503x Oral Communication Skills for Engineering Ph.D. Students

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Course Objectives

Oral communication skills are vital in the formal and everyday tasks of engineering practice and academic duties. This course will help you with your oral presentation skills in academic, professional and informal settings. Specific attention is placed on preparing for conference presentations. We also address strategies for managing informal communication events including one-on-one interactions, group meetings, seminars, and classroom communications, depending on interest.

The course covers the following:

- Crafting a presentation: organizing and structuring the information
- Designing the introduction and conclusion for maximum impact
- Developing your presentation personality and style
- Appropriately integrating story-telling, description and humor
- Using formal and informal language to support understanding and delivery
- Learning the basic rules for making presentations
- Distinguishing between various presentation tasks: lecturing, teaching, discussing, facilitating, demonstrating, training
- Understanding your own strengths and weaknesses
- Gaining the tools for life-long improvement and assessment
- Assessing your audience in any presenting situation
- Effectively incorporating visual aids into your presentation
- Becoming attuned to non-verbal cues from your audience
- Managing your emotions and those of your audience

Course Approach

The purpose of this class is individual skill development. Thus, much of this class is experiential. The value is the opportunity to practice your oral communicating and receive immediate feedback that you can use to move forward. Each class is as participatory as possible in order to develop your skills through practice, feedback, observation of others, understanding and application. You will receive personal feedback and will develop a plan for improvement.

Schedule

Many students find this course valuable to practice presentations they will be giving outside our classroom. For example, you might do a trial run of a conference presentation you are preparing; you might present a lecture you'll be giving as a TA; or you might ask us to be a mock qualifying exam audience. The schedule will be modified to incorporate your individual needs as much as possible. This course schedule will be subject to change, based on your ongoing presentation needs.

Assignments

You will complete as many of the following assignments as time permits:

- Technical how-to presentation (explaining step by step a process or activity)
- Research overview presentation
- Elevator talk
- Impromptu speech
- Undergrad lecture
- Conference presentation
- TED talk

Course Requirements

To get the maximum value from the class do your best to participate fully (do as many presentations as possible)   Specifically, you should:
- Attend class sessions (Please let me know if you need to miss class or cannot give a presentation on a scheduled day)
- Give your best effort when presenting and attend fully to your colleagues when they are presenting
- Give useful feedback to your colleagues