I. COURSE OVERVIEW

Public speaking isn’t only about presenting a speech from behind a podium. This form of speaking is something this course will address and practice, but it is just a small part of what speaking in public is all about. In the course, we will define what “public” means, realizing that in all of our speaking engagements, whether personal or professional, we will always have an audience, whether it is an audience of one or one hundred.

Public Speaking is a form of human communication, consisting of both talking and listening to an audience: it is a CONVERSATION. To become a strong speaker, in ANY context, you must begin at the foundation of where speaking and listening live in our daily lives: with our families, friends, classmates, colleagues, and in our professions. Naturally, we choose different communicative skills depending on our environment and audience. Much of the speaking we will do in life will NOT be from behind a podium.

In this course, we will work on speaking for LIFE. We will talk about who we are, our fears, our strengths, and our challenges when we think about speaking in front of others, and we will use these personal profiles as our foundation for our study. Each student will be able to use the flexibility of the assignments to work at his or her own pace and develop skills from whatever place you are coming from. This course is appropriate for a variety of skill levels, from the novice and more fearful speaker, to a more comfortable speaker looking for a place to focus and develop stronger skills. All will find a solid place here.

The overall course goal is to allow each student to feel comfortable, confident, and prepared to succeed in a variety of speaking situations, and to overcome any fears of public speaking through practice, discussion, and collegial support/feedback. I also have two greater goals for our time together: for you to ENJOY speaking and for us to BUILD a learning community. Connecting with other human beings in this manner can be really fun!

This course is much like a lab in speaking and listening, and your classmates are as much a part of your learning as your own work and motivation are. Listening and learning from each other, as each person develops in his/her own way, is a huge part of this course.

Finally, our focus is on speaking and presenting effectively, and working through your strengths and challenges as a speaker. If you want a course that will help you become an expert in PowerPoint presentations or political speechwriting, this is not the course for you.

II. COURSE STRUCTURE

We will conduct our course in an experiential seminar format. We will follow a loose structure of skill-building, in-class working time, speeches, and collegial/instructor feedback. This is a course about doing, so we will all be up and speaking and giving feedback from day one. Practice is the only way to become a better speaker.
I expect you to be READY to do work in class when I give you time; being ready means having access to your laptop, ideas for possible topics to play with, and a commitment to the work. You will NOT only be working on your speeches outside of class on your own time. It will be done with your classmates and with me, as a community working together. It is important that you use the time I give you to work with your partners on your speeches, because I am there and can answer questions and help guide you in the process. This is not “free time” in class but structured working time in class on our speech “experiments” like any lab course, and I expect you to use ALL of the time for assignments.

Please bring a notebook and pen to take notes in class, but you should also bring your laptop to every class for assignment work. I prefer that students not use technology for notes in class because it distracts from your ability to listen fully to lectures and discussions. Please be aware that we will use LATTE for ALL assignment postings and handouts on a regular basis, so be sure you are familiar with it.

III. ASSIGNMENTS

Speeches
You will be required to complete 5 speeches in class. Due dates are listed on the schedule attached and more will be explained in class.

Written Reflections
You will be required to complete written self-reflections after each speech, as well as a longer final reflection paper at the end of the course. Due dates are listed on the schedule attached.

Partner Work
Students are required to work with a speaking partner throughout the course. You will reflect on your work together in class discussions. I will make these assignments in the first week of class.

Colleague Feedback
We will give feedback in class as a group. You are required to take notes during speeches and provide quality, constructive feedback to your classmates. We will discuss constructive feedback and what to look for in class. You will be evaluated on the depth of your feedback in your participation grade (see percentages below).

Instructor Feedback
Working with each of you individually is part of my core teaching pedagogy for the course. You are required to meet with me individually for feedback. You must take notes on the feedback in these meetings. In the summer, I try to have all meetings take place during class time, but there may be a need to schedule outside of class from time to time.

Active Listening
I will evaluate you as a listener during class/speeches over the course of the semester. Active listening, i.e., giving the perception of listening to your speaker, is crucial for your own understanding as well as contributing to the success of the speaker. You will be helping each other be better, all semester. If you are not being a good listener, you are hindering your classmates’ progress. This is a crucial responsibility for you to remember.
If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. Visiting students who have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations should contact Gwenn Smaxwill, Summer School Director (781-736-3424) or smaxwill@brandeis.edu. Current Brandeis undergraduates should contact Academic Services (781-736-3470) for assistance. Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

IV. EVALUATION OF WORK

I cannot build the community required for the work we will do together without full attendance, all of the time. We are a learning community and each person is a vital member of this community. For this reason, there are no excused absences in this course unless documentation can be provided. If you feel you cannot fully commit to this policy, you should reconsider taking this course.

If you miss a day of speeches without a documented reason, you will receive a failing grade for that speech as well as lose 5 points from your participation grade, due to being unable to participate in any class feedback for the week. Our work is done IN class and seldom can be made up.

This class does not require extensive readings, long term papers, or traditional exams. It requires physical and mental presence in class and research/writing/speaking/practice outside of class. Your attendance, speech work (both in presentation and written reflection), and participation in the classroom community and feedback are the 3 core tenets of the class.

Speeches are graded on effort, risk-taking, growth (when applicable), and clearly following the instructions of each assignment. More information will be given in class.

Written reflections must be typed, proofed, and written with care and effort. You will be graded on depth of content but also on form and efforts in writing. Spelling errors and lack of proofing will result in a lowered grade. I grade everyone equally on reflection assignments and expect high-level writing from all Brandeis students. Please write in a professional manner, without abbreviations and text-speak.

Class participation grading is based on (on-time) attendance AND participation in class through feedback, class exercises, and the like. Participation is not about raising your hand and talking all the time; it can also be about being a great listener. More information will be given in class.

If you ever have any questions about the grading policies/allocations, please let me know.

Speech Assignments (4 graded), 12.5% each: 50%
Written Reflections (4), 5% each: 20%
Class Participation (which includes punctuality, attendance, partner work, and colleague feedback): 20%
Listening Effort (in class and during speeches): 10%

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity (See:
V. COMMUNICATION WITH ME

I will be as available as possible to each of you. Please know the following parameters to my availability: I am not always checking my work email and cannot respond to last-minute/late-night emails about assignments. I will generally answer emails once per day, usually in the morning. I do not email in the evening or over weekends unless absolutely necessary or urgent. Also, given the community we are creating, remember that your classmates are also your partners in this course, and you will also have an assigned partner for your speech work. Check with a classmate’s notes and rely on each other as well as on the syllabus, handouts, and me for answers to your questions. You are expected to take notes on skill-building work/assignments given in class, and if you miss class, to secure notes from a classmate. I do not re-teach lectures but will answer any questions after you have secured a classmate’s notes.

I am excited to work with all of you this summer.