

COMM 54A: FORENSIC SPEECH

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Fall 2026
Units:	5
Hours:	5 lecture per week (60 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Recommended previous or concurrent enrollment in COMM C1000, C1000H, or 1B; demonstrated proficiency in English by placement via multiple measures OR through an equivalent placement process OR completion of ESLL 125 & ESLL 249; not open to students with credit in COMM 54 or SPCH 54.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 1B: Oral Communication & Critical Thinking
Transferable:	CSU
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- Prepare and deliver a competition-level platform (informative, persuasive, communication analysis, after dinner speech) or limited preparation (impromptu, extemp.) speech
- Using forensic performance standards, provide oral critiques of individual speeches

Description

Training in principles of forensic speech, focusing on both individual prepared and individual extemporaneous oratory. Speech formats include communication analysis, extemp, impromptu, informative, and persuasive speech. Study of the history of various speech formats and instruction in speech criticism.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Outline and perform properly-formatted impromptu and extemporaneous speeches.
2. Prepare and present either an informative, persuasive, or communication analysis speech.
3. Provide accurate and complete oral citation of researched sources during speeches.
4. Understand the history and development of rhetorical competition in the United States.
5. Deliver constructive and professional oral critiques of peer speeches.
6. Create appropriate and correctly-formatted written speech critiques using adjudication standards.

7. Gain understanding and appreciation of people from diverse cultural backgrounds through intercultural research and presentation analysis.
8. Gain understanding of effective verbal and nonverbal delivery techniques.
9. Apply principles of information competency to research, analyze, and develop content for competitive speeches.
10. Examine ethical engagement with teammates, coaches, judges, and competitors in a forensics or community event setting.
11. Reflect on personal growth and performance through post-event evaluation and self-assessment.

Course Content

This course provides focused instruction and practice in two key areas of competitive forensics: platform speeches and limited preparation speeches. Students will develop skills in research, organization, delivery, and critique through the following components:

1. Introduction to platform and limited preparation speech events
 - a. Overview of relevant forensics categories
 - i. Platform speeches: Informative, persuasive, and communication analysis
 - ii. Limited preparation speeches: Impromptu and extemporaneous
 - b. Review of event structures and competition requirements
 - c. Ethics and etiquette for participation in speech events
2. Platform speeches
 - a. Instruction in the preparation and delivery of:
 - i. Informative speeches
 - ii. Persuasive speeches
 - iii. Communication analysis speeches
 - b. Study of historically and culturally relevant examples
 - c. Practice in integrating research and evidence into structured arguments
3. Limited preparation speeches
 - a. Impromptu speaking
 - i. Techniques for spontaneous organization and delivery
 - ii. Practice analyzing quotations, prompts, and current event topics
 - b. Extemporaneous speaking
 - i. Research and organization strategies for timed preparation
 - ii. Emphasis on information competency, analysis, and synthesis of current issues
4. Source citation and evidence integration
 - a. Review of proper oral citation techniques
 - b. Practice incorporating credible sources into both prepared and limited preparation speeches
5. Speech critique and feedback
 - a. Development of oral and written critique skills
 - b. Practice evaluating peer speeches using adjudication standards
6. Intercultural understanding and appreciation
 - a. Cross-cultural research to inform speech content and audience awareness
 - b. Review and analysis of international intercollegiate forensics competition performances to gain a global perspective on speech practices
7. Application and performance

- a. Practicing advocacy and presentation for one or more speech events
- b. Participation in at least one competitive forensics event focused on platform or limited preparation speeches

Lab Content

Not applicable.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Classroom with access to audio/visual aids, especially video camera, computer with internet access, projector and viewing screen, monitor, and DVD/VCR.
2. When taught as an online/hybrid section: on-going access to computer with email software and capabilities; email address; JavaScript-enabled internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

Written presentation outline

Evaluation of speeches based on organization of material, clarity of expression, significance of evidence, effectiveness of transitions, and logical progression of ideas

Written speech critique of peer performances

Written self-assessments reflecting on personal growth and performance

Participation in in-class performances, activities, discussions, and critiques to demonstrate understanding of competitive event formats and communication theory

Development and submission of a digital portfolio containing all speech events from the quarter, including post-event participation evaluations and self-reflections with support from peers and the instructor

Preparation and presentation of at least one coach-approved event suitable for collegiate competition to assess the quality of speeches

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Instructor-led lectures that introduce the structure, purpose, and variety of forensics event types

Group seminar coaching focused on research, social significance, writing, editing, performance, and delivery

Individualized coaching sessions tailored to each student's chosen event and specific advocacy goals to provide targeted support

In-class performances followed by instructor-guided interpretation, analysis, and feedback

Cooperative exercises, such as peer critiques, oral presentations, and electronic group discussions facilitated by instructor prompts

Demonstrations of essential techniques and elements required for competitive speaking

Participation as a competitor or observer in on-campus performances, intramural events, and/or intercollegiate speech competitions to further enrich the learning experience

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Schreiber, Lisa, and Morgan Hartranft. Public Speaking (The Public Speaking Project). 2023.

Donovan, Jeremy. How to Win the Championship of Public Speaking. 2013.

Sedniev, Andrii. Magic of Public Speaking: A Complete System to Become a World Class Speaker. 2012.

Winebrennar, T.C.. Intercollegiate Forensics, 2nd ed.. 1999.

Although some of these texts are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal texts in this area of study.

The nature of this course allows for the use of a variety of materials identified by the instructor, such as current event publications, sample speeches, instructor-created resources.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Speech writing assignments
 - a. Write multiple speeches in a variety of formats, including:
 - i. Limited preparation speeches (e.g., impromptu or extemporaneous)
 - ii. Public address speeches (e.g., informative, persuasive, rhetorical criticism/communication analysis)
 - b. Draft outlines and manuscripts using proper structure, research integration, and oral citation techniques
2. Critical thinking assignments
 - a. Analyze and evaluate peer speeches and professional models using rhetorical and organizational criteria
 - b. Prepare and revise speeches with attention to argument development, audience adaptation, and the use of credible evidence
 - c. Reflect on and respond to written feedback from tournament judges and coaches
3. Reading and research assignments
 - a. Conduct and review scholarly and credible research to support the construction of speech content
 - b. Read assigned materials that explore communication theory, speech strategy, and effective delivery techniques
4. Performance and skills demonstrations
 - a. Deliver weekly in-class presentations for critique and improvement
 - b. Prepare and present coach-approved competitive speeches that meet tournament standards
5. Evaluation and reflection assignments
 - a. Provide verbal critiques of peer presentations using course terminology and evaluation rubrics
 - b. Complete written evaluations of speeches presented in class or in competition
 - c. Submit a one-page reflection on feedback received from judges at intercollegiate tournaments

These assignments are representative and may vary based on instructor approach, but all are designed to meet course objectives and support student success in competitive speaking environments.

Discipline(s)

Communication Studies