Course Goals

The overarching goals of the class are to help students:
1) become reflective about speaking and communicating in a variety of academic contexts
2) build strategies to independently improve oral proficiency as lifelong language learners

Students will practice:
• Paraphrasing, or explaining things in different ways
• Narrating and describing in rich detail
• Communicating effectively in informal and formal situations (from small talk to professional presentations)
• Speaking clearly, accurately, and concisely
• Applying culturally appropriate nonverbal and verbal communication strategies

Course Overview

This student-centered course is designed to help international graduate students develop oral communication skills necessary for success as graduate students and Teaching Fellows at Harvard. The course is designed to meet individual needs. Through intensive speaking activities and assignments, participants will work on improving:
• oral English comprehensibility
• general teaching skills
• intercultural competence for communicating in the academic environment

Who can take this course? International graduate students who want to develop oral proficiency are invited to apply.
What are the course components?

Classes
Meet with a small group twice a week for 90 minutes.

Instructor meetings
Consult with your instructor and receive targeted feedback. Meetings are focused on your specific goals.

Language partner meetings
Meet one-on-one with trained Harvard College students to practice the skills learned in class and to have conversations about Harvard culture and beyond in a friendly and informal environment.

How is this course different?

It is unique to have a class that is tailored so specifically to the communicative needs of international graduate students, in the context of the Harvard academic environment, and that uses a proficiency based approach designed to help students have a complete understanding of their own speaker profile and what they can do to improve their skills. In addition, the course is designed to include targeted individual meetings with the instructor, and offers the opportunity to connect with and learn from Harvard undergraduates.

The class was offered as a pilot in 2009. There was such demand for and interest in the course that it spurred the formation of the Professional Communication Program for International Teachers and Scholars at the Bok Center, an entire program dedicated to the professional development needs of international academics.

Course Activities

This highly interactive class depends on the full participation of all students. Activities are designed to allow students to practice and get feedback on a range of speaking tasks and to enhance self-awareness, self-monitoring, and oral communication development.

role plays | microteaching
audio journals | pronunciation exercises
presentations | impromptu speeches
discussions | debates

“It is a terrific program and should be open to more international students.”

“Pauline is a wonderful teacher. She helps me build skills that will continue to serve me in the future.”

Offered in Fall and Spring semesters. Class meetings typically take place on Mon. /Wed. (3:00-4:30pm) and/or Tues. /Thurs. (9:30-11:00am) at 125 Mt Auburn Street, room 307.