

## Syllabus, MARK 8397, Summer, 2010, sect. 25830 Communicating Academic Research

We meet 9:30-12:30 Fridays in 387 Melcher Hall: June 4, 11, 18, 25, July 2, 9, and 16. Then the Wednesday following each of those dates, the class meets 1:15-4:30, so June 9, 16, 23, 30, then July 7 and 14 (on July 21<sup>st</sup> we'll schedule an individual meeting with each of you). In the Friday morning sessions we'll have an 11-11:15 break. In the Wednesday afternoon sessions you'll work with Michelle Miley from the UH Writing Center, who also attends the Friday morning sessions. She'll meet with you in 212 Agnes Arnold Hall.

Instructor: Betsy Gelb, 713-743-4558, [gelb@uh.edu](mailto:gelb@uh.edu), 385G Melcher Hall  
Office hours by appointment. Please let's operate with first names, including mine.

Textbook: *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 10th edition (2011), by Joseph M. Williams and Gregory Colomb.

Blackboard will have material useful to you in this class. Mice work cheap; please check it often.

Course objectives: We hope to significantly increase your level of:

- **Skill in talking about research**, measured by my perception of whether academicians would think: Hmmmm, sharp student!
- **Confidence in talking about your research**, measured by your own perceptions.
- **Understanding of how academicians evaluate oral presentations of research**, measured by the astuteness of your comments on what you hear from others in the class. If you tell people they are wonderful when they are not, they don't get better. And if they *are* wonderful, please tell them what they are doing right.
- **Self-marketing skills**. This is a marketing course. We expect you to use oral communication to increase the odds that people LIKE you -- a necessary but not sufficient condition for success in the academic job market,
- **Written communication skills**, measured in two ways. We want everything you write to be clear to a first-year doctoral student and at the same time gladden the heart of a purist in the English language.

### Course format

You will talk a lot. I'll assign communication topics for everyone in the class to present briefly. You will also present your own research in various forms:

- "elevator speeches"
- interviews for academic positions
- presentations before groups
- discussion of how this study fits into a continuing research program

Of course, a major focus will be those third and fourth bullets. We'll help you to become stellar presenters of the research papers that we ask that you each bring to this course. You should be a co-author or sole author of, ideally, an empirical study. You'll title (re-title) it. You'll introduce it. You'll tell us why we want to know what this study will tell us. Others in the class will critique all that. Wednesday afternoons, you'll be improving your paper until it's ready to be fully presented and also ready to be handed in for evaluation as a written submission. Michelle will help you to do that work.

Some days we'll have one or more guest speakers on a special topic. These folks not only have something to say, they are role models as presenters.

Grading --- I'll assess progress, application of class material, your contributions in class discussions and presentations, and the paper you hand in. Less than stellar English that improves over the summer will not damage your grade unless a writing error would have been flagged by Word software. However, lack of preparation and/or a casual concern for deadlines will damage your grade. What you say/present and what you write will receive roughly equal weight. The course has no exams.

### **Two notes from the Bauer College Dean's office:**

The University of Houston Academic Honesty Policy is strictly enforced by the C. T. Bauer College of Business. No violations of this policy will be tolerated in this course. A discussion of the policy is included in the University of Houston Student Handbook, <http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html>. Students are expected to be familiar with this policy.

The C. T. Bauer College of Business would like to help students who have disabilities achieve their highest potential. To this end, in order to receive academic accommodations, students must register with the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) (telephone 713-743-5400), and present approved accommodation documentation to their instructors in a timely manner.

*Note how I made clear in the subhead that the two paragraphs above came from the Dean's office, not from me. In a class on communication, I'd never word anything the way those two paragraphs are worded. I hope you wouldn't either.*

### **Schedule**

**Fri., 6/4** Each of you will introduce yourself as a researcher-in-training. Please before you come to class think about what you'll say. Thinking about what you'll say in situations in which you will be evaluated by others is a fine mind-set to develop. I'll also ask that sometime during the morning you fill out a contact form with e-mail address, phone numbers, and anything else that you think I ought to know if you haven't already done so.

We'll go over the syllabus; please bring a hard copy. If you have even trivial questions, please ask them. Then I'll ask each of you to describe the paper you will be improving this semester. Michelle ([mlmiley@central.uh.edu](mailto:mlmiley@central.uh.edu)) will describe her role in this class and will make whatever comments and suggestions she thinks are helpful. I'll do the same. You'll do the same to help each other. Not only is there no curve in the grading in this class, but you are expected to make suggestions early and often. Academic norms require us to be candid, objective, and helpful; that's how research improves.

Please be sure that you have bought the textbook before this class and have read Chapter 1 (Feel free to skip "A Short History of Unclear Writing," pp. 3-7) and Chapter 2. I am happy to spend as much time as you'd like responding to your questions (Michelle will help) about what the author is trying to tell you. Then I'll ask some of you to explain one or more of the ideas in these chapters to all of us. Also, I have posted on Blackboard an article that I can mine for examples that are good and less-good in terms of the material in those chapters. Please read that article to find such examples. We need to get past the idea that everything that's published is wonderful. What examples of poor style or incorrectness did you find? What examples of good style and admirable-but-not-stiff correctness did you find, for example?

**Fri., 6/11** Today's first focus is your papers. You should have improved them since last week. We'll go around and each report improvements. Yes, you will first need to re-describe what your paper is about. Today we'll all critique the way you present that description. I'll ask for oral comments, and each class member will fill out an evaluation sheet telling each of you his or her top-of-mind reactions to how you talked about your work and also the work itself.

Then we'll have a two-person faculty panel on selecting research topics and/or anything else they want to talk about that will help you publish WELL. Panelists are Mike Ahearne and Bob Keller.

Finally, please read Chapters 3 and 4. Each of you will present, with no more than four PowerPoint slides, examples of how material from these chapters has improved your writing. Examples should NOT come from the book. Please explain briefly each writing-improvement point you are making, then use a "before improved" and "after improved" format to show that you have applied the point. You should plan on a presentation of 3 to 5 minutes. Please put your slide presentation on the desktop before class if possible. We may have some presentations before the break and some after.

**Fri., 6/18** Please bring to class your academic c.v. in draft form. Nobody will see it today except you. We'll talk about how to improve it --- not just its form, but also the "you" it presents. Because it's a component of the "product" that future academic colleagues will evaluate, we'll discuss that evaluation process, which may differ from discipline to discipline. Please **before this class** talk with anybody who seems knowledgeable in your department: How does recruiting work? We will expect each of you to tell us, please.

Today is also your “elevator speech” concerning your research. You have two minutes to interest someone from a business faculty, but not necessarily from your discipline, in your study. We’ll go around the class. Again, as we did last week, each class member will fill out an evaluation sheet with top-of-mind reactions.

A speaker, Kaye Newberry, will talk about co-authorship. Most academic papers are co-authored. Since your dissertation won’t be, you may not realize how co-authorship can go well or less well.

As you suspect by now, please read Chapters 5 and 6, and each class member will have 3-5 minutes to tell us one or more points made in these chapters, then offer examples, with no more than four slides. Again, we may split this set of presentations so that some come before and some after the guest speaker’s talk.

**Fri., 6/25** Job interviews today! The elevator speech and your resume helped to get you the interview. Please bring a finished version of your academic resume to hand in. Of course, we won’t go through a full 30-minute interview with each of you. But I’ll ask the sorts of questions that interviewers ask, and we’ll critique the answers of those I target with those questions. If you’d like to prepare, the faculty positions I will be trying to fill all will be at LSU in Baton Rouge.

**Fri., 7/2** This is our day to focus on oral presentations, including teaching skills, and we’ll have a faculty panel with skills, expertise, and suggestions – some of which, of course, may conflict. Participants are Jim Hess, Latha Ramchand, Dusya Vera, and possibly also Ed Blair. On the other hand, we recognize that the two of you who aren’t taking the course for credit might want to take off early for the July 4 weekend. If you decide to do that, please understand that you still are expected to meet with Michelle on Wednesday, July 7. Today we’ll start the class with each of you applying Chapters 7 and 8 (usual format – 3-5 minutes, no more than four slides, one or more points from the chapter explained, then illustrated from changes in your work). And for all of you -- when Michelle sees your paper on July 7, you will want to have it **done**, because there is no good writing, only good rewriting. Past July 7, you are rewriting and then re-rewriting.

**Fri., 7/9** Ten of you will present formally next week, July 16. Today we’ll schedule for each of you individually your final class session with Michelle and me to discuss the papers you will hand in and present on the 16<sup>th</sup>. We should be able to schedule all of those sessions for Wednesday, July 21. We’ll go through our usual drill with Chapters 10 and 11 (yes, we skip Chapter 9). Anything else you want discussed? Now is the time, because next Friday the presentations will take up all of our class time. Today we’ll have our first two, from Christine and Manoshi, 15 minutes each, and these two papers are due today, please.

**Fri., 7/16** Presentations from the rest of you, and you will turn your paper in today. Then Michelle and I will meet with you Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> in my office, 385G, at the time set last week. We’ll discuss your paper, our comments, ask what else we might do

that's useful, and wish you a happy rest-of-summer, rest-of-doctoral program, and rest-of-career.