CSE/ISE 300 Communication F11

• Time: Tue/Thur 5:20-6:40PM
• Location: Room 102 Light Engineering
• Required Book: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (2000), Authors: Strunk and White $10 (or $4 2007 reprint by Coyote)
• Online Technical Writing, Author: David A. McMurrey http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/
• Recommended Textbook: Pocket Guide to Technical Communication, 5th ed. (2011). Author: Pfeiffer $42 list; $33 Amazon ($26+$4 used)
• Instructor: Professor Larry Wittie  TA: Sean Munson
• Office: CS Building, Room 1308  TA Office: 2110 CSB
• Phone: 631-632-8750 (not 2-8456)  TA Hours: 11AM-1PM, Weds
• Email: lw@ic.sunysb.edu  TA Email: smunson@cs.stonybrook.edu
• Office Hours: 3:45-5:15PM Tue & Thu or by appointment
• Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300

Short grammar quiz in class Tuesday 25 Oct 2011. Bring a pen to class.
Guidelines for Speech Preparation and Delivery

The goal of most oral presentations is quite simple: You must present a few basic points, in a fairly brief time, to an interested but usually impatient audience. Simplicity, brevity, and interest are the keys to success. If you deliver what you expect when you hear a speech, then you will give good presentations yourself.

Speech Guideline 1: Know Your Listeners
These features are common to most listeners:

- They cannot “rewind the tape” of your presentation, in contrast to the way they can skip back and forth through the text of a report.
- They are impatient after the first few minutes, particularly if they do not know where a speech is going.
- They will daydream and often need their attention brought back to the matter at hand (expect a 30-second attention span).
- They have heard so many disappointing presentations that they might not have high expectations for yours.
Speech Guideline 2: Use the Preacher’s Maxim
The well-known preacher’s maxim goes like this:

First you tell ’em what you’re gonna tell ’em, then you tell ’em, and then you tell ’em what you told ’em.

Speech Guideline 3: Stick to a Few Main Points
Our short-term memory holds limited items. It follows that listeners are most attentive to speeches organized around a few major points. In fact, a good argument can be made for organizing information in groups of threes whenever possible. For reasons that are not totally understood, listeners seem to remember groups of three items more than they do any other size groupings—perhaps for these reasons:

- The number is simple.
- It parallels the overall three-part structure of most speeches and documents (beginning, middle, and end).
Speech Guideline 4: Put Your Outline on Cards, Paper, or Overheads
The best presentations are “extemporaneous,” meaning the speaker shows great familiarity with the material but uses notes for occasional reference. Avoid the extremes of (1) reading a speech verbatim, which many listeners consider the ultimate insult, or (2) memorizing a speech, which can make your presentation seem somewhat wooden and artificial.

Ironically, you appear more natural if you refer to notes during a presentation. Such extemporaneous speaking allows you to make last-minute changes in phrasing and emphasis that may improve delivery, rather than locking you into specific phrasing that is memorized or written out word for word.

Depending on your personal preference, you may choose to write speech notes on (1) index cards, (2) a sheet or two of paper, or (3) overhead transparencies. The main advantages and disadvantages of each are listed in Figure 4–14.
Speech Guideline 5: Practice, Practice, Practice
Many speakers prepare a well-organized speech but then fail to add the essential ingredient: practice. Constant practice distinguishes superior presentations from mediocre ones. It also helps to eliminate the nervousness that most speakers feel at one time or another.

Speech Guideline 6: Speak Vigorously and Deliberately
Vigorously means with enthusiasm; deliberately means with care, attention, and appropriate emphasis on words and phrases. The importance of this guideline becomes clear when you think back to how you felt during the most recent speech you heard. At the very least, you expected the speaker to show interest in the subject and to demonstrate enthusiasm. Good information is not enough. You need to arouse the interest of the listeners.

You may wonder, “How much enthusiasm is enough?” The best way to answer this question is to hear or (preferably) watch yourself on tape. Your delivery should incorporate just enough enthusiasm so that it sounds and looks a bit unnatural to you. Few, if any, listeners ever complain about a speech being too enthusiastic or a speaker being too energetic. But many, many people complain about dull speakers who fail to show that they themselves are excited about the topic. Remember, every presentation is, in a sense, “showtime.”
Speech Guideline 7: Avoid Filler Words
Avoiding filler words presents a tremendous challenge to most speakers. When they think about what comes next or encounter a break in the speech, they may tend to fill the gap with filler words and phrases such as these:

- uhhhhh . . .
- ya know . . .
- okay . . .
- well . . . uh . . .
- like . . .
- I mean . . .
- umm . . .
Speech Guideline 8: Use Rhetorical Questions

Enthusiasm, of course, is your best delivery technique for capturing the attention of the audience. Another technique is the use of rhetorical questions at pivotal points in your presentation.

Rhetorical questions are those you ask to get listeners thinking about a topic, not those that you would expect them to answer out loud. They prod listeners to think about your point and set up an expectation that important information will follow. Also, they break the monotony of standard declarative sentence patterns. For example, here is a rhetorical question used by a computer salesperson in proposing a purchase:

I’ve discussed the three main advantages that a centralized word-processing center would provide your office staff. But is this an approach that you can afford at this point in the company’s growth?
Speech Guideline 9: Maintain Eye Contact

Your main goal—always—is to keep listeners interested in what you are saying. This goal requires that you maintain control, using whatever techniques you can to direct the attention of the audience. Frequent eye contact is one good strategy.

The simple truth is that listeners pay closer attention to what you are saying when you look at them. Think how you react when a speaker makes constant eye contact with you. If you are like most people, you feel as if the speaker is speaking to you personally, even if there are 100 people in the audience. Also, you tend to feel more obligated to listen when you know that the speaker’s eyes will be meeting yours throughout the presentation. Here are some ways you can make eye contact a natural part of your own strategy for effective oral presentations:

- **With audiences of about 30 or less:** Make regular eye contact with everyone in the room. Be particularly careful not to ignore members of the audience who are seated to your far right and far left (see Figure).

- **With large audiences:** There may be too many people or a room too large for you to make individual eye contact with all listeners. In this case, focus on just a few people in all three sections of the audience.

- **With any size audience:** Occasionally, look away from the audience—either to your notes or toward a part of the room where there are no faces looking back. In this way, you avoid the appearance of staring.
Speech Guideline 10: Use Appropriate Gestures and Posture
Speaking is only one part of giving a speech; others are adopting appropriate posture and using gestures that will reinforce what you are saying. Note that good speakers are much more than “talking heads” before a lectern. Instead, they do the following:

- Use their hands and fingers to emphasize major points
- Stand straight, without leaning on or gripping the lectern
- Step out from behind the lectern on occasion, to decrease the distance to the audience
- Point toward visuals on screens or charts, without losing eye contact with the audience

The audience will judge you by what you say and what they see, a fact that again makes videotaping a crucial part of your preparation. With work on this facet of your presentation, you can avoid problems like keeping your hands constantly in your pockets, rustling change (remove pocket change and keys beforehand), tapping a pencil, scratching nervously, slouching over a lectern, and shifting from foot to foot.