

**Advanced Speaking and Critical Listening Skills (ELS)  
21W.232 (Graduate)/21W.233 (Undergraduate)**

Fall 2023

Mon/Wed 3:30pm – 5:00pm

Classroom: 1-273

Office hours: Mon & Wed 5-6 pm and by appointment

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### **Course Description**

The goal of this course is to develop effective interactive speaking and listening skills for academic and professional contexts. It is designed for advanced, motivated learners who want to improve their listening effectiveness, pronunciation accuracy, oral delivery, and overall presentation skills. Organized as a workshop, it is “hands-on,” which means class participation requires active preparation (reading, videos, exercises) done in advance, outside of class. Course work also includes frequent audio- and video recording for analysis and feedback in 4 main areas:

- Career-related oral interactions expected of MIT students and graduates, such as impromptu speaking, job interviews, research presentations, and interactive teaching;
- Strategic expressions (gambits) and common idioms used in professional communication;
- Comprehensible pronunciation, stress, and intonation patterns in global English;
- Critical listening for professional contexts and purposes (including signaling attentiveness and reading others’ non-verbal signals).

### **Enrollment priorities**

First priority is for MIT graduate students who are currently teaching assistants and for whom the class is a requirement based on the English Evaluation Test (EET). Next are graduate students required or recommended to take the class based on the EET within the past two years, and undergraduates who are concentrating in ELS. Then come other students who have pre-registered for the course. Finally, if room remains, credit-seeking students for whom the class is not required or recommended by the Institute, with permission of the instructor. Limited to 15 students. No listeners.

### **Required Materials**

- *The Craft of Scientific Presentations* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) by Michael Alley, Springer NY;
- *Well Said* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) by Linda Grant, NGL/Cengage;
- *The Torch or the Firehose: A Guide to Section Teaching*  
<https://ocw.mit.edu/resources/res-18-004-the-torch-or-the-firehose-a-guide-to-section-teaching-spring-2009/online-publication/>
- *Career Development Handbook*, available in Building 12 Career Center and online: <https://capd.mit.edu/resources/career-handbook/>
- A folder in which to keep class materials and handouts – bring to each class.

### **Attendance, Participation and Homework**

Skills improvement entails focus and ample practice in response to feedback, so this workshop requires consistent active participation. You can expect progress only if you attend regularly, do all the required assignments, and work steadily on your improvement goals. Grading is based heavily on work presented during class, so attendance, class preparation, and active participation are essential. Missing more than three *excused* classes or repeated lateness will negatively affect your grade. Should absence be unavoidable, you are still responsible for submitting any work due, and for finding out and doing what is due for the next class. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior permission from the instructor. If you think you may need to attend lectures or do work for other classes during our class time, you should postpone taking this course until you can give it the time and attention it requires.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes**

The various communication tasks for which you will be responsible throughout the term are designed to address effective message organization/structure, body language and facial expressions as well as vocal delivery, professionally relevant idiomatic expressions, effective visual aids and Q & A, and generally improving your *interactive* listening and speaking skills. Effective interaction and communication includes not only awareness and consideration of your audience but also strategies for getting the floor, interrupting, participating in shaping discussion, getting clarification or confirmation, providing feedback as well as clarification, and generally *actively negotiating meaning*.

We aim to build your confidence as we develop your ability to assess your own as well as others' performances, give realistic and constructive feedback, effectively integrate the non-verbal and verbal aspects of professional communication, and manage anxiety as well as time constraints. We will also consider the influence of various levels of culture -- national, ethnic, regional, organizational, etc. -- on communication norms.

### **Communication**

Regular communication with your classmates and instructor is essential to this course. You are expected to check the Canvas site regularly and your email daily.

### **Grading**

Attendance, preparation, participation & in-class activities	10%
Homework (includes listening, reading, and journal)	10%
Academic Minute presentation	10%
Interactive teaching	20%
Design and explanation of a visual	10%
Research presentation	20%
Memos and self-evaluations	10%
Sound Files (audio recordings of outside pronunciation assignments)	10%

### **Grading standard**

<b>A</b> = 94 +	<b>A-</b> = 90-93	<b>B+</b> = 86 – 89	<b>B</b> = 83 – 85	<b>B-</b> = 80 - 82
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<b>C+</b> = 76 - 79	<b>C</b> = 73 - 75	<b>C-</b> = 70 - 72	<b>D</b> = 60 - 69	<b>F</b> = < 60
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**Tentative Schedule** (subject to change; most current will be posted on Canvas).

<b>Class/date</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Assignments due (before that day or in class – always check Canvas for exact due dates!)</b>
(1) W 9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the course and each other</li> <li>• Introduction to impromptu speaking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete information sheet</li> </ul>
(2) M 9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intro to (interactive) critical listening, aka active listening</li> <li>• Small talk</li> <li>• Activating vocabulary development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening &amp; Speaking Basics (assignment on Canvas)</li> <li>• <b>Memo 1:</b> Your experience with spoken academic English, strengths and weakness, and course goals/action plan</li> <li>• <b>Sound file (SF) #1:</b> Speaking baseline/diagnostic</li> </ul>
(3) W 9/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocal qualities and pronunciation</li> <li>• Presence: verbal and non-verbal communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch videos, read, and answer questions (assignments on Canvas)</li> </ul>
(4) M 9/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic “Minute,” aka Elevator Speech</li> <li>• Strategic message organization</li> <li>• Delivery skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch Academic Minute talks and answer questions</li> <li>• Read Career Guide on elevator speeches</li> <li>• <b>Activating vocabulary journal #1</b></li> </ul>
(5) W 9/20	Pronunciation Workshop 1: Sounds and Syllables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WS Ch. 2-4: do self-study exercises and check answers + bring any questions to class</li> <li>• Read Alley Ch. 5 on presenting</li> </ul>
(6) M 9/25	<b>Oral Presentations: Academic “Minutes”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and practice your Academic “Minute” presentation</li> <li>• <b>Sound File (SF) #2:</b> Linking</li> </ul>
(7) W 9/27	Pronunciation Workshop 2: Stress and Intonation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WS Ch. 5–7: do self-study exercises and check answers</li> <li>• <b>Academic “Minute” self-evaluation</b></li> </ul>
(8) M 10/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Job Interviews and constructive feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activating vocabulary journal #2</b></li> <li>• Watch videos on interview</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role-plays</li> </ul>	pointers and importance of small talk.
(9) W 10/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Interview simulation</li> <li>• Interactive Teaching assignment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Career Guide on interviews</li> <li>• <b>SF 3: Academic Minute trouble spots/corrections</b></li> </ul>
(10) W 10/6	Pronunciation Workshop 3: Focus, emphasis, and contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WS Ch. 8-10: do self-study exercises and check answers</li> <li>• <b>Activating vocab journal #3</b></li> </ul>
Monday 10/9	<b>No class</b>	Indigenous People's Holiday
(11) M 10/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working Effectively in Groups (and some cultural contrasts)</li> <li>• Teaching and Learning Video discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching &amp; Learning video review</li> <li>• Plan/choose class to observe</li> </ul>
(12) W 10/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Cultures and the American Perspective on Effective Teaching</li> <li>• Brain-storming micro-teaching ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read <i>Guidelines on Learning that Inform Teaching at MIT</i></li> <li>• <b>Activating vocab journal #4</b></li> </ul>
(13) M 10/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive Teaching: Building rapport and managing activities</li> <li>• Peer review of lesson plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Torch or the Firehose</li> <li>• Watch teaching videos</li> <li>• <b>Memo 2:</b> Analyze the class/lecture/seminar you observed and take-aways for your own teaching</li> </ul>
(14) W 10/25	Pronunciation Workshop 4: Connected Speech (linking & blending)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WS, Ch.11-12: do self-study exercises and check answers</li> <li>• <b>Activating vocab journal #5</b></li> </ul>
(15) M 10/30	<b>Interactive Micro-lessons (group A)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare and practice micro-teaching lesson</li> </ul>
(16) W 11/1	<b>Interactive Micro-lessons (group B)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Activating vocab journal #6</b></li> </ul>
(17) M 11/6	Presenting Research 1: Purpose and Audience Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive Teaching Self-evaluations</li> <li>• Read Alley Ch. 1 + 2</li> </ul>
(18) W 11/8	Presenting Research 2; <i>Death by PPT</i> vs. the best visual information practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research presentation proposal and detailed outline</li> <li>• Read Alley Ch. 4</li> <li>• <b>Activating vocab journal #7</b></li> </ul>

(19) M 11/13	<b>Presenting a Visual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare 2 slides (sequential) that reflect best practices and practice explaining them.</li> </ul>
(20) W 11/15	Presenting Research 3: Organization and storyboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting a Visual self-eval</li> <li>• Read Alley Ch. 3.</li> <li>• <b>Activating vocab journal #8</b></li> </ul>
(21) M 11/20	Presentation Rehearsals and Peer Review 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and practice research presentation</li> <li>• Read/review Alley Ch. 5 + 6</li> </ul>
Wednesday 11/21	<b>No class</b>	(Thursday: Thanksgiving Holiday)
(22) M 11/27	Presentation Rehearsals and Peer Review 2	
(23) W 11/29	<b>Research Presentations: Group 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenters: bring a hard copy of your slides (4/pg.) and outline of your talk.</li> </ul>
(24) M 12/4	<b>Research Presentations: Group 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenters: bring a hard copy of your slides (4/pg.) and outline of your talk</li> <li>• Group 1 Self-evaluations due.</li> </ul>
(25) W 12/6	<b>Research Presentations: Group 3 (if needed)</b> Otherwise, review of Activating Vocabulary results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenters: bring a hard copy of your slides (4/pg.) and written outline of your talk</li> <li>• Group 2 Self-evaluations due.</li> </ul>
(26) M12/11	Wrap Up/Review and Course Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group 3 Self-evaluations due</li> <li>• <b>Memo 3:</b> Progress assessment and report</li> <li>• <b>SF #4: Exit self-assessment</b></li> </ul>