**ENGI 600: GRADUATE COMMUNICATIONS SEMINAR**

**Brown School of Engineering**

**SEMESTER SCHEDULE, FALL 2015**

**Dr. Jan Hewitt**

**Senior Lecturer in Professional Communication**

**Rice Center for Engineering Leadership (RCEL)**

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Office hours: Wednesdays 2:00 – 3:30; Thursdays, 1:30 – 3:30; by appointment

**Mech Lab 253**. One group meets Wednesdays 10:30 – noon; the other group meets Thursdays 4:00 – 5:30. Attendance is required, but if you have a conflict on the day your group meets, you may come to the other session if you notify me in advance. (If you have a documented disability, please talk with me about your needs.)

**Course goals**: You will learn how to present your research clearly and persuasively, both written and orally, to a wide range of audiences: expert, interdisciplinary, international, and general. The course does not give credit hours, but a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory will show on your transcript. To receive a Satisfactory grade, by semester end you must complete one of the following: a paper for publication, an extended PhD proposal, or a thesis chapter; you will then meet with me to discuss it.

**Week One: August 26 and 27**

Introductions

Necessary paperwork

**Course overview**

**Seven Key Questions** (7 questions you must answer in writing a paper for publication, thesis proposal, Master’s thesis, Ph.D. dissertation, or grant proposal)

**Evaluating visuals: A Checklist**. (Download Rice logos and slide templates from the Rice website by clicking on Downloads and Tools.)

Discuss the **90-second talks** that start next week and the **10-minute talks** that start on September 30.

**Homework #1**: **Write the answers to the Seven Key Questions** (not too technical; max of 2 pages, 12 point, single spaced; can be dbl-sided). Due at start of class next week (all homework will be due at the start of the next week’s class, unless otherwise stated). **At the top of the page, indicate if you will be working on a thesis, PhD proposal, or journal paper.**

**Homework #2:**  **Write the script for a 90-second oral presentation (no slides)** that explains your research focus to the other members of the class (smart and well educated, but not familiar with your field). Identify and explain the problem that needs to be solved, how it fits in with other work in your field, its importance (not just to your field), results to date, and potential applications (either theoretical or practical). Work for an attention-getting opening sentence and a memorable closing sentence. This talk can be modified to compete in the RCEL-sponsored SCREECH competition on October 29. Note that many of the Seven Key Questions are answered briefly in this 90- second summary.

**Week Two: September 2 and 3**

**Contents of a thesis, thesis proposal, or paper for publication**: How are they the same? How do they differ?

Discuss the **Template for Taking Notes** on research articles (download from rcel.rice.edu)

**Exchange scripts for 90-second talks** with someone NOT in your field; discuss clarity and word choices.

**90-second summaries of your work**. (3)

**Homework #3**: Fill out the Template for Taking Notes (or something similar) for a published paper related to your research. Choose one from a top-rated journal in your field. Single-spaced, 12point, 2 pages, dbl-sided.

**Week Three: September 9 and 10**

**Recognize and avoid plagiarism**

Writing an acceptable **paraphrase**

**90-second presentations (2)**

**Homework #4**: **Write a paraphrase** of two key paragraphs in the Template paper. Include the key points, cite the source, and bring me a copy of the paragraphs you are paraphrasing. Remember that a paraphrase is always considerably shorter than the original source.

**Week Four: September 16 and 17**

**Analysis of an abstract** (three drafts) for the 7 Key Questions

**90-second presentations (4)**

**Homework #5**: **Write a technical practice abstract** (350 words for PhD thesis or proposal, 150 words for Master’s thesis or published paper). Identify which it is for. Send me an electronic copy; bring 3 copies to class.

**Week Five: September 23 and 24**

**90-second presentations (5)**

Evaluate your own practice abstracts for opening sentences and content (the 7 questions)

Discuss sample PowerPoint slides

**Week Six: September 30 and October 1**

**First sentences and topic sentences; paragraph development**

10-minute oral presentations and discussion (2)

**Homework #6**: Revise your abstract; hand in both drafts. Due Week 7.

**Week Seven: October 7 and 8**

**Discuss the RCEL SCREECH competition on October 29;** assign practice sessions

Writing a **literature review**

Analysis of a sample lit review (note precise verb choices)

10-minute oral presentation and discussion (1)

**Homework #7**: **Write a minimum of 3-4 pages of your Literature Review**. Due Week 9 at start of class.

**Homework #8**: **Due no later than Monday, November 23, at 4 p.m.: A complete and well edited draft of one of the following: your paper for publication, PhD proposal, or thesis chapter. Bring a paper copy to my office. We will meet to discuss it. You must complete this assignment to get a Satisfactory grade for the class. If you need an extension, you must request it in advance!**

**NO CLASSES ON OCTOBER 12 AND 13: FALL RECESS (DOES NOT AFFECT US)**

**Week Eight: October 14 and 15**

Writing an effective job/postdoc/grant **application letter and e-mail cover letter**

Oral presentations and discussion (2)

**Homework #9**: Write a one-page letter of application and a cover e-mail. Bring a paper copy to class. **Homework #7 is due next week at start of class.**

**Week Nine: October 21 and 22**

Rewrite the claim in the student-written abstracts (problem, method, result): “This paper proposes…”

Limit use of **passive, weak, or colorless verbs**

Generate a list of precise, active verbs

Oral presentations and discussion (2)

**Week Ten: October 28 and 29**

Writing an effective **thank-you note** (You will write one in class.)

**Commas, semi-colons, and colons**

Writing a fine **introductory paragraph for a chapter or a section**

**Transitions**: between sentences, between paragraphs, between sections, between chapters

Oral presentations and discussion (2)

**(Homework #8 is due by 4 p.m. on Monday, November 23.)**

**Week Eleven: November 4 and 5**

Writing the Introduction/Background chapter and the Conclusion/Discussion

Techniques for **reducing wordiness**

Oral presentations and discussion (2)

**Homework #10:** As needed, revise your letter of application and e-cover message.

**Hour-long student conferences**

**Homework #8 is due by 4 p.m. on Monday, November 23. If you need an extension, you must ask in advance!**

**Week Twelve: November 11 and 12**

**Parallelism; clear antecedents**, including “that,” “which,” and “this”

Thinking on your feet: role playing (President Leebron asks, “What are you working on?” What do you say???)

Oral presentations and discussion (2)

**Hour-long student conferences**

**Week Thirteen: November 18 and 19**

Paraphrase work

Oral presentations and discussion (2)

Thinking on your feet: role playing

**Homework #8 is due by 4 p.m. on Monday, November 23!**

**Hour-long student conferences**

**NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 25 AND 26: THANKSGIVING RECESS**

**Week Fourteen: December 2 and 3**

**TBA; Hour-long student conferences**

**KEY DATES**:

**Today or tomorrow**:

* Download from [www.graduate.rice.edu/thesis](http://www.graduate.rice.edu/thesis) the up-to-date university requirements: *Thesis Format,* *Thesis Submission*, and *Checklist for Master’s/PhD Thesis Submission*, and *Thesis Templates.* Note: Thesis submission is now electronic, but you must take certain pages to the Office of Graduate Studies by noon of December 4 and complete your electronic submission by NOON of December 4. Do NOT wait until the last minute. If you do not meet the noon deadline, you won’t graduate in December.
* Change your default margins to fit thesis requirements: 1.5 inches left; one inch top, right, and bottom.
* Check departmental requirements for a thesis proposal or thesis (Master’s or PhD).
* Verify journal requirements
* Set a tentative timetable for writing your paper for publication, PhD proposal, or thesis.

**By the middle of October:**

* Work with your advisor to finalize who is on your committee.
* Check with your department to get individual deadlines for when you must submit your thesis or proposal to your committee before your Defense. Schedule your defense date and place. If you wait until the last minute, you may have difficulty finding a room or a time when all your committee members are available**.**

**Friday, November 20: Try to defend before this date** so that you will have time to revise your thesis prior to the turn-in deadline of NOON on Friday, December 4. An earlier defense would be even better.

**Friday, December 4 before NOON: Turn your paperwork in to the Office of Graduate Studies for December degree conferral. Submit your thesis electronically. This deadline is NOT movable. If your thesis isn’t in by noon, you won’t graduate in December 2015.**

Janice L. Hewitt, PhD Rice University [jhewitt@rice.edu](mailto:jhewitt@rice.edu) Fall 2015