

Strategic Presentation Skills
Course #90-718

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Office hours by appointment

*“ ... you should say what you mean,” the March Hare went on.
“I do,” Alice hastily replied; “at least—at least I mean what I
say—that’s the same thing, you know.”
“Not the same thing a bit!” said the Hatter.*

- Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

1. Course Description

This course focuses on creating and delivering credible, professional, and meaningful presentations for a variety of audiences. Students will learn to connect with their audiences and increase their confidence when standing before a group or camera. These skills are important to students, job-seekers, and professionals, and while the experience of presenting isn’t everyone’s favorite (or forte), they are frequently evaluated across most career industries. In addition to honing their own techniques, students will also learn to work together to deliver a message as a group, as well as gain tips to relax and avoid common presentation pitfalls.

2. Course Objectives

The following learning objectives will be assessed through student individual and group presentations and self/peer evaluations:

- Identify and use appropriate elements for effective presentations
- Adapt message accordingly to connect with audiences
- Design and deliver logical, evidence-based, trustworthy information in an accessible format
- Understand and differentiate techniques necessary for specific types of presentations

3. Course Materials

There are no required books for this class, however, articles and videos may be assigned and provided throughout the course at the professor’s discretion. All rubrics for presentations will be posted in Canvas.

4. Expectations

This class naturally makes many students nervous. Being evaluated on the spot by professors and peers is uncomfortable for a lot of people. It’s expected that everyone will show respect to one another. Please note, there is a difference between anxiety and lack of preparedness, and it is usually obvious. Students should be patient with one another while also holding presenters to the standards outlined in all rubrics.

My goal is to make this a pleasant learning experience for you. If at any time you feel that the course is not meeting your expectations, please contact me. I ask that you be respectful of others by arriving to class on time and not using your electronic devices in class without discussing the purpose with me first. Please let me know if you do not understand class material or requirements or if any special circumstance prevents you from completing a class requirement on time.

5. Evaluation/Grading

All assignments and class participation are graded on a point scale as outlined below. The maximum points one can achieve for the entire semester is 200. Final course grades will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Point Range
A	169-200
B	150-168
C	133-149
R - Fail	Below 133

Assessment Activity	Possible Points
Interview exercise	15
Informative speech	40
Demonstrative speech	40
Persuasive speech	50
Exploration of fallacies	15
Impromptu presentation	40
Total	200

Attendance is critical to success in this class. Not only will you learn much from each other, but you are also required to evaluate each presentation made, and you cannot do that if you don't witness them. Note that participation points are not awarded. It is not possible to pass this class if more than three classes are missed.

6. Academic Integrity

You are responsible to know and adhere to all University policies on academic integrity. The Heinz School provides a booklet on Plagiarism and Cheating and the University lists all policies on the web at www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html. Please acquaint yourself with their contents. Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failure in the course and your case will be referred to the Associate Dean, who may decide to take further action.

Although it seems difficult to cheat in a class where you're presenting, it's not impossible. To avoid plagiarism, make certain you cite all sources. If you're not sure whether or not you need to cite something, cite it. You're not expected to come up with all new, brilliant ideas for every assignment. You can talk about what makes someone else's ideas brilliant, though, and meet with great success. In other words, be yourself, show your brain, and acknowledge that there are other smart people in the world who have contributed to this topic.

7. Recording academic classroom activities, lectures, etc.

Classroom activities, lectures, etc. may not be recorded by anyone other than myself without written permission in advance.

8. Use of electronic devices

Few things make presenters feel worse than an inattentive audience. Even boring presenters hate to see the tops of heads rather than faces (or that tell-tale expression when you're looking at another screen on Zoom). Please don't

disrespect each other by performing unrelated activities during class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week/Date	Topic & Activity	Homework	Items Due
Week 1 10/18/21	Course introduction		N/A
Week 1, cont'd 10/20/21	Connecting with audience	<i>Prepare</i> for interview question exercise	N/A
Week 2 10/25/21	Enhancing presentations, interview question exercises	N/A	Interview question exercises
Week 2, cont'd 10/27/21	The Art of Delivery, Interview question exercises		Interview question exercises
Week 3 11/1/21	Best Practices – Informative and impromptu presentations		N/A
Week 3, cont'd 11/3/21	Best Practices – Demo and Persuasive presentations	<i>Prepare</i> informative speech	
Week 4 11/8/21	Informative speech		Informative speech
Week 4, cont'd 11/10/21	Informative speech	<i>Prepare</i> impromptu speech	Informative speech
Week 5 11/15/21	Impromptu speech	<i>Prepare</i> demo speech	Impromptu speech
Week 5, cont'd 11/17/21	Demo speeches		Demonstrative speech
Week 6 11/22/21	Demo speeches	Prepare group pres	Demonstrative speech
Week 6, cont'd 11/24/21	NO CLASS		N/A
Week 7 11/29/21	Group presentations		Group persuasive speech (incorporating exploration of fallacies)
Week 7, cont'd 12/1/21	Group presentations		Group persuasive speech (incorporating exploration of fallacies)