

Assessment Plan
COMM 1023: Communication in a Diverse World
September 1, 2016

by Dr. Ron Warren, COMM Undergraduate Director

University General Education Outcomes Guiding Student Learning in Social Sciences Courses

Learning Outcomes (LO): Upon completion of nine (9) hours of social science courses, students will be able to:

- (LO1) Identify and/or explain a method of inquiry in one of the social sciences
- (LO2) Identify and/or explain human organization and behavior
- (LO3) Identify and/or explain challenges associated with the diversity encountered by individuals, organizations, and/or societies
- (LO4) Identify and/or explain how technology affects individuals, groups, and/or social institutions
- (LO5) Identify and/or explain the changes caused by the increasing interconnectedness of today's world

Assessment Process

The Department of Communication offered five on-campus sections of COMM 1023 in the 2016 calendar year to a total of 388 students. The course is taught by instructors, clinical professors, and tenure-track faculty in the department. The department is currently pilot testing potential assessment items for the course. The timetable for this process is as follows:

- Spring of 2016: pilot testing in one course section
 - items written and developed by clinical and tenure-track faculty, based on relevance to stated course and core objectives
 - students assess during first week of classes, then again at the end of the course
 - comparison of mean scores on pretest and posttest
- Fall 2016: second pilot test of potential assessment items in two sections
 - items revised (and new items written) by instructors and tenure-track faculty, based on relevance to stated course and core objectives
 - students assess during first week of classes, then again at the end of the course
 - comparison of mean scores on pretest and posttest; item analyses conducted
- Spring 2017: full assessment in all sections
 - analysis of within-section scores, as well as across sections
 - full item analysis of assessment questions
 - comparisons of learning outcomes by key demographic factors (e.g., class standing)

During the pilot tests, no inter-group comparisons will be conducted due to small sample sizes within student subgroups (e.g., race/ethnicity or class standing). Only students who completed both the pre- and posttests were included in the analysis.

Starting in Spring 2017, assessment reports will take the following forms:

- Each fall and spring semester, instructors of sections selected for assessment will present (to the Undergraduate Director) an assessment report, including the following analyses:
 - comparison of pretest and posttest scores within the section as a whole
 - comparisons of student scores based on class standing (and other demographic factors to be determined)
 - a list of questions identified as potentially poor assessment measures based on an item analysis of the pretest and posttest instruments
- The COMM Undergraduate Director will prepare an executive summary of the reports from all sections for the Department Chair, Vice-Chair, and Undergraduate Committee.

In addition, and regardless of the results of the ongoing assessments, the department's Undergraduate Committee will conduct a periodic (no less than every five years), comprehensive course review to evaluate the course's ability to achieve course- and core-specific objectives. The committee will conduct this review in two stages.

- In the first stage, instructors shall provide a copy of course materials (e.g., syllabi, assignments/tests, sample teaching plans or activities, and assigned readings) to the committee. The committee will meet with the instructors to review their materials and discuss the course's strengths and weaknesses.
- In the second stage, the committee will evaluate course materials, particularly as they address both course and core objectives. The committee will report these deliberations and their recommendations regarding the course – first for feedback from course instructors, then for review and potential action by the department's tenure-track faculty.

The first of these reviews took place in the Spring 2016 semester. The purpose of the initial review was to define the evaluative procedures and the process itself. The committee's first report (Appendix B), though brief, identified a critical concern about the role of diversity in course content. Based on that report, the tenure-track faculty directed two tenured professors to review course materials. After an initial meeting, those faculty members concluded that teaching a summer-semester section of the course might provide a more thorough examination of its content. That faculty member's report appears in Appendix C of this document.

Assessment Instrument

Items from the pretest and posttest assessments in COMM 1023 appear in Appendix A of this report. The items are presented according to the Fine Arts Learning Objectives each targets (items duplicate when they target multiple objectives). As these items were piloted in the Spring 2016 semester and are being implemented for the first time in the Fall 2016 semester, tests for their reliability and validity have not yet been conducted with an adequate sample of students. Those tests will be conducted after the completion of the Fall 2016 semester.

Assessment Outcomes

Review of ongoing, quantitative assessment data will result in one of three outcomes:

1. Improvement of student achievement: or those assessments that result in improvement, instructors may choose to take no action or examine ways to further improve positive outcomes.
2. No improvement: Such results will prompt instructor review of the course content, course objectives, classroom techniques, and assessment tools. For example, in those classes where no-improvement should result, items will be identified and learning objectives will be created to address the negative outcomes.
3. Decline in achievement: Such results will prompt instructor review of the course content, course objectives, classroom techniques, and assessment tools. Additionally, instructors in those courses where the assessment tools are distributed may select to interview students on the specific items of concern for additional feedback, to identify barriers, and to develop teaching strategies that may better serve at-risk students.

Reviews of the periodic comprehensive assessment of the course will result in one of three potential judgments:

1. Course effectively meets all course and core objectives: instructors may choose to take no action or examine ways to further improve positive outcomes.
2. Course meets some (but not all) its objectives: department's faculty will specify which course weaknesses are to be addressed, and course instructors will revise course content and/or delivery as needed to improve student achievement.
3. Course meets few (if any) of its objectives: department's faculty shall appoint members of the tenure-track faculty to implement a plan to revise course materials and instructional methods to better achieve course and core objectives. In cases like this, the course shall undergo another comprehensive review the following year.

Appendix A: Student Assessment Instrument (by SS Outcomes)

SS LO1: Identify and/or explain a method of inquiry in one of the social sciences

Which of the following approaches to the study of communication views communication as predictable and controllable?

- A. Social Scientific B. Interpretivist C. Critical

In Duck's Breakdown Process Model the second process, which entails confronting the partner and openly discussing a problem with the relationship, is referred to as the _____ process.

- A. intrapsychic C. social E. resurrection
B. dyadic D. grave dressing

The preparation for becoming a worker in the form of socialization that takes place in a child's early life through family interaction and exposure to the media is referred to as

- A. vocational anticipatory socialization.
B. high code adoption.
C. the spillover effect.
D. sedimentation.
E. reification.

SS LO2: Identify and/or explain human organization and behavior

The _____ level of communication refers to the actual information contained within a communicative interaction.

- A. sign C. content E. transactional
B. symbolic D. relational

Dinnertime interactions are guided primarily by _____ rules.

- A. denotative C. constitutive E. None of the Above
B. connotative D. regulative

Joaquin came to the United States from Mexico three months ago and he is still having trouble understanding Americans' tendency to rush all the time. He is also surprised when his teachers are irritated if he joins a class a while after class has started. Joaquin's confusion about American pace of life is based on which aspect of nonverbal behavior?

- A. chronemics C. kinesics E. None of the Above
B. proxemics D. artifacts

The physiological component of listening is

- A. organizing. C. hearing. E. remembering.
B. interpreting. D. responding.

_____ face focuses on an individual's desire to be seen as autonomous and independent.

- A. Positive
B. Negative

SS LO3: Identify and/or explain challenges associated with the diversity encountered by individuals, organizations, and/or societies

According to Peggy McIntosh, being able to do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to one's race is an indicator of

- A. privilege.
- B. oppression.

Joaquin came to the United States from Mexico three months ago and he is still having trouble understanding Americans' tendency to rush all the time. He is also surprised when his teachers are irritated if he joins a class a while after class has started. Joaquin's confusion about American pace of life is based on which aspect of nonverbal behavior?

- A. chronemics
- B. proxemics
- C. kinesics
- D. artifacts
- E. None of the Above

Cohesiveness, or the ability of group members to work in unison, is

- A. always desirable in a group.
- B. desirable if it does not lead to groupthink.
- C. desirable if it helps members create romantic relationships.
- D. never desirable in a group.
- E. desirable if it does not encourage friendships among the group members.

Gerry Philipsen (1975) explored the talk in Teamsterville, a pseudonym for a working-class communication in Chicago showing a "man's communication style." Teamsterville is representative of a

- A. dominant culture.
- B. mainstream culture.
- C. speech community.
- D. stylistic community.
- E. mainstream community.

In a country with _____, subordinates are more likely to have friendly relationships with their supervisors.

- A. high uncertainty avoidance
- B. low uncertainty avoidance
- C. high power distance
- D. low power distance
- E. a long-term orientation.

SS LO4: Identify/explain how technology affects individuals, groups, or social institutions

What is the means through which a message is conveyed?

- A. Medium
- B. Noise
- C. Sender
- D. Receiver
- E. Message

Which of the following is true about Media and Health?

- A. Some cancers, such as breast cancer, are overreported by the news media based on incidence rates.
- B. Direct-to-consumer advertising of medications has only negative impacts on health communication.

- C. Direct-to-consumer advertising of medications has only positive impacts on health communication.
- D. Direct-to-consumer advertising decreases the likelihood that patients will take a more active role in discussions with providers.
- E. None of the Above

SS LO5: Identify and/or explain the changes caused by the increasing interconnectedness of today's world

Joaquin came to the United States from Mexico three months ago and he is still having trouble understanding Americans' tendency to rush all the time. He is also surprised when his teachers are irritated if he joins a class a while after class has started. Joaquin's confusion about American pace of life is based on which aspect of nonverbal behavior?

- A. chronemics
- B. proxemics
- C. kinesics
- D. artifacts
- E. None of the Above

In a country with _____, subordinates are more likely to have friendly relationships with their supervisors.

- A. high uncertainty avoidance
- B. low uncertainty avoidance
- C. high power distance
- D. low power distance
- E. a long-term orientation.

Appendix B: Undergraduate Committee Course Review
COMM 1023: Communication in a Diverse World
April 11, 2016

The undergraduate committee (Frank Scheide, Lisa Corrigan, Lindsey Aloia) met on Monday, April 4th with the current COMM 1023 instructors (Kasey Walker, Lynn Meade) and the Undergraduate Director (Ron Warren). Prior to the meeting, instructors provided the committee with course materials including class syllabi and sample lesson plans. During the meeting, the undergraduate committee reviewed and discussed the course materials with the instructors. Specific attention was paid to the course description, learning objectives, and required text. The relevant information is included below.

Course Description

This course answers an important question:

How can I become a more competent communicator?

This introductory course to the communication discipline focuses on the skills and understandings associated with competent communication in a diverse society within interpersonal, family, group, organizational, health, and intercultural communication contexts.

Student Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to

- Explain, compare, and apply multiple models of and theoretical perspectives on communication.
- Describe the history of the communication discipline.
- Explain and apply communication concepts to a variety of diverse contexts, including: interpersonal, family, group, organizational, health, and intercultural communication contexts.
- Explain the relationship between privilege and diversity.
- Deconstruct their own potentially privileged positions.
- Critique key communication concepts.
- Implement key communication concepts within their daily interactions.

Required Text

Duck, S., & McMahan, D. T. (2015). *Communication in everyday life* (2nd ed., Custom Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN: 9781483366067

After careful review, the undergraduate committee, in consult with the course instructors, provides the following insights and recommendations for *COMM 1023: Communication in a Diverse World*.

- Offering *COMM 1023: Communication in a Diverse World* as a larger class raises questions concerning how well the title, course description, student learning objectives, and required text address what this class is intended to accomplish.
- In addition, the course assignments (e.g., small group assignments, papers) that addressed student learning objectives are not viable given the larger class size. Accordingly, course instructors are not able to assess a number of the student learning objectives.
- The required text does not adequately address the “diversity” component of the course. As such, the topic of diversity is primarily explored in supplemental readings, lecture, and in-class assignments.

Recommendation: Given the focus on diversity in the title *COMM 1023: Communication in a Diverse World*, the course objectives should be restructured and a required text should be selected to denote diversity as a central component of the class. If, however, the faculty prefers the survey design of the current required text for *COMM 1023: Communication in a Diverse World*, the class should be renamed and student learning objectives revamped to reflect the focus.

Appendix C: Follow Up Report & Faculty Review
COMM 1023 Communication in a Diverse World
submitted by Drs. Patricia Amason (Assoc. Prof.) and Myria Allen (Prof.)

August 22, 2016

Two tenure-track faculty members of the Department of Communication evaluated the contents and learning objectives for the course through the Spring 2016 semester. Course syllabi were reviewed of the first three semesters in which the course was offered (beginning Fall 2011) as well as the textbook used. This textbook was compared with the textbook used from Spring 2013 until present. Much of the course content was very similar. The textbook that was used the first three semesters had more of a focus on describing communication as a means of managing issues of difference.

One of the faculty members taught the course during the second 2016 summer session to further evaluate the current course content. Adjustments were made throughout the course to more closely match the learning objectives and course description identified when the course was originally developed. As of the summer of 2016, the course introduces students to how communication is used to manage challenges associated with societal and worldwide differences. The contents of the course promote communication competencies resulting in better understanding and adaptation to the diversities of human life.

A method of measuring outcomes of the learning objectives is being developed during the Fall 2016 semester.

Course Summary and Objective

Communication in a Diverse World is designed to teach you fundamental concepts pertaining to what affects how we communicate across myriad relationships and contexts. Ultimately, this course will raise your awareness of the complexities of competent communication critical to interaction in a diverse society within interpersonal, intercultural, organizational, and group communication contexts. Students will become more self-aware and better appreciate persons' individual differences and the important role persons' unique experiences play in competent communication and how we relate to others. Various experiences and perceptions shared by members of underrepresented groups will be explored as well as other factors associated with differences according to race and ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ability as they affect communication.

We will focus on developing a greater awareness of perception, interpersonal, teamwork and leadership skills. Exams are designed not only to test your general understandings of the concepts, but to require you to apply the concepts to real and hypothetical examples dealing with persons in which you may have similar attributes and talents, as well as those more diverse.