

COMS 930: Teaching the Basic Course

The University of Kansas
Fall 2009; Tuesday, 5-7 (2 credits)

Instructor: Kristine Bruss
E-mail: kbruss@ku.edu (best way to reach me)
Office Phone: 864-1968

Office: 402 Bailey Hall
Office Hours: T, 1-3; W, 11-12;
other times by appointment

Course Description

The Basic Course seminar is intended, most fundamentally, to provide you with the pedagogical knowledge and strategies necessary to teach KU's basic public speaking course. Although this seminar focuses on teaching one particular course, the principles, practices, and philosophical perspectives addressed are applicable to a variety of teaching contexts. As such, the course seeks to contribute to your general development as a competent, creative, student-centered educator.

Objectives

As a result of taking this seminar, you will be able to

- 1) draw on a wide variety of teaching strategies and instructional resources (e.g., books, journals, websites, colleague observations) in developing educational content for your classes
- 2) create learner-centered lesson plans featuring clearly articulated objectives, appropriate and varied learning activities (e.g., lecture, discussion, application exercises, etc.), and methods of assessment
- 3) design learning activities that promote critical thinking and sound rhetorical judgment
- 4) create assessment and evaluation tools that clearly document student learning and provide fair and constructive feedback on performance
- 5) manage your classroom effectively and handle problems (including challenging students) with confidence
- 6) articulate a philosophy of effective teaching, using examples from your own practice to illustrate
- 7) identify ways to strengthen your teaching through critically reflective practice

Required Reading Materials

Carver, C., Grill, K. & Bruss, K., eds. (2009). *Blueprints for success*. Boston: Pearson.

McKeachie, W.J., & Svinicki, M. (2002). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. (12th ed). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Zarefsky, D. (2008). *Public speaking: Strategies for success* (5th ed.). Boston: AB Longman Publishers.

Other readings:

- Articles and essays, as assigned (check Blackboard for announcements). These readings will be available on the Blackboard site unless otherwise specified.

Blackboard Site

This seminar has a Blackboard site on which you'll find a variety of resources including the course syllabus, assignment sheets, links to helpful websites, and an online forum for discussing matters of interest (e.g., teaching ideas, questions, classroom conundrums, professional development issues). If you have ideas for content additions to this support site, please let me know.

Assignments

Following is a brief description of your assignments for the semester, along with their relative weight in the course grade. You can find more details about each of these assignments on the course Blackboard site.

Weekly Preparation and Participation (10%)

One important feature of successful seminar courses is well-informed, thoughtful, and spirited discussion. To that end, you should come to class each week having read and reflected on the assigned readings (see schedule), and you should be prepared to contribute insights, perspectives, arguments, and questions to class discussions. Your discussion participation will not be evaluated formally as part of your seminar grade; rather, it is simply expected as a hallmark of responsible and engaged professionalism.

Other forms of expected participation *will* contribute to 10% of your seminar grade. Activities include peer evaluation of lesson presentations, “e-mail of the week responses” (to be explained in class), and submission of exams and other materials on the dates specified to the Basic Course staff.

Lesson Plan and Presentation (40%)

During the semester, each student will prepare and present a model lesson for use in the basic course. Presentation dates will be determined on or before the first class meeting. This assignment will provide you with an opportunity to boost your expertise in a particular area of public speaking, try out strategies that we're discussing in class, share ideas with fellow teachers, and gain feedback on your teaching. **See schedule for various due dates.**

Teacher Observation and Report (40%)

Teachers can learn a great deal by observing fellow teachers. In this assignment, you'll observe a teacher, either a KU professor (any subject is fine) OR a veteran (i.e., 2nd-year or beyond) COMS 130 instructor, several (at least three) times during the semester; the choice depends on your goals for the observation. After the series of observations, you'll write an analysis. What did you learn from your observations? What might you be able to apply to strengthen your own teaching? **Due December 8.**

Teaching Philosophy (10%)

As part of your professional preparation, it's crucial that you start thinking (if you've not already done so) about your philosophy of teaching, particularly with respect to teaching communication courses. What are your aims? What theories inform your work? What constitutes effective teaching, and how do those beliefs inform your practice? How do you measure your classroom success? Answering questions like these (and doing so in a manner devoid of hackneyed, clichéd observations) will help you produce a portfolio-worthy teaching philosophy statement. **Due December 15.**

Course Evaluation

All assignments will be evaluated according to the following scale:

- A = meets or exceeds high expectations for graduate work
- B = meets assignment parameters, but could be stronger in some areas
- C = passing but generally weak graduate work
- D and F = failing graduate work

The overall course grade will be based on a simple 100-point scale. Letter grades will be assigned as follows: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 59 or lower.

Course Policies

Late Work

Submitting work on time is both a necessity for the effective functioning of this seminar as well as an indicator of your professionalism. Therefore, all work must be submitted by the due date, at the beginning of class unless otherwise specified. If a deadline is approaching and you encounter circumstances beyond your control (e.g., your appendix bursts), let me

know, and we can make alternative arrangements. Work that is submitted late and not cleared in advance will receive a deduction of 20%. Late work not submitted within a week of the due date will get zero points.

Cell Phones and Computers

In the interests of keeping distractions to a minimum, please turn cell phone ringers off and keep phones out of sight. If you elect to use a laptop to take notes, please try to do so as quietly as possible.

Academic Integrity

As a university instructor, you should be a model of the sort of academic integrity that you expect from your students, which means, at a minimum, that you conduct your research ethically and responsibly and give credit where credit is due (i.e., no plagiarism). Penalties for academic misconduct range from a grade of zero on an assignment to a failing grade in the course.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability—physical, medical, psychological, or learning-related—that may affect with your progress in this course, I encourage you to contact me as well as KU's office of Disability Resources (22 Strong Hall, 785-864-2620 [v/tty]), through which you may make requests for accommodation and services.

Course Schedule (tentative)

Aug. 25 **Course Overview; Lesson Planning**

- Briefly discuss syllabus
- Reactions to the first day of class
- Speech pedagogy: Ancient wisdom, contemporary practice

For the next meeting: Read Z 14 (Informing) and 5 (Choosing a Topic); McK 5 (Facilitating Discussions) and Frederick's "The Dreaded Discussion"

Sept. 1 **Lesson Presentations**

- Lesson: Informative Speaking/Choosing a Topic
- Leading discussions

For next week: Read Z 3 (Listening), 4 (Audience), and 6 (Research)

Sept. 8 **Lesson Presentations**

- Lesson: Researching the Speech
- Lesson: Listening Critically/Audience Analysis

For next week: Read Z 8 (Organizing), 9 (Intros/Conclusions), 10 (Outlining); 13 (Visuals)

Sept. 15 **Lesson Presentations; Leading Discussions**

- Lesson: Organizing and Outlining
- Lesson: Visual Aids

For next week: Read Z 11; also McK 11 (Assigning Grades); journal articles on evaluation

Sept. 22 **Evaluation Practices**

- Lesson: Using Language Effectively
- Revisit speech critique process
- Classroom assessment techniques (CATs)

For next week: Read McK 8, 9 (Testing), and 10 (Cheating)

Sept. 29 **Constructing Exams**

- Clarifying objectives
- Using Bloom's Taxonomy as a guide
- Creating valid and reliable questions
- Related matters: reviewing, discouraging cheating, creating a workable exam for the timeframe

For next week: Read Z 15 (Persuading) and 7 (Reasoning); revisit Z 6 (Research)

Oct. 6 **Lesson Presentations: Persuasion 1**

- Lesson: Persuasive Speaking
- Lesson: Reasoning

For next week: Handbook 6

Oct. 13 **Zarefsky on Argumentation**

- View and discuss excerpts from David Zarefsky's "Great Courses" DVD, *Argumentation*.

Oct. 20 **Revisiting Evaluation: Persuasive Speeches**

For next week: Handbook readings on persuasion

Oct. 27 **Persuasion II**

- Lesson: Advanced Concepts in Persuasive Speaking

For next week: Read McK 23 (Teaching Students How to Learn) and 24 (Teaching Thinking); readings on Perry and King and Kitchener

- Nov. 3 **Fostering Critical Thinking and Reflective Judgment in the Basic Course**
- What is CT?
 - Perry's Scheme of intellectual and ethical development
 - CT and the basic course
 - King and Kitchener's model of reflective judgment
- For next week:* McK 25 (Ethics) and 13 (Diversity)
- Nov. 10 **Ethics and Diversity**
- Discuss readings; seek insights for the basic course (e.g., what are the implications of the recent intellectual diversity debate for the basic course?)
 - Consider a few cases, culled from the pages of higher ed publications
- For next week:* Read Read McK 12 (Motivation) and 14 (Student Problems)
- Nov. 17 **Student Challenges**
- Case discussion highlighting student challenges
 - Discuss special challenges in the basic course
- For next week:* McK 26 (Vitality and Growth)
- Nov. 24 **Professional Development**
- Discuss professional development with respect to teaching
- preparing a teaching portfolio
 - writing a teaching philosophy statement
- For next week:* Read articles describing various approaches to the basic course (Bb)
- Dec. 1 **The Big Picture: Approaches to the Basic Course**
- Discuss alternative approaches to the basic course, as described in the readings for the week.
 - How do these approaches compare to what we currently do at KU?
 - Are there other alternatives worth considering?
 - How might we make KU's basic course a more powerful learning experience?
- For next week:* Prepare a report (written, if not already submitted, and oral) on your teaching observation assignment. Work on philosophy statement.

- Dec. 8 **Last class meeting**
- Brief reports on teaching observation
 - Final exam preparation
 - Course Assessment

For next week: Write teaching philosophy statement.

- Dec. 15 **Course Final**
- Gather at Chéz Bruss for dinner and informal wrap-up discussion.
- NOTE: Teaching philosophy statement required as an admission ticket to this event.

Checklist of Required Documents

During the first semester of teaching, the Basic Course staff regularly reviews assignments and exams. Below is a checklist of documents you'll need to submit, along with the date on which they are due.

<i>Document</i>	<i>Due on or before</i>
Introductory Speech Assignment	Aug. 25
Informative Speech #1	Sept. 1
Informative Speech #2	Sept. 1
Writing Assignment	Sept. 15
Persuasive Speech #1	Sept. 29
Persuasive Speech #2	Sept. 29
Midterm Exam	Oct. 6
Final Exam	Dec. 8