

BSST340: Oral Communication for National Security Careers

Course Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 6 – 7:15 p.m.

Classroom Location: Knight Hall 1103

Office Hours: By Appointment

Lecturer: Holly Roberts
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course, students will discuss perspectives on strategic communication and national security, while discussing and practicing public speaking skills and developing proficiency in four genres of security-related briefings. Students will work with the technical, scientific, and/or specialized data, vocabularies, processes, and products of the academic disciplines and/or fields of expertise relevant to national and international security careers. Students will learn:

- How to conduct primary, secondary, and tertiary research to produce professional presentations;
- How to tailor the ways in which they present information to specific audiences;
- How to organize their ideas clearly and concisely;
- How to use stylistic and visual devices to make information accessible and digestible; and
- How to edit and analyze their own work and that of their peers.

Students will complete six oral presentation assignments:

- An introductory speech;
- An impromptu speech;
- A policy briefing recommending adoption of new political measures;
- A current intelligence briefing;
- An emergency situation report/crisis press conference; and
- A piece of testimony to the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Plan, prepare, and deliver effective oral presentations that:
 - Reflect successful presentation techniques including presentation graphics;
 - Produce cogent arguments that identify arguable issues, reflect the degree of available evidence, and take account of counter argument; and
 - Use verbal and nonverbal language appropriate to the goal and the context of the presentation;
- Analyze the oral presentations of peers, thereby further developing abilities to:
 - Listen carefully;
 - Ask and respond to questions;

- Communicate interpersonally and interculturally with others in conversation and group discussion contexts; and
- Understand one's own communication styles and choices and the styles and choices of others;
- Design and adapt oral presentations to audiences who may differ in their familiarity with the subject matter (in academic and professional contexts);
- Demonstrate awareness of communication ethics in a global society, particularly within the context of national and international security apparatuses;
- Develop, deliver, and analyze policy briefings;
- Develop, deliver, and analyze current intelligence briefings;
- Develop, deliver, and analyze emergency situation reports; and
- Develop, deliver, and analyze congressional testimony.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Your final grade in this course will be based on:

- Reading/Engagement Quizzes (10) (100 points)
- Introductory Speech (25 points)
- Impromptu Speech (25 points)
- Policy Briefing Speech (50 points)
- Current Intelligence Briefing (50 points)
- Emergency Situation Report/Press Conference (50 points)
- A rhetorical analysis of a speech/briefing relevant to national security (50 points).
- A speech presenting the findings of your rhetorical analysis (50 points)
- Additional points may be obtained through class participation points and additional assignments.

Reading/Engagement Quizzes (10) (100 points) A total of ten online quizzes will be assigned throughout the semester. Each quiz will be worth ten points and will cover assigned readings and/or material relevant to the previous lecture. The quizzes will constitute a mix of essay questions, and/or true/false, and multiple-choice questions.

Quizzes will be available for 24 hours and it is your responsibility to take them at a time that is convenient for you. I understand that sometimes life happens (you forgot, you were busy, you simply didn't want to do it, etc.) As such, I will offer one extra credit quiz at the end of the semester.

Introductory Speech (25 points) This speech will help get us talking! You'll be matched with a fellow classmate and asked to introduce them to the class in a short 2-3 minute speech.

Impromptu Speech (25 points) The purpose of the impromptu speech assignment is to have a little fun! At times in your career, you may be asked to speak publicly with little-to-no prep time. This assignment embraces this real-life setting by asking student to draw a topic out of a hat (i.e., what's your favorite vegetable?) and prepare a 2-3 minute speech with 10 minutes of prep time. The

format of the speech will be simple and straightforward (i.e., an attention grabber, a thesis statement, three points with support, and a conclusion with thesis restatement).

Policy Briefings. (50 points) A policy briefing presents the findings of a policy memorandum, in which a group or individual prepares an analysis of an existing policy or problem and a proposal for a policy change. The policy briefing presents the policy analysis in order to inform and support political decision making. Based on class discussions and readings, you will prepare a 5 minute briefing in which you will present a policy problem, present 2 to 3 alternative responses to the problem, and select and advocate for the best option for policy change.

Current Intelligence Briefings. (50 points) A current intelligence briefing is a common presentation genre within the intelligence and national security sectors, including the military service branches; it provides information on current events that may affect the safety of US citizens and/or interests. Current intelligence briefings typically focus on a theme (e.g. cybersecurity), an incident (e.g. a suicide bombing in Iraq), a group or individual (e.g. Al Qaeda), or a particular region of the world (e.g. Northern Iraq). The briefing presents information on current events and presents an argument on the state of one or more threats to US interests. Based on discussions and readings, you will prepare a 5 minute briefing in which you will present information on something you believe to be a current threat to US interests and work to convince your audience that the threat requires action (although you do not need to propose a specific action).

Congressional Testimonies. (50 points) Congressional hearings are the principal format through which Congressional authorization and/or appropriations committees collect and analyze information. There are four types of hearings: legislative hearings, in which a committee considers current legislation or need for new legislation; oversight hearings, in which a committee gathers information and considers how to implement new legislation; investigative hearings, in which a committee comes together to uncover evidence of wrongdoing or error; and confirmation hearings, in which a committee (Senate only) reviews Presidential appointments. We will focus on the Congressional oversight committee, where individuals often present evidence of their research and/or programs, and why that work is important. We will read theory and practice on Congressional testimony from think tank literature, military strategy documents, and the disciplines of anthropology, law, and political science. Based on these discussions, you will prepare a 10-minute briefing on an issue of your choice relevant to a topical national security issue, to the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. You will use your briefing to argue that your topic is of the utmost importance to homeland security, and you will present substantial evidence to support your claims, utilizing scholarly research where applicable.

Rhetorical Analysis Paper (50 points) Your rhetorical analysis gives you the opportunity to analyze and critique the communication skills of an individual or organization in the national security field. You may find a video speech on YouTube or an organization's website, and, using the criteria we will discuss in lecture, you will examine each detail of the message, the orator, the visual cues and any other relevant factor of the speech.

The paper should be written according to [APA guidelines](#) and be 7-10 pages in length.

Rhetorical Analysis Speech (50 points) You will present the findings of your Rhetorical Analysis paper to the class in a 4-6 minute speech. Accompanying visual aids should follow guidelines discussed in lecture.

Emergency Situation Report/Press Conference/Final Exam (50 points) An emergency situation report provides factual information on an unfolding crisis. It is a recurring report which provides emergency managers and other response personnel with situational awareness on an evolving scenario and which directs emergency managers to the issues requiring most immediate attention. Emergency situation reports typically survey the physical and cultural landscapes of a disaster, including the nature of the disaster, the area affected, the physical, economic, and social impacts, and/or the projected evolution/secondary threats. Situation reports then typically provide information on ongoing response efforts and major areas of need. Your situation report will be combined with your press conference in your final exam.

For the final exam, we will go through a mock crisis simulation. Students will be divided into teams, assigned agency affiliations, and given information regarding a specific crisis. Students will need to collaborate as teams to provide an emergency situation report during the simulation and then identify the ideal spokesperson and deliver a brief message at a mock press conference. Students will also be asked to respond to “media” questions per guidelines discussed in lecture.

Additional Points

Additional points may be given throughout the semester at the instructor’s discretion. Example of these points may include participation points, attendance points, or extra credit opportunities.

Your grades for all assignments in the course will be numerical values. Numerical scores correspond to letter grades as follows:

A+	98-100	C+	78-79
A	93-97	C	73-77
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	88-89	D+	68-69
B	83-87	D	63-67
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
		F	0-59

CLASS POLICIES:

University of Maryland class policies can be [found online](#)¹. I would encourage you to read them and familiarize yourself with them as all policies are relevant to your time at the university.

Additionally, policies unique to this class are as follows:

Plagiarism. I will not tolerate plagiarism. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an “F” on the assignment, and you may be referred to the University of Maryland’s Honor Council. The following text on what constitutes plagiarism comes from the website, <http://www.plagiarism.org/>, which is a useful resource if you would like more information on the topic:

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another individual’s work or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like “copying” and “borrowing” can disguise the seriousness of the offense. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following practices are acts of plagiarism:

“The Forgotten Footnote”

The writer mentions an author's name for a source but neglects to include specific information on the location of the material referenced. This practice often masks other forms of plagiarism by obscuring source locations.

“The Misinformer”

The writer provides inaccurate information regarding the sources, making it impossible to find them.

“The Too-Perfect Paraphrase”

The writer properly cites a source but neglects to place quotation marks around text that has been copied word-for-word (or close to it). Although attributing the basic ideas to the source, the writer is falsely claiming original presentation and interpretation of the information.

“The Resourceful Citer”

The writer properly cites all sources, paraphrasing and using quotations appropriately. The catch? The paper contains almost no original work!

“The Perfect Crime”

In this case, the writer properly quotes and cites sources in some places, but goes on to paraphrase other arguments from those sources without citation. This way, the writer tries to pass off the paraphrased material as his or her own analysis of the cited material.

¹ <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

“I Thought We Didn't Have to Quote Facts”

Because the Internet makes information so readily available, students may find it difficult to tell the difference between “common knowledge” they are free to use, and original ideas which are the intellectual property of others. When in doubt, cite sources.

“Confusion about Expectations”

Students may not be aware of what proper research requires. They may think they are being asked simply to report critical commentary, or to “borrow” from a number of sources to show that they have “done their homework.” In either case, it becomes a problem if what they submit is predominantly comprised of the work of other scholars and/or analysts. One of the most common sources of confusion is the ambiguity of terms such as “analyze” and “discuss.” These words have specific meanings in academic discourse, and they imply a degree of original thought that goes beyond mere “reporting.” (Plagiarism.org)

24-Hour Policy. I will respond to e-mail within 24 hours. Often, when dealing with an approaching deadline, my inbox is flooded with last minute questions. I, like you, have a life outside of this course and may not be able to get to them as quickly as you would like. Therefore, I encourage you to send questions as quickly as possible as it may take me 24 hours to respond.

The 24-Hour Policy also applies to grade discussions. I am always happy to discuss your classwork with you. However, I will not do so immediately before class or immediately afterwards. My office hours are flexible and I'm sure we can find a time convenient for both of us.

Class Dismissal. While I intend on being on time to every class this semester, we all know that life happens. In the event that I am 15 minutes late, and you have not received an e-mail from me, you are free to go and will not lose any participation/attendance point opportunities.

Considerate Technology. We all know it's rude to be on your cell phone while someone is talking/presenting. If I notice that you are on your phone repetitively, I will make a note of that. Therefore, don't be surprised if I mention it when/if you have questions regarding assignments or lecture notes. **Please note that phone use is strictly forbidden on speech days as a courtesy to your fellow classmates. Failure to abide by this policy will result in a loss of points from your speech.**

Speech Days. I expect all class members to attend speech days, even if you are not scheduled to present. Failure to attend class without appropriate documentation and notice, as outlined in UMD's policies, will result in the loss of points from your speech.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Please note that this is a guide to our semester together but dates and assignments may change due to class cancellations, the availability of other readings or instructor discretion.

Week	Date	Topic	What's due?
1	Aug. 28	Introductions	
	Aug. 30	Types of Communication	Quiz 1 Reading: Sellnow
2	Sept. 4	No class. Have a safe and happy Labor Day!	
	Sept. 6	Introductory Speeches	
3	Sept. 11	Understanding Communication Roles: Contagion – Out of Class Assignment	Online Response Due
	Sept. 13	Public Speaking/Verbal Communication	Quiz 2 Reading: Gamble and Gamble; Gamble and Gamble;
4	Sept. 18	Audience Analysis/Nonverbal Communication	Quiz 3 Reading: Williams and Olanarin; Brad Phillips
	Sept. 20	Developing Arguments	Quiz 4 Reading: “Structuring Arguments”; George Orwell’s Writing Advice
5	Sept. 25	Rhetorical Analysis/Visual Communication	
	Sept. 27	Rhetorical Analysis Continued	Quiz 5
6	Oct. 2	Work Day	Peer Reviews Due
	Oct. 4	Rhetorical Analysis Speech Day	
7	Oct. 9	Rhetorical Analysis Speech Day	
	Oct. 11	Policy Briefings/Writing Techniques <i>Guest Lecturer: John Richter, Senate Legislative Correspondent</i>	Quiz 6 Reading: Smith, Chapter 2
8	Oct. 16	Policy Briefings	
	Oct. 18	Work Day	
9	Oct. 23	Speech Day: Policy Briefings	
	Oct. 25	Speech Day: Policy Briefings	
10	Oct. 30	Current Intelligence Briefings <i>Guest Lecturer: Steve Sin, Senior Researcher at START</i>	Reading: Intel-Briefings; Lowenthal
	Nov. 1	Current Intelligence Briefings Continued	Quiz 7
11	Nov. 6	Work Day	

	Nov. 8	Current Intelligence Briefing Speech Day	
12	Nov. 13	Congressional Testimonies	Reading: Braniff Testimony Al-Qaeda; Braniff Testimony, Testifying Before Congress Handbook
	Nov. 15	Congressional Testimonies Continued	Quiz 8
13	Nov. 20	Work Day	
	Nov. 22	No Class. Have a safe and happy Thanksgiving!	
14	Nov. 27	Speech Day: Congressional Testimonies	
	Nov. 29	Speech Day Congressional Testimonies	
15	Dec. 4	Crisis Communication/Reputation Management/Spokespeople	Quiz 9 Reading: Coombs; Anthony and Sellnow; Issue Management; Milt Cole-Fuerstein
	Dec. 6	Impromptu Speeches	
16	Dec. 11	Press Conferences/Emergency Situation Reports	Quiz 10 Reading: Charlie Tuggle; Fink
	Dec. 15	Final Exam: 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	