Gateway Scholars Program
Course Information & Syllabus
Academic Oral Communication

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Description

This course is designed to prepare you for the academic and social speaking and listening skills that are expected of you as a Brandeis student. The course focus will be on strategies for improving all aspects of oral communications in academic and social settings. You will be giving presentations, lead class discussions, and collaborate in groups. Activities will include watching and listening to live lectures, practicing listening and speaking strategies, and presenting original work to groups of peers and Gateway staff. It is essential that you improve your listening and speaking skills in order to have a successful transition into life as a Brandeis student.

Text/Materials

Main texts will be provided in class and online

Supplementary Resource:
*Strategies for College Success: A Study Skills Guide*, Diana Renn, University of Michigan Press, 2005. This text will be handed out during Orientation Week.

Goals

By the end of the summer, you should be able to:

**Speaking**
- Lead and Participate in small group discussions
  - Use appropriate phrasal structures and vocabulary for asking/answering questions
  - Use “small talk” appropriately in academic and social settings
  - Differentiate between formal and informal language
- Give informal and formal presentations
  - Improve presentation skills
  - Learn the importance of nonverbal communication
  - Use appropriate visual aids
- Use appropriate word choice and key terms
Gateway Academic Oral Communication
Summer 2015

**Listening**
- Differentiate between main ideas and supporting details
- Take efficient lecture notes
  - Listen for cues
  - Use effective organizers
- Listen for key terms
- Understand formal and informal language in various contexts

**Pronunciation**
- Speak confidently and competently, focusing on:
  - Word stress
  - Sentence level stress
  - Connected speech and linking
  - Contrasting sounds
  - Intonation

**Critical Thinking**
- Differentiate between facts, opinions, and analytical arguments
- Compose responses to course readings, lectures, and clips that are both relevant and thought provoking.

**Expectations**

**Participation** is required. It is the most important aspect of the course. You will be required to actively contribute at least once during class. Additionally, you will be required to lead a discussion, present to the entire class and in small groups, and record podcasts in response to course materials.

**Preparation** is essential in order to succeed at Brandeis. You are expected to come prepared for each class, have all homework or assigned materials completed, and be awake in order to participate in the daily discussions. (Laptops are permitted in class with the permission of the instructor.)

**Speaking English** is vital. Being able to communicate effectively and efficiently in English will be a driving force in your future successes here at Brandeis. You will not be able to use your native language during class time.

**Punctuality and Attendance** is mandatory in the Gateway Scholars Program. You are required to attend 100% of your classes and must be on time for each class. Tardiness will result in a reduced participation grade. Please notify the staff if there is an emergency.

**Assignments/Homework** must be completed on time. Homework is to be posted to Latte or turned in during class time when it is due. Late assignments will not be accepted unless due to an emergency or illness.
Grading

The following elements and percentages are subject to change:

- Participation: 30%
- Leading small group discussions: 25%
- Presentations: 35%
- Listening assignments & preparation (this includes homework): 10%

Academic Integrity

All writing and original presentations are considered the intellectual property of the writer/presenter. Avoid accidental plagiarism by learning how to cite sources properly and by using accepted academic conventions to do so. Please note that the Registrar’s Office does not differentiate between accidental and deliberate plagiarism—all plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty. Please refer to the university’s policy on academic honesty. Any evidence of plagiarism may result in a failing grade for this course and/or academic suspension from Brandeis University. For further information, please visit:
http://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html.

Disabilities

Documented disabilities on record are afforded the right for special reasonable accommodation. Inform the instructor immediately if you need accommodations. For further information, please go to this site:
http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/disabilities/
Course Outline

Week 1 (July 7 – July 10)

Theme: Social Media and Innovation

Focus: Pros and Cons of social media, thinking and responding critically and innovatively, understanding that the Internet can be both immensely beneficial as well as crippling, innovation: how far have we come and where could we potentially go?

Critical Thinking and Discussion Skills: Introduction to the Socratic method, how to lead a discussion, and providing feedback

Active Listening Skills: Introduction to note taking, note taking formats, listening for cue words, best practices for note reviewing, TED talks as practice for note taking

Pronunciation Training: Vowel sounds – Intonation and stress; connected speech; confusion pairs: /i:/ and /I/, /l/ and /n/; vowels: long sounds - a (eɪ), e (i), i (ai), o (oʊ), u (ju); consonants: /b/ and /d/

Presentation Skills: Debating – word choice, maintaining respect and dignity, providing support for claims or decisions

Practicum Focus: The Great Debate – students will choose sides on controversial topics and utilize terminology for proving their points. The Internet will be utilized and teams will research facts to use during their debates.

Week 2 (July 13 – July 17)

Theme: Formal and Informal Conversational English

Focus: listening and responding to faculty and administrators, idioms and slang, public speaking and presentations, questioning and responding academically

Critical Thinking and Discussion Skills: Listen to conversations between professors and students and take notes on main ideas, discuss what went well and what didn’t, and how situations can be handled differently. Watch student presentations. In small groups, discuss what type of presentation it was based on key words and body language. Mock faculty interactions with instructors and TA’s will be given and students will receive immediate feedback on their interactions and language skills.

Active Listening Skills: Respond in conversations to various topics. Conversations will be with classmates, faculty, and role-play situations where you will interact with others off-campus. Take and use notes to prepare feedback on the dialogues you will witness between classmates and faculty.

Pronunciation Training: Intonation and stress; connected speech; confusion pairs: /ʊ/ and /u:/; vowels: short a (æ), e (ɛ), i (ɪ), o (ʊ), u (ʌ); consonants: /s/ and /z/

Presentation Skills: Body language, engaging the audience, visual aids, organizing a speech

Practicum Focus: Mini-presentations – small groups will choose a topic of choice related to health and science and create a presentation that will be filmed.
Week 3 (July 20 – July 24)

**Theme:** Business, News, and Pop Culture

**Focus:** Listening and responding to current affairs in the field of business, listening and comprehending news broadcasts and forming opinions on selected clips, and being exposed to American pop culture which will include sports, music, and celebrities.

**Critical Thinking and Discussion Skills:** Listen to, read, and respond to selected business topics, current controversial issues in the news, and the pop culture phenomenon in America. Be prepared to lead a discussion utilizing the Socratic seminar method.

**Active Listening Skills:** News reports, business presentations and lectures, and pop culture articles will be listened to and read. Respond with note taking and small group discussions to highlight main ideas as well as opinions on the selected topics.

**Pronunciation Training:** Intonation and stress; connected speech; confusion pairs: /θ/ and /ð/; vowels: ow (əʊ), aw (ə), consonant clusters: /pr/,. /pl/, /tr/, /kr/

**Presentation Skills:** Informative presentations – organize information to appeal to the audience wanting to learn about a topic of choice. Provide facts and figures to support the information being presented.

**Practicum Focus:** Community Service/Volunteering – collaborating with the Department of Community Service at Brandeis

Week 4 (July 27 – July 31)

**Theme:** Politics, Government, and Religion

**Focus:** Political debates, interpreting laws, freedom and respect discussions, rights and responsibilities

**Critical Thinking and Discussion Skills:** Read and respond to political controversies, religious debates, and government decisions and laws. Understand and respond appropriately to the varying views and beliefs on hot topics throughout American history as well as develop your own views and beliefs on topics that appeal or don’t appeal to you. Discussions will take place as a Socratic seminar and also in small groups.

**Active Listening Skills:** listen to presidential speeches, debates, and citizen peaceful protests to understand and discuss the critical opinions, demands, and issues being presented

**Pronunciation Training:** Intonation and stress; connected speech; confusion pairs /ʊə/ and /ʊəː/; Vowels: r-controlled- schwa + r, ar, or (ər), air sound (ɛər); consonants /r/ and /v/

**Presentation Skills:** Speaking to persuade – tone, information, and audience engagement. Organizing a speech to gain approval

**Practicum Focus:** Mini-presentations – persuade your audience to believe in what you are presenting. Topics can range from potential laws, changing forms of government, religious persecutions and freedoms, acceptance of differences, or reasons for peaceful protests. Utilize non-verbal communication skills such as body language, audience engagement, and visuals as well as speaking clearly and with purpose.
Week 5 (August 8 – August 7)

Theme: Health & Science

Focus: listening and responding to hot topics in the health and science fields, reading critically and responding to scientific journal articles, small group discussions

Critical Thinking and Discussion Skills: Discuss controversial topics in the health and science fields, critically read and respond to scientific journal topics of choice, small group discussions with varying leaders

Active Listening Skills: Listen and watch presentations about health topics, take notes utilizing the formats provided in week one, focus on presenter body language and audience engagement, review and re-write notes, listen to presentations and read articles on health and science for homework utilizing Latte for note submission and small group discussion question preparation

Pronunciation Training: Intonation and stress; connected speech; confusion pairs: /æ/ and /e/; vowels: other u (ʊ) and oi (ɔɪ); consonant clusters: /kl/, /fl/, /ks/, /sk/

Presentation Skills: Review and practice of body language, engaging the audience, visual aids, organizing a speech

Practicum Focus: Play Preparations - Penelopiad

Week 6 (August 10 – August 14)

Theme: Cultural Identity, Diversity, and Adapting to Change

Focus: The US is considered a Melting Pot and with that comes many challenges and differences in communication and interactions. Students will listen to, read, and respond to various culturally diverse topics and speeches. Stories and challenges of immigrants and international students will be presented and responses and ideas about adapting to life in America will be discussed.

Critical Thinking and Discussion Skills: Students will read about and listen to stories of triumph and hardships faced by those new to the American way of life. Socratic seminars will be held daily in order to discuss various questions faced by viewers and listeners of such stories.

Active Listening Skills: Take notes on the difficulties of adapting to life in America. Based on the notes taken throughout the week, hold discussions on what you can do to make the transition for yourself easier in both the academic and social aspects of American life. Notes will be utilized during class discussion to make reference to specific speakers and stories.

Pronunciation Training: Intonation and stress; connected speech; review confusion pairs that were covered; review vowel sounds that were covered; review consonant sounds that were covered plus: /st/ and /ts/ as well as words ending in /m/.

Practicum Focus: Play Rehearsals - Penelopiad