

## COMM 204 Public Speaking<sup>1</sup>

Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Kessler

Office: ASC 333

Office Hours: Th 2:00pm-5:00pm and by appt

Email: srkessle@usc.edu

Section: 20380

Meeting: T/Th 11:00am-12:20pm

Classroom: ANN 305

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Public speaking—as in speaking both to and before an audience—is not only about what you say; it’s about how you say it. As politicians and pop stars constantly remind us, voice is as much a part of spoken communication as speech itself. In this introductory public speaking course, students will both examine the established principles and cultivate the practices of effective verbal and non-verbal oral communication for a variety of professional and social contexts. This work will involve critically analyzing the dynamics between speaker and listener; performing research, as well as selecting and organizing materials, in preparation for public speaking; using various multimedia tools and sensory aids to bolster oral presentations; and most importantly, giving compelling, ethically grounded, speeches. Crucially, the course will also entail considering contemporary notions of voice in relation to questions of language, authority, power, and identity.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Comprehend and be able to clearly explain communication concepts that serve as bases for effective speaking
- Cultivate and demonstrate analytical, listening, research, and verbal and non-verbal communication skills
- Give captivating, responsibly crafted, speeches
- Critically examine and evaluate others’ speeches (both within and without the classroom)
- Become a more confident, ethical speaker and a more active, responsive listener
- Critically register and interrogate how ideas of voice intersect with issues of identity, language, power, and authority

### REQUIRED TEXT

*Public Speaking: The Virtual Text* (n.d.), available online at <http://publicspeakingproject.org/psvirtualtext.html> (abbreviated to PS in course materials)

Other course readings and viewing materials will be made available via Blackboard.



## ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

More detailed descriptions will be provided when speeches and other exercises are assigned. Written assignments may shift focus based on the needs and desires of the class.

**Introductory Speech.** ~1 min. A brief speech about you, you, you, that introduces you to the rest of the class. This speech should help you feel less jittery speaking in front of your classmates.

**Informative Speech.** 5-7 min. A research-based speech (modeled on a TED Talk) that informs your classmates about a topic of your choice. This speech requires you to sharpen your research skills and provide credible evidence for your claims. Along with your speech, you will be required to submit your research materials (including at least 5 outside sources).

**Persuasive Speech.** 5-7 min. A research-based speech that requires you to craft effective arguments and to define and refute potential counterarguments. This speech should request your audience to perform an action or to shift potential thoughts and feelings. Along with your speech, you will be required to submit your research materials (including at least 5 outside sources).

**Multimedia Aided Speech.** 5-7 min. A research-based speech that uses audio, visual, or other media and non-verbal tools to effectively enhance your claims. You may choose to revisit an idea or a topic from either your informative or your persuasive speech. Along with your speech, you will be required to submit your research materials (including at least 5 outside sources).

**Special Occasion Speech.** ~2 min. A speech appropriate to a real-life special occasion at which you might be asked to speak in future. This speech can be anything from a wedding toast to an Oscar acceptance speech (!), and should help you practice speaking in a less formal environment.

**Written Reflections and Analyses.** In addition to writing a 1-page (double-spaced) critical reflection on your own performance after each of the first four speeches (total = 4 reflections), you will also be required to write a 2-page (double-spaced, before references) critical analysis of a TED Talk of your choice, as well as a 3-4-page (double-spaced, before references) critical analysis of the public speaking skills of two people on opposing sides of a debate. All reflections and analyses should critically apply the terms and concepts we are studying in the class—mere summaries will not suffice.

**Group Pitch.** An in-class activity in which each group pitches an idea to a panel of deep-pocketed “sharks.” The group with the most persuasive pitch wins 10 extra credit points.

**Final Reflection.** 3-5 pp. (double-spaced, before references). Instead of a final exam, you will be required to submit a final reflection paper that applies the concepts and terms learned in class to your own work throughout the past semester. Rather than regurgitating your previous reflections, you should holistically and critically reflect on your speaking experience, improvement, and room for improvement through the lens of the course materials covered. You should also discuss your goals for future performances.

**Participation and Attendance.** This course is as much about developing your ability to productively engage others' ideas—i.e. sharpening your listening (not to mention reading and writing) skills, honing your contributions to collective discussion, and bolstering your confidence in asking questions—as it is about performing speeches before an audience. Our classroom will serve as a laboratory for learning and practicing crucial oral, written, and organizational skills. Every lecture or presentation will be followed by substantial discussion, and impromptu speaking and other activities will be assigned throughout the semester so that you may become more adept at responding without formal preparation. In short, show up, show up on time, come prepared to discuss the assigned readings, and come prepared to perform!

### **GRADE DISTRIBUTION**

**Grade % Breakdown.** Percentages will be calculated by taking the total points earned in the course and dividing by total possible points (1000).

A 92.5-100	B+ 86.5-89.4	C+ 76.5-79.4	D+ 66.5-69.4
A- 89.5-92.4	B 82.5-86.4	C 72.5-76.4	D 62.5-66.4
	B- 79.5-82.4	C- 69.5-72.4	D- 59.5-62.4
			F 59.4 or below

#### **Grade Breakdown by Assignment.**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Total Points</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
<b>Speeches</b>		
Introductory Speech	40 points	Aug. 29
Informative Speech	140 points	Sept. 19 & 21
Persuasive Speech	140 points	Oct. 17 & 19
Multimedia Aided Speech	180 points	Nov. 14 & 16
Special Occasion Speech	100 points	Nov. 28 & 30
<b>Written Assignments</b>		
Speech Reflections (4)	100 points (25 x 4)	Sept. 5, Sept. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 21
TED Talk Analysis	40 points	Sept. 12
Debate Analysis	60 points	Nov. 2
Final Reflection	100 points	Dec. 3
<b>In-Class</b>		
Group Pitch	40 points	Oct. 12
Participation and Attendance	60 points	Ongoing
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000 points</b>	

## COURSE SCHEDULE

The assigned readings should be read *in advance* of the class under which they are listed. The course schedule will shift according to our needs, so please regularly consult Blackboard for any updates (i.e. I won't be handing out updated paper syllabi over the course of the semester).

### Week 1: Course Introduction

- T 8/22            Introductions and Course Overview  
*Assignment:* Introductory Speech
- Th 8/24            Introduction to Public Speaking and Effective Listening  
*Reading:* PS Chapter 1, "Introduction to Public Speaking" and PS Chapter 4, "Listening Effectively"

### Week 2: Introductory Speeches & Introduction to Informative Speaking

- T 8/29            Introductory Speeches (Groups A and B)
- Th 8/31            Remaining Introductory Speeches (if necessary)  
Informative Speaking and Choosing Research Topics  
*Reading:* PS Chapter 15, "Informative Speaking"  
*Viewing:* Chris Anderson (Head of TED) Talk:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/chris\\_anderson\\_teds\\_secret\\_to\\_great\\_public\\_speaking?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chris_anderson_teds_secret_to_great_public_speaking?language=en) and Nancy Duarte TED Talk:  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/nancy\\_duarte\\_the\\_secret\\_structure\\_of\\_great\\_talks](http://www.ted.com/talks/nancy_duarte_the_secret_structure_of_great_talks)  
*Assignments:* Informative Speech and TED Talk Analysis

### Week 3: Speech Research & Preparation I

- T 9/5              Creating a Research Portfolio  
*Reading:* PS Chapter 7, "Supporting Your Ideas" and PS Chapter 8, "Organizing and Outlining"  
*Deadline:* Introductory Speech Reflection (Blackboard)
- W 9/6              *Deadline:* Informative Speech Topic (via email by 5:00 PM)
- Th 9/7              Performing Your Speech  
*Reading:* PS Chapter 11, "Speaking with Confidence"

### Week 4: Speech Research & Preparation II

- T 9/12            The Uses of Language  
*Reading:* PS Chapter 9, "Introductions and Conclusions" and PS Chapter 10, "Using Language Well"  
*Deadline:* TED Talk Analysis (Blackboard)

Th 9/14 In-Class Informative Speech Peer Review (*bring outline drafts to class*)

### **Week 5: Informative Speech Week**

T 9/19 Informative Speeches and Research Portfolios (Group A)

Th 9/21 Informative Speeches and Research Portfolios (Group B)

### **Week 6: 'Voice,' Voice, & Political Speech**

T 9/26 'Voice' as Metaphor, Voice as Instrument  
*Reading: Freeing the Natural Voice*, Kristin Linklater (selections); additional reading TBA

Th 9/28 Voice and Political Speech  
*Reading: Public Speaking and Civic Engagement*, "Democratic Citizenship and the Ethics of Public Speaking" (selections); additional reading TBA  
*Assignment: Persuasive Speech*  
*Deadline: Informative Speech Reflection (Blackboard)*

### **Week 7: Introduction to Persuasive Speaking**

T 10/3 Introduction to Persuasive Speaking  
*Reading: PS Chapter 16, "Persuasive Speaking"; PS Chapter 6, "Critical Thinking"; The Book of Bad Arguments*, Ali Almosawi (<https://bookofbadarguments.com>)

Th 10/5 Reading Your Audience  
*Reading: PS Chapter 5, "Audience Analysis" and Ch. 18, "Group Presentations"*  
*Assignment: Group Pitch*  
*Deadline: Persuasive Speech Topic (via email)*

### **Week 8: Persuasive Speech Preparation & Group Presentations**

T 10/10 In-Class Persuasive Speech Peer Review (*bring outline drafts to class*)  
*Assignment: Debate Analysis*

Th 10/12 Group Pitches (All Groups)

### **Week 9: Persuasive Speech Week**

T 10/17 Persuasive Speeches and Research Portfolios (Group B)

Th 10/19 Persuasive Speeches and Research Portfolios (Group A)

### **Week 10: Introduction to Speaking with Multimedia Aids**

T 10/24 Introduction to Speaking with Multimedia Aids  
*Reading:* PS Chapter 13, “Visual Aids”  
*Assignment:* Multimedia Aided Speech

Th 10/26 Making Visual Arguments  
*Viewing:* “How to Avoid Death by Powerpoint”  
*Deadline:* Persuasive Speech Reflection (Blackboard)

### **Week 11: Multimedia Aided Speech Preparation**

T 10/31 Alternative Sensory Aids and Media  
*Reading:* “How to Choose and Use Speech Props”  
*Deadline:* Multimedia Aided Speech Topic (via email)

Th 11/2 Sound Effects  
In-Class Work Day

### **Week 12: Multimedia Aided Speech Peer Review & Introduction to Speaking on Special Occasions**

T 11/7 In-Class Multimedia Aided Speech Peer Review (*bring outline drafts to class*)  
*Assignment:* Final Reflection

Th 11/9 Introduction to Speaking on Special Occasions  
*Reading:* PS Chapter 17, “Special Occasion Speaking”  
*Assignment:* Special Occasion Speech  
*Deadline:* Debate Analysis

### **Week 13: Multimedia Aided Speech Week**

T 11/14 Multimedia Aided Speeches and Research Portfolios (Group A)

Th 11/16 Multimedia Aided Speeches and Research Portfolios (Group B)

### **Week 14: Special Occasion, i.e. Thanksgiving, i.e. NO CLASS**

T 11/21 NO CLASS  
*Deadline:* Multimedia Aided Speech Reflection (Blackboard)

Th 11/23 NO CLASS—Enjoy the break!

### **Week 15: Special Occasion Speech Week**

T 11/28 Special Occasion Speeches (Group B)  
Course Evaluations

**Final Reflection Due Su 12/3, 5 PM (Blackboard)**

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Respect.** It is not uncommon for people to experience anxiety when speaking before an audience. One of the goals of this course is to help you develop the confidence to express your ideas publically. To this end, our classroom will foster a safe space within which you are able to do just that. I expect students to listen attentively and respectfully to one another during speeches as well as class discussions. When contributing to the conversation (as I hope everyone will), I expect students to speak thoughtfully, and to remain sensitive to others' desires to speak and be heard. Disrespectful conduct will not be tolerated. Please let me know right away if you have concerns about the atmosphere of our classroom.

**Attendance.** Your presence in the classroom is essential and mandatory. If you will be absent from class due to illness, a religious observance, or a university-sanctioned activity, I will require advance documentation to excuse your absence. Should an emergency situation arise that makes it impossible for you to attend class, I will require documentation after the fact to excuse your absence. More than two unexcused absences will lead to a 1/3 deduction from your final course grade (i.e. an A will become an A- and so on).

**Participation and Technology.** Please arrive to class on time, prepared (i.e. having done the day's course readings and other assignments), and ready to participate. Repeated lateness is disruptive to our work in the classroom and will negatively impact attendance and participation scores. Phones must be turned off and stowed away for the duration of each class meeting. Do not, I repeat, do not be that person whose phone rings during a speech. Laptops may be used only for note-taking and accessing course-related materials (i.e. course texts). They must be stowed away during all speeches. If at any other moment they become distracting, I will require that they be stowed away immediately. Please always bring additional note-taking materials to class (paper and pencil or pen).

**Assignment Submission.** All written assignments for the course will be submitted through Blackboard (<http://blackboard.usc.edu>) via Turnitin. If you are, for any reason, technically unable to submit a given course assignment to Blackboard, please send it to me as an email attachment in advance of the deadline. Due to the fast pace of the course, late assignments will not be accepted. If an emergency arises, please provide documentation and contact me before the deadline if possible. If you are absent on your assigned speech day without prior or emergency documentation (i.e. your absence is unexcused), your speech portfolio may still earn you credit if it is submitted by the appropriate deadline, but you will receive no higher than a C for the assignment.

**Contacting Me.** Please feel free to email me with any course-related questions or concerns you may have, provided these are not addressed or answered by the present course syllabus. Feel free, as well, to schedule an in-person meeting with me to discuss any issues related to the course. When you email me during the regular work week (M-F, 9 AM - 5 PM), I may take up to 24 hours to respond. If you email me over the weekend, I will typically not respond until Monday. You may send me a follow-up email if more than the allotted amount of response time has elapsed.

**Academic Integrity.** Plagiarism—presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words—is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*: <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus*. If you are confused about what constitutes plagiarism, please, by all means, come and speak with me.

**Disability Accommodations.** *The Office of Disability Services and Programs*, [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Please note: any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with The Office of Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

**ESL and Additional Accommodations.** Please inform me as soon as possible if English is not your primary language and you believe you may require special accommodations. Please also let me know if you believe you may require accommodations for any other reason.

**Academic Support.** A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Please note: the USC Dornsife Writing Center, <http://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>, Taper Hall of the Humanities Room 216, is an excellent resource. A number of additional campus resources exist to support you academically. Contact the Center for Academic Support (<http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/>) at 213-740-0776 or [study@usc.edu](mailto:study@usc.edu).

**Stress Management.** If you begin to feel overwhelmed, it is important that you reach out for help. A good place to start is the USC Student Counseling Services office at 213-740-7711. The service is confidential, and there is no charge. Moreover, they offer drop-in workshops throughout the semester on managing stress and maintaining mindfulness.

**Safety Resources.** Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity*, <http://equity.usc.edu/>, or to the *Department of Public Safety*, <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the USC community as a whole. Another member of the university community—such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member—can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men*, <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/>, provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage, [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu), describes reporting options and other resources.

---

<sup>1</sup> No syllabus is developed in isolation, especially not for a course like this one. This document has benefited from the work and insights of Leila Bighash, Laurel Felt, and Raffi Sarkissian, whose thoughtful syllabi inspired my own.