some time thinking about the content, format, and general feel of your resume. As such, you will be responsible for creating and submitting a general version of your resume early in on in the semester.

Intrapersonal Reflection Paper (35 points): In order to have a successful and fulfilling career it is important to understand your own needs, wants, and inclinations. You will reflect on your personal conceptualization of work. Prompts are located on the assignment sheet. Papers are to be 1-2 pages single-spaced.

Occupational Aspirations Presentation (50 points): This assignment is designed to get you thinking about your own career and occupations of interest to you. Regardless of your stage in your career, it is important to develop and understanding of the industry and career you wish to enter. You will research an industry of your interest, identify at least 15 companies within the industry, and at least 5 *specific* entry-level and/or internship positions within those (or different) organizations and their qualifications/responsibilities. Additionally, you should discuss why you are interested in a few sentences. You will type up a 1-2 page (single-spaced) bulleted summary of your findings, attach the most current version of your resume to the summary, create a targeted cover letter for ONE position that most interests you, and give a 2-3 minute presentation to the class about the industry, occupation, and your interest in it.

Contemporary Issues Presentation and Discussion (50 points): To practice your presentation skills, as well as your ability to research an important and controversial professional issue, you will research a topic that is expressed via interpersonal channels in organizations (age discrimination, nepotism, sexual harassment, outsourcing, abuses of power, bullying, etc.). You will then prepare a 1-page (single-spaced) executive summary (with works cited page) and make a 3-4 minute presentation to the class, allowing class members to respond to your proposed solution. Please be prepared to lead the discussion about your researched topic.

Industry Professional Interview (3 x 50 points – 150 total): There is no one better equipped to tell you about a certain job than the person who does it. For this assignment you will need to seek out someone who is in currently in an occupation you are interested in. You can do this in-person or via digital avenues (i.e. LinkedIn, Glassdoor, etc.). Once contact has been made, you should schedule a brief interview with them (Roughly 10 minutes). Prior to the interview you should create a list of questions for them. After the interview you should type up a 1-2 page (single-spaced) summary of the interview, an appraisal of how the interaction went, and reflection on the

information learned. You will turn in your line of questioning document, an audio or video recording of the interview, and copies of any correspondence.

Event Participation (3x50 points – 150 total): The majority of your professional development over the course of your career will take place outside of the classroom. All too frequently students wait until after graduation to begin seeking out avenues for developing their skillset and professional network. As such, you will be required to seek out and attend a variety of professional development opportunities and/or events (see assignment sheet for qualifying activities) throughout the course of the semester. After attending the event you will be required to provide proof of attendance (via a selfie) and a 1 page single-spaced reflection summarizing the main takeaways.

Case Studies (2x75 points – 150 total): In groups you will be tasked with completing a case study on a particular phenomenon related to concepts within interpersonal communication. Once the case study is assigned, you will have until the next class period to formulate your answers, type up case study notes, and present to the class.

Podcast Assignment (125 points): For your final project you will record (video & audio) a podcast that applies course concepts to identify, analyze, and provide recommendations for a business issue related to interpersonal communication. Final podcasts recordings will be 15-25 minutes and be submitted with a preparation dossier.

Physical Book Assignment (50 points): Throughout the semester you will be tasked with independently selecting, reading, and annotating a book of your choosing. This book must be approved by the instructor, but you have a great deal of freedom in your selection, permitted that you provide adequate justification for your selection. At the end of the semester, you will turn in your annotated book, provide a brief written summary, and present to the class.

Participation (50 points): This class will require you to meaningfully engage with members within and outside of the class. It is integral to your success in the course that you are active member in discussions and activities. Additionally, the goal of this course is become an effective interpersonal communicator. Thus, you will be expected to model the behaviors we are learning in digital (i.e. email) and in-person interactions. A portion of this grade will be reserved for your professional acumen throughout the term.

Point Breakdown

A = 900 – 1000

B = 800 – 899

C = 700 – 799

D = 600 – 699

F = 599 and below

Course Schedule (Tentative)

Week	Schedule (Tentative)		Reading	Assignments
	Date	Topic		
1	13-Jan	No Class		
	15-Jan	Course Introduction		Syllabus Contract due by 1/18
2	20-Jan	Communication, Work, and Self Individuals in Organizations + Why Work	Ch 1	
	22-Jan		Ch. 2 + PDF	Intrapersonal Reflection due 1/26
3	27-Jan	Credibility	Ch 5	
	29-Jan	Networking	Ch. 3 + PDF	
4	3-Feb	OA Presentations		Occupational Aspirations Summary due by class time
	5-Feb	Organizational Culture	Ch. 4	Resume due by 2/8
5	10-Feb	Workplace Relationships	Ch. 6	Book Check #1 by class time
	12-Feb	Industry Interview Roundtable #1		Industry Interview #1 due by class time
6	17-Feb	Listening	Ch 9 + PDF	
	19-Feb	Giving Good Presentations	Ch 14	Event Participation #1 due by 2/22
7	24-Feb	CI Presentations		Executive Summary due by class time
	26-Feb	Effective Messaging + Case Studies		
8	3-Mar	CaseStudy #1 Assigned		
	5-Mar	Case Study #2 Presentations		Case Study #2 due by class time
9	10-Mar	NO CLASS - Spring Break		
	12-Mar	NO CLASS - Spring Break		
10	17-Mar	Coaching + Being Coached	Chapter 8 + PDF	
	19-Mar	Leadership	PDF	Event Participation #2 due by 3/19
11	24-Mar	Navigating Conflict + Organizational Politics	Ch 11 + 13	Book Check #2 by class time
	26-Mar	Industry Interview Roundtable #2		Industry Interview #2 due by class time
12	31-Mar	Case Study #2 Assigned		
	2-Apr	Case Study #2 Presentations		Case Study #2 due by class time
13	7-Apr	Diffusion of Ideas	PDF	
	9-Apr	Technology + Mediated Interactions	PDF	Event Participation #3 due by 4/12
14	14-Apr	AI, Quantum Computing, and the Future of the Workplace	PDF	
	16-Apr	Industry Interview Roundtable #3		Industry Interview #3 due by class time
15	21-Apr	Book Club Presentations		Final Books/Reflection due by Class time
	23-Apr	Course Wrap-up + Group Meetings		
16	28-Apr	Finals Week		Final Projects due TBD
	30-Apr	Finals Week		
** All assignments due by 11:59pm unless specified otherwise **				

CMST 3321 (Spring 2026) Syllabus Contract

I have read the syllabus for CMST 3321 and agree to the terms for required coursework and acceptable behavior.

Name:

Year in School:

Major/Minor:

Hometown:

Professional Headshot:

What do you hope to get out of this class?

What are your career interests?

Who are the top 3 people who inspire you (this can be personally or professionally) and why?

Who are your top 3 musical artists and/or songs?

What are your favorite TV Shows, movies, or books/authors?

Lastly, if you feel comfortable doing so, please list any time commitments (work, extra-curriculars, family, etc.) you have – or expect to have – outside of CMST 3321 this Spring. (This section is entirely optional and exists just so that, if you wish, I am aware of your general schedule and can accommodate you accordingly).