COMM 2400: Public Speaking

Fall 2014 Course Syllabus
Section 008: Mondays/Wednesdays 2:00-2:50pm, J157
Section 009: Mondays/Wednesdays 3:00-3:50pm, J157

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IMPORTANT DATES

- Start of classes: August 13
- End of add/drop: August 18
- University holiday: September 1
- Engagement reports due: September 3
- Midterm grades due: September 29
- Withdrawal deadline: October 2
- University holiday: November 26-28
- Last day of classes: December 1
- Final exams: December 3-9

*** Please make a note that we WILL meet during our scheduled final exam time. The university registrar will post that schedule on BannerWeb after the semester begins. You need to plan to be in town and available during the final exam time.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

- Reliable and consistent access to an internet-enabled computer with speakers and a printer
- Reliable and consistent access to your SPSU email and D2L accounts

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will learn the skills and strategies needed to prepare and deliver ceremonial, informative, persuasive speeches. Special consideration is given to adapting communication styles and content to diverse speakers and audiences. This course emphasizes how to compose meaningful and coherent messages; how to conduct responsible research on appropriate topics; and how to argue, develop, and polish effective presentation skills. Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. be able to properly organize/outline a speech or presentation;
2. be able to support their positions and use a variety of support materials in their speeches;
3. be able to properly prepare and use visual aids regardless of the technology being used;
4. be able to prepare and present a speech that has an introduction, body, and conclusion that will hold interest, be easy to follow, and be factually accurate based on appropriate research; and
5. be able to adequately analyze an audience and use that analysis in speeches.
GENERAL COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. Read and understand the syllabus, schedule, and materials posted on the course D2L page.

2. Make an effort. I expect you to be an active participant in your education.

3. Ask for help. It is difficult for me to know you need assistance unless you ask for help. I am willing to provide a substantial amount of help to those who ask.

4. Any phones, laptops, tablets or similar devices should not create noise (vibrate is not silent) or other distractions. If these devices become a distraction you will be prohibited from bringing them to class in the future.

5. Please wait until class has ended to begin packing up your belongings.

6. Never enter the classroom while another student is giving a speech or presentation.

7. Keep all graded work until your final grade is available on Banner Web. You will need these documents in the event of an error or discrepancy regarding your final grade.

8. Avoid sexist, racist, homophobic speech and/or behaviors as well as other violent actions that discourage full class participation and create a hostile environment.

9. Occasionally, changes to this syllabus and/or the course schedule will become necessary. In the event changes are made, you will be notified via SPSU email and/or D2L.

COURSE POLICIES

Students are expected to read, understand, and be familiar with the following policies specific to this course. Failure to know or understand these policies is not a valid excuse for failing to follow them.

COMMUNICATION

I will communicate with you regularly through your SPSU email and D2L. I expect students to check their SPSU email and D2L accounts regularly to avoid missing important announcements and updates.

Please remember that our relationship is of a professional nature and therefore, you should communicate with me in a professional manner. Any time you contact me via writing, you should provide your first and last name as well as the course and section number in which you are enrolled. You are welcome to contact me at any time via email, D2L, or my office phone. I will reply to these messages as quickly as possible, Monday through Friday.

You also are welcome to stop by my office at any time to see if I am available. My office hours are times I am regularly available to meet with students. If you plan to come to my office hours, please let me know ahead of time so I can reserve that time for you. If you have an appointment with me, during my office hours or otherwise, you will be given preference over students without appointments. If coming to campus to meet is not possible, you may also request an appointment to speak with me via phone, Skype, or the D2L Pager tool.
ATTENDANCE
Attending class regularly is essential in order to succeed in this course. Furthermore, students who regularly attend class continually earn significantly higher grades than those who do not. You are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the duration of each class meeting. In order to be considered present for any given class period you must be awake, alert, and not involved in other activities (ie. reading the paper, completing other coursework, having side conversations, texting, picking your nose, etc.) I reserve the right to count you absent for any class period in which you were a distraction to others (and will notify you of this action if it occurs).

Attendance will be taken using a sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class. If you are late it is your responsibility to remember to sign in AFTER class has ended. If you do not sign the sheet before leaving class, you will be counted absent for that day. Do not, under any circumstances, sign in another student. You are allowed to miss one class, on a non-speech day, without any penalty to your grade. Each additional absence on non-speech days will result in a one-point deduction from your final grade. Speech days are those days any student is scheduled to deliver a speech. Each absence on a speech day will result in a two-point deduction from your final grade. Given there are only 100 points possible in the course, a deduction of two points is equivalent to a two percentage point deduction in your overall course grade. I will not impose a penalty for being late or leaving early so long as it does not occur regularly. If it becomes a consistent problem during the semester, a penalty for arriving late and/or leaving early may be implemented. In this event, students will be notified via email and/or D2L of the new policy.

In the event you miss class, you are responsible for attaining any information you missed. I do not provide copies of my notes to students therefore you will need to contact a classmate to discuss what you missed and get a copy of her or his notes. I suggest you try to notice which classmates appear to regularly take notes during class so that if you are absent you can ask to borrow notes from someone who is likely to have a complete set of notes. Additionally, you might ask two people for notes to make sure you have all the information covered during class. After you have gotten notes from a classmate, you may make an appointment with me to discuss any questions or concerns over the missed material.

The ONLY absences that are excused are those due to university-sponsored activities and “severe health/family-related concerns.” I define “severe health/family-related concerns” as something that requires a visit to a hospital or is a sudden and immediate crisis situation and I require documentation as proof of such. Keep in mind that requests are just that, requests, and therefore may not be granted. For absences due to university-sponsored activities, you must speak to me PRIOR to your absence and missed work is expected to be completed either before leaving or by the assigned due date. For absences due to severe health/family-related concerns, you should contact me as soon as is reasonably possible to discuss any missed assignments.

LATE SPEECHES
You must complete all speech assignments in order to pass this class. Failure to complete all speech assignments will result in an automatic F for this course. In-class presentations are difficult to schedule; therefore, the penalties for missing your assigned presentation time are quite harsh. In the event that you are absent or unprepared the day you are scheduled to deliver your speech, your name will be moved to the very bottom of the speaking order and you risk not having time to give your speech in class. If there is time left in class, after everyone else has delivered her or his speech, you will be allowed to deliver your speech for a 25% penalty. If there is not time left in class after everyone else has gone, you will need to make an appointment to deliver your speech outside of class. Giving your speech outside of class will result in a 50% penalty.
WRITTEN WORK
The majority of written assignments in this course will be submitted electronically via the D2L dropbox. All written work should be carefully proofread and contain your name, the course and section number, the semester, and the name of the assignment. Work submitted electronically should be saved as a PDF. Any written work that you are asked to turn in as a hard/paper copy must also be typed and stapled. If the assignment exceeds one page you should put your last name and the page number on all subsequent pages. I reserve the right to lower the grade for any work not meeting these guidelines.

VISUAL AIDS AND TECHNOLOGY
Visual aids can be an important aspect of public speaking and are required for some of the speech assignments in this course. Flash drives and online storage technologies are the best methods for transporting electronic visual aids. When you plan to use some type of electronic visual aid, I strongly encourage you to prepare a backup visual aid in the event technology should fail you. Technical difficulties will not excuse you from any visual aid requirement in an assignment. I also strongly recommend that you practice using the classroom technology required for your presentation before using it during an in-class presentation. Talk to me to schedule a time to practice using the classroom technology.

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS
I will not accept hard/paper copies of assignments that are to be submitted electronically via the D2L dropbox. Assignments for which you are asked to submit a hard/paper copy must be completed and turned in by the beginning of the class during which it is due. Working on an assignment during class means that it was not completed by the due date. Putting work under my office door and/or emailing it to me are unacceptable ways of handing in any work and thus will receive no credit. I do not accept any late written work without prior approval.

REQUESTING EXTENSIONS
Occasionally, it is necessary for students to request an assignment deadline be extended. Keep in mind that requests for extensions are just that, requests, and therefore may not be granted. I must receive any request for extensions prior to the class period in which the assignment is due.

GRADE GRABBING
I have borrowed the explanation of my policy on grade grabbing from a friend and former colleague, Dr. Ryan McGeough:

Grade grabbing is the practice of asking for a grade near the end of the semester. You or someone you know may have successfully talked a professor into bumping a grade up in a past course. It would be unwise to attempt grade grabbing in any of my courses. Not only will it absolutely not work, but asking to be given a grade you did not earn is unfair to all of your peers who operate under the same grading expectations as you. As such it will almost certainly damage my opinion of you, thus impairing my ability to do the favors I routinely do for former students, such as writing letters of recommendation or adding into future courses. Be sure to avoid alternate grade grabbing strategies such as the impending doom scenario: ‘if I don’t get an ‘A’ in your class, my GPA will fall below ____, I will lose my scholarship, be forced to drop out of school, and inevitably turn to a life of crime and drugs.’ Obviously I do not want you to turn to a life of crime, thus I work hard to ensure my grading criteria are clear. As such, if you need an ‘A’, it is up to you to do the work to earn it.
SERVICES AVAILABLE TO SPSU STUDENTS

HORNET ALERT
I strongly encourage students to sign up for SPSU’s emergency notification system, Hornet Alert, at www.spsu.edu/emergency/emergency_notification/hornetalert.htm

SPSU CAREER AND COUNSELING CENTER
The SPSU Career and Counseling Center provides essential assistance to students regarding personal, career, or academic issues. These services are free to current students and allow students to meet privately and confidentially with a trained counselor. The Career and Counseling Center is located on the lower level of the student center. They can be reached from 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, at 678-915-7391. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing a mental health emergency after normal business hours please contact SPSU Campus Police (678-915-5555) to be connected with an on-call counselor. Additional information regarding services and appointments can be found online at: http://www.spsu.edu/counselingservices/.

DISABILITY SERVICES
Students with disabilities are encouraged to visit the ATTIC (Student Center/Building A, Suite 160) to speak with a staff member regarding attaining accommodations in this course. Current university policies and procedures relating to accommodations for disabilities can be found in section 460.0 of the University Policies and Procedures (http://www.spsu.edu/pandp). Additional information can also be found online at: http://www.spsu.edu/attic/disabilities/index.htm

SPSU WRITING CENTER
The Writing Center provides opportunities for individualized tutorial assistance to all Southern Polytechnic students. Academic consultants help students through the processes of invention, organization, writing, revising, and editing of essays and research papers. The Writing Center is not a proofreading service but a collaborative effort to improve student writing. The SPSU Writing Center Website (http://www.spsu.edu/writingcenter) contains information on policies, hours and scheduling.

SELECTED UNIVERSITY POLICIES
You are responsible for knowing and following all university policies; failure to understand university policies is not a valid excuse for failing to follow them.

HONOR CODE
"SPSU has an Honor Code and a new procedure relating to when academic misconduct is alleged. All students should be aware of them. Information about the Honor Code and the misconduct procedure may be found at http://spsu.edu/honorcode/" (http://www.spsu.edu/honorcode/syllabus.htm)

Please remember that the standards for ethical and honest writing also apply to speaking assignments. SPSU faculty members, Bob Brown and Bob Harbort, prepared an excellent, concise explanation of academic honesty in writing. This document is located at: http://bbrown.spsu.edu/papers/conduct.html

POLICY ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
“Southern Polytechnic State University is committed to making all of its programs and services available to all qualified students regardless of their race, age, sex, national origin, ethnicity, religion, marital status, Vietnam era veteran status, handicap, or other non-relevant criteria.” (Student Handbook, http://www.spsu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/Studenthandbook.pdf)
POLICY ON WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASSES
Current policies regarding the ability to withdraw from a course and the ability of the university to administratively withdraw a student from her or his courses can be found in the student handbook (http://www.spsu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/Studenthandbook.pdf)

GRADE APPEALS FOR COURSES
In the event any SPSU student believes her or his final course grade was based on criteria that were not “a fair and impartial evaluation of academic performance,” that student may formally appeal a course grade. Detailed information about this policy is available in section 304.5 of the University Policies and Procedures (http://www.spsu.edu/pandp).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS
In this course there are a total of 100 points possible. If you have concerns regarding a 100-point grading scale please visit with me so we can discuss it in more detail. However, everyone should be mindful of not only the points possible for each assignment, but also their relative worth to other assignments. A 2-point assignment might not seem particularly important in another class but in this class that assignment is worth two percent of your final grade.

SPEECHES
Speeches are your primary opportunity to demonstrate your comprehension of the concepts discussed in the book and lectures. Specific information about each speech assignment and the requirements for each speech are available on D2L. You will deliver a total of three speeches in this course:

1. an introductory speech
2. an informative speech
3. a persuasive speech

PEER EVALUATION
The peer evaluation assignment will require you to conduct a thorough evaluation of a classmate’s informative speech. Specific instructions for the peer evaluation assignment are available on D2L.

REFLECTION
The reflection assignment will give you the opportunity to reflect on the progress you have made over the semester and to discuss your public speaking strengths and weaknesses. This assignment will require you to use the self-evaluation forms and the PRCA surveys you have completed throughout the semester.

PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES
Throughout the semester there will be a number of participation activities completed in class and on D2L. These activities will test your understanding of the course material, require you to apply the material to specific examples, and provide you with opportunities to practice specific skills. In-class participation activities will not be announced in advance. Missed in-class participation activities are only allowed to be made up if your absence was due to participation in a university-sponsored activity or a severe health/family-related concern. See the course syllabus for additional information regarding absences for those reasons.