COM 47: Terrific Technical Presentations

“Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler” - Albert Einstein

Instructors: Mary Etta Eaton & Russ Carpenter

Course Schedule: Ten sessions, each class runs from 7:00 - 9:00 pm, with a short break around 8:00 pm.

Course Overview:
Thank you for making time to become a better technical communicator so your listeners better understand, remember, and act on your ideas! This course leverages communication pedagogy, research on visual communications and audience dynamics to help you understand why various principles work. We will emphasize active learning strategies based on proven principles and use current real-world case examples to illustrate the impact of these techniques. You will gain increased confidence in preparing and executing technical briefings as well as poise when answering impromptu questions. This course will be useful to a range of professionals -- from higher-level managers who interact with the press to technical specialists preparing to share research at multi-disciplinary conferences.

Course Objectives:
- Improve your ability to analyze and prepare for the unique dynamics of diverse audiences
- Enhance your verbal and nonverbal effectiveness conveying specialized technical information
- Develop and practice techniques to improve comprehension and impact of complex content (including using visual aids for maximum effect)
- Polish your ability to “think on your feet” and successfully handle Q&A

Class Preparation & Assignments:
Although we will not use a single textbook for this course, we will provide you with a list of useful books, articles and websites for further reference or study. Recognizing that you are busy professionals, we will not require extensive work outside of class. We do ask that you come mentally prepared and periodically bring in (non-proprietary) technical content from your field of expertise that you’d like to work on during class. As a learning lab, you will apply new skills each week and actively present in most sessions. We will create a fun, safe, spontaneous environment where you will feel comfortable trying out innovative techniques as well as giving and receiving feedback from supportive peers.

We expect active student participation, as your relevant experiences in cutting-edge professional environments contribute to an intellectually vibrant
classroom. We learn from one another’s actual best/worst case presentation experiences.

**Weekly Schedule:**

**Week #1:** Fundamentals of Conversational Presentations & the 4 P’s to Powerful Presentations

**Week #2:** Strong Delivery: Using Nonverbal Communication to Enhance your Message

**Week #3:** The 5 S’s of Preparation - STAR Method

**Week #4:** Using Sensible/Sensory Language & “Stickiness” to Craft Clear and Compelling Messages

**Week #5:** Sharing Technical Information & Using Powerful Visual Aids for Support

**Week #6:** Applying Visual Information Techniques to Data Presentation

**Week #7:** Mastering Q&A to Finish Strong

**Week #8:** Informative Presentations with Q&A (all students)

**Week #9:** Presentation Feedback and “Selling” your Ideas and Proposals

**Week #10:** Persuasive Presentations (all students)

**Grading Guidelines:**

Students have three grading options for COM47 - Terrific Technical Presentations:

- **No Grade Requested (NGR)** – no homework is required; no credit received; no proof of attendance provided (not suitable for those requiring proof of attendance/completion)
- **Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)** – see requirements below
- **Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)** – timely attendance and active participation (minimum 7 out of 10 classes, completion of at least one of the final presentations)

If you elect to take COM 47 for a letter grade, you will be required to meet the requirements for students taking the CR/NC option and your grade will be based on the following criteria: Active class & group participation (25%); Effective handling of Q&A (15%); Informative Presentation quality (25%); Persuasive Presentation quality (25%); Quality of feedback to peer speakers (10%).