ESM 438: Presentation Skills for Environmental Professionals Syllabus

"There are only two types of speakers in the world: those who are nervous and those who are liars" - Mark Twain

🍎Instructor: Alexandra Phillips (she/her)
💌 Email: alexandra_phillips@bren.ucsb.edu
🏢Office: Bren Hall 4426
📅Office Hours: TBD
⏱️Class Time: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:45 pm
🏫Class Location: Bren Hall 1414

🍎Teaching Assistant: Annette Hilton (she/her)
💌 Email: ahilton@bren.ucsb.edu
🏢Office: Bren Hall 1005
📅Office Hours: TBD
⏱️Lab Time: Fridays, 9-11:30 am or 12-2:30 pm
🏫Lab Location: Bren Hall 1424

I. Course Description

This ten-week, graduate-level course is an intensive introduction to public speaking skills for environmental professionals. In lectures, students will learn about various topics around giving science presentations (e.g., appropriate tone, designing slides, outlining talks, answering questions) and practice these skills through individual and group active learning exercises. Outside of lectures, students will watch and reflect on examples of effective environmental public speaking ranging from podcasts to TED talks. Students are expected to complete weekly assignments before Friday labs, where they will practice speaking in front of their peers and receive constructive feedback. ***A focus throughout the course will be on building a 12-15 minute talk for a conference or public presentation.*** In place of a final, students will give a three-minute condensed version of their presentation and turn in two other refined laboratory assignments as part of a public speaking portfolio.

II. Eligibility

This class has no prerequisites and is open to any graduate students at the Bren School, including the MESM, MEDS, and PhD programs. Due to the time needed for each student for practice and feedback, the course is strictly limited to 40 participants, with 20 in each lab section. PhD students from other departments are welcome to join. We encourage interested senior undergraduates across campus to petition to enroll. Undergraduates must have a GPA of 3.0 or above to be eligible. To receive an add code, send a signed copy of the form to the instructor and academics@bren.ucsb.edu.

III. Learning Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 🔎 Identify aspects of effective environmental public speaking
- 🗣️Improve comfort in adapting and speaking to live audiences
- 🎙️ Translate environmental science stories into various spoken formats
- 🌎Outline and build presentations about environmental science topics
- 🖼️ Strategically reframe environmental messages for different audiences
- 📝 Refine science presentations from peer and instructor feedback
- 💼 Create an initial public speaking portfolio with multiple pieces
- 🎓Gain exposure to careers that use environmental presentation skills

IV. Inclusion Statement

Every student has a unique background and perspective. As a classroom, we should strive for an

inclusive atmosphere that respects this diversity. Everyone is expected to adhere to the Bren School Code of Conduct (pg 31-34) and the UCSB Code of Conduct. While taking this class we ask students to:

- Provide fellow students with feedback that is kind, thoughtful, and constructive
- Respect peers by actively participating during labs in group feedback sessions
- Share own values, experiences, and beliefs but remain open to the views of others
- Communicate respectfully (in disagreements, challenging the idea, not the person)
- Share responsibility for including all voices (if you have been speaking often, hold back; if you have been hesitant to talk, look for ways to speak up)
- Avoid playing devil's advocate for the sake of conflict - ask genuine questions to receive genuine answers

V. Accessibility Statement

Students with disabilities may request academic accommodations for assignments online through the UCSB Disabled Students Program at http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu/. Please make your requests for accommodations through the online system as early in the quarter as possible to ensure proper arrangement; for certain accommodations, DSP requires at least 10 days notice.

VI. Generative AI Policy

Although AI can be a useful tool, ***you may not use it to complete assignments or reflection questions in ESM 438***. Students may use AI programs like ChatGPT for tasks like outlining, brainstorming, editing, and literature exploration. Students will receive a written warning if there is evidence that generative AI is used for reflection questions or assignments. Repeated improper use of AI will be treated as academic dishonesty and may result in disciplinary action following a campus report.

VII. Communications Lab Access

All students are encouraged to use the Environmental Communication Lab (Bren Hall 1016) throughout the course to collaborate on assignments. The lab space includes computer workstations, whiteboards, large tables, couches, rentable creative equipment, and other resources.

VIII. Grading

Grading for ESM 437 is based on student participation, reading reflections, in-class and lab assignments, and a final portfolio. On all assignments, students will either receive a "pass" or "no-pass." At no time will letter grades be awarded on any individual assignment or presentation.

- ***15% Participation:*** Students are expected to attend each class and lab. Attendance will be taken for every class and lab period, which will count towards the final course grade.
- ***25% Reflection Questions:*** Weekly readings, video recordings, and reflection questions will be posted on Canvas and must be completed by Thursday at midnight.
- ***25% Lab Assignments*:** To receive full credit for a lab assignment, students must come to the lab with a draft of any materials needed, present their assignment, and participate in peer feedback.
- ***35% Final Portfolio:*** There will be no final exam. Instead, students will present a three-minute version of their full presentation to the class (which will be recorded and posted online for the student's portfolio) and turn in two other items from the labs (full presentation slide deck, social media video, recorded elevator pitch or mini podcast episode). The portfolio will be due on the final day of finals week and must be submitted electronically.

IX. Attendance Policy

As noted above in the grading scheme, regular attendance is crucial for this class. Students who expect to miss multiple classes or labs should not enroll or consider auditing. If students learn they will be absent from a class or lab during the course, they should email the instructor and TA with at least 24 hours notice. Attendance points can be made up by attending office hours within two weeks of the absence or through the following assignment (to be used only once):

- ***Talk Critique:*** Attend any scientific or environmental themed talk on campus or in the community and write (~ 1 pg) a critique of the presenter's style, content, tone, slides, and overall effectiveness.

X. Materials

Throughout this class, we will read papers and books on public speaking and analyze recordings. You do not need to purchase any of these titles. Physical copies of any books used will be kept in the Bren Environmental Communications Lab and digital copies of relevant sections will be posted electronically on Canvas. Video links for any recordings will also be posted to Canvas.

XI. Class Schedule

Lecture slides and lab assignments will be posted on Canvas weekly. Links are included below, but note that assignments and slides are still subject to change until they are posted on the Canvas page.

💬 Week One: Elements of Speaking | January 6 - January 10

Lecture

- Normalizing feeling nervous
- Tone, pitch, posture, pacing, and other common elements of public speaking

Lab

- Analyzing tone, pitch, posture, and pacing in famous political speeches
- Performing famous movie monologues

🛗 Week Two: Elevator Pitches | January 13 - January 17

Lecture

- The ABT framework for elevator pitches
- Removing jargon to distill messages

Lab

- Practicing your elevator pitch for different audiences and time limits

🎙️ Week Three: January 20 - January 24

Lecture

- Ethics of interviewing and recording
- Intro to podcast editing software
- Impact of podcasts on communication

Lab

- Case studies of effective science and environmental podcasts
- Creating a mini-podcast episode

👥Week Four: Informational Interviews | January 27 - January 31

Lecture

- Guest lecture with the Bren Career Team

Lab

- *No meeting in labs this week due to Bren Faculty Reviews*

- Setting up, researching, and tracking informational interviews
- Conducting an informational interview

📚**Week Five: Environmental Storytelling | February 3 - February 7**

Lecture

- Storytelling improv games
- Templates for science stories

Lab

- Translating an environmental paper to a short social media reel or TikTok

🎨**Week Six: Outlining & Slide Design | February 10 - February 14**

Lecture

- Writing descriptive title slides
- Typography, images, icons, color palettes, and other elements of design

Lab

- Talk outline with descriptive titles
- Practicing your introduction and getting feedback on slide design and delivery

📊**Week Seven: Presenting Data | February 17 - February 21**

Lecture

- Best practices for presenting data in science presentations
- Powerpoint karaoke improv game

Lab

- Presenting the methods and results section of your full presentation and receiving peer feedback

❓**Week Eight: Answering Questions | February 24 - February 28**

Lecture

- Fielding questions after presentations
- How to prepare for interview questions

Lab

- Presenting your conclusion with a follow-up question and answer session

🤝**Week Nine: Environmental Negotiations | February 3 - February 7**

Lecture

- Introduction to environmental negotiation skills and tips
- Persuasive speaking tactics

Lab

- Mock environmental negotiation exercise with agency roles
- Reflecting on persuasive tactics

🎓**Week Ten: Career Panel | March 3 - March 7**

Lecture

- Panel with local environmental public speakers and podcast hosts

Lab

- Final three-minute version of science presentation in Bren Hall 1414

XII. About the Instructors

Annette Hilton is a 6th-year PhD Candidate in the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management. She has a background in theatre, writing, and science. Annette's research at the Bren School is focused on hydrology and water resources. Annette's winning Grad Slam talk of 2023, "Turning on the Tap," covered her work to restore century-old groundwater measurements throughout the United States to gain new insights of human effects on water resources. Annette additionally conducts field-based research in catchment hydrology at the Jack and Laura Dangermond Preserve in Southern California.

Alexandra A Phillips is an assistant teaching professor in environmental communication at the Bren School at UC Santa Barbara. Here, she runs the communications focus for the Masters of Environmental Science and Management program. She also researches the effectiveness of science communication to students, the public, and policymakers. Although Alex is an oceanographer and geoscientist by training, she is also a professional photographer and graphic designer passionate about making environmental science communication more beautiful and impactful. She holds a BA in biology from the College of Creative Studies at UC Santa Barbara and a PhD in Geochemistry from Caltech. Before joining the Bren faculty, she completed a postdoc at the Large Lakes Observatory and worked as a professional science communicator at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis. Alex was also the first AAAS congressional fellow in climate science, where she spent a year on environmental policy for US Senator Alex Padilla.