

Study Guide for *Objective Communication*

by Dr. Leonard Peikoff

Lecture One

- Describe the ways that attacks on reason necessitate the undermining of communication.
- How does communicating new ideas play an important part in understanding them?
- Given that knowledge is conceptual, what responsibility does that imply for communication?
- Provide an original example of a statement that an audience could understand from different contexts.
- How does an audience's context control the content of one's communication?
- Describe some examples of how the "crow epistemology" affects communication?
- Why does the need to motivate have both epistemological and ethical components?
- What are the main factors that can help determine how to delimit any topic?
- Using an original example, what are some of the ways that the same points could follow different organizational structures?
- What would be missing cognitively from a presentation that did not use examples?
- Why would using too many examples detract from a good presentation?

Lecture Two

- Before listening to this lecture, students should read the written pieces ("Philosophy: Who Needs It?" and "Certainty") discussed here.
- What was Rand's approach in motivating her topic?
- How does Rand's use of motivation keep her audience engaged?
- When does it make sense to anticipate and address audience questions?
- Why did Rand use concretes first to get to abstractions in some parts of her speech and vice versa in others?
- What would guide one in choosing a bottom up or top-down approach on the question of concretization?
- Where are there options in the structure Rand uses, and where are there necessary choices?
- How did Rand use delimitation of her subject?

- What approaches can be used to achieve a self-contained presentation even when all knowledge is interrelated?
- What is the positive versus negative form of rationalism?
- Why is it often hard to detect rationalism in a presentation or piece of writing?

Lecture Three

- Students should read the two pieces on the draft (selections from Ayn Rand's "The Wreckage of the Consensus" and "The Draft") as well as the indicated exercises prior to listening to this lecture.
- Why does Ayn Rand begin with the political level in her argument against the draft?
- Explain the importance in Miss Rand's article of addressing both liberal and conservative perspectives. Does this not stretch the context too far?
- Why is it necessary to bring in the issue of a volunteer military?
- Why is it important to establish the impracticality of the draft and its lack of justification before discussing the motives of those who advocate it?
- Explain three instances of when the second essay on the draft fails to delimit the subject and opens wider questions.
- How do the metaphysical and epistemological senses of objectivity both apply to the issue of communication?
- Is it strictly necessary to avoid all misinterpretation for some communication to be completely objective?
- Using original examples, give examples of non-objective formulations in the following categories discussed in the lecture: arbitrary statements, poor formulations, poor placement.
- Students should work through the provided examples before Dr. Peikoff provides his analysis of each during the lecture.

Lecture Four

- What are three distinct values to extemporaneous spoken presentations compared to reading a prepared speech?
- What philosophic principle underlies the crucial need to monitor one's pace in oral delivery? Why does this not apply in the same way in writing?

- What fact of human biology applies in considering the special importance of pace in oral presentation?
- Why are the necessarily inexact formulations in extemporaneous presentation not a barrier to objectivity?
- How does the “circling around” that Dr. Peikoff discusses parallel the question of appropriate pacing?
- Using examples, describe ways of implementing the five strategies for slowing down one’s pace.
- When monitoring one’s audience for engagement, what are the four techniques for maintaining or recapturing their attention?
- What degree of specificity should one aim for in presentation notes?
- How can notes be an aid to timing of a presentation?

Lecture Five

- During this lecture, students should pause the recording after the student presentations and make observations, based on the course material, as to the qualities of the presentation. Students should then compare their observations to those of Dr. Peikoff.

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Lecture Seven

- Why is free-flowing argument a near certainty in life?
- What are the two proper goals of spontaneous argument?
- What moral issues, if any, are involved in the choice to argue with someone who holds a contrary view?
- What context is necessary to judge someone’s intellectual honesty?
- How does the hierarchical nature of philosophy help in arguing?
- What approach can one take to identify the level of philosophic disagreement one has with an opponent?

- What creates the mistaken desire to accept an opponent's premises, even temporarily?
- What error in philosophy is indicated by this polemical approach?
- How should one go about selecting an essential point to focus one's argument on?
- What questions should one ask if an opponent presents a barrage of contested facts instead of ideas and argument?

Lecture Eight

- During this lecture, students should pause the recording after the mock arguments and make observations, based on the course material, as to the qualities of the participants. Students should then compare their observations to those of Dr. Peikoff.

Lecture Nine

- Prior to this lecture, students should read and analyze the selected student writing according to the principles discussed in the course. During the lecture, students should compare their observations to those of Dr. Peikoff.

Lecture Ten

- Prior to this lecture, students should read and analyze the selected student writing according to the principles discussed in the course. During the lecture, students should compare their observations to those of Dr. Peikoff.