Stanford Continuing Studies / Personal & Professional Development / Winter 2015

COM 34 - Professional English for Non-Native Speakers: The Art of Conversation
Preliminary Course Syllabus
[Note that the final draft of the syllabus will include the course description from the web.]

Instructor: Lisa Singleton Quijano / quijano@stanford.edu
Day & Time: Tuesdays, 7:00-8:50pm
10 weeks: Jan 13 – March 17 / Room: [TBA]

Description:
[Please see the CSP course description for additional information on the course.]

COM 34 is designed to help students manage impromptu situations in which the speaker must achieve a variety of communicative functions in a spontaneous format. Students will learn to express their ideas more clearly and articulately, and feedback will be provided on usage, grammar, pronunciation, and style of communication, as well as on conveying and developing a central point in a succinct manner.

Note that the curriculum for COM 34 is based in part on the oral proficiency guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In general, the course covers skills from the Advanced Level to the Superior Level, so it is important that students be at least at the Intermediate Level. While it is not expected that students will see marked improvements over the course of the ten meetings, the goal is to facilitate awareness of the characteristics of these levels so that students move toward a higher level.

Note: It is important for students to maintain realistic expectations concerning their own progress; for example, it may not be possible to attain a completely superior level of fluency within a ten-week academic term.

Materials:
The instructor will provide handouts, audio-video content, and other materials to facilitate and prompt class discussions and projects.

Because members of educated communities are often expected to communicate in an articulate and informed manner about a wide range of topics, students in COM 34 should expect to encounter subjects not directly related to their field of study, occupation, or profession. Our class activities and assignments will encompass a variety of subjects including American and global society, cultural issues, recent and current events, and developments in science and technology. These content-based activities will serve as vehicles for language development.

Recommended: A comprehensive dictionary (and perhaps a thesaurus) and/or access to online references.
Highlighted Functions:

- Interacting in English on an advanced level, with an emphasis on appropriateness in terms of content, manner, style, usage, cultural awareness, and social awareness
- Participating in (and possibly leading) conversations, discussions & panels
- Expressing and supporting opinions in a clear, convincing, logical, and appropriate manner
- Receiving and responding to ideas and opinions, including opposing points of view
- Summarizing and paraphrasing in oral communication
- Reaching consensus, especially as a means of concluding communication
- Employing strategies and techniques for interrupting and for providing appropriate feedback to other speakers concerning discussion content
- Analyzing, understanding, incorporating, and applying feedback: Students will correct their own errors and produce appropriate utterances based on comments and corrections provided by the instructor and/or classmates.
- Understanding recommendations for student success in everyday social situations and more specialized contexts; reinforcing cultural awareness and issues related to appropriate usage in interpersonal communication
- Conducting conversational interviews: Preparing and conducting an interview as a vehicle for engaging in extended conversation with others.

Important Strategies:

One of the key skills we will be focusing on is being able to contribute to any conversation in a positive way. The following list of examples may serve as guidelines for how to respond when one is faced with a somewhat unfamiliar subject in an academic setting:

*Not acceptable*: “I don’t have an opinion about / I don’t want to talk about that topic.”

**Acceptable** (shift and generalize or speculate): “I don’t know much about topic X, but it sounds similar to Y [OR-- but in general, I think the most important thing is to do ‘Y’] [OR-- but maybe…]”

*Not acceptable* [before time is up]: “That’s all.” or “That’s all I have to say.”

**Acceptable** [before time is up] (summarize and/or extend): “So overall / to summarize… / The reason why ‘X’ is so important… [OR- We can apply ‘X’ to…] [OR- ‘X’ may be used to…]”
Assignments (due by 5PM on the stated due date):

**Weekly Idioms** - Each week, please submit an interesting idiom* (from SPOKEN language) with an example sentence to my email [* per: www.thefreedictionary.com = "A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements, as in keep tabs on." ]

**Recorded Speaking Tasks** – Speaking submissions will be made by leaving a voicemail with my GoogleVoice phone number: Feedback will be given, and then—with the benefit of this feedback—you will be expected to resubmit the same recording task a second time. These tasks will fall under the following categories:

1) Description 
2) Narrative 
3) Opinion

**Final Project** – For the final project you should interview a native speaker for at least 20 minutes and write a 300-500-word report on the experience. In the interview, you should start with low level questions and then move into higher-level questions that elicit hypothesis and supported opinions. The report should describe the interview and detail your observations and conclusion.

**Grading:**
All assignments will be graded on a submitted / not submitted basis. Due to the large number of students in the class, late assignments may not receive feedback. The final grade will be calculated according to the following percentages:

- Attendance 30%
- Weekly Idioms (from spoken language) 20%
- Recorded Speaking Tasks (including revised versions) 30%
- Final Project 20%

A passing grade ("Credit") is 70% submitted / present.

**Class Website:**
Our class website should be available by the first day of class (after class). Please check this website regularly for homework assignments, copies of documents given and/or referred to in class, website links, and other useful and important information.
Nature of the Course:
In this class, you should expect significant diversity—of background and needs of individual students, so please understand that the course will not focus on your specific interests at all times. The needs of all students must be considered within the context of this course. In addition, in the United States, it is often necessary to communicate and interact effectively with many interlocutors at varying levels of proficiency. Mastering this ability can be a significant advantage in academic, socio-cultural, professional, and vocational situations.

Privacy Matters:
Please note that any (spoken or written) content you produce for this class will not be shared outside of the class. However, it may be used as a source of in-class examples, discussion and exercises, unless you expressly request that it not be, due to the sensitive nature of its content.

COM 34: The Art of Conversation - Projected Weekly Outline
[may be subject to change at instructor’s discretion]

Week 1 - Jan 13
Introductions
Course syllabus & expectations
Fluency exercises (including an "elevator pitch" style activity)

Week 2 - Jan 20
Weekly Idiom 1 due
Recorded Speaking Task 1 due (brief description)
ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines reviewed
Ice breaker/ follow my lead
Conversational analysis: how to keep the conversation going
Video clip of conversation for analysis
Fluency exercises

Week 3 - Jan 27
Weekly Idiom 2 due
Recorded Speaking Task 1, revised version due (brief description)
Creating connections in conversation
Video clip of conversation for analysis
Importance of anecdote
Fluency exercises (including keeping the conversation flowing relentlessly)
Week 4 - Feb 3
Weekly Idiom 3 due
Recorded Speaking Task 2 due (brief narrative)
Interruption & interjection
Controversial topics
Video clip of conversation for analysis
Fluency exercises

Week 5 - Feb 10
Weekly Idiom 4 due
Recorded Voice Exercise 2, revised version due (brief narrative)
Resisting interruption & regaining the floor* (* = one’s turn to speak)
Making commentary about almost any topic
Various fluency exercises

Week 6 - Feb 17
Weekly Idiom 5 due
Recorded Voice Exercise 3 due (opinion)
Stress timing / intonation / focus words (Part I)
Giving an opinion in various ways / Supporting a point of view
Panel discussion
Fluency exercises

Week 7 - Feb 24
Weekly Idiom 6 due
Negotiating
Panel discussion
Fluency exercises

Week 8 - March 3
Weekly Idiom 7 due
Recorded Voice Exercise 3, revised version due (opinion)
Expansion drill
Hypothesizing

Week 9 - March 10
Weekly Idiom 8 due
Final Project due (via email)
Persuasion in conversation
Fluency exercises

Week 10 - March 17
Recap: description of a skilled conversationalist
Topics related to the experience living in the U.S. / students' choice
Fluency exercises
Advice for the future