Spring 2015 Syllabus

Johns Hopkins University
The Center for Leadership Education
Oral Presentations
661.250.06
Instructor: Charlotte O’Donnell
Email: cod@charlotteodonnell.net
Class Meetings: Wednesdays 5 - 7:45PM
Classroom: Gilman 381
Instructor Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4PM, The Daily Grind (café at top of BLC)

Course Assistant: Kevin Cryan
CA Email: kevincryan2700@gmail.com
CA Office Hours: TBA, Whitehead 104

Required Texts and Materials
On Speaking Well by Peggy Noonan, ISBN: 978-0060987404

USB Flash Drive
Please purchase a USB stick that does not need to install its own proprietary software.

Course Description

“According to most studies, peoples’ number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy.”

—Jerry Seinfeld

As Jerry Seinfeld notes, the fear of public speaking is so intense that most of us would prefer dying rather than giving a speech. Even veteran speakers admit to feeling butterflies, nausea, or panic before some of their most important speaking engagements. While very few people ever manage to rid themselves completely of their fear, many people do learn how to channel that fear effectively and become compelling, persuasive speakers. This course is designed to help you push through any anxieties you may have about public speaking by immersing you in a practice-intensive environment. You'll learn how to speak with confidence in a variety of formats and venues—including extemporaneous speaking, job interviewing, leading a discussion, presenting a technical speech with slides, and other relevant scenarios. You'll learn how to develop effective slides that capture your main point with ease and clarity, hone your message, improve your delivery skills, and write thought-provoking, well-organized speeches that hold your audience's attention. During most class sessions, you will be practicing to give a speech, presenting an actual speech, and acting as a thoughtful commentator on other students' speeches. In short, this is a course where you will learn by doing—not by listening to a lecture.
Grading Breakdown
Life Story Speech (not graded)
Presentation Zen Speech 5%
"How to" Technical Speech 10%
The Interview 10%
Extemp/Impromptu Speech 10%
Discussion Topic 10%
TED Talk Speech in “Plan B” Mode 15%
Final Group Problem Solving Presentation 15%
Speaker Critiques 10%
Participation in Class Discussions, Video Footage Journal and Define Your Style Exercise 15%

Please note that grades are non-negotiable. While I’m perfectly happy to talk to you about slide design, rhetoric or speaking technique, I find that it’s generally counterproductive to discuss grades. Also, I won’t be giving any extra credit in this class.

ABET Requirements

- Understanding of professional and ethical responsibility (f).
- Ability to communicate effectively (g).
- The broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global and societal context (h).
- Recognition of the need for and an ability to engage in life-long learning (i).
- Knowledge of contemporary issues (j).

Class Participation
I firmly believe that communications classes, when taken seriously, are some of the hardest classes a student can take at this university. It takes guts to put yourself out there during class – whether in a presentation or in contributions to class discussions – but at the same time it is one of the most important experiences a young student can have. I want the atmosphere in this classroom to foster lively and productive discussion of texts and student work. To do this, it is important that both students and faculty maintain a sense of mutual respect. There are a lot of elements that foster this sense of mutual respect that are easy to lose track of as we become enmeshed in the chaos of the semester. To clarify (lest we forget later on – and I sincerely hope I do not have to return to these points later in the semester) my expectations for class participation will include the following:

- You will arrive on time. Note the attendance policy below. Punctuality and regular attendance are non-negotiable.
- You will arrive prepared for class. You will need to have the texts for that day on hand and all assignments completed. You will also need to be alert. I understand that many of you have heavy workloads and will staying up late studying, but we cannot accomplish anything without your full participation, which means you need to be awake. Bring a large cup of coffee to class, or take a power nap right before – whatever it takes!
- On days when we use computers in the classroom – and this happens frequently – you will not go on Facebook, or check your email, or succumb to any of the other temptations that the internet has created for us of late.
- You will turn off your cell phone before class. I don’t want to hear any ringers go off in the middle of our discussions, and I certainly don’t want to see you texting.
- You will clear any visitors you want to invite into the classroom with me first.
• You won’t gossip or comment about what it took for certain students to finish their assignments on time – or why certain students are late or absent on any particular day. Let’s keep all discussion focused on course material (rather than students’ personal lives), please!
• You will respect each student’s right to express themselves in the classroom. When someone else is talking, don’t interrupt – and for goodness sake, obviously, don’t yell. Listen to him or her and try and think about what they are saying. It will help your case when it is your turn to speak.
• On the flip side, you won’t hold back because you feel that your idea may be unpopular or incorrect. Keep in mind that the study of communication can be a subjective thing at times. The strength of all classroom discussion comes from the diversity of opinions within the group.

If you do not adhere to the above-mentioned policies, I reserve the right to kick you out of class for the day. We will discuss any impact this may or may not have on your attendance record after the fact.

Department Attendance Policy
Attendance is required. You get two unexcused absences over the course of the semester – you should reserve them almost exclusively for situations of serious illness or other true personal emergencies. Please note that a late arrival to class (7 minutes) counts as half an absence. Each absence after #2 will result in a 10 point deduction from your final grade. On rare occasion, I will excuse a student’s absence with a doctor’s note (but we’re talking the kind of note you get from the hospital – not Health Services, because they don’t give notes). The only other way to get an excused absence is to go through the Dean of Students or Counseling Services (generally for religious observances, extreme personal illness, or a death in the family). That said, if you’re having a really bad semester and have a truly legitimate excuse, please come talk to me!

If you know that you will be absent on a particular day, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor in advance and to obtain class notes and assignments from your peers.

Video Footage Journal
For every speaking assignment you complete, you’ll be asked to submit a written critique of your own performance. You’ll be able to do this by watching video footage of each performance posted online.

Each journal entry should be between 250 and 500 words. I expect the writing in these assignments to be thoughtful, clear and free from grammatical errors/typos. Good journal entries will incorporate concepts gleaned from reading Peggy Noonan’s book and watching various assigned speeches. ‘A’ level journal entries will strive for the level of articulate reflection Peggy Noonan achieves in analyzing her own speaking tendencies.

You will submit journal entries to me as word documents attached to email. Due dates are listed on the syllabus.

Speaker Critique
For this class you will be required to attend two professional speaking events over the course of the semester. After the event, you will write a two to three page critique of the speaker’s presentation. I expect you take treat these critiques just as seriously as you do your journal entries – though instead of using Peggy Noonan as a model, you might think of yourself as a writer for the New York Times, writing up a review of the performance. Same as the journal entries, these assignments should be submitted to me (on the assigned due dates) via email.

Define Your Style Exercise
One of the things you’ll be working on in your major assignments this semester is development of a personal speaking style. All great public speakers work hard to develop their own style, and yet many students find this a daunting task.

Toward the middle in the semester, you’ll do a recitation exercise that will ask you to consider the collection of gestures, voice modulations, posture and expressions that make your speeches uniquely your own. See the assignment packet for more details.

Missed Speeches
We will have one “make up” day at the end of the semester for missed speeches. At that time, you will be required to make up any speech you missed. You may also re-do one botched speech to replace the grade. If you miss a practice session for your speech, you will still be expected to give the final speech on the scheduled day.

Ethics
The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

Report any violations you witness to the instructor.

You can find more information about university misconduct policies on the web at these sites:
• For undergraduates: http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergrad-students/student-life-policies/
• For graduate students: http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/grad-students/graduate-specific-policies

Students with Disabilities
Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

Extensions
Available on request. You need to give me more than just a few days notice (I prefer 72 hours notice).

Help for Non-Native Speakers
The CLE offers free ESOL tutoring services to foreign students who need extra help with grammar/mechanics issues in their papers. These tutors can also help students overcome any difficulties they may have with foreign accents. Denise Link-Farajali and Laura Davis hold regular office hours during the week. You can schedule an appointment with either of them through the CLE’s website. http://eng.jhu.edu/wse/cle/page/esl

Email Policy
Though I am happy to answer any course-related questions you might have, please keep in mind that I am not tethered to my computer – and I don’t regularly check email on my phone. My personal email address is listed at the top of this syllabus. I usually respond to student emails within 48 hours.

Also, please know that I don’t send out emails to confirm that I’ve received student work. It’s your responsibility to check your inbox/spam folder to make sure that your communication has gone through. (I check my spam folder all the time to make sure I’m receiving what you’re sending...)
Tentative Course Schedule
* Denotes material that will be distributed as a Xeroxed packet in class.

W 1/28 Course Intro
  - **IN CLASS:** Conan O’Brien’s Harvard Commencement Speech
  - **AS SOON AS YOU LEAVE HERE:** Begin reading Garr Reynolds’ *Presentation Zen*
  - **AS SOON AS YOU LEAVE HERE:** Begin outlining a speech about the most significant/defining moment(s) of your life

W 2/4 Life Story Speeches
  - **PREP:** Finish reading Garr Reynolds’ *Presentation Zen*.
  - **PREP:** Come to class with three (public domain) images that you might use in a series of slides to illustrate Conan O’Brien’s speech

W 2/11 *Presentation Zen* Speeches
  - **PREP:** Pages ix-16 of Peggy Noonan’s *On Speaking Well*.
  - **PREP:** “How Bacteria Talk,” Bonnie Bassler*

W 2/18 “How to” Technical Speeches
  - **PREP:** Pages 17-87 of Peggy Noonan’s *On Speaking Well*.
  - **PREP:** Sarah Palin/Katie Couric Interviews*

W 2/25 Interviews
  - **PREP:** Bring your resume and cover letter. Wear a professional outfit.
  - **PREP:** First three journal entries due.
  - **PREP:** Pages 88-140 of Peggy Noonan’s *On Speaking Well*.

W 3/4 Practice Sessions for Impromptu Speeches / Define Your Style
  - **PREP:** Pages 143-191 of Peggy Noonan’s *On Speaking Well*.
  - **PREP:** Be ready to recite your passage from *On Speaking Well* to the group
  - **PREP:** “Ain’t I a Woman,” Sojourner Truth; “Remarks after the Death of Martin Luther King Jr.,” Robert F. Kennedy; “Peace by Inches,” Al Pacino from *Any Given Sunday*; “The ABC’s of Sales,” Alec Baldwin from *Glengarry Glen Ross**
  - **PREP:** Come to class with a cheat sheet that includes:
    - 5 personal anecdotes
    - 10 quotations said by famous people / written in literature / sung on the radio / etc.
    - 20 facts / statistics (it is usually helpful if some of these facts are related to each other, to your quotations, or to your anecdotes)

W 3/11 Final Extemp/Impromptu Speeches
  - **PREP:** Pages 191-208 of Peggy Noonan’s *On Speaking Well*.
  - **PREP:** “Apology,” Plato*

NO CLASS SPRING BREAK

W 3/25 Discussion Topics
• PREP: First speaker critique due.
• PREP: “The Law of Gravitation,” Richard P. Feynman*

W 4/1
Discussion Topics
• PREP: Watch TED talks by Jaime Oliver, Robert Ballard and two others of your choosing

W 4/8
Practice TED Talk
• PREP: “The Ballot or the Bullet,” Malcolm X*
• PREP: Watch five TED videos of your choosing at www.ted.com (in preparation for the upcoming TED talks)
• PREP: Second set of journal entries due.

W 4/15
Final TED Talk in “Plan B” Mode
• PREP: “Last Lecture,” Randy Pausch*

W 4/22
Make Up Class
• PREP: “Address to Kenyon College,” David Foster Wallace*
• PREP: Second speaker critique due.

W 4/29
Final Group Presentations
• PREP: Last set of journal entries due.
Descriptions of Speech Grades

You will receive a detailed feedback form for each speech you give. However, I use a holistic, descriptive method to grade your speeches overall.

An "A" quality speech does the following:
- **Interest:** I am riveted and deeply interested in the speech.
- **Knowledge:** I leave the speech feeling as if I have learned something new and exciting.
- **Audience Contact:** I notice the speaker making natural, friendly eye contact with me and with other members of the audience.
- **Main Point:** I can remember the main point of the speech very easily.
- **Slides:** I feel impressed and compelled by the slides. They visually reinforce the spoken message mainly in images and a few words. They embody the essence of *Presentation Zen*.

A "B" quality speech does the following:
- **Interest:** I am interested in the speech, but my attention might wander a bit.
- **Knowledge:** The speaker did a good job making an important point about a topic but may not give me anything new to consider.
- **Audience Contact:** The speaker tries to make eye contact and connect with the audience but may or may not have been completely successful.
- **Main Point:** I can remember the general gist but may not be able to recall a specific message from the presentation.
- **Slides:** The slides are competent but boring. They may have one or two errors, but they do not distract from the presentation. They are somewhat simple, but may need to embody PZ more.

A "C" quality speech does the following:
- **Interest:** I am bored by the speech.
- **Knowledge:** I don't think the speech tried anything new. The speech felt canned, cliched, heroic, or fake.
- **Audience Contact:** The speaker makes little to no eye contact or does not connect well with the audience emotionally. The speaker may have accent issues which make it hard to follow and understand the speech.
- **Main Point:** I have a hard time remembering what the speech’s topic or main point was.
- **Slides:** The slides have heavy bullet points and function like an outline. They are distracting, text-heavy, and awkward. They may have lots of typos, stretched graphics, or weird font colors. They may also be way too simplistic and have performed a parody of *Presentation Zen* slides.

A “D” or "F" quality speech does the following:
- The speaker is unprepared or does not give his or her speech.
- The speaker is unprofessional, inappropriate, disrespectful, racist/homophobic/sexist, or rude.
- The speaker clearly has used fake or false material and/or has used an already-prepared speech.
Life Story Speech (not graded)

Slides: Not required  
Length: 3-5 minutes  
Practice Session: None

For this speech, you will introduce yourself to the class by telling the story of your life (or perhaps just a single anecdote that best represents the story of your life) in three to five minutes. Because this is the first assignment, we’re going to be doing a lot of the work during the first class. If you miss the first class, you should email me for more details.

The purpose of this speech is to help your classmates get to know you better so you can have a good rapport with the group – and also to help you hone your storytelling skills. For that reason it’s best to talk about details of your life that are both significant and make you stand out from the pack. Milestones (perhaps?) worth noting in your speech: your birth, the birth of your siblings, the day you met your best friend, the day you got your driver’s license, any near-death experiences you’ve had, the grossest/weirdest/most hilarious day of your life. Other things to consider: the times you’ve been happiest/saddest, the times you’ve made the most/least money, the times you’ve been smartest/dumbest, the times your parents have been most/least proud of you, the times you’ve been least/most serious, the times when you’ve been most/least creative. Consider that the real trick to this speech is escaping the cliché life experience story – also, that an original story doesn’t necessarily have to come from really extraordinary content (you don’t have to survive an alien invasion, or win a Nobel Prize). It’s all in the way you tell it. Can you make the ordinary seem strange or new?

Presentation Zen Speech (5%)

Slides: Required  
Length: 5-7 minutes  
Practice Session: None

During class, you will be asked to select a chapter from Presentation Zen to present the following week. You will create a presentation in which you explain the major bullet points listed at the back of your chapter using your own words/examples/anecdotes/images. Your presentation should be between five to seven minutes in length and utilize an appropriate number of slides. You should strive to make your presentation embody the Presentation Zen approach as much as possible without merely copying the information from the chapter. That is, try to remain true to the PZ principles you just learned about but use your own examples—not the book’s.
The “How To” Speech (10%)

Slides: Required  
Length: 7-10 minutes  
Practice Session: None

For this assignment, you will need to prepare a 7-10 minute speech in which you explain how to do something you’ve learned about as part of coursework here at Johns Hopkins. Your speech should be geared towards a well-educated but non-technical audience. Your “how to” process should be organized sequentially. That is, “how to get a date at JHU” would not, necessarily, meet the requirements of the assignment because, in effect, one could deploy the steps in any number of ways and still not get a date at JHU. However, “how to download BitTorrent and evade the JHU Firewall” would.

Your “how to” technical speech also should contain a compelling “What’s in it for me?” message to the audience that will make them interested in knowing how to do this process. Not everyone necessarily needs to know how to do a dental bone graft, so try to find some honest, compelling reasons to keep your audience listening to your presentation. Often times, an easy way to do this is to imagine that the audience is a particular kind of group and address their particular needs and preferences.

Lastly, your presentation needs to have a “sticky” main message that helps the audience remember the critical components of your process. Think of this as the following kind of statement: “If I were going to help you remember the most critical thing about pricing your own stocks, it would be this . . .”

SOME POTENTIAL IDEAS:
- How to make nanocubes.
- How to diagram a sentence.
- How to get new legislation passed through Congress
- How to do a “close reading” of a poem.
- How to solve an equation.
- How to psychoanalyze your mother
For this assignment, you will be expected to interview for one of the four “jobs” listed below. You will apply in person in front of a panel of your peers who will act as the “interviewers.” You will receive an outfit, handshake, and cover letter/resume critique from the panel. Therefore, you should dress for success and work on practicing for the interview with your friends, family members, and colleagues. If you come dressed unprofessionally, your grade will suffer.

As part of the interview process, you will need to create both a cover letter and a resume that fits the job, scholarship, or internship for which you will apply. Please bring five copies of these materials to the interview. Part of your skill in navigating this tricky public speaking situation will be your ability to handle interpersonal stress, communicate your strong points, remain calm, and seem credible.

**Scholarship Application:** The Ellen Marie Christina Steffensen Cannon Foundation is offering scholarship grants of $15,000 to qualified undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in furthering their studies in their field of interest. Applicants should have a strong academic record, a persuasive personal statement of their goals, and a commitment to furthering the common good. Women and minorities are strongly encouraged to apply. Applicants should submit their cover letters to Ms. Charlotte O’Donnell, Center for Leadership Education, The Johns Hopkins University, 3400 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218.

**Research Internship:** Dr. Iwanna BiFamus is the director of a prominent neurobiological research lab that studies the genetic component of diseases such as MS, Alzheimer’s, and Tay-Sachs. The lab is looking for a level I intern who will be responsible for preparing samples, cleaning laboratory equipment, and tending to/sacrificing rats for the other researchers. Applicants should have a strong academic record, a persuasive statement of their research interests and experience, and a clear statement of goals. Please address your letter to Dr. Iwanna BiFamus, The Johns Hopkins University, 3400 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218.

**Film Production Assistant:** John Waters, a famous independent filmmaker, is looking for a production assistant to work on his latest film, *Charm City Cakes*—a quirky spoof about a high-end bakery located in the Remington neighborhood of Baltimore. Waters is famously idiosyncratic and has specifically stated he is looking for someone reliable, creative, and “out-of-the-box.” The job would entail running errands, coordinating the “extras,” scouting for locations, and creating props/costumes on an ad hoc basis. Address your letter to Mr. John Waters, 3999 Canterbury Road, Baltimore, MD 21218.

**A Real Job/Internship Listing that You Find on the Internet:** In this case, you will find an actual job listing online and I will do my best to interview you for the position. You need to get approval in advance if you want to do this (please email me before the weekend); though I am generally happy to interview you for most types of positions, I reserve the right to ask you to pick another job.
Sample Interview Questions for Hiring Committees

Ellen Marie Christina Steffensen Cannon Scholarship
- Describe your area of study and why you became interested in it?
- How will your studies lead you to improve the common good?
- Describe one meaningful academic experience and any “lessons learned.”
- Describe one experience where you failed at something. How did you respond to this failure?
- Why do you deserve this scholarship more than anyone else?

Research Internship
- Describe your background in science.
- Why do you want to be a researcher?
- What kinds of research have you conducted in the past?
- What makes you a good researcher?
- What are the most important traits a researcher brings to the job?
- Where do you think you fail the most at being a good researcher?
- If you could research anything in the world, what would it be?
- How do you solve a problem?
- Pretend you are a researcher and you spot another researcher falsifying his or her data. What would you do in response?

Film Production Assistant
- What do you know about movie making and/or the film industry?
- Why do you want to work with Mr. Waters?
- Which film is your favorite John Waters film?
- If you could pick one spot in Baltimore to make a film, what spot would you pick and why would you choose it?
- What is creativity?
- What kinds of skills, “know how,” or knowledge could you bring to a movie set?
- Describe one incident where you had to think on your feet and solve a problem almost instantaneously.
- If you were asked to do something weird or something that makes you uncomfortable, how would you handle the situation?
March 30, 2010

Ms. Julie Reiser, Editor-in-Chief
City Paper
1234 Printers Alley
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

Dear Ms. Reiser:

I am writing about the opportunity for a science writer to join the City Paper. As a scientist and individual with prior press experience, I am very excited about this position. And I think my unique combination of education, experience, and skills would serve the City Paper well.

I have been conducting scientific research in the environmental field for four years, most recently at the Johns Hopkins University. I have presented my work at a number of general audience conferences, which required me to think about the “big picture” of my work and present it in a manner that could be comprehended by individuals of differing backgrounds. This will allow me to easily communicate scientific topics to the readers of the City Paper. My knowledge as an “insider” in the scientific field will help me to be in tune with the current trends and “hot topics” in the field. For instance, my current research on pharmaceuticals and personal care products in water is a large social and technical issue that faces every resident of the Chesapeake watershed.

I also have some unique experiences in the publishing industry. For two years, I have worked as editor of a student-created publication An Insider’s Guide to Johns Hopkins, which is produced for the Johns Hopkins Office of Undergraduate Admissions. This experience required me to work with writers, graphic designers, and printers to successfully complete the project. At the end of our first year, our client was so excited with the product that we received a 20% budget increase for the following year’s project. I also have worked for two years as a member of the graphics staff of the Johns Hopkins News-Letter. In this role I have had to work with writers to produce graphics for the articles under the stresses of tight deadlines. This experience makes me particularly well suited to join the City Paper, as I am already familiar with the most challenging aspects of press work and have successfully led my team to complete the Insider’s Guide on-time and under-budget for the last two years.

I have lived in Baltimore for two years and have immersed myself in the culture and trends associated with Charm City. One of the primary sections of the Insider’s Guide is a lengthy section detailing the entertainment, transportation, and cultural nuances of Baltimore’s neighborhoods. This experience makes me a great candidate for the City Paper position, as I have experience writing about Baltimore in a cultural sense.

As you requested, I have included my resume for your review. I feel that my past experiences and my enthusiasm make me a great match for City Paper. Should you have any questions regarding my candidacy, please contact me via email (bjohnso1@jhu.edu) or phone (801-582-6756). Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,
Ben Johnson

Ben Johnson
Bjohnso1@jhu.edu ♦ 801-582-6756
3301 N. Charles Street ♦ Charles Commons #4321 ♦ Baltimore, MD 21218

EDUCATION

The Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Expected May 2012
Bachelor of Science in Environmental Engineering
Baltimore, MD

Major GPA: 3.8
• Recipient of the prestigious Westgate Scholarship.

PUBLICATION EXPERIENCE

Student Admissions Advisory Board Baltimore, MD
Editor, An Insider’s Guide to Johns Hopkins September 2008 to present
• Serve as advisory board member to the Johns Hopkins Office of Undergraduate Admissions.
• Co-direct the development of a print publication, An Insider’s Guide to Johns Hopkins, distributed to 1,000+ admitted students.
• Implement e-recruiting and marketing of Johns Hopkins via social networking sites, blogs, web, and other digital media outlets.

The Johns Hopkins News-Letter Baltimore, MD
Member, Graphics Staff September 2008 to present
• Work under tight deadlines to produce graphics and photo supplements for each week’s issue of student newspaper.
• Collaborate extensively with writers, editors, managing editors, photographers, and other members of graphics staff.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Department of Geography and Environmental Engineering, JHU Baltimore, MD
Research Assistant September 2008 to present
• Research soil aquifer treatment of pharmaceuticals and personal care products in wastewater.
• Play active role in research process, write papers summarizing lab experience.
• Develop skills in microbiology and analytical chemistry techniques, including GC/MS.

Ohmsett, the National Oil Spill Response Test Facility Leonardo, NJ
Engineering Intern January to June 2008
• Worked on 2.6 million gallon simulated environmental test tank for oil spill response equipment at Naval Weapons Station Earle.
• Prepared test summary videos for multinational clients.
• Led an investigation into the feasibility of testing wave energy devices in the tank.
SKILLS

- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe InDesign for Press Layout
Extemporaneous/Impromptu Speeches (10%)

**Slides:** None  
**Length:** 3-5 minutes with 90 seconds of prep time  
**Practice Session:** Yes

Extemporaneous and impromptu speeches are speeches you are asked to give with minimal-to-no preparation time. They will typically occur during an interview, board meeting, or other professional context. For instance, you might be asked by your boss at the beginning of a board meeting to give a brief project update later during the status reports section on the agenda. Or, you might attend a community meeting, notice something that affects you personally on the agenda, and realize you will have to stand up and say something later during the meeting. Or, you might accidentally run into the venture capitalist who has been avoiding your emails and you have 60 seconds to give her the best “elevator sales pitch” of your life to get funding for your start-up. In most cases, you will probably know that you will be asked to say something and may have a few minutes to gather your thoughts. However, you will not have sufficient time to plan, practice, and deliver a formal speech.

Regardless of how much time you have to prepare, you should use whatever time you are given to map out a plan in your head—even if that plan consists of nothing more than memorizing one keyword that will help you articulate the payoff or the “What’s In It For Me” value of what you have to say. Try to remember all the principles we’ve covered for longer speeches but employ them in a more subtle way: hook, main point, example, recap, and close. No matter what: keep it simple. And remember to answer the question or get to the main point ASAP. Always look people in the eye, take your time, and speak concisely. It is better to say less in a more effective way than it is to say more, blather on, and leave your audience confused.

**Ways of Organizing Great Speeches on the Fly**

- **PREP (or Point-Reason-Example-Point):** Make your main point, give a reason, give an example, and wrap up by restating your main point.

- **Pro and Con:** Begin by stating your position. (This should not be “neutral” or “objective.”) Describe both sides of the issue to demonstrate that you can see the virtue of each perspective. At the end, repeat your initial position and give a compelling reason as to why the audience should ignore the other side of the position.

- **Chronology:** Pick a unifying theme/object/process/idea and then tell the “significance” of that thing by outlining its history—how it started, how it works, and how it unfolded over time, and what it means to the present era.

- **Cause and Effect:** State what you think is happening—i.e. what the problem or the condition is—and explain what results from those initial conditions. Then, think of your job as recommending a course of action to change those effects. Think of this as “the politician’s pundit-show fix.”
Discussion Topics (10%)

Slides: None
Length: 15-20 minutes

PREP: Distribute any reading material you would like your audience to use at least one week in advance of the assignment.

For this assignment, you will facilitate a thought-provoking and relevant discussion on a “sticky idea” of your choice. You should pick a topic that genuinely interests you and provides you with enough substance to facilitate a 20 minute discussion, but you should also strive to pick a topic that will capture your classmates’ attention. Your goal is to get everyone talking about the topic and to lead the class to articulate at least two points of consensus on the issue.

Helpful Hints:

- **Think of your job as “facilitating” the discussion—not lecturing.** Don’t summarize the topic for all of us, act like a know-it-all, or an expert. Instead, use our questions and answers to bring out many different or hidden points that people ordinarily wouldn’t consider. Think of ways in which the “common sense” thinking about the topic falls apart and use that as an entry point to a more complicated, rich discussion.

- **Try formulating your topic as an interesting question to narrow its scope.** People like to give their opinions on things, but sometimes it can be difficult to get everyone talking on the same track. If you frame your topic as a question, you can use a leading frame to get everyone thinking about potential solutions, answers, or alternatives. For example, the topic “technology today” is very vague, but “Many experts suggest that cell phones, iPads, and iPods are damaging children’s brains by overtasking them with too many activities. Do you think this is a real problem?”

- **Know your stuff.** Make sure you have formed a coherent plan of attack, written a compelling outline of your own thoughts, and have considered the issue from many different points of view.

- **Draw information out of your all audience members.** Use recap phrases such as, “Joey does a good job giving us one explanation for the current economic crisis, “The stock market crashed because sub-prime lenders overextended themselves. Can you think of any others?”

- **Plan for silence.** Think of several ways to engage your audience and write out five relevant points or questions you can ask if your audience remains quiet. Feel free to call on silent members of class and ask them for their opinions.
The TED Speech in “Plan B” Mode (10%)

Slides: Required
Length: 7-10 minutes
Practice Session: Yes

PREP: Watch at least ten different videos on http://www.ted.com. Try to pick speakers and topics that interest you; however, try to watch things on a variety of subject matters.

TED Content:
For this assignment, you will create an oral presentation for the well-known series, TED: Ideas Worth Spreading. TED talks, found at http://www.ted.com, are prize-winning speeches devoted to spreading innovative, revolutionary ideas. Using the form of the TED “talk” as your guide, create a much shorter presentation (7-10 minutes) about an important idea that you think everyone should know. Your presentation should strive to present something simple, compelling, and revolutionary in a language that “sticks” in your reader’s head. Regardless of whatever rhetorical strategy you use—repetition, humor, passionate engagement, gripping narrative, etc.—your work needs to present its importance in a self-evident way. In other words, your audience needs to know what the “payoff” is and why your idea counts as something inherently important. And, most importantly, it needs to focus on conveying a clear message that does at least one of the following:

- changes our normal way of thinking about something
- argues for a new course of action about a seemingly intractable problem
- demonstrates the presence of a problem where none was seen before

Plan B Mode:
This speech assignment will also give you the opportunity to experience what it’s like to endure the worst possible case scenario while speaking in public. Even large, well-orchestrated speaking opportunities like a TED Conference can run into technical malfunctions, power outages, or abbreviated time periods. In the business world, a critical sales presentation to an important group of stakeholders might be re-scheduled at the last minute or, worse, reduced to an elevator pitch while a busy executive rushes to make her plane flight.

For our graded session, you will select a random “worst case scenario” that will be kept hidden from you and the audience will proceed to enact it. You will need to adjust to these taxing conditions mid-stream in your speech. The whole goal is for you to focus on the presentation and make your main message stick regardless of the circumstances you encounter. Part of your grade will be determined both by the interesting nature of your content and by your ability to handle the extenuating circumstances you will select at random. You should strategize in advance your own personal methods for dealing with logistical snafus, technical dilemmas, and other disruptions.
Final Presentation: Group Problem-Solving Speech (15%)

Slides: Required
Length: 10-15 minutes + 5 minutes Q&A
Practice Session: None

A problem-solving speech is a very practical speech designed to provide a specific, relevant solution to a problem that may have many different stakeholders, variables, and projected outcomes. These kinds of speeches happen frequently at work, in the lab, or in volunteer organizations where money is often on the line.

Because most of the “real world” works collaboratively in teams and groups, you will be asked to give this presentation in groups of three. As a group, you will be asked to prepare a 15 minute presentation with slides in response to a specific problem scenario. Your goal is to create a compelling solution and to persuade your audience to accept your solution above all others. Your speech/response should be focused, germane, and detail-oriented. In other words, you cannot rely on generalities or clichés if you want your solution to be adopted. You should follow all the principles of good public speaking we have worked on this semester—hook, specific examples, recap, and close—and you should make your solution extremely specific and practical by including the results of your research. For this speech, you can assume that your audience is the relevant group of stakeholders mentioned in the scenario and can address them directly. You should plan on a brief Q & A session after your speech has concluded.

As a group, you will need to work on blending your personalities, smoothing out group dynamics, splitting the labor and presentation time evenly, and synthesizing yourselves into one coherent point of view. Above all, each member of the group should try to emphasize his or her strengths while seeming to contribute equally with every other member. You will be graded both individually on your own performance and collectively as a group.

I will announce the problem topic two weeks before the assignment is due.
Define Your Style Exercise

Slides: None
Time: about 3-5 minutes

As you give more and more speeches this semester, you should be working to uncover a presentation style that comes comfortably and naturally to you. This style is a collection of refined gestures, voice modulations, posture and expressions that make your speeches unique. It’s also part of how the audience judges whether or not they should listen to you; through examining the non-verbal cues you give them, they assess what kind of human being you really are and whether or not you have their best interest at heart. The best public speakers not only know their own style, but also work hard to refine those elements over the course of their careers so that their messages target their audiences in a very precise way.

This assignment asks you to think critically about your own style by reciting a portion of the Noonan text in a way that is true to your own voice and speaking technique. I've selected a few passages from the Noonan text – you will choose the one that speaks most to you. (Hint: it may help to choose a passage that has a message you actually believe in.)

On the day of the assignment, you will recite the passage to the group as if it were your own speech. You must keep all of the words of the speech the same, though you may choose to alter the punctuation to fit your own voice. You should consider playing with voice modulation, tone, timing, hand gestures, facial expressions and other body language. You may bring notes with you to the podium, but try not to rely on them. (Reading from the paper is pretty poor style!)

Excellent work will grab the audience’s attention and leave them feeling that not only do you believe in the words that you are saying, you own them. Your delivery will give the audience a strong impression of your character (or ethos); no one else could have delivered those words in quite the way you did. At the same time, your technique will leave the audience utterly convinced that you are a solid and credible human. It is clear you worked hard to define your personal approach to verbal delivery and thought critically about how to overlay it upon a prepared text. The technical aspects of your speech, such as voice modulation and body language, are refined.

Okay work feels like an adequate speech, although you might not seem entirely comfortable during certain parts of the recitation – or your delivery might seem fake or forced in places. Some thought has been put into the elements that make your speeches unique, but they may be awkwardly grafted upon the prepared text, or the technique itself may detract from the message you are attempting to deliver. Technical proficiency is plateaued from previous assignments.

Poor work shows little or no critical thinking into the elements of your own style while presenting. It feels as though the presenter has regurgitated the text without adding anything to it. There is a lack of attention to the technical aspects of the speech.
Sample Journal Entry

Interview

Preparation for this speech was not particularly complicated. I went over the possible questions and thought about the specific scholarship I was applying for and how I could articulate why my research is important. I have done interviews before and I am really very familiar with the field of study I proposed to research so there was little need to learn about the field. I think it might have been more challenging if the job were more dictated by the employer and not crafted by me.

Peggy Noonan doesn’t discuss interviewing explicitly but I tried to employ some of her advice. Specifically, I tried my best to be confident and self-assured. I think I did a good job in that regard. I tried to be myself (but a more formal version of myself). After watching the traumatizing Sarah Palin video, it was really clear why those things matter. Going in to the interview, I was nervous that I wouldn’t be able to answer some of the questions and I would give some blubbering answer. That didn’t happen too badly so I’m happy.

I was fairly pleased with my overall performance and I wish I would be more like this in all my interviews. Often when I go into interviews I feel really nervous because it seems like an uphill battle; I will have to be convincing them that I am a good candidate even though they know exactly what a good candidate should look like. This time I felt more in control because I was the one crafting the scholarship and because I was the most knowledgeable about my field of research. Having that kind of expertise is nothing something you get to have in most interviews for entry-level positions. It gave me confidence.

I was really happy with my response to the question about how my experience teaching art classes would be useful for this scholarship. I’m still kind of surprised I came up with that answer and wish I had planned it! I also would have liked to have had a more articulated response to the question about what I would do if I did not get the scholarship. I think that is a tricky question because you do not want to seem like you have so many other options that the scholarship wouldn’t matter, but you also don’t want to sound too desperate. I think this was hard to articulate for me personally because answering the “what are your plans after graduation” question is anxiety provoking in real life (let alone fake interview life) and always makes me painfully aware of my unemployed status. I guess the lesson there is to try not to let my own insecurities and feelings of inadequacy seep into an interview, even if that means pretending to be self-assured.

It is very confusing to be an ambitious person who currently has absolutely no articulated dreams or specific goals except some amorphous idea of ‘success.’
Sample Speaker Critique

On April 9th, I attended the Foreign Affairs Symposium speech given by former Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum. I found Santorum’s performance to be fairly good, which is surprising because I have strong negative feelings towards him. I would like to touch upon the positive aspects of his speech, and then go into detail about the issues I found problematic, specifically certain aspects of his treatment of the audience, word choice, and ability to respond to questions.

In terms of Santorum’s presentation delivery, he was confident and comfortable on stage, clearly a result of years of experience with public speaking. He spoke with passion and conviction. He was not thrown off by certain technical difficulties with the microphone and lighting in the beginning. He was relaxed and relatively casual, which was fitting and appropriate for a student audience. These are all admirable qualities in a speaker. The structure of the speech was also fairly clear and well done. He touched upon the focus of his talk (his views on foreign affairs), gave a brief summary of his professional experience, specifically work relevant to foreign affairs, and provided us with a loose “roadmap” of how the talk would unfold. This was done well and gave the speech focus.

Santorum was at Hopkins because he was asked to fill in for another speaker, whose name escapes me. Being asked to fill in for someone else at the last minute is probably challenging for most speakers, especially someone of note like Santorum, who might not be used to being picked second-string. I admire his willingness to accept the invitation, especially on short notice. However, he began his speech by first thanking us for attending, then saying something along the lines of “I know I am a last minute replacement.” This seemed unnecessarily self-deprecating, and not in a funny way. The audience was there by choice; we weren’t disappointed he was there.

As Santorum began discussing his approach for the evening, he mentioned his desire to have a “robust” question and answer session at the end. I found this encouraging and exciting; it seemed like a very democratic approach to a speech about politics. However, he quickly turned this on its head by reminding us that questions are “words put together with a question mark at the end, as opposed to a statement or a demand,” which I found a little rude. This remark got some laughs, and I imagine Santorum felt it necessary to make such a comment in anticipation of students strongly opposing his views. That is fine, but his tone was belittling to the audience, especially because the FAS staff had already reminded us to be respectful of the speaker.

Santorum’s actual speech began by pointing to radical Islam as the root of many of the foreign affairs issues today, but took an interesting approach by going very far back in history and explaining why he believes the conflict between Muslims and the West began. This was an enlightening and unique approach that I really appreciated. However, Santorum’s rhetoric and word choice clearly indicated he was someone with a strong religious (Christian) background, which was slightly problematic for his speech. Santorum was trying to explain that one of the central differences between Christianity and Islam is that Islam includes both civil and religious codes, whereas Christianity only lays out religious codes and operates independently of the state. Being an overtly religious political leader does not support this argument very well. I have no problem with religion but it can be such a divisive subject, as evidenced by Santorum’s own narrative about radical Islam, and politicians should be careful to avoid implicitly religious rhetoric so that their message can be digested as unbiased.
Santorum’s “closing moves” were well done. He left us with very broad, open-ended questions about national defense and the future of terrorist threats. He critiqued the work of both Presidents Bush and Obama during their times in office, which I believe was a good way of presenting himself as an independent thinker. His closing remarks were oriented towards the future, which I found to be very thought provoking and a good strategy to get people to remember his words.

Despite Santorum’s overall confidence, he seemed stumped when confronted with certain questions during the Q & A, specifically one posed by our very own Kevin. Kevin asked Santorum if there was a good reason for not applying federal ethics laws to gay married couples. Santorum claimed there was not, and then went on to minimize this issue, saying it was not central to the gay marriage debate. I’m not sure how one might formulate a better response, but simply saying “no,” then minimizing the question is not a strong tactic. Answering questions can be really tough, but I did not find anything especially shocking about Kevin’s question. Such a question could be anticipated; a good answer could have been formulated. That said, Santorum wasn’t really rattled by these questions, and remained poised. This is a good ability for any speaker, but there is a different between remaining calm by avoiding giving an answer and remaining calm while addressing a difficult question in full, the latter being much more difficult and admirable.

The best parts of Santorum’s actual speech (not the question and answer) were his overall delivery—his confidence, conviction and passion. He knew what he was talking about and spoke clearly about his views. Although I was personally bothered by the way he belittled the audience in the beginning and the religious rhetoric he intertwined in his talk, these are not egregious errors. Still, these errors might be worth fixing because they might make for a more receptive audience. Additionally, Santorum should be more confident and articulate when responding to difficult questions. He will be confronted with them time and time again in his political career.