COMM 2400: Public Speaking
Department of English, Technical Communication, and Media Arts

Fall 2013 Course Syllabus
Section 002: M/W 10-10:50a
Section 011: M/W 4-4:50p

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And by appointment

IMPORTANT DATES
• Fall 2013 Semester: Aug 14 - Dec 2
• End of Add/Drop: Aug 19
• Labor Day/No classes: Sept 2
• Engagement Reports due: Sept 4
• Midterm Grades due: Sept 30
• Withdrawal Deadline: Oct 3
• Thanksgiving Holiday: Nov 27 - 29
• Final Exams: Dec 4 - 10

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS
• Reliable and consistent access to an internet-enabled computer with speakers, a printer, your SPSU email account and your D2L account.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
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.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon successful completion of this course, students will:
• be able to properly organize/outline a speech or presentation;
• be able to support their positions and use a variety of support materials in their speeches;
• be able to properly prepare and use visual aids regardless of the technology being used;
• 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
• be able to adequately analyze an audience and use that analysis in speeches.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/RATIONALE
During the course, you will be asked to stand before a group and deliver information, argue a position, speak with a group, or various other public presentations. It is important that you command the audience’s attention and present yourself as a competent and credible speaker. In this course, you will be asked to present four speeches. The goal is for you to gain more confidence in communicating in public contexts. In addition, the following learning objectives will be met:
• Construct (research, outline, and organize) public speeches for delivery to audiences.
• Deliver ceremonial, informative, and persuasive speeches.
• Develop analytic and critical thinking skills.
• Successfully manage their apprehension about communicating in public contexts.
GENERAL COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1) Read and understand the syllabus, schedule, and materials posted on the course D2L page.
2) Ask for help. Asking for help is the only way I know you need assistance. I am happy to provide a substantial amount of help if you ask.
3) Please silence all phones (and similar devices) during classtime. The vibrate setting is not silent.
4) Laptops and tablets are permitted only on days during which other students are not giving speeches. If it becomes a distraction, you will be asked to put it away and stop bringing it to class.
5) 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) Avoid sexist, racist, homophobic speech and/or behaviors as well as other violent actions that discourage full class participation and create a hostile environment.
8) Keep all graded work until your final grade is available on Banner Web. These documents will be necessary should there be an error or discrepancy regarding your final grade.
9) Occasionally, changes to this syllabus or the course schedule will become necessary. In the event changes are made, students will be notified via SPSU email and/or D2L.

ASSIGNMENTS
In this course, you may earn up to 100 points total. Although a 100-point grading scale may be unfamiliar to you, I find it preferable for a variety of reasons. If you have questions or concerns about the grading scale, please contact me. You may view your grades at any time in the D2L grade book.

• READING
  Reading assignments listed on the course schedule should be completed prior to class. Please note that we will not necessarily discuss each section of the reading in class and we will often discuss topics in class that are not included in the textbook. Your comprehension of the reading and lecture material will be assessed through class discussions and graded assignments.

• SPEECHES (72 points)
  You will deliver a total of four speeches in this course. Speeches are your primary opportunity to demonstrate your comprehension of the concepts discussed in the book and lectures. Specific information about each speech assignment will be available on D2L.

• PEER EVALUATION (2 points)
  You will complete an evaluation of a peer’s in-class speech. Specific information about the peer evaluation assignment will be available on D2L.

• REFLECTION (3 points)
  At the end of the semester you will be asked to reflect upon your experience in the course and your level of comfort with public speaking. Specific information about the reflection assignment will be available on D2L.

• FINAL EXAM (5 points)
  You will complete a take-home final exam near the end of the semester. Specific information about this exam will be available on D2L.

• QUIZZES AND IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES (18 points)
  Throughout the course of the semester there will be nine unannounced quizzes/in-class activities. These assignments will test your comprehension of the assigned reading and ability to apply the course concept to examples. In the event that you miss class the day of a quiz or activity, you will be permitted to complete an alternative assignment for up to 50% credit. If your absence was due to a university-sponsored activity, you may submit a request for an excused absence and, if granted, earn up to 100% on the alternative assignment. It is the student’s responsibility to determine when they have missed a quiz/activity and to contact me regarding an alternative assignment.
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 be aware 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 may contact me at any time via email, D2L, or my office phone. 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. Speak with me to schedule an appointment at a time other than my scheduled office hours. 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 contact me through the D2L Pager.

• ATTENDANCE
Attending class regularly is essential in order to succeed in this course. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the duration of each class. You are responsible for attaining any information you missed while absent from class. You should first contact a classmate to discuss what you missed and get a copy of her or his notes. Once you have done this, you are welcome to make an appointment with me to discuss any questions or concerns over the missed material.

Although students who regularly attend class routinely earn much higher grades than those who do not, student’s grades will only be penalized for absences on speech days. Speech days are those days any student is scheduled to deliver a speech. Absences on these days will result in a two [2] point deduction from your final grade.

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 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.

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.

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. In order to request that an absence be excused, you must complete the “Request for an Excused Absence” form found on D2L. Keep in mind that requests are just that, requests, and therefore may not be granted. For absences due to university-sponsored activities, this form must be turned in 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 and complete the form to request an excused absence within two class meetings of your return.
• **GRADE GRABBING**
  I have borrowed the explanation of my policy on grade grabbing from a former colleague. I should add, however, that grade grabbing is discouraged at any point in the semester, not just at the end.

  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.

• **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 in either the .doc or PDF format. 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.

• **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 will not be accepted without explicit and prior permission. **I do not accept any late written work.**

• **LATE SPEECHES**
  **You must complete all four 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 and make up and therefore the penalties for missing your assigned presentation time are 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 accept the 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 20% 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 40% penalty.

• **LOCKDOWN DAYS**
  There are two “lockdown days” during the semester. The first occurs approximately half way through the course and is the day by which any outstanding assignments must be handed in to receive any credit. The second lockdown day occurs on the day of the final exam meeting. Any outstanding assignments from the second half of the semester must be handed in by that time in order to receive any credit.
• **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. To request an extension you should complete the form available on D2L and follow the submission instructions on that form.

• **VISUAL AIDS AND TECHNOLOGY**
Visual aids can be an important aspect of public speaking and are required for some of the speech assignments. Flash drives and online storage technologies are the best methods for transporting electronic visual aids. You are encouraged to bring a backup visual aid in the event technology should fail you. Note that technical difficulties will *not* excuse you from any visual aid requirement in an assignment. I 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 technology.

**UNIVERSITY SERVICES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS**

• **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 and can be reached by phone at 678-915-7391 between the hours of 8am and 5pm Monday through Friday. 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 was 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].