

Communication, Collaboration, and Community: Capstone



COMM 498/495-Spring 2011

Instructors:

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Course website: my.unl.edu [Blackboard]

Required Readings

Course packet available for purchase from the Communication Studies office (433 Oldfather Hall)

Course Objectives and Achievement-Centered Education (ACE)

The role and mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies are to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, and societies. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages. The department's research, teaching, and service devote particular attention to understanding the ways in which **communication** sustains and erodes **collaboration** within and among local, national, and global **communities**. Through course activities and the semester projects, you will integrate the diverse theories, concepts, and processes learned throughout the communication studies major to reflect upon and improve your scholarly, personal, and professional development.

This course satisfies ACE Outcome #10: "Generate a creative or scholarly product that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation, and reflection." Course activities are designed to facilitate the development and completion of an individual semester project that integrates theories, concepts, and skills introduced in previous courses (see **Capstone Project**). Further, course readings, reflection activities and discussions will allow you to explore and synthesize your understanding of the department commitment to communication, collaboration, and community. As such, the objectives of this course are to provide you with:

- (a) the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills you have acquired in your courses to an individual project,
- (b) an increased appreciation of the role of communication in our professional and personal lives,
- (c) an enhanced ability to understand and critically evaluate historical, current and future social issues through a communicative perspective, and
- (d) the knowledge of professional opportunities and practical applications of the Communication Studies discipline.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

Prerequisites & Expectations

As a prerequisite for this course, you are expected to have completed COMM 200 and COMM 201 and be in “senior standing” if you are a Communication Studies major. If you are a Communication Studies minor, you should have completed either one of these courses and be in “senior standing.” If you have not completed both COMM 200 and COMM 201, please talk to me prior to continuing in the course. As a student in a 400-level course, you are expected to: (a) attend class and be actively engaged, (b) complete assigned readings, (c) complete all work by the assigned due date, (d) be able to find, read, and analyze scholarly sources, (e) construct a literature review and be familiar with various approaches to research, and (f) critically reflect on course concepts.

Attendance Policy

The design of this course requires your consistent and active involvement. A notable portion of class time will focus on in-class activities and discussion of assigned readings (see **Participation and Discussion**). Thus, you are expected to attend each class (excluding any non-required “workshop” days: see **Tentative Schedule**) and have assigned readings, preparations for activities, and any experiential exercises completed. Obviously, if you are absent, you cannot participate and this will be reflected in your final grade. Further, I reserve the right to reduce your final grade due to course absences. If you will be absent for university-related events or religious observance, please let me know as soon as possible.

Classroom Etiquette

Although there are undoubtedly times when circumstances cause us to be late to class, please remember that tardiness is disruptive. Make it a point to be here on-time. Also, please refrain from reading newspapers, studying for other classes, text-messaging, etc. during the class period. There will be circumstances when you need to have a cell phone on (e.g., family emergencies). For the most part, this will not be the case. Therefore, please remember to turn off cell phones before entering class.

Course Website and E-mail

If you are enrolled in the course, you should have access to the course website at **my.unl.edu**. Copies of the syllabus, assignments, reflection assignments, etc. will be available through this site. Additionally, any important announcements will be posted on the site. On occasion, I may ask you to print a document from the course website for use in an in-class activity.

Academic Integrity

All course work should be original and unique for this class (i.e., do not use work from other courses even if it is your own). Plagiarism results in, at minimum, failure on the assignment, but can result in failure of the course and reporting to academic authorities at the university. If you have questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism, please review UNL’s Student Code of Conduct and/or discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism does not excuse you from the consequences.

Assignments

Your course evaluation will be based on three components: the *Capstone Project*, in-class *Discussion*, and *Reflections*. Detailed information concerning each of these will be provided early in the semester.

Capstone Project. You have various options for your semester project in terms of the nature of your inquiry. Specifically, you may choose to complete an empirical, data-based study (i.e., you collect and analyze your own data), a rhetorical criticism, or an ethnographic, service-learning project. Each option requires that you demonstrate theoretical/conceptual knowledge, written and oral presentation proficiency, and analytical skills. In addition to a final written product, you will discuss your project in a “poster session” in which faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students serve as audience members to assess oral competency. The written portion will count as 85% of your evaluation and the visual presentation will count as 15% of your evaluation. You will receive detailed information on requirements for the individual projects as we progress through the semester. Regardless of the nature

of your project, all work will be evaluated based on expectations for a senior, 400-level, capstone course. Remember that the appearance of your assignments signals the time and care in which they were prepared. All the material you turn in is expected to reflect university-level writing quality. Spelling, organizational, and grammatical errors will greatly reduce your final grade.

In the semester schedule, we have built in three types of activities to facilitate completion of the capstone project:

- *Capstone Project Workshops.* Workshops will cover various topics related to your semester project. Some of the workshops will be significant for all students whereas others will be specific to one of the project options (see **Semester Schedule**).
- *Individual Meetings.* We have designated various times throughout the semester for individual meetings. Meetings do not need to take place during class time. However, they should take place within 2 days before or after the designated class periods unless an agreement is reached between you and one of the instructors.
- *In-Class Updates.* There are two sets of in-class updates included in the semester schedule. During these class periods, you will discuss your topic and/or progress of your project with fellow classmates. Although this is an informal discussion, you are expected to prepare a brief summary. More information will be provided prior to each session.

These activities are important in keeping you on track with your semester project. Therefore, your final grade will be reduced by 2% for each of these activities you miss (e.g., not attending a workshop, not setting up an individual meeting).

Discussion. Rather than a traditional lecture/note-taking format, we will discuss the readings in a seminar-style format (i.e., group-based discussion). Therefore, you are expected to come to class having **thoroughly** read the assigned readings in a manner that allows you to be critically engaged in discussion. You should not only participate, but you should be **proactive in generating discussion**. In reading the material, you should identify what you believe are the important concepts and ideas, develop thought-provoking discussion questions, identify any clarification questions, and/or develop propositions for which fellow students can respond. We expect that you will develop a list of questions, propositions, etc. for each reading prior to class. Participation in discussion will be evaluated as part of your final evaluation

Reflections. As a capstone course, you are expected to exit the class with an enhanced understanding of the Communication Studies discipline and the ways in which your coursework reflects the department commitment to *Communication, Collaboration and Community*. To achieve this objective, you will complete guided reflections throughout the semester. For each reflection, you will be asked to provide your perspective, opinion, thoughts, etc. on a series of questions in a 2-4 page written response (typed, double-spaced). Although each reflection will ask you to provide your personal opinion and perspective on the readings and/or discussion, they are still expected to reflect university-level writing quality. Reflections are due the next in-class meeting you are required to attend.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The UNL office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) “provides special assistance to students with disabilities through individualized help and counseling.” Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Evaluation

Students are encouraged to discuss their progress with us anytime throughout the semester. Please visit me during our office hours or make an appointment for discussing grades rather than before or after class. Communication Studies majors must earn a grade of 'C' or better to receive credit for the course.

Assignment	Points Possible
a) Participation	50
b) Capstone Project	400
c) Reflections	100
♦Reading/Discussion Reflections: 8 @ 10 pts each	
♦Final Reflection: 20 pts	
Total Points	550

A	93% & above	B	83%-86.9%	C	73%-76.9%	D	63%-66.9%
A-	90%-92.9%	B-	80%-82.9%	C-	70%-72.9%	D-	60%-62.9%
B+	87%-89.9%	C+	77%-79.9%	D+	67%-69.9%	F	59.9% & below

TENTATIVE SEMESTER SCHEDULE
Capstone Workshops: *E* = Everyone, *P* = Project-Specific

Week 1	1/10	Introduction to the Course
	1/12	What is Communication Studies? Initial Reflection and Definition Assign Reflection #1
	1/14	Overview of Capstone Project Option #1: Rhetorical Criticism
Week 2	1/17	NO CLASS-MLK Holiday
	1/19	Overview of Capstone Project Option #2: Ethnography/Service-Learning
	1/21	Overview of Capstone Project Option #3: Empirical Studies
Week 3	1/24	Capstone Workshop (E): Brainstorming
	1/26	Discussion Group #1: Craig, Donsbach Assign Reflection #2
	1/28	Discussion Group #2: Craig, Donsbach Assign Reflection #2
Week 4	1/31	Individual Meetings #1
	2/2	Individual Meetings #1
	2/4	Capstone Workshop (E): Ethics
Week 5	2/7	Discussion Group #1: Shepherd (X2) Assign Reflection #3
	2/9	Discussion Group #2: Shepherd (X2) Assign Reflection #3
	2/11	Capstone Workshop on Method (P): Ethnography
Week 6	2/14	Capstone Workshop on Method (P): Criticism
	2/16	Capstone Workshop on Method (P): Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis—Empirical Study
	2/18	In-Class Updates Group #1
Week 7	2/21	In-Class Updates Group #2
	2/23	Independent Work Day
	2/25	Discussion Group #1: Depew & Peters Assign Reflection #4

Week 8	2/28	Discussion Group #2: Depew & Peters Assign Reflection #4
	3/2	Career Workshop: Graduate School and Scholarly Careers
	3/4	Discussion Group #1: Pearce & Littlejohn Assign Reflection #5
Week 9	3/7	Discussion Group #2: Pearce & Littlejohn Assign Reflection #5
	3/9	Career Workshop: "Selling" a Communication Studies Degree
	3/11	Individual Meetings #2
Week 10	3/14	Individual Meetings #2
	3/16	Discussion Group #1: McGee Assign Reflection #6
	3/18	Discussion Group #1: McGee Assign Reflection #6
Week 11	3/21-3/25	NO CLASS-SPRING BREAK
Week 12	3/28	<i>Capstone Workshop on Organizing the Report (P): Qualitative and Quantitative Reports</i>
	3/30	<i>Capstone Workshop on Organizing the Report (P): Rhetorical Criticism</i>
	4/1	<i>Capstone Workshop on Organizing the Report (P): Ethnography and Service-Learning</i>
Week 13	4/4	Discussion Group #1: Burke Assign Reflection #7
	4/6	In-Class Updates Group #1
	4/8	In-Class Updates Group #2
Week 14	4/11	Discussion Group #2: Burke Assign Reflection #7
	4/13	Capstone Workshop (E): Visual Presentations
	4/15	Discussion Group #1: Japp Assign Reflection #8
Week 15	4/18	Discussion Group #2: Japp Assign Reflection #8
	4/20	Individual Meetings #3

	4/22	Individual Meetings #3
Week 16	4/25	Poster Session Practice Session
	4/27	Poster Session
	4/29	Course Review/Capstone Projects Due Final Reflection Due (Posted On-Line)