
COMM 375
Business and Professional Communication
Fall 2005

Instructor:	Jillian Pierson, Ph.D.	Office Hours:
Office:	ASC 227 You can usually also find me Tu/Th between 9:15 and 9:30 and immediately after class	Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 – 12:20 and by phone
Office Phone:	(213)821-1406 [Tues/Thurs a.m. only]	Please use my home phone for messages. I cannot retrieve messages on the office line.
Home Phone:	(xxx)xxx-xxxx [9am-9pm]	I want you to feel free to call me at home. Since my availability on campus is limited, I do welcome your calls at home.
Email:	jilliank@usc.edu	

Course Goals

The overall goal of this course is to develop your professional communication skills and knowledge. While we will cover some theory to enhance your understanding of the business world, the bulk of our time will be spent focused on your applied skills. I would like you to walk out of this class confident that you can deliver excellent presentations; feel comfortable and be successful in interviews; write first-rate cover letters and resumes; and produce effective, clear and correct business writing. You should also have increased awareness of and ability to manage business issues that will affect your work life.

Required Course Materials

- ♣ Brinkman, R. & Kirschner, R. (2002). *Dealing with people you can't stand* (rev. ed.). NY: McGraw-Hill.
- ♣ Lencioni, P. (2005). *Overcoming the five dysfunctions of a team*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- ♣ Toogood, G. (1996). *The articulate executive: Lean to look, act, and sound like a leader*. NY: McGraw-Hill.
- ♣ Venolia, J. (2004). *The right letter!* Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.

Additional readings may be required.

Optional Text

Danzier, E. (2001). *Get to the point!* New York: Three Rivers Press.

If you think grammar, spelling, and punctuation don't count, you need to know that I do think they count. Mistakes in these areas can be costly. This book should help those of you who need to improve your writing, grammar, and punctuation.

Course Standards

This course will be as action-packed as you should expect your professional life to be. The requirements of consistent attendance, punctuality and participation are essential to your success. Missing class more than once or twice in the short time we have together is no more acceptable than it would be to miss important workdays at any company. When you have a deadline for an assignment, reading, or a presentation, you must have the work prepared at the very beginning of class. These deadlines will come up often: don't allow yourself to fall behind!

Here's the fine print. Read it. Any student who misses more than four classes may fail the course. If you turn in an assignment late, it will be downgraded by a full letter grade for every day it is late. Missing a presentation assignment or exam will result in a failing grade unless you have physical proof of some serious emergency that prohibited your presence (e.g., a bill from the paramedics). You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Homework/impromptus/quizzes	10% (average of all scores; drop one lowest)
Major essay	10%
Brief presentation	5%
Informative presentation	15%
Job package	10%
Informational interview report	15%
Persuasive presentation	15%
Midterm	10%
Final	10%

Participation (including attendance, promptness, involvement in classroom activities/discussions, courtesy and professionalism) may affect your grade by up to one half grade.

Your personal improvement is highly valued in this class. Even if you already possess superior skills, you should incorporate feedback and make improvements from one assignment to the next. Demonstrations of improvement can positively affect your grade.

School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled: "University Student Conduct Code." See especially Appendix A: "Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines." The policies, procedures, and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty.

It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone but yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, confer with a faculty member or the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

ADA COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

Any student requesting academic accommodation 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.

Tentative Course Schedule, Subject to Change:

Readings should be completed prior to class the day they are scheduled.

	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>	<u>Readings</u>
1	Aug 23 Aug 25	Course Introduction Presentation Boot Camp components, audience, topic, transitions, and organization; outlining		
2	Aug 30 Sept 1	Presentation Boot Camp anxiety; being yourself; delivery exercises: taking the stage and speaking w/emotion Brief Presentation	Brief Presentations	
3	Sept 6 Sept 8	More Presentation Boot Camp Support and visual aids Business Writing		Toogood
4	Sept 13 Sept 15	Resumes and Cover Letters Designing Documents	Communication major essay 3 document examples	Venolia
5	Sept 20 Sept 22	Power Point Presentation and discussion Organizational structures	Power Point Presentation	
6	Sept 27 Sept 29	Informative Presentations Informative Presentations	Presentations	
7	Oct 4 Oct 6	Resume Clinic Miscommunication at work	Draft of resume and cover letter: 3 copies	
8	Oct 11 Oct 13	Midterm Teams at Work	Midterm	Lencioni
9	Oct 18 Oct 20	Careers Interviewing	Informational Interview report	
10	Oct 25 Oct 27	Mock interviews (cont.)	Job Package	
11	Nov 1 Nov 3	Persuasion Effective Listening	Final persuasive topic	

12	Nov 8	Persuasive Presentations	Persuasive Presentations
	Nov 10	Persuasive Presentations	
13	Nov 15	Persuasive Presentations	
	Nov 17	Persuasive Presentations	
14	Nov 22	Conflict at work/difficult people	Brinkman & Kirschner
	Nov 24	Enjoy Thanksgiving!	
15	Nov 29	Culture and Diversity	
	Dec 1	Sexual Harassment	
	Dec 13	Final Exam 11:00 – 1:00	

ASSIGNMENTS

Brief Presentation (2-3 minutes)

For this first introductory presentation the topic is wide open. Your only guideline is that you must speak on *something you love*. Delivery is extemporaneous. You may use a key word outline if you find it necessary. If you do use one, please hand it in after your presentation.

You will be graded on both delivery and content of the speech. Practice several times at home and time yourself. You will also turn in a full sentence outline to me when you give your presentation.

Communication Major Essay*

(Written Assignment, 1-2 pages)

When you interview for your first job after graduation, it is practically guaranteed that you'll be asked certain questions. This essay gives you an opportunity to think through these questions and be prepared to reply in a focused way. Write up an explanation of:

- What advantages a student who majored in communication has in the professional world
- What knowledge and skills the major provides that other students might not have gained

Give these questions some serious thought and then write a concise and specific response that would be persuasive to a future employer. Remember to use details, not generalizations.

* If you are not a communication major, write the essay about your own major. If you are undeclared, pick a major you're considering. Writing this essay should help you decide. Double majors may write about both majors, taking up to one extra page if necessary.

Power Point Slide Presentation

(These will be part of your homework grade.)

Choose a potential informative topic and develop three power point slides that would provide support for a presentation on that topic. One slide should feature words; another should use a graph or table; a third should use a picture or photograph. Bring me a hard copy of the slides (black and white is fine) and send them to yourself via email. As a precaution, you should also bring them to class on CD or disk.

During class you will give a very brief informative presentation, using the PowerPoint slides as visual support. In this case I will be less concerned about the content of the presentation and mostly concerned with your comfort level using the slides and the quality of the slides themselves.

If you have never used Power Point, you need to learn how to use it outside of class prior to the day the Power Point homework is due. Leavey Library offers “Adventures in Learning” workshops on Power Point. Check their schedule at <http://www.usc.edu/isd/adventures/>. Many online tutorials are also available.

Informative Presentations (5-7 minutes)

This informative presentation topic is restricted to something applicable to work life. That gives you a very broad range of possibilities. You should spend time researching something interesting to you that will likely benefit the class as well. Learning more about current business events or “hot topics” in the workplace will help you make conversation at job interviews and networking opportunities (and may be useful on your midterm)! Please check with me for topic approval at least one week prior to your assigned presentation date.

I’ll be looking for some of the following elements: an appropriately narrowed topic, clear organization, a variety of supporting materials, an attention-grabbing introduction and a conclusion that leaves an impact. I’ll also expect you to be confident, make strong eye contact with the entire audience, speak fluently, and show interest and enthusiasm. You may use visual aids if you feel they will enhance your presentation.

Please turn in a full-sentence outline that includes a minimum of six references.

Job Package (Written Assignment)

Your job package will include the following:

- The ad:** Locate an advertisement that represents a job you would be likely to apply for when you are seeking for one of your first post-college jobs. If you can't find an exact match, find one that closely resembles the job you'd like to find. Possible sources: the career center, Monstertrak.com, professional organizations/newsletters, trade publications, the newspaper.
- Cover letter:** This should be tailored to the specific ad you chose. Address the letter to the person who posted the ad and if there was no name listed, see if you can contact the company to find the name of the appropriate person. The content should not repeat what is contained in the resume—it should identify the specific job for which you are applying, highlight the qualifications that make you a good candidate for the position, and contain a request for an opportunity to be interviewed. It should be no longer than one page.
- Resume:** Your resume should be a projected resume for use upon graduation. You'll see a variety of sample resumes in class and should play around with your own until it looks sharp and reads well. The resume should be no longer than two pages--one page is strongly recommended unless you already have extensive professional experience.
- References:** Identify three individuals who would provide positive recommendations for you. Include their names, addresses, telephone numbers, and relationship to you. This is separate from your resume, but should be printed on the same paper and with the same typeface and headings. You would not actually mail this to a potential employer unless they requested references.

During our “resume workshop” you will have the opportunity to get feedback on your resume and cover letter from your peers. Remember that a resume is always a work-in-progress and cover letters should always be tailored to the ad. By the time you hand in your final package, I do expect your resume and cover letter to be free of typos and grammatical errors, just as they must be when you send them to a prospective employer.

Informational Interview

Interview a person who currently holds a job that you would like to hold within three years after graduation. (Maybe you'd like to be the CEO of Disney, but I'm talking about a job you could reasonably expect to hold within that timeframe.) The interview should last about 45 minutes. The objectives of this assignment are: (1) to give you insight into that position; (2) to develop your interviewing and self-presentation skills; and (3) to gain experience writing an executive summary. This is not an employment interview; so do not ask for a job. Present yourself as a

student conducting research regarding future career possibilities.

Please follow these steps for this assignment:

1. Read the chapter regarding interviewing. Then conduct your own research regarding a job and potential companies that interest you. You will need at least three sources (from the library, the career center, the company). Library research may include general research on an entire field, as well as your specific company/person. You should gather basic information such as a job description, starting salary, level and type of education required for the position, and specific information regarding the company of interest. Use this information to formulate interview questions. Write up the information you've gathered in an annotated bibliography.
2. Contact an individual in the entry-level position of your choice. Do not interview someone in a top managerial position (e.g., a CEO) or someone you know (relatives, friends and their companies are **not** acceptable for this assignment). Arrange an interview with the appropriate person for approximately 45 minutes.
3. Formulate your interview questions and re-confirm your interview two days before by telephone.
4. For the interview, behave **professionally**. Dress appropriately, in business attire. Introduce yourself, your purpose and your goals for the interview ("My goal for this interview is to learn about this job so that I understand what it's like to work in such a position and what the requirements are to be hired in a job like yours"). Explain that you have a number of questions to ask and that you would like to take notes, if the interviewee does not object. Listen carefully, paraphrase responses, and ask for clarification when you do not understand. After finishing your questions, ask your interviewee if there is anything else they would like to tell you. Be conscious of the time you've used and do not go over, unless they indicate they wish to continue. Thank them for their time.
5. Get the interviewee's business card before you leave the interview so you can include it when you hand in your assignment.
6. As soon after the interview as possible, write a thank-you note and mail it to your interviewee. Be sure this brief letter is grammatically correct and error free! Make a copy to include when you turn in your assignment. This kind of note is generally neatly hand-written: **no e-mailed thank-you notes**. Consult pp. 82-83 of *The Right Letter!* (Please note that for an employment interview, you would send a more formal thank-you letter printed on stationery.)
7. Write a three-page executive summary about your interview. This report is a professional document in style and content which includes summaries on the following topics:
 - description of the industry/product/service
 - description of the position
 - requirements for the position (education, experience, skills)
 - general summary of what you learned overall from the interview process,

including your own thoughts and reactions

8. Be prepared to give a brief informative presentation in class regarding your interview.

Your total Interview Package will consist of:

- Executive Summary (in memo format, addressed to me)
- Photocopy of your thank-you note
- Business card of your interviewee
- Reference page from your pre-interview research in proper bibliographic format (APA or MLA).

Persuasive Presentation (5-7 minutes)

Your topic choice is once again very broad, as long as you choose something directly relevant to work life. You must persuade your audience to buy, to believe, to take action or to change in some concrete way. Your audience will be whatever group you would like, such as a board of trustees, executive committee, brand new employees, or union members.

Make sure you choose a topic about which your audience would actually need persuading. Also make sure your topic is researchable.

After you speak, the class (as your board, managers, union members, or whatever you've chosen) will have a chance to ask you questions while you sit in the Hot Seat. We will expect you to be knowledgeable and able to further defend your position.

You may use visual aids if you feel they will enhance your presentation.

Some of the elements I will be evaluating are: a clear, appropriately narrowed thesis, strength of arguments, variety of verbal support, effectiveness of visual aids, and consideration of audience's perspective.

Please turn in a full-sentence outline that includes a minimum of six references.

Exams

The format of the midterm and final exams has not yet been determined. I most likely will give you a number of multiple choice questions and several open-ended questions on each. Keep in mind that 80% of the class assignments are "subjective" and open-ended. These mostly objective tests are a different avenue for checking your knowledge, and making sure you've paid attention in class and completed the readings.

Presentation Attire

I would like to see you present in what I would call “business casual.” What I mean by this is you should look presentable, but I think it’s unreasonable to expect you to spend your day on campus dressed up in formal business attire. Here’s what I absolutely do not want to see on your presentation days: your toes, your navel or any other part of your midriff, your cleavage, baseball caps, or ripped clothing.

Peer Critiques

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to help your peers by offering oral and written feedback. This is one reason you must attend class, even if it is not one of your own presentation dates. Good critiques leave people with ideas that will help them improve both the delivery and content of their presentations.