



Enter title here

## Description

Titles matter. I stumbled across an interesting web site with advice about titling your talks. The advice also applies to headings for essays, articles, books, blogs, podcasts, etc.

[Olivier Mitchell writes](#) that in order to create a title that gets people flocking to your session, it ought to do at least one of the following (1) offer benefits, (2) promise a story, (3) offer three of something, (4) provoke curiosity, and/or (5) evoke concern. A commenter on the site added (6) imply privileged information. I would add (7) state the opposite of what you intend to convey.

Negatives are sometimes more engaging, provocative, revealing and truthful than positives. I titled Thursday's final Media and Culture lecture for the year "We are all entertainers: How to alienate your audience."

## Negative logic

A title ought not misrepresent the content, but negatives are philosophically respectable. After all, logicians and mathematicians prove a theorem by negating it, then showing how that negative proposition produces an obvious contradiction.

There's also a practical benefit in pursuing the negative. If you know what alienates your audience then you might just discover what to avoid. Negation doesn't always equate to alienation, but in performance, drama and film, there is such a thing as "the alienation effect" which was the main point I was making in the title of the class ("How to alienate your audience").

## Alienation effect

Such techniques, attributed to Bertolt Brecht, disengage the audience from the action and remind them they are watching a play, as when the stage setting shows the lighting rigs, microphones, and offstage paraphernalia, or the actors start talking out of character to the audience. It's explained well in an [online Encyclopaedia Britannica entry](#).



To call a blog post “Enter title here” demonstrates something of that alienation effect. If you don’t know, these are the words that appear in the title field of the WordPress editor until you enter a title. (There’s a film company called “Working title.”)

There are some other ideas about engagement and disengagement in the audio that accompanies this blog. Also see post: [audience disengagement](#).

I manage to think of catchy titles for blog posts, but until this year it never occurred to me to title a lecture in a course other than by direct reference to its content. Encouraged by my colleague Jules Rawlinson, I gave the following a try. An appropriate title, even when invented after the fact, can permeate the content and enliven it.

#### OLD TITLE

1. Post truth politics
2. Play and creativity
3. The body and emotions
4. Voice and text
5. Metaphor and creativity
6. Digital society
7. Sound, space, society
8. Artificial intelligence
9. Technoromanticism
10. IT ethics
11. Cinema and entertainment

#### NEW TITLE

- The truth is out there: Introducing Media and Culture
- Breaking the rules: Play as creative journey
- Manufacturing moods: How to feel like a computer
- Dissenting voices: The war between the ear and the eye
- Mice and memory chips: Metaphor in digital design and everywhere
- The wisdom of crowds: Digital subcultures and the sharing economy
- Share your bubble: Sound, Space, Society
- How to think like a machine: AI and its prospects
- Techno-medievalists: Post-human cyborg futures
- The court of public opinion: Ethics in the age of social media
- We are all entertainers: How to alienate your audience

#### References

- Brecht, Bertolt. 1964. A short organum for the theatre. In John Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. 179-205. London: Methuen.

- Mitchel, Olivia. 2018. How to write a presentation title that gets people flocking to your session. *Effective Speaking*. Available online: <https://speakingaboutpresenting.com/content/presentation-title/> (accessed 27 November 2018).

<https://richardcoyne.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/disengagement.mp3>

**Category**

1. Film and media
2. Podcast

**Tags**

1. emotion
2. engagement
3. film

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**Author**

rcoyne99

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