**How to Make Complicated Things Understandable**

**Arts & Sciences 1138.\*\*, Freshman Seminar**

**Semester, 1 Credit Hour**

**Weds, 11am PS XXX**

**Instructor Info**

Laura Wagner, Psychology

Office: 241 PS

Email: wagner.602@osu.edu

Office hours: By Appointment

# Course Description

The purpose of this class is to teach you how to talk to regular people about complicated things and get them to understand them. We’ll analyze other people’s efforts to do this (in news reporting, the “Flame Challenge”, press releases) and we’ll also spend time practicing – both within the class and with people outside of it. Be prepared to talk to your family, friends, and complete strangers about complicated things that YOU will make them understand!

# Texts

Heath, C. & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to Stick.* NY: Random House.

**Course Policies**

* Attendance: Students are expected to attend ALL classes. If you need to miss a class, please be sure to email me ahead of time.
* Class participation: Students are expected to engage in all in-class activities and to provide constructive feedback to their classmates as needed.
* Written assignments: There will be 3 short written assignments (see schedule below for due dates). Assignment 1 is to write a short press release (~100 words), Assignment 2 is to write a Flame-Challenge style essay (~300 words), and Assignment 3 is to make an informative mini-poster. Details about the contents of each assignment will be provided.

* Oral assignments: You will be asked to make multiple, very short, oral presentations in class. These will be counted as part of your class participation points.

# Grading

Final grades will be either Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U) with an S grade requiring at least 70% of the possible points.

Attendance and Class Participation (including Oral presentations): 55 points

Written Assignments (15 points each) 45 points

**Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf>).

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

#### Weekly Schedule

### **Week 1 – What Makes Things Complicated?**

Nothing to read – introduction to class topics, assignments, and activities

### **Week 2 – What Makes Things Complicated?**

READ: Heath & Heath (especially, Introduction: “What Sticks”)

### **Week 3 – Making it Simple**

READ: Heath & Heath (especially, Chapter 1: “Simple”)

### **Week 4 – Press Summaries: Good, Bad, Ugly!**

DUE: Writing Assignment #1: Press Release

### **Week 5 – Press Summaries: How to have a good sound bite**

READ: Heath & Heath (especially, Chapter 2: “Unexpected”)

IN CLASS: Be prepared to work on your sound bites!

### **Week 6 – More on Sound bites**

IN CLASS: Be prepared to work on your sound bites!

### **Week 7 – Connecting with your Audience**

READ: Heath & Heath (especially, Chapters 4 & 5: “Credible & Emotional”)

IN CLASS: Be prepared to practice!

### **Week 8 – Talking to Different Audiences**

IN CLASS: Be prepared to practice!

### **Week 9 – COSI Field Trip**

See how some professionals make complicated things easier to understand!

### **Week 10 – Flame Challenge**

READ: Read through all the 2016 entries (and as many previous year entries as you like).

http://www.centerforcommunicatingscience.org/flame-challenge-2015/

### **Week 11 – Making Science Understandable**

READ: Find and read about a piece of science (broadly construed) that interests you

### **Week 12 – Making Science Understandable**

DUE: Flame-Challenge write up

### **Week 13 – Simple Language doesn’t Mean Simple Ideas**

In class: Work with the Upgoer Five program to practice using simple vocabulary

**Week 14 – Class Evaluation of Mini-Posters**

DUE: Mini-Posters must be turned in by MIDNIGHT of Sunday before this class.