

An explanation of how all students will be involved in presentations and assignments that help them achieve proficiency in oral discourse. These should typically include researching a topic, developing an argument, and organizing supporting details. Please specify the types of oral discourse (for example, presentations, roundtables, debates, panels).

Philosophy 460-469 is an upper-level seminar typically enrolling 10-15 students, about 1/2 of whom are philosophy majors. I include a syllabus of PL 461: Nietzsche as an example.

All students are required to act as discussion leaders or co-leaders (DLs) at least twice a semester. DLs must explain, analyze, and critique preassigned materials, usually secondary literature about the major philosopher or primary material written by the philosopher. DLs must also solicit questions, comments, and criticism from their fellow students. DL presentations will each be at least 10 minutes in length, but usually 20 minutes each. All students, then, have opportunities to present, persuade, and critique. The virtues of oral discourse are paramount. DLs are evaluated according to established criteria (see below). Moreover, in the seminar setting, all students contribute through their own questioning and analyses of the material, and the presentations of the DLs, as well as in the sessions orchestrated by the instructor. These efforts, though, are not formally evaluated for oral proficiency.

An explanation of how oral presentations will be evaluated according to established criteria of competent speaking in general and to standards relevant to a specific discipline or professional context.

All DLs are evaluated according to the following criteria: clearness of presentation, effective relationship with audience, level of critical thinking, understanding of preassigned material, persuasiveness, quality of handouts or multi-media aids, ability to nurture discussion, quality of responses to questions and comments, organizational skills, and quality of physical behavior that supports the verbal message.

Each category is scored 1 (worst) –5 (best), with written explanatory comments accompanying each score.

An assessment plan that facilitates course improvement by evaluating the effectiveness of the course's oral communication pedagogy in improving student proficiency in oral discourse.

Students will evaluate the effectiveness of discussion leader sessions and their evaluation as DL at the end of the course and, probably, at mid-semester. Instructors will evaluate the progress of each student's oral discourse and will provide a model prior to the first DL session of effective philosophical discourse. Throughout the semester, DL sessions will alternate with instructor-led sessions as reinforcement. After each offering, the course will be assessed to determine how criteria of effective oral communication can better be met. Student evaluation data, feedback from colleagues who have visited class sessions, and student performance on DL sessions and in general will be examined during these assessments.