The Leader’s Voice: Communication Skills for Leading Organizations

**IMPORTANT:** You must attend the first class to be in this course. If you are absent the first day, you will be automatically dropped.

Spring 2016
B Term: Wednesdays, 12:30pm – 3:45pm **BIDDING ONLY**

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**REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL**
• Required readings are provided via Canvas

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**
Leadership roles involve a wide range of communication challenges—sharing your vision in a way that sticks, mentoring a colleague through a challenge, rallying demoralized employees, working the room at an industry event, handling tough questions from the media, running meetings in ways that elicit candid conversation and learning.

The goal of this class is to introduce you to concepts and best practices, as well as to offer a safe place to practice. While you will have opportunities to practice public speaking in various forms, this class will also discuss frameworks and the challenges of different types of communication.

The world is full of communication experts: salespersons, actors, screenwriters, political speechwriters, coaches, networkers, public relations experts, diplomats and so forth. When we watch an expert in action, it is tempting to attribute their performance to a mystical gift that the rest of us lack. Yet success in any of these fields most often owes more to method than magic. What looks to us like spontaneous eloquence typically results from applying frameworks and focused practice.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**
This class looks to various communication professions for tools and methods that can help business leaders face their communication challenges. We aim to develop two kinds of knowledge—conceptual understanding and procedural skill. Each session will convey frameworks for particular kinds of communication and some active exercises for practicing them. We rely on role-play simulations and personalized feedback (from peers and through video) to hone behavioral skills. Each student will also
have the opportunity to receive direct coaching feedback from the Professor on their particular communication and presence.

The topics we will cover in class are:
• Storytelling
• Managing & Influencing
• Public Speaking
• Networking & Building Relationships
• Troubleshooting & Other Communication Areas (e.g. e-mail, powerpoint)

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING
Class Participation: 40%
Final Project: 30%
Other assignments: 30%

Participation & Individual Class Pre-Assignments (40%): To be in the class, you must be present in the first class and arrive prepared. It will not be possible to add the course if you do not participate in the first session. Given that the exercises are central to the learning, missing any of the subsequent sessions without an excuse will lower your grade. Participation will be evaluated by your preparedness and your contribution to the learning of your classmates, not based on your performance in the communication exercises. You will be graded on how well you are prepared for each class (readings and any class-specific assignments announced during the course) as well as the level of your participation in each class. Part of this grade will include when you present to the full class, with the focus on how well you had prepared, how much you were able to implement class learnings to date, and your willingness to take feedback and adjust. Staying off tech devices and being on time at the beginning of classes and coming back from breaks will also be rolled into this grade.

Final Assignment (30%): There are four parts to your final assignment:
Self-Assessment: You will grade yourself on your own development as well as on your ability to coach those within your coaching group (including the coaching assessment you give to those in your coaching group)
Presentation: At some point before the end of the course, you need to be observed by someone in your coaching group giving a presentation (audience >6)
Action Plan: This will be something you will write up that will include reflection on your progress through the class, implementation of feedback (from coaching group peers, other classmates and class learnings), and how you plan to continue to progress after the class is over.

There will not be a final exam for this course