

Course Assessment Summary Report, 2017-2018 COMM 1233: Media, Community, & Citizenship

COMM 1233 is included as an option in the humanities area of the university core. The department completed its assessment plan for COMM 1233 during the 2017-2018 academic year. This included six on-campus sections of the course offered during the fall 2017 and spring 2018 semesters. Four of these were taught by a Clinical Assistant Professor of Communication, and two were taught by an Instructor in the department. A total of 420 students enrolled in the course during this time period (70 students per section each semester). This is a summary of the section assessment reports, which are available upon request.

Goals for the Assessment

Based on the results of the 2016-2017 assessment, we set several procedural goals for this academic year:

- Review course objectives and consider possible revisions to reflect course content
- conduct a statistical analysis of all assessment items, then review assessment items for possible revisions
- Develop a larger pool of assessment questions for each objective.
- Analyze data on the same units of analysis to permit comparisons across sections/semesters. This should include overall scores, scores for item-sets in each course objective, and item analyses (both difficulty and discrimination index scores).
- Implement a report template for the reporting of results and conclusions of each assessment.

Assessment Procedures

In August, 2017, instructors revised the course objectives in fall semester, but only after the course had already begun. Hence, two objectives were only assessed in the spring 2018 semester. An item analysis of the fall 2017 assessment instrument indicated that some items required revision or replacement. Instructors tested new items in the spring assessments as potential additions to the question pool. These steps addressed the first three assessment goals above.

The last two assessment goals were achieved by developing a template for section assessment reports. Each section now reports class averages on the overall assessment and for items targeted at each course objective. In addition, the purchase of test scoring software now permits to calculate difficulty and discrimination scores for test items.

Because of these steps, the assessment instruments used each semester do not match. In some cases, new objectives were tested, in others the objective was tested with additional items or with revised items. Most of this report's conclusions, therefore, are based on the spring semester assessment results.

Assessment Results

The average scores (out of 10 points) showed substantial student achievement from pretest to posttest:

	Pretest (N)	Posttest (N)
Fall, Sec 001	4.37 (66)	9.23 (67)
Fall, Sec 002	3.95 (66)	9.67 (68)
Fall, Sec 003	4.38 (69)	9.89 (68)
Spring, Sec 001	5.12 (61)	8.17 (62)
Spring, Sec 002	5.10 (64)	7.86 (62)
Spring, Sec 003	5.24 (69)	9.85 (63)

Objective 1: Define media literacy & its importance on an individual & societal level (Fall = 1 item, Spring = 2 items)

	Pretest	Posttest
Fall, Sec 001	0.62	0.94
Fall, Sec 002	0.57	0.96
Fall, Sec 003	0.71	0.97
Spring, Sec 001	1.24	1.82
Spring, Sec 002	1.32	1.70
Spring, Sec 003	1.52	1.99

Objective 2: Develop a critical awareness of personal media usage and generate goals to help yourself and others (2 items)

	Pretest	Posttest
Fall, Sec 001	1.62	1.93
Fall, Sec 002	0.49	1.91
Fall, Sec 003	0.56	1.96
Spring, Sec 001	1.05	1.39
Spring, Sec 002	0.96	1.41
Spring, Sec 003	1.83	1.94

Objective 3: Explore the economic structures of media industries (2 items)

	Pretest	Posttest
Fall, Sec 001	0.26	1.12
Fall, Sec 002	0.24	1.98
Fall, Sec 003	0.22	1.99
Spring, Sec 001	0.79	0.99
Spring, Sec 002	0.75	1.34
Spring, Sec 003	1.06	1.99

Objective 4: Explore government's role in shaping how media develops and changes over time (2 items)

	Pretest	Posttest
Fall, Sec 001	*	*
Fall, Sec 002	*	*
Fall, Sec 003	*	*
Spring, Sec 001	0.98	1.60
Spring, Sec 002	1.05	1.65
Spring, Sec 003	1.10	1.96

*New objective for Spring 2018

Objective 5: Recognize content patterns across media messages and describe the underlying implications of these patterns (2 items)

	Pretest	Posttest
Fall, Sec 001	*	*
Fall, Sec 002	*	*
Fall, Sec 003	*	*
Spring, Sec 001	1.18	1.86
Spring, Sec 002	1.06	1.78
Spring, Sec 003	1.03	1.99

*New objective for Spring 2018

Summary of Instructors' Comments & Feedback

Course instructors believed that these results indicate excellent participation rates in the assessment (which is not a graded assignment in the course) and satisfactory improvements in student achievement in all sections of the course. The clinical professor teaching this course identified several test items that, based on student performance, merit further review. Items that tested minor details in the course textbook were replaced with others that more meaningfully tested students' knowledge of larger concepts and themes in the class. That professor also remarked that the items in the spring instrument showed two with high pretest scores, suggesting that they assess students' existing knowledge rather than course-based learning outcomes. At least two items had low posttest scores, suggesting that some course content might require more emphasis in the class.

Conclusions

While the overall assessment scores indicate some improvement in student achievement, it is too early to tell if the revisions of course objectives have bared any fruit. Hence, the instructional staff should continue to review course objectives to make sure all intended learning outcomes of the course are adequately addressed. Further, they should ensure that objectives are phrased in ways that can be operationalized given the chosen format of the assessment. In addition, the instructional staff should address the following goals for the 2018-2019 academic year:

- Review potential assessment items from course exams, identifying a pool of at least 10 items targeted at each course objective.
- Course objectives will be paired with learning outcomes in the humanities core.
- The instructional staff will take steps to address any potential reliability and validity issues with the assessment instruments.
- The section report template will be revised to present results for both course and core learning outcomes.

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Appendix: Assessment Instrument

Objective 1: Define media literacy and its importance (on an individual and societal level)

1. One of the major advantages of improving our media literacy is that:
 - a. we develop more control over our media experiences.*
 - b. we substantially reduce our overall media exposure.
 - c. we learn to put our minds on automatic-pilot to reduce message overload.
 - d. we come to focus our consumption on only the most sophisticated forms of media.
2. The production of media messages is growing at an accelerating rate because:
 - a. there are more people producing and sharing information than ever before.
 - b. technology provides easy-to-use platforms to create and share messages.
 - c. there are more scientists and musicians than ever before.
 - d. all of these answers.*

Objective 2: Develop a critical awareness of personal media usage and generate goals to help yourself and others

3. By observing role models such as famous athletes and musicians, we gather information about what it takes to be happy and successful. This is an example of:
 - a. an attitudinal-type effect.
 - b. a cognitive-type effect.*
 - c. an aspirational-type effect.
 - d. a brainwash-type effect.
4. Most people _____ media exposure each year.
 - a. increase their*
 - b. decrease their
 - c. maintain the same amount of
 - d. monitor and reevaluate their

Objective 3: Explore the economic structures of media industries

5. The strongest influence on the construction of news is its:
 - a. social relevance.
 - b. author bias.
 - c. commercial nature.*
 - d. political affiliation.
6. In 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.

Objective 4: Explore government's role in shaping how media develops and changes over time

7. In 1996, Congress passed the Telecommunications Act which:
 - a. significantly reduced the remaining limitations to media consolidation.*
 - b. imposed new, broad-sweeping limitations to prevent future mergers.
 - c. legalized the practice of payola for independent media companies.
 - d. greatly increased taxes on large media conglomerates.

8. _____ are required five-second segments aired between children's programming and advertisements in order to help children better delineate between the programming and the ads.
 - a. Bumpers*
 - b. Safeties
 - c. PSAs
 - d. Trigger warnings

Objective 5: Recognize content patterns across media messages and describe the underlying implications of these patterns

9. What likely accounts for the dominance of young, white male characters on TV?
 - a. The demographics of television writers*
 - b. The characteristics of audience members
 - c. The popularity of these types of characters
 - d. The availability of young, white actors

10. Which of the following statements regarding television characters is true?
 - a. Most television characters are not shown as having particularly healthy habits.*
 - b. Characters on television are often portrayed as suffering from everyday health maladies, such as asthma or a cold.
 - c. The number of television characters shown with physical impairments is reflective of the number of people with physical impairments in the real world.
 - d. Characters in television entertainment stories often die of natural causes.