

STRATEGIC PRESENTATION SKILLS (90-718)






This course equips students with essential skills to confidently navigate professional communication scenarios, such as interviews, webinars, and face-to-face presentations. Activities include analyzing an audience, crafting an outline, developing cohesive visuals, and speaking extemporaneously. By the end of this course, students learn to adapt communication strategies to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders. They will also possess the necessary tools to excel in a wide range of professional settings, contributing to their overall academic and professional success.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS

Some assignments encourage the use of AI for content creation and delivery. However, it is imperative that students verify the accuracy and credibility of the content, the references, and the evidence before sharing their work. Conversely, some assignments prohibit the use of AI for content creation and delivery. In these cases, students are required to demonstrate mastery of course objectives without AI assistance. This ensures that students are well-equipped for their professional careers through impromptu interactions with supervisors, co-workers, and clients.

USE OF VIRTUAL REALITY (VR)

Some homework assignments can be completed in Professor Hyatt's VR lab using Ovation VR. While it is optional to use VR for practice, combining VR training with feedback from in-person practice sessions has proven to be an effective way to enhance public speaking skills.

<div><div> Gaze</div><div> Voice</div><div> Hands</div></div> <div><div>Audience Section Staring</div><div>Filler Words</div><div>Speaking Rate</div><div>Pauses</div><div>Monotone</div><div>Hand Movement</div><div>Mic Distance</div></div>	<div></div> <div>Filler Words</div> <div>You will receive warning notifications each time you say a filler word (um, like, so).</div>	<div></div> <div>Learn to improvise while responding to prompts and answering questions</div> <div>Ovation provides hundreds of prompts, with categories including interview and leadership, or you can add your own.</div>
---	---	--

PROFESSIONALISM

As students embark on an exciting semester of professional growth at Heinz College, the importance of professionalism must be addressed. In the world of academia, as in the professional world, adhering to deadlines and maintaining high standards are indispensable qualities. **Below are a few key reasons why professionalism matter in this course:**

1. **Accountability:** Meeting deadlines establishes accountability for your academic performance. It reflects your dedication to the subject matter and showcases your ability to manage your time effectively.
2. **Quality of Work:** Adhering to deadlines is conducive to producing high-quality assignments. Rushed or late submissions often result in subpar work.
3. **Respect for Others:** Submitting work on time demonstrates respect for your peers who rely on shared contributions for in-class workshops and activities. The act of sharing facilitates efficient and effective completion of tasks for everyone involved.
4. **Preparation for the Real World:** Cultivating the habit of being punctual for class and submitting work before deadlines sets the foundation for expectations you'll face in your future career. In a professional context, tardiness for meetings or late submissions of work can result in missed opportunities, dissatisfied clients, or even termination of your job.

This semester is an opportunity to develop and practice the essential skills of professionalism that will serve you well throughout your academic journey and professional career. Remember that by consistently meeting deadlines and maintaining high standards, you are setting yourself up for a future filled with success and opportunities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES (according to Bloom's revised taxonomy) **Students will be able to...**

- Remember:** Identify effective presentation elements, including message effectiveness (e.g., strong introduction, smooth transitions, logical flow, closure), verbal skills (e.g., pace, clarity, filler words), and nonverbal skills (e.g., gestures, eye contact, posture).
- Understand:** Compare/contrast effective and ineffective presentations based on rubric elements.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the key components that contribute to successful presentations.
- Apply:** Adapt compelling messages to the perspectives of various stakeholders through written and oral communications.
- Utilize effective communication strategies in diverse professional contexts.
- Analyze:** Analyze recorded presentations, including impromptu speaking exercises, elevator pitches, interviews, informative speeches, persuasive speeches.
- Identify strengths and areas for improvement in both individual and peer presentations.
- Evaluate:** Provide constructive feedback to peers on their presentations.
- Complete self-evaluations to reflect on personal communications and presentations.
- Create:** Produce effective presentations for a variety of professional contexts, considering the needs and expectations of specific stakeholders.

NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION (NCA) COMPETENCIES

According to the NCA position on expectations for speaking and listening, "... skills must result in effective outcomes and seen as appropriate (a) by the audience, (b) in the context enacted, and (c) for the purpose specified." See the link on Canvas for NCA Speaking and Listening Competencies for College Students (Basic and Advanced Skills) that are covered in this course.

ACCOMMODATIONS & OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATION

If a student provides evidence of learning for a specific topic, demonstrating an advanced level of proficiency (see rubric), a different assignment will be provided. Students are also provided options to complete some assignments in correlation with their field of study or personal interest.

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY (paid by CMU)

- Record/analyze speeches using **Zoom**.
- Upload videos and write reflections using **Acclaim**, a flexible video platform that allows professors and students to set up folders, embed videos, and share comments with each other.

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

The semester is organized into the following areas with nonverbal, verbal, and visual communication aspects integrated into our discussions and assignments:

- **Building Professional Relationships** (elevator pitch, interview, impromptu speaking exercises)
- **Working in Teams** (informative speech)
- **Presenting to a Targeted Audience to Achieve a Specific Outcome** (persuasive speech)

Students have access to course content via Canvas once registered. Specific assignments are not posted on the syllabus.

NO TEXT

Free online readings are provided via Canvas to target course objectives.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

If you plagiarize, you are in violation of academic integrity. An automatic “0” is assigned and the incident gets reported to program administrators. Moreover, if you provide your work to another student and they use it, you will also be reported for an academic integrity violation.

When it is not deemed appropriate by the professor, using AI is considered a violation of academic integrity.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION POLICY

CMU Attendance Statement (adapted): To uphold a student’s right to confidentiality, to ensure equitable treatment, and to protect a faculty member from adjudicating medical needs, the Provost and the Office of General Counsel strongly encourage faculty to not ask for medical documentation to be provided directly to them in the case of student absences or late arrivals. To remove ambiguity, some faculty have chosen an attendance policy with **no distinction between excused and unexcused**. With this approach, instructors can make clear that the reason for their attendance policy is **to accurately reflect the amount of information that the student engaged with during class**.

Strategic Presentation Skills (SPS) is a workshop-based, interactive communication course with 10-12 students per section. It’s not a lecture-based course with exams. Due to this format, attendance and participation are factored into your final grade.

SPS Attendance Policy: If you're not present, you cannot engage with class activities. With daily group interactions and impromptu speaking exercises, the class relies heavily on active participation for practice sessions and feedback. Since there is **no distinction between excused and unexcused**, you do not need to email the professor or the TA to provide a reason for an absence. If you're unable to attend class, review the weekly links on Canvas and meet with the TA. Furthermore, to protect a student's right to privacy during practice sessions and group work activities, classes are not recorded. Face-to-face learning is an expectation at Heinz College.

SPS Participation Policy: As an interactive class, **participation is an expectation** (e.g., engaging with speakers by asking questions, providing feedback after speeches, working productively with group members). Therefore, you are expected to receive a 0 score. However, you may be awarded additional points for extra effort, or you may receive negative points for a lack of effort. As a note, these points are completely at the professor's discretion and based on direct observations during class.

Bonus Participation Points:

- If you go above and beyond to engage with speakers (e.g., asking questions, offering great feedback).
- If you go above and beyond to engage with group members (e.g., taking a leadership role).
- If you go above and beyond to practice speeches outside of class time (e.g., meetings with the TA or practicing in the VR lab).

Negative Participation Points:

- If you are not prepared to give your speech on the assigned day, points are deducted.
- If you're not an active listener (e.g., typing on your computer, checking emails or texts on your phone, working on assignments for other classes, talking during someone's speech), points are deducted.
- If you are not prepared when working with your group (e.g., vague outline, incomplete visuals), points are deducted.

GRADING POLICY

At the end of the semester, a final grade is calculated by combining the points for all assignments (minus any deductions) and dividing that score by the total number of points [e.g., 329 (student's score) / 350 (total points) = 94%]. There are no weighted assignments.

Heinz Grading Scale

Grade	%	Interpretation
A+	98 - 100	Exceptional
A	93 - 97	Excellent
A-	90 - 92	Very Good
B+	88 - 89	Good
B	83 - 87	Acceptable
B-	80 - 82	Fair
C+	78 - 79	Poor
C	73 - 77	Very Poor
C-	70 - 72	Minimal Passing
R	69 - below	Failing
I	NA	Incomplete

SAMPLE RUBRIC

	TIME The presenter demonstrates appropriate use of time.	PACE AND FLOW The presenter demonstrates appropriate pace (rate of delivery) and flow (fluidity of content) while using appropriate pauses, not filler words (e.g., umm, ah, like, so, you know).	HAND GESTURES The presenter demonstrates appropriate hand gestures.	EYE CONTACT The presenter demonstrates appropriate eye contact.	VOLUME AND CLARITY The presenter demonstrates appropriate volume and clarity.	PRESENCE AND MESSAGE EFFECTIVENESS The presenter demonstrates presence (confidence) and message effectiveness.
PROFESSIONAL	The time for the presentation aligns with the range established by the presenter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate of delivery is consistently maintained (not too fast or too slow). The presenter does not get lost in thought, stumble over words, or repeat sentences (due to memorizing and forgetting the speech). Pauses (1 – 2 seconds), not filler words, are consistently used to engage the audience, build interest, and transition to the next discussion point. Filler words (if any) are not noticeable or distracting. 	Hand gestures align with the content (referencing what the presenter is saying) and do not distract from the message.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eye contact is evident because the presenter scans the room (often) to include audience members (equally). The presenter uses the screens (computer and/or presentation screen) as cues to discuss content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume is consistently maintained (not too loud or too soft). Words are clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction is very confident and friendly (e.g., welcomes audience, provides credentials, builds interest with hook). The message is organized (e.g., agenda, logical sequence, and clear summary). In a persuasive speech, a strong argument (with use of repetition) is evident. Strong evidence is used to support the topic. Content is based on audience demographics. The presenter appears confident (posture/stance) throughout the speech.
PROFICIENT	<p>Additional practice is suggested.</p> <p>The time for the presentation is within an acceptable range.</p>	<p>Additional practice is suggested in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pace is too fast or too slow (at times). The presenter occasionally gets lost in thought, stumbles over words, or repeats a sentence. Pauses could be utilized more effectively to engage the audience, build interest, and transition to the next discussion point. Filler words are noticeable, but not distracting. 	<p>Additional practice is suggested.</p> <p>Too many gestures (or lack thereof), implies nervousness or indecisiveness. These gestures (while noticeable) do not distract from the message.</p>	<p>Additional practice is suggested in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eye contact is evident because the presenter scans the room; however, too much time is spent looking at specific individuals or at a specific place (left, right, or over the heads of audience members). The presenter reads (occasionally) from the screen(s) without looking at the audience. 	<p>Additional practice is suggested in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume is too loud or too soft (at times). Some words are difficult to understand. 	<p>Additional practice is suggested in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction is friendly but could be more engaging. The message could use more structure. In a persuasive speech, the argument is stated; however, it could be stronger. Evidence is provided to support the topic; however, it could be stronger. Content is vaguely based on audience demographics. The presenter appears confident (posture/stance) for most of the speech.
DEVELOPING	<p>Additional practice is required.</p> <p>The time for the presentation is not within an acceptable range.</p>	<p>Additional practice is required in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pace is too fast or too slow. The presenter gets lost in thought, stumbles over words, or repeats sentences. It is distracting and impacts the message. Pauses (or lack thereof) are distracting, not engaging. Filler words are distracting. 	<p>Additional practice is required.</p> <p>Too many gestures (or lack thereof), implies nervousness or indecisiveness. These gestures are obvious and distract from the message.</p>	<p>Additional practice is required in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eye contact is limited. The presenter spends a significant amount of time looking at specific individuals or at a specific place (left, right, or over the heads of audience members). The presenter spends a significant amount of time reading directly from the screen(s). 	<p>Additional practice is required in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume is not maintained throughout the presentation. Many words are difficult to understand. 	<p>Additional practice is required in one or more areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction is not confident or engaging. The speech is not organized. In a persuasive speech, the argument is weak. Additional evidence is needed. Content is not based on audience demographics. The presenter does not appear confident (posture/stance) for most of the speech.

LATE WORK POLICY

After a deadline, submit assignments to the “Late Work” folder on Canvas. Your work will not be accepted via email since I utilize the commenting tools on Canvas to provide feedback. Since everyone has an acceptable excuse for late work, I cannot give special consideration to some and not others regarding the penalty for submitting a late assignment.

Since I am continuously grading weekly assignments (videos and reflections), I review late work at the end of the semester, not when you submit the assignment. For major assignments, grading starts at 80% of the total score. For reflections (only worth 10 points), I cannot accept late work. A reflection (e.g., reviewing a 30-second to 2-minute elevator pitch) only takes a few minutes to write. Therefore, it must be completed during the week that it was assigned. Please do not submit reflections and expect them to be graded after the deadline has passed. Reflections are posted to Acclaim, not Canvas; therefore, I do not receive notifications on this platform for late submissions.

MISSING (ungraded) WORK

A draft, ungraded work, is an important part of the learning process. If a **quality** draft is not submitted, -10 points are deducted from your participation score. Without a quality draft, you cannot fully participate with in-class activities for group work, and there is a penalty for not completing your homework. Drafts are utilized to provide feedback to a student prior to submitting the work for a grade.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours start at 8:00 AM on class days. Late afternoon, evening, and weekend appointments are also available to accommodate a variety of schedules. Please feel free to stop in or email me to schedule a meeting.

PLACEMENT & EXEMPTION POLICY

To apply for an exemption, students must meet the criteria (see the Heinz website for specific directions and exemption exam dates).

REGISTRATION & WAITLIST POLICY

A maximum of twelve students are registered for each SPS section. Once a section is full, admission to the course is dependent on (1) the number of registered students who drop the section, and (2) the waitlist order.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Diversity (adapted from <https://www.cmu.edu/student-diversity>): Diversity and inclusion have a singular place among the values of Carnegie Mellon University. This class will “enhance an inclusive and transformative student experience in dimensions such as access, success, and intergroup dialogue” through class activities, writing workshops, discussions, and assignments.

WELLNESS STATEMENT

Wellness (adapted): Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. There are many resources available on campus, and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. You are not alone.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings of anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is available to help you. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty, or family member for help. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night.

CaPS: 412-268-2922

Re:solve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226

If the situation is life threatening, call CMU Police at **412-268-2323** or **911**.