Advanced Speaking & Critical Listening Skills: ESL

T, Th 4:00-5:00 in Room 14E-310
Recitation: TBA
Office hours: M 10-11:30 am;
Th 5-6 pm; & by appointment
Jane Dunphy, Office 14N-312
253-3069; email dunphy@mit.edu

Key dates. Add Date/change to P/D/F (10/6); Drop Date/change to listener (11/22); Last class (12/13): No assignments accepted after this date.

Course Description. Advanced Listening Comprehension & Speaking Skills (21G.232/3) is designed for students who are relatively comfortable with the complex grammatical structures and vocabulary of English conversation. We will focus on the more formal forms of speaking that are central to academic and professional communication in global English. The course is in workshop format, which means that most of class time will be spent in discussion and activities based on preparation (readings, videos, textbook assignments) that you do in advance outside of class time. You will receive instruction, practice and feedback—all grounded in current research—in four main areas:

1. The interactions, including impromptu speaking, job interviews, research presentations, and interactive teaching, for which MIT students/graduates will be responsible in their careers;
2. The formulaic vocabulary (gambits) associated with professional communication;
3. The most salient pronunciation, stress and intonation patterns for comprehensibility (a listener’s perception of how much effort s/he makes to listen to a speaker) and intelligibility (the extent to which a speaker’s message is understood by a listener) in global English;
4. Critical listening skills for professional contexts.

The workshop content builds cumulatively; each module and assignment builds on the one before. Consistent, constructive participation throughout the semester is essential to the learning process and the success of the workshop 21G.232/3. As a result, I expect all participants to register for grades or for P/D/F. If you expect to have difficulty this semester being punctual, preparing for and attending almost every class, and completing assignments on time, you should plan to take 21G.232/3 another semester.

The prerequisite for the course is Listening, Speaking & Pronunciation (21G.223/4), an EET recommendation for 21G.232/3, or permission of the instructor.

Expected learning outcomes. Over the course of the term, you will be responsible for a variety of spoken communication tasks. We will be considering such topics as effective message structure, gestures and facial expressions, common rhetorical expressions associated with particular contexts, successful Q & A sessions, purposeful visual aids, and interpretation of rapid speech. We will also consider the influence of national- and micro-cultures on communication norms.
You will learn how to handle nerves; speak with confidence and honor time constraints; sharpen your active listening skills; minimize your audience’s listening efforts; contribute constructively to group decision-making; integrate verbal and nonverbal language to support a message; assess your communication performance, as well as those of your peers; and give and receive honest, realistic and focused feedback in different registers.

You are expected to evaluate each of your presentations, and consider the feedback of your peers, as well as the detailed assessments that I will provide you when you hand in each of your self-evaluations.

This workshop is designed for self-motivated students who are interested in actively taking charge of improving their communication skills. You can expect to see improvement in your speaking and critical listening skills only if you come to class and participate regularly, closely follow the syllabus, and do the recommended assignments. Therefore, attendance is mandatory without the advance permission of the instructor. Three unexcused absences will result in a final grade reduction of one letter grade.

**Required Materials** (available at the Tech Coop, on reserve in Hayden Library, and on the course Stellar site)

1. Dunphy, Jane. *Fall 2017 Course Workbook* (CW) (Copy Tech Center, 11-004)
2. Binder with pockets to hold handouts
3. Readings and videos posted on the course Stellar site. Check the class Stellar site regularly for updates, changes, and announcements. (While some materials will be posted on the course Stellar site, these materials cannot be considered a substitute for the activities that occur in regular class periods.)

**Grade Distribution.** The CW contains detailed descriptions of the assignments. The point value (for a total of 100 points) of each component of the course grade follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, punctuality, preparation, &amp; participation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic minute (including self-evaluation)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive teaching (including self-evaluation)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design (5) and Explanation (5) of two consecutive slides</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research presentation (including self-evaluation)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memos (4 X 2.5 points)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recordings (5 X 3 points)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Letter grades are calculated according to MIT conventions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 &amp; above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.

B Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.

C Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field.

**Analytical Memo Assignments.** You will be responsible for four short memos over the course of the semester.

These memos must conform to conventions, as demonstrated in the *template* below. Note the use of space and the way the information is organized with the “conclusion” (=key message) first, and all supporting details provided in subtitled sections below your key message. Note that memos are composed of paragraphs, single-spaced, and formatted for easy skimming. Subheadings are standard in memos, unless they are extremely short (~one paragraph).

Why are you required to submit memos in a speaking class? The memo’s conventional organization strategy is identical to the approach we take when making an argument or providing information in most professional contexts. Practicing this “conclusion at the start” style in writing will reinforce your effective delivery of spoken messages.

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**Memorandum**

To: Students of 21G.232/3
From: Jane Dunphy
Subject: Required format and organizational strategy of memo assignments
Date: September 8, 2017

A typical American memo starts with a summary statement of your *main message/conclusion* (sometimes called the audience take-away message). My key message here is the following: I expect your four memo assignments to conform to this conventional strategy.

All other information that your reader may expect or need (e.g., data set, experimental procedures, next steps) should be presented in one-to-three “chunks” with informative subheadings. Memos are typically no more than two pages.

**Subheading # 1**
Provide one or more paragraphs composed of details in support of your main message.

**Subheading # 2**
Provide one or more paragraphs composed of details in support of your main message.

If appropriate to the context, you can close your memo with a request for the reader. For example, “I welcome your questions about memo format, contents and use. Contact me at dunphy@mit.edu”

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**Independent Practice of Clear Speech & Critical Listening.** I will make suggestions for each of you, depending on your particular speaking/listening strengths and
weaknesses. You are expected to spend at least two hours each week this term working independently on listening, fluency and pronunciation practice in any of the following ways:

(1) Spending time using any English materials from the list of recommended materials (attached), or any other on-line materials that appeal to you and that you find productive.

(2) Listening to the radio (e.g., NPR at 90.9 FM), watching shows and movies on-line (e.g., PBS) at home, or going to movies or plays on campus and in metro Boston. For those of you who like TV shows like *Friends, Sex & the City, How I Met Your Mother, or Big Bang Theory*, transcripts of episodes are available on line.

(3) Purposefully practicing critical listening during academic conversations, lectures, departmental seminars, or research group meetings.

(4) Making a conscious effort in social and academic situations to practice critical listening and impromptu speaking in English, and to reflect on your difficulties and successes.

(5) Using MIT’s *Language Conversation Exchange*. Many MIT students & community members are studying languages other than English. If you would like to meet with someone and help her/him practice your language in exchange for help in fine-tuning your English skills, or learning more about American culture, you have two options:

   (a) Ask an instructor of Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian or Spanish, in the Global Studies & Languages Department, to help you contact an interested partner. Find their names and contact information opposite Room 14N-305, or at [http://mitgsl.mit.edu/people](http://mitgsl.mit.edu/people)

   (b) Contact Jennifer Reckley at the MIT community-wide Language Conversation Exchange. For information/applications, contact x3-1614 or visit [http://lce.scripts.mit.edu/about.php](http://lce.scripts.mit.edu/about.php)

**More Suggested Resources for Listening and Speaking Practice**

**Real Time**

- Dickenson College, The Mixer (free site that connects language learners around the world so that everyone is both student and teacher): [http://www.language-exchanges.org/](http://www.language-exchanges.org/)
- MIT’s GCED office, which provides individual help with job application tasks: [https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/Account/LogOn?ReturnUrl=%2fmit%2fstudent](https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/Account/LogOn?ReturnUrl=%2fmit%2fstudent)
- MIT clubs (dance, outing, social action, etc.)
- Free private sessions with Writing & Communication Center tutors
- Roommates/office mates as teachers: have them teach five new words/expressions per day
- Self-directed impromptu speaking groups within disciplinary communities

**Streaming Video (ESL, news programs & general)**

• Frontline:  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/view/
• National Geographic:  http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/
• Online Newshour:  http://www.pbs.org/newshour/
• Randall’s ESL Cyber Listening Lab:  http://www.esl-lab.com/
• Ted Talks (with transcripts):  ted.com

Streaming Video and Audio (news programs/newspapers/magazines, science-focused)
• Last Week Tonight with John Oliver:  http://www.hbo.com/last-week-tonight-with-john-oliver
• WBUR (90.9 FM): On You’re the Expert, a panel of comedians tries to guess what distinguished guest scientists study:  http://theexpertshow.com/
• ScienceHack: “Every science video on ScienceHack is screened by a scientist to verify its accuracy and quality.” Search by categories  http://sciencehack.com/
• National Geographic:  http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/
• NOVA Science Now:  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/sciencenow/
• Scientific American Frontiers:  http://www.pbs.org/saf/previous.htm
• PBS Science (including 60-second “How It’s Made segments):  http://www.pbs.org/science/
• Wired Science:  http://www.pbs.org/kcet/wiredscience/

Streaming Audio (stories)
• Moth Radio Hour:  http://themoth.org/radio/episodes
• This American Life (archives):  http://www.thislife.org/Radio_Archive.aspx

Pronunciation and Grammar Materials
• American Accent:  http://www.americanaccent.com/pronunciation.html
• English Pronunciation:  http://www.ep.com
• George Mason University, Speech Accent Archive:  http://accent.gmu.edu/
• Hiser & Kopecky,  American Speechsounds
• Minimal Pairs Pronunciation Practice:  http://www.manythings.org/mp/m15.html
• Minimal Pairs practice  http://www.shiporsheep
• New Okanagan College (Can 8 VirtuaLab):  http://international.ouc.bc.ca/pronunciation
• On-line English-English dictionary (e.g., Merriam Websterwww.m-w.com)
• Pronunciation of American English:  http://pronucian.com/
• Pronunciation podcasts:  www.englishpronunciationpod.com
• Raymond Murphy’s English Grammar in Use (mobile app)
• Richard Cauldwell,  Cool Speech (iPad app for listening and pronunciation)
• Ron Thomson, English Accent Coach:  http://www.englishaccentcoach.com/
• University of Iowa, Sounds of Speech:  http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html

Materials on communication strategies
• University of Minnesota, ITA resources
  http://cei.umn.edu/support-services/international-teaching-assistant-program