

Assessment Plan
COMM 1233: Media, Community, & Citizenship
September 1, 2016

submitted by Dr. Ron Warren, COMM Undergraduate Director

University General Education Outcomes Guiding Student Learning in Humanities Courses

Upon completion of three (3) hours of humanities courses, students will understand and articulate:

- (LO1) Basic structures, themes, and principles of the discipline being introduced
- (LO2) Important philosophical, religious, and/or ethical ideas inherent in the discipline being introduced and inscribed by writers, artists, and thinkers
- (LO3) The processes by which artistic and humanistic values and aesthetic approaches are formed and challenged over time
- (LO4) Connections among cultural achievements of various groups of people, such as those of different ethnicities, religious backgrounds, racial origins, and/or sexual identities

Assessment Process

The Department of Communication offered eleven on-campus sections of COMM 1233 in the 2016 calendar year to a total of 659 students. The course is taught by instructors, clinical professors, and tenure-track faculty. 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 three potential concerns. The first focused on the phrasing of course objectives, which did not completely align with course assignments. After some discussion between the committee and course instructors, the course objectives were revised to align them with the assignment objectives. The second concern focused on the publication date of the secondary text for the course. Upon further investigation by the Undergraduate Director, an updated text was located and will be adopted for the course. The third concern was that, because the course had multiple instructors, consistency in the assignments needed to be maintained across sections of the course. Beginning in the Fall 2016 semester, the number of instructors teaching the course was lowered to two in order to facilitate closer collaboration and course planning.

Assessment Instrument

Items from the pretest and posttest assessments in COMM 1233 appear in Appendix A of this report. The items are presented according to the Humanities 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.

It is anticipated that the next revision of the assessment instrument for Spring 2017 will address the imbalance in the number of items addressing each core objective. Those items will be adopted from current tests, resulting in a much larger set of possible assessment items. Instructors will select up to 20 items each semester for assessment purposes.

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: Assessment Instrument Items

HU LO1: Basic structures, themes, and principles of the discipline being introduced

Time Warner, Viacom, Comcast, and Walt Disney are all examples of which kind of company that brings together several other companies under a common ownership while running them as distinct entities?

- a. Conglomerates
- b. Monopolies
- c. Cooperatives
- d. Congregations

If you decide to remove photos that you posted on Facebook, you can safely assume that:

- a. no one will ever see the photos again.
- b. the photos could be on the internet forever.
- c. Facebook will no longer have access to the photos.
- d. only friends could still have access to the photos.

Judging a friend's attractiveness based on standards set by the media is an example of:

- a. media literacy
- b. visual literacy
- c. channeling
- d. indirect exposure

One advantage of becoming more media literate is that you are likely to:

- a. widen the variety of media messages you seek out
- b. direct your media choices to a smaller set of messages
- c. lose the desire to "veg out" or relax while consuming media
- d. only seek out the most sophisticated media content

The mass media continually reinforce certain behavioral patterns of exposure:

- a. in order to instill automatic habits.
- b. in order to make exposure more enjoyable for viewers.
- c. in order to reduce media duplication.
- d. in order to help audiences pick up on underlying media messages.

Frequently, our judgment of reality in media messages is:

- a. multidimensional
- b. uniform across age groups
- c. based on the attractiveness of characters
- d. all of the above

HU LO2: Important philosophical, religious, and/or ethical ideas inherent in the discipline being introduced and inscribed by writers, artists, and thinkers

The sanitization of violence in TV and movies:

- a. desensitizes viewers to the suffering of victims.
- b. reduces the likelihood of negative effects on viewers.
- c. allows children to watch violence while avoiding its negative effects.
- d. helps explain the increase in media portrayals of verbal aggression.

In the new media environment, what is the most practical standard we can use to judge the quality of news?

- a. credibility
- b. accuracy
- c. usefulness
- d. objectivity

HU LO3: The processes by which artistic and humanistic values and aesthetic approaches are formed and challenged over time

As digital technology has developed, different forms of media (print, electric, photographic, etc) have melded together into digitized form. This phenomenon is known as:

- a. Media convergence
- b. Media intersectionality
- c. Media amalgamation
- d. Media coalescence

Why does the FCC continually deregulate the broadcasting industry?

- a. Pressure from broadcasters
- b. Increasing concern for the public good
- c. A strong dedication to efficiency
- d. A commitment to decreasing the effects of globalization

The primary goal of most news organizations is to:

- a. attract audiences.
- b. inform audiences.
- c. be socially responsible.
- d. objectively cover the most important societal issues.

HU LO4: Connections among cultural achievements of various groups of people, such as those of different ethnicities, religious backgrounds, racial origins, and/or sexual identities

In the mass media industries, talent is viewed primarily as:

- a. the ability to attract large audiences.
- b. the willingness and ability to innovate and take creative risks.
- c. a combination of intelligence and creativity.
- d. highbrow artistry

Appendix B: Undergraduate Committee Course Review
COMM 1233: Media, Community, and Citizenship
April 20, 2016

Members of the undergraduate committee (Frank Scheide, Lindsey Aloia) met on Wednesday, April 20th with the current COMM 1233 instructors (Sophie Janicke, Brian O’Loughlin, Cathy Hollingsworth) 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

Navigating the media-saturated world has become more difficult, and in many ways understanding media has never been more important to participating in American society. This course provides students with an understanding of the importance of media in an increasingly networked social, cultural, and political world. This class surveys the numerous ways Americans imagine media outlets and competent media consumption. This course promotes “media literate” citizenship by studying the ways media construct social meaning, the range of uses of media, and the effects of exposure to mediated messages on individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and societies.

Student Learning Objectives

1. Awareness of the impact of media on the individual and society
2. Awareness of media content as a text that provides insight into culture
3. Development of critical thinking skills that allow independent judgments about media messages
4. Development of strategies with which to discuss, analyze, and evaluate media messages
5. Development of strategies with which to engage media content and create a media world that helps service prosocial and civic goals

Required Text

Potter, W. James. *Media Literacy*. Sage: Los Angeles, CA, 2013. (Library Reserve)
Dill, Karen. *How Fantasy Becomes Reality: Seeing Through Media Influence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

After careful review, the committee, in consult with the course instructors, provides the following insights and recommendations for *COMM 1233: Media, Community, and Citizenship*.

- Given the course description and course assignments, the course objectives should be refined to reflect the course content.
- In addition, the Dill text is out of date and does not adequately serve students.
- While instructors follow a similar template, there is inconsistency regarding course assignments across sections of the course. Because staffing frequently changes in *COMM 1233: Media, Community, and Citizenship*, course assignments should be congruent across instructors. It is recommended that faculty teaching this class communicate with one another regarding how course objectives will be met to maintain consistency among the classes.