

Syllabus, MARK 8397, Section 18283 Summer, 2014 Communicating Academic Research

This is a summer-long course with a large gap between our first-week-in-June sessions and semi-weekly sessions that begin June 30. That way everyone has a chance in June to develop a draft of a paper or proposal beyond the idea stage, if you haven't done so, because the July/August portion of the course focuses on improving either a paper or a proposal for research that is already drafted. **If you won't have thought about an empirical research paper until this course starts in June, please postpone taking the course until next summer. Our format doesn't include time to decide what you will study.**

We meet 1:30-4:20 Monday, June 2, and Wednesday, June 4, in 387 Melcher Hall, the Marketing conference room. Then you have three weeks to think and write. We start in again on a schedule of Monday and Wednesday afternoons June 30 and July 2, July 7 and 9, 14 and 16, 21 and 23, 28 and 30, then August 4 (on August 11 I'll schedule an individual meeting with each of you; some will be in the morning). We'll aim for a 2:45-3 p.m. break in each Monday class. In the Wednesday sessions from July 2 on you'll work with Becky Hallman from the UH Writing Center, who also attends the Monday classes. She'll meet with you in 226 UCBB (but do check that room number with her).

Instructor: Betsy Gelb, 713-743-4558, gelb@uh.edu, 385G Melcher Hall
Office hours by appointment. Please let's operate with first names, including mine.

Textbook: *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, 11th edition, by Joseph M. Williams and Gregory Colomb

Blackboard Learn will have material useful to you in this class. Mice work cheap; please check it often.

Course objectives: We hope to significantly increase your level of:

- **Skill in talking about research**, measured by my perception of whether academicians would think: Hmmmm, sharp student!
- **Confidence in talking about your research**, measured by your own perceptions.
- **Understanding of how academicians evaluate oral presentations of research, or of proposals**, measured by the astuteness of your comments on what you hear from others in the class. If you tell people they are wonderful when they are not, they don't get better. And if they *are* wonderful, please tell them what they are doing right.
- **Self-marketing skills.** This is a marketing course. We expect you to use oral communication to increase the odds that people LIKE you -- a necessary but not sufficient condition for success in the academic job market,

- **Written communication skills**, measured in two ways. We want everything you write to be clear to a first-year doctoral student and at the same time gladden the heart of a purist in the English language.

Course format

You will talk a lot. I'll assign communication topics for everyone in the class to present briefly. You will also present your own research, a proposal or a completed paper, in various forms:

- "elevator speeches"
- interviews for academic positions
- presentations before groups
- discussion of how this study fits into a continuing research program

Of course, a major focus will be those third and fourth bullets. We'll help you to become stellar presenters of the research papers that we ask each of you to bring to this course. You should be a co-author or sole author of, ideally, an empirical study or a proposal for one **that you could actually carry out**. You'll title (re-title) it. You'll introduce it. You'll tell us why we want to know what this study will tell us. Others in the class will critique all that. Wednesday afternoons beginning July 2 you'll be improving your paper until it's ready to be fully presented and also ready to be handed in for evaluation as a written submission. If it is simply a proposal, because you don't yet have data or haven't analyzed it, then it should be a fleshed-out proposal. Becky will help you to do that work.

Some days we'll have a guest speaker on a special topic. These folks not only have something to say, they are role models as presenters.

Grading --- I'll assess progress, application of class material, your contributions in class discussions and presentations, and the paper you hand in. Less than stellar English that improves over the summer will not damage your grade unless a writing error would have been flagged by Word software. However, lack of preparation and/or a casual concern for deadlines will damage your grade. What you say/present and what you write will receive roughly equal weight. The course has no exams.

Two notes from the Bauer College Dean's office:

The University of Houston Academic Honesty Policy is strictly enforced by the C. T. Bauer College of Business. No violations of this policy will be tolerated in this course. A discussion of the policy is included in the University of Houston Student Handbook, <http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html>. Students are expected to be familiar with this policy.

The C. T. Bauer College of Business would like to help students who have disabilities achieve their highest potential. To this end, in order to receive academic accommodations, students must register with the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) (telephone 713-743-5400), and present approved accommodation documentation to their instructors in a timely manner.

Note how I made clear in the subhead that the two paragraphs above came from the Dean's office, not from me. In a class on communication, I'd never word anything the way those two paragraphs are worded. I hope you wouldn't either.

Schedule

Mon. 6/2 Each of you will introduce yourself as a researcher-in-training. Please before you come to class think about what you'll say. Thinking about what you'll say in situations in which you will be evaluated by others is a fine mind-set to develop. I'll also ask that sometime during the afternoon you fill out a contact form with e-mail address, phone numbers, and anything else that you think I ought to know if you haven't already done so.

We'll go over the syllabus; *please bring a hard copy*. If you have even trivial questions, please ask them. Then I'll ask each of you to describe the proposal or paper you will be developing and drafting this month and improving beginning in July. Becky will join us in commenting on your research plans. You'll do the same to help each other. Not only is there no curve in the grading in this class, but you are expected to make suggestions early and often. Academic norms require us to be candid, objective, and helpful; that's how research improves.

Wed., 6/4 We'll begin by asking you to re-describe your research briefly. **Please be sure that you have bought the textbook before this class and have read Chapters 1-2 (Feel free to skip "A Short History of Unclear Writing," pp. 3-7).** If you have questions about the material, we'll discuss them. Also, I will post on Blackboard an article that I can mine for examples of writing that need improvement based on the material in those chapters. Please read that article to find such examples. We need to get past the idea that everything that's published is wonderful. What examples of poor style or incorrectness did you find? I will demonstrate what you will do in future classes: use the textbook material to improve your own work. But also, please notice that the paper includes some examples of good style and admirable-but-not-stiff correctness. What did you find?

I'll offer writing tips from Ajay Kohli, a former *Journal of Marketing* editor, whose slides apply to any business discipline. **Be sure you follow his recommendations in whatever you write for this class.** Doing so will make you a better writer and lead to a more successful academic career, but doing so also means extra work rewriting and re-writing. That's what you're here for.

Note: there is no class meeting until the end of June, but Becky and I want to read your most recent draft before that session. Please email it to both of us no later than noon on Monday, June 23, giving you three weeks to develop or improve something you already had worked on. Email addresses are: gelb@uh.edu and rebeccahallman7@gmail.com. If you don't have data already, you will want to make this draft and your paper for this summer a proposal rather than a paper. In

that case, you need to justify the research as though you were seeking funding. What idea will you test? What previous work justifies that idea? What results do you expect? How will your discipline benefit from those results if they appear? Exactly how will you proceed to gather data and analyze it? Your reader should finish reading a proposal with two beliefs: that this work will be feasible (you can get those data!) and will be useful. But this is not a class in data analysis; a sentence or two on how you will handle your analysis is sufficient.

Mon., 6/30 Today we'll start with Professor Jim Hess talking about whatever he thinks is pertinent, and he is very much open to questions. Then the next focus is your papers. Although you told us something about the study when we started, you should have improved the paper since then, and we'll all want to hear how. We'll go around and each report on the status of what we're doing. In any case, please first re-describe what your paper is about. **A good description says: I am testing the overall idea that.... A not-good description says "My research is about...."**

We'll all critique the way you present that description. I'll ask for oral comments, and each class member will fill out an evaluation sheet telling each of you his or her top-of-mind reactions to how you talked about your work and also the work itself.

Also, please read Chapters 3 and 4. Half of you will present, with no more than four PowerPoint slides, examples of how material from these chapters has improved your writing. Examples should NOT come from the book. Please explain briefly each writing-improvement point you are making, then use a "before improved" and "after improved" format to show that you have applied the point. What you are learning to do here is teach. Assume that we need coaching on applying the chapter material. You should plan on a presentation of 3-5 minutes. Please email your slide presentation to me by 9 p.m. the night before you present and use your name as the file name. These presentations will come after the break.

Mon., 7/7 Today we'll go around so that each of you can tell us what progress you have made on your research paper. From 2:15 to 2:45 our speaker will be Professor Jim Phillips talking about selecting research topics and/or anything else he wants to talk about that will help you choose a dissertation topic astutely and publish WELL. After the break the other half of the class will present your slides on chapters 3 and 4.

Mon., 7/14 Today is your "elevator speech" concerning your research. You have two minutes to interest someone from a business faculty, but not necessarily from your discipline, in your study. We'll go around the class.

Also, please bring to class your academic c.v. in draft form. Nobody will see it today except you. We'll talk about how to improve it --- not just its form, but also the "you" it presents. Because it's a component of the "product" that future academic colleagues will evaluate, we'll discuss that evaluation process, which may differ from discipline to discipline. Please **before this class** talk with anybody who seems knowledgeable in your department: How does recruiting work? We will expect each of you to tell us, please.

Professor Dusya Vera will talk about oral communication, for research presentations and job talks and also teaching, coming in about 2:30. As you suspect by now, please read Chapters 5 and 6, and each class member will have 3-5 minutes to tell us one or more points made in these chapters, then offer examples, with no more than four slides. Again, as will be true all semester, please regard this assignment as teaching practice. We are your students.

Mon., 7/21 Job interviews today! The elevator speech and your resume helped to get you the interview. Please bring **four copies** of a finished version of your academic resume to hand in (for me, Becky, and Professors Sahin and Newberry).

Of course, we won't go through a full 30-minute interview with each of you. But I'll ask the sorts of questions that interviewers ask, and we'll critique the answers of those I target with those questions. If you'd like to prepare, the faculty positions I will be trying to fill all will be at LSU in Baton Rouge. Professors Funda Sahin and Kaye Newberry will join us for some of the interviews and will present some useful ideas as well. And for all of you -- when Becky sees your paper on Wednesday you will want to have it **done**, because there is no good writing, only good rewriting. Past this coming Wednesday, July 24, you are rewriting and then re-rewriting during the week before the papers are due to be turned in.

Mon., 7/28 This is a fine day to demonstrate your teaching skills. We'll start the class with each of you applying Chapters 7 and 8 (usual format – 3-5 minutes, no more than four slides, one or more points from the chapter explained, then illustrated from changes in your work).

On Wednesday, July 30, instead of meeting with Becky, half of you will present formally, and all of you will hand in your papers; the other half will present next Monday, August 4. For all presentations, we'll do a second round of written comments by all class members, using the same form we used previously.

Today we'll schedule for each of you individually a final session that boils down to a 45-minute meeting with me Monday, August 11, to discuss the papers you will have handed in July 30 and presented either Wednesday 7/30 or Monday 8/4. We should be able to schedule all of those sessions for that one day, the 11th, either in the morning or afternoon. Also for today, please read Chapters 9 and 10, but rather than present their influence on your paper, we'll just talk about them as a group. Anything else you want discussed? Now is the time, because this coming Wednesday and the following Monday the presentations will take up all of our class time.

Wed., 7/30 Please let me know if you need to or prefer to present today, and everybody else will be assigned a presentation day (today or this coming Monday) by random draw. The presentations today take the place of your regular session with Becky. **All papers are due to be handed in today. Please bring two copies, one for Becky and one for**

me. Also please bring six blank copies of the same form we used at the beginning of this month that lets you offer comments to each speaker.

Mon., 8/4 Today we'll have the other half of the presentations. Then I will meet with you individually **Monday the 11th** in my office, 385G, at the time set on the 28th. Alternatively, we can schedule an earlier date if you let me know in advance; Wednesday, August 6, is an obvious alternative. We'll discuss Becky's comments and mine on your paper. Then I'll ask what else either of us might do that's useful, and wish you a happy rest-of-summer, rest-of-doctoral program, and rest-of-career.