USC

ALI 244 - Academic and Professional Speaking Skills III
Units: 2
Spring 2025—MW, 10 –11:20
Location: DMC 108
Instructor: Olivia Veronica Méndez
Office: PSD 106
Office Hours TH 1-12
Contact Info: ovmartin@usc.edu; 310-626-2809 (usually responds within 48 hours)

Course Description
According to the University, "[a]cademic success in the United States depends on your ability to communicate effectively in English,"1 and the "ability to communicate effectively in English— to read, write and speak the language fluently—is vital to your success as a university student."2 This course is designed to help students meet this requirement by working on skills that will improve fluency, pronunciation, oral grammar and relevant vocabulary.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course students will be able to
1. Identify sounds of the Standard American English system that are difficult for them to hear and/or pronounce
2. Adjust their pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and stress to better convey their message to native speakers of Standard American English.
3. Lead academic discussions and give academic presentations in Standard American English with increased fluency, clarity, and efficacy.
4. Identify different dialects of American English and factors that distinguish Academic American English from other varieties.

Prerequisite(s): Students are placed into ALI 244 based on the results of the International Student English (ISE) Exam or a previous ALI oral skills course.

Course Notes/ Grading
This is a credit/no credit course. Your final evaluation will be based on your improvement in fluency, pronunciation, and oral grammar. You will watch your first video recorded in class and compare it to your final video and prepare an evaluation of your improvement. You will record a video of a self-evaluation in which you indicate the ways in which you have improved, pointing to and describing specific areas of improvement. Throughout the semester, you will receive regular feedback on what you need to improve in both listening and speaking so that you can be ready for the final evaluation.

Upon completion of the course, you will be evaluated in the areas shown in Table 1. To receive credit for the course, you must obtain an average score of 5 across all 3 categories, complete all assignments, and have no more than 6 hours of absences.

Table 1 Course Grading Scale

	Fluency	Pronunciation	Vocabulary/Grammar
1	Choppy, fragmented	Severe problems with sounds and intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns	Very limited vocabulary, no control of tenses
2	Almost constant choppiness	Frequent problems with sounds and intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns	Limited vocabulary, little control of tenses
3	Frequent choppiness	Frequent problems with specific sounds and intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns	Somewhat limited vocabulary, repetitive grammar, some control of tenses
4	Occasional choppiness	Some problems with specific sounds and intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns	Adequate vocabulary, somewhat repetitive grammar, inconsistent grammar errors (i.e., verb tenses)
5	Occasional repetition or self-correction	Occasional problems with sounds and intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns	Occasional errors with vocabulary, grammar and/or verb forms/tenses
6	Infrequent repetition or self-correction	Infrequent problems with sounds and intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns	Infrequent errors with vocabulary, grammar, and/or verb forms/tenses
7	Very fluent	Few problems with sounds and intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns	Few errors with vocabulary, grammar, and/or verb forms/tenses

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

We will be using Brightspace for the first time in this course and all course materials will be available there. As we will all be using this platform for the first time, please be sure to become familiar with https://www.brightspacehelp.usc.edu/ to obtain help. I will work on becoming more familiar with the platform and answer whatever questions I can.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Each week, students will complete one pronunciation assignment consisting of a video or audio recording focusing on a specific pronunciation area. Students will prepare to lead 4 discussion sessions (10-15 minutes) and 4 presentations (10-15 minutes in length + Q&A). Students will receive feedback on the areas in Table 1, with comments so that they can work on problem areas. Office hours and consultation times will be available to discuss specific issues.

Participation

Participation is required in the course. A consistent lack of participation will result in obtaining no credit for the course. Lack of participation includes but is not limited to being on devices carrying out activities not relevant to the course, doing work for other classes, and consistently asking to be excused or walking out of class.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will either be submitted online through Brightspace or in person in class (presentations and discussions will require attendance).

Grading Timeline

Students will receive feedback on presentations and assignments within 2 weeks of submission.

Attendance

More than 3 hours of absence will be reported to the ALI student advisor. More than 6 hours of absence will result in a course grade of NC (no credit). If you receive a notification that you have missed 3 hours of class, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss any problems that may arise or any difficulties you may be experiencing.

Course Specific Policies
Arriving late to class will count towards the number of hours missed, if more than 15 minutes late. Leaving class more than 15 minutes early will also be counted toward absences. Leaving class early or arriving late to class regularly may result in receiving No Credit for the course. If you need any special accommodation, please let me know so we can discuss options to help you obtain credit for the course. No late work will be accepted, if you need an exception, please reach out so we can discuss any necessary accommodation.

Classroom norms
As mentioned above, participation is required. Please be aware that because of the nature of our class, there will be different perspectives and cultural norms, and it is required that everyone be respectful during class discussions and assignments. If someone says or does something that is offensive or disrespectful (even if it is me), please reach out so that we can address the problem. A healthy discussion of different viewpoints and cultures is encouraged, but everyone should feel safe and comfortable participating in class.

Academic Integrity
The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

AI Generators

I expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT and image generation tools) in this class. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- AI is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses AI explaining how (and why) you used AI and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results and what prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.

You may use AI to help you find discussion topics and sources and prepare for your presentations. You may also use AI to practice oral skills (pronunciation, conversation skills, intonation, etc.).

Please ask me if you are unsure about what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Collaboration. In this class, you are expected to submit work that demonstrates your individual mastery of the course concepts.

Group work. Unless specifically designated as a 'group project,' all assignments are expected to be completed individually.

Computer programs. Plagiarism includes the submission of code written by, or otherwise obtained from someone else.

If found responsible for an academic violation, students may be assigned university outcomes, such as suspension or expulsion from the university, and grade penalties, such receiving no credit for the assignment or in the course.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonestly and is strictly prohibited. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Course Evaluations

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experiences in the class. Students will be asked to rate the course and instructor and provide valuable feedback. Your feedback is important as it helps us continue to mold to meet the students' ever-changing needs. This course has changed significantly since its inception thanks to the feedback from student evaluations. Students will also be required to provide feedback in the form of an oral or written reflection of the course.

Table 2 Course schedule

	Topics/ Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
Week 1 1/13	Land acknowledgement Course Intro Diagnostic	Watch this video 3-5 Minute Response	Submit a 3–5-minute video with your thoughts about the video Conversation reports
Week 2 **MLK Day** 1/20	SAE Vowel System Dialects of AE Decolonization TED Talk	Vowels (pp. 1-5) Vowel Resources Decolonization Discussion Class Discussions	In-class vowel practice Group Discussion #1 Topic Conversation Reports
Week 3 1/27	SAE Consonant System East Coast AE	Consonants (pp. 1-4) Consonant Resources Leading a Discussion	In-class pronunciation practice In-class Group Discussion #1 Conversation Reports
Week 4 2/3	Vowel Length in SAE West Coast AE vs East Coast AE Academic/Professional Presentations	Consonants (Review) Vowels (pp. 6 V. Length) Verbs and Nouns Presentation #1 Topics	In-class pronunciation practice Presentation Topic #1 Conversation Reports
Week 5 2/10	Intonation LA Dialects of AE	Intonation Intonation Resources Presentation #1	In-class intonation practice Presentation #1 Conversation Reports
Week 6 2/17 **Pres. Day**	Select Midterm Discussion and Presentation Topics	Vowels (changes pp. 6-7) Midterm Topics Pre-Midterm Consult	In-class pronunciation practice Midterm Topics Conversation Reports
Week 7 2/24	Midterm Discussions	Midterm Discussions	Midterm Discussions Conversation Reports
Week 8 3/3	Midterm Discussions/ Midterm Presentations	Midterm Discussions/ Midterm Presentations	Midterm Presentations Midterm Evaluations Conversation Reports
Week 9 3/10	Stress Discussion #3 -Topics	Stress Stress Resources Discussion #3 Topics	In-class pronunciation practice Choose a rap Discussion #3 Topics Conversation Reports
SPRING BREAK 3/16-3/23			
Week 10 3/24	Oral Grammar Discussion #3 Rap	Oral Grammar (MT vs Final) Discussion #3 Rap	In-class oral grammar practice Rap Discussion #3 Conversation Reports
Week 11 3/31	Allophones/ Sounds of T Presentation #3 –Topic	Consonants (pp. 5-7) Consonant Resources Presentation #3 -Topic	In-class pronunciation practice Presentation #3 Topic Conversation Reports
Week 12 4/7	Connected Speech Presentation #3	Connected Speech Presentation #3	In-class pronunciation practice Presentation #3 Conversation Reports
Week 13 4/14	Prepare for Final Presentation & Discussion	Choose topics for presentation and Discussion	Prepare for presentation and discussion (in groups)
Week 14 4/21	Record and submit your final presentation, discussion, and conversation report.		
Week 15 4/28	Submit final self-evaluation and course evaluation		

Statement on University Academic and Support Systems

Students and Disability Accommodations:
USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:
To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the Financial Aid Office webpage for undergraduate- and graduate-level SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:
Counseling and Mental Health - *(213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - *988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call*
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - *(213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call*
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - *(213) 740-5086*
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - *(213) 740-2500*
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - *(213) 740-0776*
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - *(213) 740-0411*
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - *(213) 740-2101*
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - *UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - *UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call*
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - *(213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - *(323) 442-2850 or* otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.