
Communication Courses

Oral Communication in Graduate Studies (OPIE 582)

This course focuses on improving communication skills in classroom situations such as presentation, asking and answering questions, discussion, and interacting with professors and peers. Students explore aspects of language, the US academic culture, and strategies for effective discussion and presentation. Students learn and practice individual sounds, rhythm, intonation and stress associated with spontaneous and planned spoken English

Oral Communication in Graduate Studies (OPIE 583) On-Line Course

For students who have completed 082/582 Oral Communication for Graduate Studies, but still require development in their pronunciation, fluency and/or understanding of the norms of the U.S. Academic Community. The course intends to have a dual focus on the culture of the U.S. academic community and pronunciation. Aspects of the U.S academic community that are covered range from informal interpersonal encounters to formal presentations, including subtle dynamics of hedging, sharing opinions, answering and asking questions and negotiating meaning. Pronunciation aspects include the introduction of standard elements of spoken English Pronunciation, the heightened ability to recognize and replicate such elements and the opportunity to employ these elements of accurate spoken English within an open classroom discussion forum

The response to these courses has been overwhelmingly positive. Students, faculty and advisors have expressed their appreciation in a variety of ways:

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

“I have taken this course four times and learned something new each time.”

“I feel more comfortable speaking in the classroom.”

“This class has helped me to gain confidence.”

“There are many things about speaking that I never knew before this class.”

COMMENTS FROM OU FACULTY AND ADVISORS

“I wish these courses were available every Quarter.”

“I encourage all of my Graduate students to take this course.”

“I can really hear a difference in their speaking.”

“He is more organized, more relaxed and easier to understand now.”

“I don't know what we would do if OPIE didn't offer these courses.”



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Academic Oral Communication

For International Graduate Students

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Program Description

We provide two graduate academic oral communication skills (OPIE 500) courses, which focus on improving the skills necessary to be successful graduate students. Both classes are available each quarter when demand is recognized. The focus of the course may be different for each student. Some students wish to improve their presentation skills for their doctorate or masters degree oral examinations, while other graduate students wish to improve their oral skills for general communication. This course may be the only access students have to oral/aural instruction beyond the OPIE curriculum. In some cases, students may be enrolled in both classes simultaneously.

Both courses are credit/no credit courses, having 3 credit hours. Audits in both classes are discouraged to assure that students will have the time to participate actively in the course. Because of the large amount of material to cover in only ten weeks, it is proposed that classes meet twice a week with one meeting of two hours and another of a single hour. While there is a different focus in each of the classes, there is also some overlap of objectives and activities to meet the needs of the students who have only one chance to take the class.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Academic Oral Communication program began in 1997 in response to a survey of faculty and advisors. This survey revealed the perception that many international Graduate Students lacked the oral communication skills necessary to effectively participate in the academic community. For many years OPIE served the needs of International Teaching Associates (ITAs) by providing support courses on an emergency basis.

A 2001 Technology Incentive Packages (TIPS) grant funded the development of both an online course as well as a collection of original digital resources.

In Fall 2005, OPIE and the department of Linguistics underwent restructuring. This resulted in new opportunities for ITA and graduate oral communication preparation. The following table reflects current policies regarding ITA Evaluation and support course opportunities:

SPEAK	Results
0-180	Not cleared, not able to teach. OPIE 580 (ITA Pronunciation) strongly recommended
190-220	Not cleared. Allowed to teach if concurrently enrolled in OPIE 581 (ITA Classroom communication)
230+	Clear for Teaching (depending upon department's individual requirements)

International Teaching Associate Courses

We provide two ITA courses, focused on improving the skills necessary to be successful ITAs.

The Pronunciation Course (OPIE 580) is generally assigned to students whose pronunciation appears to be problematic, or who identify themselves as being weak in pronunciation. The major emphasis in this course is on improving pronunciation for overall intelligibility and for comprehension in the classroom.

The Classroom Communications Skills Course (OPIE 581) is generally assigned to those whose pronunciation skills appear to be adequate for comprehensibility. The major emphasis in this class is on developing the language skills necessary for effective teaching, which include fluency, use of discourse markers, and the structural control needed for defining and explaining. In addition, considerable attention will also be given to the language necessary for effective interaction with undergraduate students, to meeting the pronunciation needs of both the class as a whole and the individual student and to the awareness of expectations for TAs and the academic situation in the United States generally.
