Syllabus Addendum

We in this section of 1545 will interpret the general course syllabus (as found on WebCom) in very specific ways. These interpretations will be announced in class and explained throughout the page of Links. For example,

1. Final grades will reflect your pattern of grades, not numeric totals. Your grades will not be posted on Webcom. But you can receive an update by sending me an email (fowensphd@gmail.com).

2. Assignments will comprise an approximate weighting of 1/4, 1/4, 1/5, 1/5 and 1/10, as the general syllabus says (non-numerical).

3. Public speeches will be given when assigned. When the class has moved to another topic of study, no “missed” speeches will be permitted. Any student who does not “answer the bell” on a speaking assignment will receive the grade “F” -- unless specific written alternative arrangements have been made.

4. DO use a manilla file folder for your written work. Boldly print your name and course information on its outside cover as demonstrated, not on the tab.

5. No student may give an informative or persuasive speech whose topic AND specific purpose I have not approved, in advance, in writing (by email to and from fowensphd@gmail.com).

The actual giving of a speech to an audience represents only the “tip of the iceberg.” Most students who have foundered in this course haven’t negotiated the iceberg’s submerged, hidden mass.

Speeches in this course are to be prepared and delivered exactly as directed. Forget what you have learned in earlier courses or through experience. Forget other online advice. Do not copy “speech outlines” or “English essays” from the web.

In daily life, people don’t get to pick their specific purposes. For example, if you’re a team leader on a product marketing team, you will be asked to give an informative presentation on your team’s progress – not on “How to play online poker.” Similarly, if you are attending a PTA meeting and someone proposes that the group adopt a child whose drug-addict parents are in jail, you’ll have to speak persuasively about that proposal, not about why the price of gas will go to $15/gallon by 2015.

For this course, we will choose as a class whether you will be able to suggest your own specific purpose or whether you will pick the general topic and I will assign your specific
purpose. Either way, I will insist that your specific purpose is outside your comfort zone.

To begin your speech assignment, ask yourself what subject or topic areas interest you. If you believe nothing interests you, sadly the world has nothing to offer you, nor have you anything to offer it. Such an answer also is contrary to your presence at a university - somewhere people go to transform themselves into educated adults - where people explore and learn. Reach out: beyond your comfort zone.

It’s quite easy for a beginner to pick a specific purpose that will lead to a bad speech ... because it’s inappropriate for the audience, the occasion or the speaker. I will not permit this. That’s why you must get my written approval for your specific purpose via <fowensphd@gmail.com> before you start specific preparation.

My approval might seem arbitrary. It is not. You might like tanning beds, but I will not permit you to do an informative speech on them. That does not mean I dislike tanning beds. It means such a speech would be terrible unless done by an expert.

The specific purpose for your informative assignment must be worthwhile for a universal audience of college-educated adults. It must potentially merit their attention because (1) it is new for them, (2) it is important for them, and (3) it is sophisticated.

The specific purpose for your persuasive assignment must merit attention for the same three reasons, plus it must also take a position on a controversial public issue, where “public” means an identifiable body of some kind, and “issue” means a question of fact, value or policy which can be argued positively or negatively.

“Demonstration” or “how-to-do-it” speeches about commonplace subjects will not be approved. Examples of unacceptable speech titles include: "How to do CPR," "How to Fasten a Seat Belt," "How to Water Ski," "Grooming Your Dog for Mutual Satisfaction," "How to Throw a Football 75 Yards," "How to Dive off a Ten Meter Board Into a Foot of Water Without Hurting Yourself," and so on.


“Formal written outline” means exactly that: a formal sentence outline, not a topical one. There are rules for outlining; follow them.

Be sure to bring your manilla folder, properly labeled, containing exactly the required elements. Only students who present this folder correctly may speak for a grade.
Speakers will be permitted to volunteer on “speaking days.” If no one volunteers, we will wait until someone does, or speakers will be chosen randomly from the roster. Be prepared.

Test your media. That means you should go to the classroom a day or two before your speaking day and load your PowerPoint slides and/or other materials to make sure they function properly and so you can handle them with style and grace.

After each speech you will be invited to demonstrate your learning by offering criticism. Show that you are a schooled listener. This activity will be considered a formal part of “participation.”

We will occasionally make assignments during class, and course materials will be explained during class. You miss class at your own risk.

You will be assigned to a group for one problem-solving/speaking event. Establish effective communication with these group members.

You will be responsible for completing the online quizzes in a timely manner. Do not confuse possible “practice quizzes” with the graded quizzes. If you postpone quizzes, you might be disadvantaged by computer trouble, internet trouble, or personal circumstances. Be aware of the “kill” date on the “Tentative Schedule,” when quizzes cease to be available.

You will appear on camera in this course. All presentations will be recorded. I will take your snapshot in several ways – these snapshots will be for identification purposes, and they will not be made public.