This paper begins by pointing out that approximately 15-20% of college students suffer from a fear of public speaking, and that a 1993 study of 369 students at Northern Kentucky University revealed high levels of speech apprehension (SA) at the beginning of the semester in the introductory speech course. The paper reports that although end-of-the-semester results were better, many students did not reduce their apprehension levels. The paper then describes the development of a special SA section of the Speech 101 course at Northern Kentucky, offered each fall and spring semester. The paper discusses recruiting techniques, publicizing the program, and interviewing for course enrollment. The SA course content mentioned in the paper includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral techniques for apprehension reduction. The paper offers teaching techniques, such as partners, methods to desensitize conspicuousness, modeling, and impromptu speeches, and also gives grading and counseling center advice. The paper also reports that a review of pre- and posttests for all semesters shows that the special SA section has been a success. Samples, including forms, a syllabus, and schedules are appended; contains 11 references. (CR)
THE MODIFICATION OF THE BASIC SPEECH COURSE
FOR SPEECH APPEHENSIVE STUDENTS

Presentation for the Kentucky Communication Association
meeting at Lake Cumberland State Resort Park
September 20-21, 1996

Vicki Abney Ragsdale
Northern Kentucky University
Apprehension of public speaking is a problem faced by many individuals in our society. Such apprehension is frequently noted in the popular press by surveys revealing that the number one fear individuals experience is public speaking (Lucas, 1995). In the academic arena, McCroskey (1977) has reported that 15-20% of college students suffer from such fear. This and related research findings have resulted in many Speech Communication departments offering speech apprehension (SA) interventions for students taking a course in public speaking. Many of these same departments offer workshops and special classes for helping students manage SA (Ayers and Hopf, 1993; Kelly and Watson, 1986; Kelly, Phillips and Keaten, 1995; Motley, 1995).

This paper describes the development of Northern Kentucky University's (NKU) SA course. This course is a special section of SPE 101, NKU's basic public speaking course. Every fall and spring semester, approximately 40 sections of SPE 101 are offered (24 students per section), and since Fall 1994, one SA section of SPE 101 has been offered per semester.

**NKU's SA Section Development**

A 1993 NKU study involving 369 students enrolled in SPE 101 revealed high levels of SA among students at the beginning of the semester. Students completed McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; Richmond and McCroskey, 1992). The PRCA-24 measures apprehension in four settings, that is, group discussion, meetings, conversations and public speaking. The sum of these four scores yields an overall communication apprehension score (CA) (See Attachment 1). NKU students completed the PRCA-24 at the beginning and end of two semesters. Initial survey results revealed average scores higher than the
norms reported by McCroskey for both overall communication apprehension (CA) and public speaking apprehension (SA) scores. End of the semester scores for both CA and SA were lower for most students. However, some students showed little reduction on scores. During the same period, individual tutoring in NKU's Speech Lab revealed some students experienced minimal reduction of SA by the end of the semester. Such lack of reduction in SA suggested the need for other interventions. As a result, an SA section of SPE 101 was developed. Plans were developed for student recruitment, interviewing, course content, and teaching techniques for this special section.

**Recruitment**

SA students are frequently reluctant to seek help. An NKU study (Proctor, Douglas, Garera-Izquierdo, Wartman, 1994) revealed some SA students are reluctant to walk across the hall from their classroom to seek one-on-one assistance in NKU's Speech Lab. Consequently, recruitment techniques for the SA section were carefully considered. Student recruitment procedures were designed following Kelly's (1989) description of the Penn State recruitment process. Prospective students are notified of the class content (they are also told that the class requires a great deal of written work, to reduce the number of students looking for an easy grade). Unlike Penn State's course, the NKU course is publicized through a video rather than teacher announcements and flyers. A five minute video was developed in conjunction with students in NKU's Radio/Television intern program. This video is shown in all sections of SPE 101 the first day of class. Interested students are asked to interview immediately.

The program was further publicized by contacting counselors in NKU's Academic Advising Center. In Fall 1995, a presentation detailing how to identify and refer SA students was
given to these counselors (this presentation resulted in a significant increase in student interviews for admission into the SA section). The third method of recruitment is in the NKU schedule of classes, where this section is identified as being for "highly nervous" speakers and stated that an interview was required for course admission.

**Interviewing**

Interviewing for the course consists of asking open-ended questions (see Kelly 1989 for more detail), discussion of class content and administration of several tests. The tests include: McCroskey's "Personal Report of Communication Apprehension" (PRCA-24), Motley's "A Gauge of Public Speaking Anxiety" (a modified version of McCroskey's "Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety") (1995), and McCroskey's "Shyness Scale" and McCroskey's "Willingness to Communicate Scale" (Richmond and McCroskey, 1995). While test results are important in indicating a student's suitability for placement in the SA section, information obtained in the interview is more valuable in determining suitability for admission to the class. For example, some students have scored within the normal range of apprehension on tests and appeared poised in the interview but reported repeatedly dropping classes that required presentations. These students were admitted to the class.

**SA Course Content**

The NKU SA section is essentially a section of basic public speaking, SPE 101. Consequently, the content of this section includes the same basic content and requirements as other sections of SPE 101. Like any other section, it requires four graded speeches, a midterm, a final and three texts. However, unlike other sections of SPE 101, the first eight sessions of the SA section emphasize techniques utilized for reducing apprehension (see syllabus; Attachment 2).
Students are required to purchase an additional text, Kelly & Watson's *Speaking With Confidence and Skill*, to facilitate understanding of techniques.

Additional lecture material about techniques is obtained from Ayers & Hopf (1993), Motley (1995), and other speech apprehension-related literature. These techniques fall into three categories (Ayers & Hopf, 1993). The cognitive category includes the apprehension reduction techniques of rational emotive therapy, cognitive restructuring (self talk), and visualization. The affective category includes relaxation and systematic desensitization. The behavioral category includes rhetoritherapy and skills training. The class emphasizes practicing of most techniques in class after these techniques are discussed. Lecturing is kept to a minimum in this section. Since many SA students rarely ask questions in class, student response sheets are frequently required.

**SA Teaching Techniques**

Not apparent in the SA course syllabus are the teaching techniques employed in this section. The techniques listed below have proven effective in increasing the comfort level of the students.

**Partners.** Students are assigned partners with whom they jointly share goals and provide objective performance data on their speeches (Mandeville, 1993). Having partners increases one-on-one interaction and gives a student speaker more objective data about his or her speeches.

**Desensitization to Conspicuousness.** Students who report they “don't like being looked at by an audience” are frequently asked at the first of the semester to hand out papers, etc. Second, the instructor arrives at class ten minutes early to engage students in conversations. Because several students are generally in the room during these conversations, some "being looked at by others" occurs and then becomes a technique for reducing speaker fear of conspicuousness.
**Modeling.** Frequent instructor modeling of cognitive (self talk) and breathing techniques during the first half of the semester has been effective. This modeling occurs at the beginning of classes, especially on the days of initial speaking assignments. This increase in instructor modeling has resulted in an increase in student reports of using these techniques.

**Impromptu Speeches.** The initial impromptu speech is humorous (Kelly, 1989) in order to increase comfort level. In addition, for initial impromptu speeches students are asked to focus on technique usage and write a brief description of the technique’s effectiveness for them.

Incremental skill development (Kelly, Phillips and Keaten, 1995) is employed in these speeches. Impromptu assignments are controlled for conspicuousness, time, and length. Initial “speeches” (four sentences) are in small groups. The progression is from small group sitting, to small group standing, to in front of class with the partner for thirty seconds, in front of class with partner for approximately two minutes, alone in front of class for thirty seconds, then alone for two minutes in front of the class. There were approximately nine of these “speeches” prior to graded speeches. Advanced notification of these “impromptu speeches” ranged from two minutes, two days and finally over a weekend.

**Grading.** Grading of the four "formal" speeches is consistent with the grading of other sections of SPE 101 (Mandeville, 1993). Students are informed of this grading standard in the initial interview.

**Counseling Center Contacts.** Some students in the SA section have problems other than SA. To increase their comfort level with seeking assistance for other problems, a counselor from the NKU Counseling Center presents one lecture per semester. The counselor lectures on
relaxation and stress. The students are not asked to seek counseling; they are simply made aware of the counseling center.

Certificates. To reduce focus on grades and celebrate completing their first speech, each student is given a certificate. As each certificate is given, positive aspects of student performances are reviewed. A certificate for the most improved speaker is given at the end of each semester.

Monitoring On-Going Levels of SA. After each graded speech, students complete the State CA Form developed by Booth-Butterfield and Gould (1986; Attachment 3). Scores are reviewed for unusually high levels of apprehension (so the instructor could intervene if necessary), monitored for decreases in anxiety and reviewed for a comparison of speech grades to levels of apprehension. In addition, in the beginning of the semester written student feedback after impromptu speeches is required. Students are asked not only to note progress with a technique but also to write how they felt about their performance.

Conclusion

The NKU SA section of the basic public speaking course began in Spring 1994. This paper has attempted to provide enough information so that other such programs may be initiated. The SA section of SPE 101 has been successful. A review of pre and post tests for all semesters reflects this success.1 Students who previously had dropped SPE 101 two to three times completed public speaking in this section. An example of this progress is evident in one senior’s last journal entry.

The scores on the evaluations (tests) don’t reflect the changes I think I have achieved. After going over both my evaluations (pre and post tests) I looked back over my journal entries and also thought about how I felt about speaking in all
situations. What a difference! My beliefs about speaking have changed. . . I realize I can make mistakes and I'm not going to die. I still feel dumb when it happens but I don't worry about it . . . My ability to organize a speech has also improved. . . My listening skills have improved. . . The biggest change is one I didn't expect to get from this class. My ability to hold a conversation has improved dramatically. . . Sometimes I feel myself becoming timid in a conversation with three or four people, but I think "Hey, I can get into the conversation" and I just start talking and it feels great! . . . I would highly recommend this class to anyone that is apprehensive about speaking and take it early. I think if it weren't for this class, I would have never graduated because I would have never taken regular speech.

Another upper classman who had investigated transferring to another university to avoid public speaking wrote the following in her final journal entry.

I guess it's only fitting to end this journal by telling you that I finally received my sticker in Weight Watchers by losing xx number of pounds. But probably the bigger achievement was I finally had the nerve to speak-up in front of a room full of strangers to get that sticker. Before taking this class, I don't believe I would have had the nerve to do this. This class has helped me learn how to set goals for myself and then implement a plan to achieve them. Also this class has made me analyze events realistically, which has helped me reduce my anxiety about the (speaking) situation.

While teaching this course does require a great deal of time and patience, the rewards for the instructor are immeasurable.

ENDNOTE

1A comparison of pre and post tests reflects the SA sections success. One example of improved test performance is on the PRCA-24. PRCA-24 norms reported by Kelly and Watson (1986, p.36) reveal that scores higher than 24.4 on public speaking subtest indicate high levels of apprehension. Initial average scores for five semesters of SA sections were 26.3, 28, 27.2, 26.7, and 27.4 respectively. End of the semester post test scores were 18, 19.4, 19.4, 21.6, and 19.8 respectively.
References


ATTACHMENT ONE

PRCA-24

DIRECTIONS: This instrument is composed of 24 statements concerning your feelings about communication with other people. Please indicate in the space provided the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) are undecided, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree with each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Many of the statements are similar to other statements. Do not be concerned about this. Work quickly, just record your first impression.

1. I dislike participating in group discussions.
2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in a group discussion.
3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.
4. I like to get involved in group discussions.
5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.
6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.
7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.
8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meeting.
9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion in a meeting.
10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.
11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.
12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.
13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.
14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
15. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in conversations.
16. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.
17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.
18. I am afraid to speak up in conversations.
19. I have no fear of giving a speech.
20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a speech.
21. I feel relaxed while giving a speech.
22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a speech.
23. I face the prospect of giving a speech with confidence.
24. While giving a speech I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

SCORING THE PRCA-24
Write the number you gave yourself above each item number listed below. Then add or subtract as indicated.

Group Discussion = 18 - (1) + (2) - (3) + (4) - (5) + (6)
Meeting = 18 - (7) + (8) + (9) - (10) - (11) + (12)
Conversation = 18 - (13) + (14) - (15) + (16) + (17) - (18)
Public Speaking = 18 + (19) - (20) + (21) - (22) + (23) - (24)
Overall CA = Group + Meeting + Conversation + Public Speaking

To obtain your total score add your four subscores together. Your score should range between 24 and 120. If your score is below 24 or above 120, you have made a mistake in computing the score. (J. McCroskey).

wp51\vragdal\feelings.han
Syllabus -- Speech 101 - 14

Principles of Communication

Fall 1996

Instructor: Vicki Abney Ragsdale

Office: 104 B Landrum Academic Center
Office Hours: Friday 2:00 to 3:00
Phone: Office - 572-6341 or 572-5435
Home - 578-9115 call between 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

The purpose and goals of Speech 101 are listed in the student course book. This special section of Speech 101 has two additional goals. By the end of the semester in this Speech 101 section you will also be able to:

- set and meet reasonable communication goals
- learn effective ways to manage speech apprehension

Texts:

Stephen E. Lucas. The Art of Public Speaking. 5th ed.


Students are responsible for reviewing the general policy statements regarding education majors, the Speech Lab, attendance and cheating and plagiarism in the student course book. These policies do apply to this class and will be enforced. A more specific attendance policy will be enforced in this class. Three or more absences may result in a one-half letter reduction in the final grade. A full letter reduction in the final grade will occur with six or more absences.

Should an emergency require you to be absent, you are responsible for all assignments and information that were given the day you were absent. You should have this assignment/information prior to the next class. Should an emergency require you to miss your assigned speaking date, you are required to give your speech the next class attended. However, because your speech will be late, your grade will be lowered one full letter. Failure to give the speech the next class after an absence will regretfully result in an "F".

Tests: There will be two exams: a midterm exam and a final exam. Exams will consist of listing and short answer discussion questions. A make-up exam will not be given for the final.

Papers: Two types of papers will be required this term. The first type is a one-to-two page paper assessing your overall performance. There will be two of these papers—one due the second day of class and the other due at the end of the term. The second type of paper is a one page paper due after every speech (See attached sheet).

Goals: Prior to each speaking situation you will turn in precise speaking goals by which you will analyze your performance and progress. Handouts concerning how to write goals, etc. will be given to you at a later date.

Individual Conferences: Two individual out-of-class conferences with the instructor are required. The first conference will be held during the first week of class meetings. This conference will be to review your first paper, analyze/review results of self-analysis forms and to prepare speaking goals and to give speeches. The final conference during finals week will be to review progress.
In addition, four conferences will be held in lieu of four class meetings (see syllabus for approximate dates). Conferences prior to speeches must be two days in advance of your speaking dates. In these four conferences we will review outlines, papers, classroom performance and/or work on delivery. The primary purpose of the conference is to allow you to clarify any questions or concerns you may have. The requirements for conferences are as follows:

1. Attend all conferences.
2. Be on time and stay the full time.
3. Be prepared (turn in completed outline and goals).

Journal: A communication journal will be kept throughout the term (see attached sheet.)

Tape: You will be given a tape to assist you in practicing systematic desensitization. This tape needs to be turned in prior to your last speech. Tapes may be purchased for $3. Failure to purchase or to turn in your tape will result in a full letter reduction on your final speech.

Speeches: Informal speeches will consist of introduction of another class member and several unannounced impromptu speeches. Four formal speeches will be given. Two will stress informative speaking and two will emphasize persuasive speaking. You will use the extemporaneous mode of delivery during your presentation. You will receive specific criteria for each assignment several days in advance of the due date. An outline is required for these four assignments. Each outline should be typed or written neatly in ink on standard paper. The outlines are handed in at the conference before you speak.

Assignments and Weights

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<td>Journal</td>
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<td>Papers</td>
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<td>Goals</td>
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<td>Graded Speech Two</td>
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<td>Graded Speech Three</td>
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<td>Graded Speech Four</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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Papers

Two types of papers will be required this term. These papers are intended to help you realistically analyze your own performance and progress. Improving your ability to realistically analyze your progress will enhance your sense of control over your speech apprehension.

Type I paper: At the first class session, you will be asked to write a 1-2 page paper in which you describe yourself as a communicator. This description will be based on your self analysis or completion of forms in Chapter Two of the Kelly and Watson book. A xeroxed copy of Kelly and Watson forms (pp 27-32, 34, 35 38-45) should be attached to the paper. The content of your paper should focus on your strengths and weaknesses. Be specific in describing behaviors. Reflect on any insights gained from the Chapter Two analysis.

In the final paper of the term you will comment on the changes you have seen in your communication behavior this semester as well as those areas which need further improvement and where you plan to go from here. Forms in Chapter Two will be completed again; a xeroxed copy of the forms should be attached.

The requirements for these papers are as follows:
1. Paper handed in on time
2. Paper neatly written
3. Paper reflects appropriate analysis of performance on Chapter Two forms and includes the above listed requirements

Type II paper: The class after each of your speeches you should hand in a half page analysis of your speaking performance. The content of this paper is based on your personal speaking goals and your other reactions to speaking in class.

The requirements for these papers are as follows:
1. Paper handed in on time
2. Paper neatly written
3. Paper follows the form of the Goal Report Format Sheet
4. Paper reflects appropriate discussion of current goals
You will be asked to keep a journal for this course. It will be collected several times during the semester (see syllabus for dates). Three is the minimum number of entries per week. The more frequent your entries the more valuable you will find the activity. The entries should be neatly and legibly written. Side margins should be 1 1/2 inches (for my comments). Papers should be in a spiral notebook or enclosed in a folder.

In the first weeks of the term your entries should especially relate to the techniques for coping with speech anxiety discussed in class and in your readings (techniques include relaxation, systematic desensitization, cognitive restructuring, goal setting and visualization). Your entries should address the following throughout the term:

1. How did each technique decrease your apprehension? Drawing from your own experience with each technique and in-class practice, describe your initial reaction to the method, when and where you used it, and how effective this technique has been for you.
2. How are you progressing on your personal goals? Give specific occurrences (describe the situations) to show your progress. Give specific data.
3. Reactions to reading assignments. What did you realize that was particularly helpful? Useful? Impractical? Confusing? (The emphasis is on your reaction; please don't do a book report.)
4. Reactions to class. Comments on teacher and student contributions. Things you wish you would have said, or are glad you didn't. Comments on the value of class activities.

Grading Criteria

The requirements for your journal are as follows:

1. Entries should be made at least three times a week.
2. Entries should contain comments relative to the class readings or discussions.
3. Entries should reflect analysis and understanding of your speaking concerns and should reflect attempts to improve your comfort level while speaking.
4. The journal should be turned in on the dates listed in your syllabus.

Adapted from the following articles:
Mary Bozik "Teaching the Basic Course in Speech: Fundamentals for the Apprehensive Student" Short Course, Speech Communication Association, 1983

Susan Koester "Communication Apprehension Intervention" Short course, Speech Communication Association, 1993
<table>
<thead>
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<td>Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 23</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<td>Aug. 26</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
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<td>Aug. 28</td>
<td>The Process of Communication</td>
<td>Kelly &amp; Watson, Chs. 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>Improving Attitudes and Reducing Apprehension</td>
<td>K &amp; W, Ch. 3</td>
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<td>ABC Model of Reasonable Thinking</td>
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<td>Cognitive Restructuring</td>
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<td>Apprehension and Relaxation</td>
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<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>Relaxation and Systematic Desensitization</td>
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<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Setting Personal Communication Goals</td>
<td>K &amp; W, Ch. 4</td>
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<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>Setting Goals for Speaking</td>
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<td>Sept. 16</td>
<td>Assessing the Communication Situation and</td>
<td>K &amp; W, Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Listener Communication in Social Relationships</td>
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<td>K &amp; W, Ch. 6</td>
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<td>Ethics in Public Speaking</td>
<td>Lucas, Ch. 2 &amp; 4</td>
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<td>Lucas, Chs. 7 &amp; 8</td>
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<td>Sept. 27</td>
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<td>Lucas, Chs. 6, 9 &amp; 10</td>
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<td>Outlining</td>
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<td>Sept. 30</td>
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Oct.  4  Three minute Informative Speeches  
(Journals Due - 7 Entries)

Oct.  7  Three Minute Informative Speeches

Oct.  9  Midterm

Oct.  11 Outlining  
Lucas, Ch. 10

Oct.  14 Audience Analysis  
Lucas, Ch. 5

Oct.  16 Delivery  
K & W, Ch. 9
Lucas Ch. 12
Lucas, Ch. 11

Using Language

Oct.  18 Using Language

Oct.  21 Conferences

Oct.  23 Informative Speeches

Oct.  25 Informative Speeches

Oct.  28 Informative Speeches

Oct.  30 Informative Speeches  
(Journals Due - 6 Entries)

Nov.  1 Goofproofer  
Persuasion  
Goofproofer  
Lucas, Ch. 15 & 16

Nov.  4 Visual Aids  
Persuasion  
Lucas, Ch. 13

Nov.  6 Persuasion

Nov.  8 Conferences

Nov. 11 Three minute Persuasive Speech

Nov. 13 Three minute Persuasive Speech

Nov. 15 Three minute Persuasive Speech

Nov. 18 Persuasion  
Lucas, pp 450 - 454

Nov. 20 Persuasion

Nov. 22 Group Discussion and Apprehension  
(Journals Due - 4 Entries)  
K & W, Ch. 7  
Lucas, Ch. 16

Nov. 25 Conferences

Nov. 27 Thanksgiving
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<tr>
<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>Persuasive Speeches</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>Persuasive Speeches (All tapes must be turned in by this date.) Review for final (Outside of class conferences must be completed by December 11)</td>
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<td>Dec. 13</td>
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The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus. Students will be notified by announcement in class of any "deadline" changes in advance of any new deadlines.
ATTACHMENT THREE

Name:_________________  Put the appropriate number to the side of each sentence; then add. Please put the total to the left of your name.

Date:__________  Directions: The following items describes how people communicate in various situations. Choose the number from the following scale that best describes how you felt during the communication experience you just completed.

Not At All 1  Somewhat 2  Moderately So 3  Very Much So 4

1. I felt tense and nervous.
2. I felt self-confident while talking.
3. While talking, I was afraid of making an embarrassing or silly slip of the tongue.
4. I worried about what others thought of me.
5. I felt calm when I was talking.
6. I felt ill at ease using gestures when I spoke.
7. I could not think clearly when I spoke.
8. My listener(s) seemed interested in what I had to say.
9. I felt poised and in control while I was talking.
10. My body felt tense and stiff while I was talking.
11. My words became confused and jumbled when I was speaking.
12. I felt relaxed when I was talking.
13. My fingers and hands trembled when I was speaking.
14. I felt I had nothing worthwhile to say.
15. I had a "deadpan" expression on my face when I spoke.
16. I found my self talking faster or slower than usual.
17. While speaking, it was easy to find the right words to express myself.
18. I felt awkward when I was talking.
19. My heart seemed to beat faster than usual.
20. I maintained eye contact when I wanted to.
The Modification of the Basic Speech Course for Speech Apprehensive Students

Vicki Abney Ragsdale

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