

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

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Office Hours: by appointment (send me an email)

### **Course Learning 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 interaction, group meetings, seminars, and classroom communications.

At the end of this course you should be able to accomplish the following:

- Formulate academic presentations with effective organization and structure of content
- Compose your presentation introduction and conclusion for maximum impact
- Implement the basic conventions for making presentations in varied contexts
- Apply principles for incorporating visual aids into your presentations
- Distinguish between various presentation tasks: lecturing, teaching, discussing, facilitating, demonstrating, training
- Assess audience needs in presenting situations
- Become attuned to non-verbal cues from your audience
- Manage your emotions and those of your audience
- Appropriately integrate story-telling, description and humor
- Use formal and informal language to support understanding and delivery
- Define your presentation personality and style
- Identify your presentation strengths and weaknesses
- Acquire tools for life-long improvement and assessment

### **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 to then 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 can 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 (a project or current work)
- Lit review presentation (review an article, or present an existing review of the literature in your research area)
- Elevator speech (2 minute pitches to different audiences)
- In class activities to help you navigate a variety of speaking situations: leading discussions, fielding questions, explaining graphs, charts and other visual data
- Undergrad lecture (condensed version of a teaching presentation)
- Conference presentation (condensed version of a talk you are planning to give or have already presented)
- Critical review presentation (review an article, book, etc.)
- TEDTalk, Lightning talk

## **Course Requirements**

To get the maximum value from the class do your best to participate and do as many presentations as possible. Specifically, you should:

- Attend class sessions – even if you are unable to prepare for your presentation, attend anyway! You learn a lot from watching everyone else's efforts
- Give your best effort when presenting and attend fully to your colleagues when they are presenting
- Provide oral feedback to your colleagues
- Fill out self-assessment forms of your own presentations

## **Evaluation Policies**

This course is Credit/No Credit. Credit for this course is based on the following criteria:

- Attending the majority of class meetings
- Participating in discussions and presenting activities
- Completing as many in-class presentations as is feasible

\*This course is supportive of your Ph.D. research and writing, and as such, there is flexibility with presenting assignments. You can postpone your presentation dates and make up classes that you miss. Let me know if this is necessary ahead of time so we can make a plan to accommodate your needs.

## **Students With Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure 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.