

BB 405H : “*Science in the Public Eye*”

1. Syllabus

BB 405H “*Science in the Public Eye*” is a course aimed at teaching students how to effectively employ scientific communications in their professional lives. Aimed at students who will be applying to professional schools, the course consists of weekly discussions and interview practice sessions. The course will include instructor-led discussion aimed at students polishing communication skills in an interview format and in a written personal statement. Student interview performances will be videotaped and the tapes will be used for analysis and enhancement of student communication skills. Student communication skills will be focused appropriately on the career interest of each student – professional schools, biotechnology industry, government agency, etc. Discussion sessions will also cover recent high-profile news events as they unfold.

Mock interview sessions will be interactive, with direct feedback to students of their performance in interviews, followed by after class meetings one-on-one with the instructor. Student-instruction sessions will involve reviewing videos for further observations and opportunities for improvement. Mock interviews will be formatted appropriate for the discipline of the student’s interest. A final oral examination will cover the topics discussed during the term.

Grading

Discussion 15%

Assignments 10%

Mock interview performance 30%

Professionalism (timeliness, participation) 15%

Final Oral Exam 30%

2. Reading Items

A. Numerous materials from the Web and original material from the instructor

3. Honors Course Distinction – There is no equivalent course for non-Honors students. The course was created to build on the skills of students in the UHC. It is expected that Honors College students are interested in the world around them and are therefore more aware of it than average students. Such knowledge and insights will be quite beneficial for meaningful participation in the course.

4. Communication Skills Component – Emphasis will be made on improving oral communication skills via instruction, videotaping, analysis, and repetition. The visual component (body language) of oral communication will also be emphasized.

5. Assessment/Grading – As noted above, grading will be based on performance in

five areas– discussion, assignments, interviews, oral exam, and professionalism. Discussion will be scored on the amount of meaningful participation from each student. Just speaking, *per se*, will not qualify and may, in fact, count against the grade if it is not germane to the discussion. Students will be asked to rate their fellow students' participation and this will be used as a guide for grading (in addition to the instructor's evaluation). To participate meaningfully, students will need to prepare in advance by reading assignments and performing exercises, as appropriate. Interviews will be scored, both by the instructor, and by the class as a whole, with equal weight given to each in grading. Interview scoring will incorporate improvements over the term. Oral exams will be 15-20 minutes in length in a one-to-one format with the instructor. Students will be asked to assess their own performance on the exam as an aid for objective scoring by the instructor. Last, professionalism is a very important piece of the puzzle. Students must be prepared for discussions/interviews, on time, follow instructions, and act in a professional manner. This will be evaluated solely by the instructor.

6. Instructional Innovations / Background –I conceived *Science in the Public Eye* after success with an informal interview skills meeting group I started two years ago. To date, over 60 students have attended these informal meetings. I believe the success of this format is due to the totally interactive nature of the meetings. Students help each other as much as I do. By maintaining a strong interactive format combined with the videotaping, I believe students in *Science in the Public Eye* will get direct feedback to make significant improvements in their ability to speak intelligently on any scientific subject. Needless to say, I expect such a course will be of interest to any student hoping to improve interview skills. This will likely include pre-med, pre-dentistry, and other students who face interviews to further their academic goals.

7. Tentative Schedule

- March 31 Introduction / Orientation / Collaborative Learning
- April 2 On Camera - "Who Am I?"
Assignment – Transcribe your description of "Who Am I?" and rewrite it
- April 7 News / Matters of Perspective and Cutting Through Stereotyping
- April 9 On Camera – Rules and Body Language
- April 14 News / Biographical Profiling
Assignment – Write a biographical profile of the person assigned to you in class
- April 16 On Camera – News
- April 21 News / Personal Statement Draft
- April 23 On Camera – Reporting
- April 28 News / Playing the Interviewer Role
Assignment – Compose a list of 10-15 questions to identify the right person to help you start a business. Compose answers you would expect of the ideal candidate.
- April 30 On Camera – Answering Common Questions
- May 5 News / Personal Statement Analysis/Polishing
- May 7 On Camera – Thinking Verbally Exercise (Personal Statement Due)
- May 12 News / Interpreting Answers
Assignment – Compose your answers to the top 15 questions given in class
- May 14 On Camera – Interview Practice

May 19 News / Thinking Quickly – Word Association
May 21 On Camera – Interview Practice
May 26 On Camera – Interview Practice
May 28 On Camera – Interview Finals
June 2 On Camera – Interview Finals
June 4 On Camera – Interview Finals