



ACTIVE STUDY SKILLS

Academic Foundations
OLive-Access 2020

Instructor: Zoë Sutherland

Email: z.sutherland@berlin.bard.edu

Teaching Units: 14

Course Dates: 3 February - 22 March (Module A)

Schedule: Thursdays, 2:30 - 3pm

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:15pm - 3:15pm

Course Description

The aim of this class is to give students practice in becoming active and effective participants in a communicative academic classroom. Students will be led through processes that culminate in individual, and later, group presentations and discussions. Through this course, students will learn how to present, how to ask questions, how to give feedback and how to work in a group. The instructor will model processes and lead the students through controlled exercises that will allow them to confidently develop their seminar skills. Students will be given the opportunity to test out various working methods and to reflect on what works best for them, based on peer- and instructor-assessment. The success of each class will be highly dependent on students' taking responsibility for their studies and learning how to effectively prepare for class.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should:

- Have learnt how to be an active and engaged student in the classroom
- Have learnt the basics of how to make both individual and group presentations
- How to prepare independently and collaboratively in an efficient and structured way for seminar classes.

Requirements

Students are expected to actively participate and attend all classes as required.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Syllabi should note that, instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

As per Student Handbook guidelines, assignments that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Assignments that are more than 24 hours late may be rejected for grading, particularly if the explanation offered for the delay is not satisfactory. If a late assignment is accepted for grading, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade higher than C. Thereafter, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend ALL classes. In cases of absence caused by illness, students must inform their instructor and the Program Director in advance of the scheduled class. Students are expected to make up for any work missed in arrangement with their instructor. Bard College Berlin cannot give a passing grade for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, whether the absences are on documented medical grounds or not.

Students are also expected to attend office hours as required. Absence from a scheduled meeting counts as an absence.

Assessment

The course will be for letter grade, assessed through active participation (70%), an assignment (15%) and a final presentation (15%). Active participation means demonstrating your presence in the seminar; engaging with fellow participants, grappling with the assigned tasks, raising relevant questions for us to consider together, making relevant insights, and giving constructive criticism on peers' presentations. Students will give presentations throughout the course, the quality of which will not be formally assessed, as students will be marked instead on their demonstration of commitment to exploring how to best present their ideas. More than one absence (missing one session) will affect a student's participation grade for this class.

The assignment for this course is a creative response to the course in the form of a piece of reflective writing, workshop notes, a poster or a mind-map. The theme of the assignment is 'Seminar Skills'. The assignment is due by Thursday 19 March at 2pm.

Students will give a number of presentations as individuals, in pairs, and in groups, throughout the course. These presentations will count towards students' active participation grades. The final presentation students give, however, in week 7, will be assessed on its merits for credit.

Letter Grade calculation

The total grade out of 100% is calculated according to the weighting described above. Letter grades are assigned as shown in the table below. Corresponding grade points are also shown. See the Bard student handbook for equivalencies to the German system. D is the minimum passing grade for any test or coursework. If a student receives a Failing F, an Incomplete I or a D grade in one or more courses, their record will be reviewed.

Letter Grade	Total %	Grade Point
A	93-100%	4.00
A-	90-92%	3.70
B+	87-89%	3.30
B	83-86%	3.00
B-	80-82%	2.70
C+	77-79%	2.30
C	73-76%	2.00
C-	70-72%	1.70
D	60-69%	1.00
F	Failure	0.00

Schedule

Seminar	Date and time	Topic	Self-Study/Homework
1	Thursday, 6 Feb, 2pm - 3:30pm	Introduction to Active Study Skills	Prepare presentation for class 2
2	Thursday, 13 Feb, 2pm - 3:30pm	Questions	Reading: Quintilian, <i>The Orator's Education</i> (excerpts provided)
3	Thursday, 20 Feb, 2pm - 3:30pm	Structure	Reading: 'We Should All Be Feminists' (excerpt provided)
4	Thursday, 27 Feb, 2pm - 3:30pm	Communicating Complexity	Prepare assignment: a creative response to the course (reflective writing/workshop notes/poster/mind-map), on 'Seminar Skills'. <u>Due by Thursday 19 March at 2pm.</u>
5	Thursday, 5 March, 2pm - 3:30pm	Presenting in Pairs	Prepare presentation in groups for class 7
6	Thursday, 12 March, 2pm - 3:30pm	Presenting in Groups	Prepare final presentations for class 7
7	Thursday, 19 March, 2pm - 3:30pm	Course Conclusion: Final presentations	

Week 1 Introduction to Active Study Skills: What makes a skilled academic communicator?

In our first workshop, we'll each give two very brief presentations; one introducing another member of the seminar and one on a topic of the speaker's selection. We'll then reflect on how it felt to give and hear these kinds of spontaneous talks. We'll think about how planning, research, and rehearsal might have produced rather different presentations (and we'll deliver the re-worked presentations in week two). We'll also analyse a presentation by an academic who studies presenting under pressure, and ask ourselves how we can develop as academic communicators, each with our own unique speaking style and research interests.

Week 2 Questions

Following a speaker's thoughts in discussion is a difficult thing to do. Developing your skills as a listener, note-taker and questioner is therefore a game-changer in seminars. In this class we'll test out techniques for listening actively and posing questions for a variety of purposes, such as clarification, implication, and application. Using the presentations prepared for homework last week, this week we'll also practise how to paraphrase, inquire, and confidently express doubt.

Week 3 Structure

Beginning, middle, end. Structuring what we say makes us understandable. In this class we'll test some rhetorical advice from the ancient world about how to speak persuasively. We'll deliver small-group presentations in response to Quintilian's advice for lawyers about how to persuade an audience of their case. Peer assessment will show us how we are best understood when we're presenting. We'll discover more about what works best for each of us in terms of structuring arguments by preparing for and participating in a series of mini-debates. Students will have the chance to build on skills from week two by offering speakers 'points of information' during the debates.

Week 4 Communicating Complexity

This week we'll delve deeper into the challenges of discussing complex concepts. Each of us will choose a statement and prepare a two-minute presentation on how it applies to the text we read for homework. The two-minute presentations will serve as springboards for structured arguments about controversial theories that ask us to look at the world in new ways. For homework, students will start work on their course assignment.

Week 5 Presenting in Pairs

In this class we'll deliver a series of brief presentations, each time in a new pair. We'll use peer assessment to reflect on the teamwork process, as well as on the presentations themselves. We'll explore how best to make individual contributions and how to compromise, how to divide research and how to rehearse. Each student will also be given the opportunity to facilitate the whole-group discussion. For homework, students will work in groups to produce 5 to 7-minute presentations on a topic of their choice.

Week 6 Presenting in Groups

This week we'll hear the group presentations prepared for homework and engage in Q&A. We'll use peer assessment to reflect on the teamwork process and to identify what works best in delivering group presentations. We'll explore the use of aids such as handouts and slides (e.g. Powerpoint, Google Slides, Prezi). We will reflect on what worked best for assigning individual responsibilities while nevertheless producing a cohesive presentation. For homework, students will prepare individual presentations that are thematically linked, for presentation in panels in our final session.

Week 7 Course Conclusion: Individual Presentations with Q&A

In our final workshop, we will hear individual presentations in a conference-style format, complete with introductions, Q&A, and facilitated panel discussion. We will build on our course-length reflections on how to work together as a seminar to engage in meaningful debate about clearly communicated ideas.