**Communication Studies 2009 Assessment Plan**

**Step 1: Department/Program Mission (Due May 15, 2009)**

Communication is the process that makes us human. It is through our ability to use symbolic expression that we develop our identities, gain personal effectiveness, and establish, maintain, and change the societies in which we live. Communication is then a study which is central to the mission of the liberal arts. Students investigate how humans use signs and symbols to communicate in a variety of settings: interpersonal, public, organizational, and mass communications contexts. In all of this study, students come to understand the mutually influencing and interdependent nature of all communication. Majors are expected to participate in all assessment objectives as outlined by the department.

**Step 2: List goals/outcomes (Due May 15, 2009)**

1) Students will master a clear understanding of the fundamental

concepts and processes of human communication.

2) Students will gain a facility with public speaking.

3) Students will graduate with an ability to understand,

evaluate, and apply contemporary communication theory.

**Step 3: Program Components**

In response to the committee’s feedback with regard to program components, we have outlined the matrix below showing how specific courses meet our outcomes. We have chosen to focus on just one outcome (stated in the matrix) at this time and we are focusing on the learning outcomes for the generalized track which most of our majors chose.

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| **Outcome 1** | **Course Sequence** | **Course Examples** |
| *Students will graduate with an ability to understand, evaluate, and apply contemporary communication theory.* | *Required Courses* | **Small Group and Organizational Communication**  ·         COMM 203 – Learn contemporary organizational communication theories such as classical management theory, cultural theory, system theory, and critical theory. Evaluate and apply the above theories in the organizational case analyses project. Apply the small group communication concepts by allowing students to work as a team to come up with a community/campus project to solve real problems on campus or in our community.    **Interpersonal Communication**    ·         COMM 202 – Students learn a model of relational communication and apply the elements of the model to a case study of a relationship conversation.  ·         COMM 207- Students learn three theories of gender differences and have a structured classroom debate critically assessing and analyzing each theory. Students then apply the theories to specific communication outcomes during classroom group activities.    **Mass Communication:**  ·         COMM 205 – Students will demonstrate knowledge of the role and impact of media and media producers. Through in-class activities and participation, students will develop creative and critical thinking skills relevant to various entertainment media elements and their effect on society through history.  Students will write and edit content for Wikipedia demonstrating creativity, research, presentation, and thoughtful analysis of media information.  ·         COMM 289 – Each student will leave this class with an understanding of major entertainment media theories as well as with the beginning of a media entertainment portfolio.  There will be an emphasis on organized, clear, and concise writing as well as participation and discussion that demonstrate critical analysis of entertainment media topics using current theory and thinking on entertainment effects research.        **Human Communication and Communication Theory**   * COMM 101: Students watch two episodes of the *IFC Media Project* and discuss the application of media theories such as agenda-setting, uses and gratifications, and cultivation to the material and stories presented. * COMM 322: Students learn the differences among major traditions of communication theory (the sociopsychological tradition, sociocultural tradition, phenomenological tradition, etc.) and use those traditions to analyze a real-world case study.  This demonstrates their ability to understand that different theories will yield different analyses of the same problem; Each week students complete a short “so what” paper in which they discuss the scientific, social, and personal utility of the specific theories we discussed that week.  This teaches them to both understand and evaluate theories; At the end of the semester students must pick the five theories they consider to be the “best” theories in the field and provide arguments supporting their choices.  This requires a full understanding of the theories, an ability to compare different theories, and an ability to evaluate theories against one another. * COMM 351: Students must complete two “real world” papers in which they explain a persuasion attempt they witnessed and analyze why it worked or did not work using various persuasion theories; Students must design an actual persuasive campaign that utilizes persuasive tactics backed by research and theory in the persuasion field.  The links to these theories must be clearly articulated, thus demonstrating both understanding and application. * COMM 314: Students study research and theories related to typically understudied aspects of interpersonal communication then apply that knowledge to a case study by explaining various “real world” communication behaviors using these theoretical terms; Twice during the semester each student must act as a “discussion leader” for the rest of the class.  In this role they must demonstrate an understanding of the theories by summarizing one or two research articles and must also offer a subjective evaluation of the research; Students learn the principles of Interpersonal Deception Theory and then must discuss its utility and validity as a theory explaining the process of deception;. |

**Step 4: Select methods/data sources and instruments (Due May 15, 2009)**

Learning Goal 1

*Students will master a clear understanding of the fundamental*

*concepts and processes of human communication*

This learning goal is assessed through the following question embedded in one of the COMM 101 (Introduction to Human Communication) exams:

One of the key points in class thus far has been the complexity and the multifaceted nature of the communication process. Early in the semester I asked you to define communication. For this question you must revisit that idea and, given what we have discussed in class so far, define communication. In your answer you should address the different processes and components involved with the communication process and how these components fit together as a cohesive whole. ***(30 points)***

Learning Goal 2

*Students will gain a facility with public speaking*

Two instructors (Dr. Erlandson and Dr. Young) examined videotapes of COMM 241 students doing their final speech. Each graded each speech on a series of 12 questions or criteria each on sliding scale from 1-5 where 1 indicated “poor” and 5 “excellent.” Thus a student could receive a maximum of 120 points for a speech.

The questions/criteria upon which each student was assessment were as follows:

1. Did the speaker limit the topic appropriately?

2. Did the speaker have a clearly defined specific purpose?

3. Did the speaker use an introduction effectively to gain the attention of the audience?

4. Did the speaker use transitions between main points effectively?

5. Did the speaker have clearly recognizable subunits to the speech?

6. Did the speaker use a variety of effective proofs to justify the subunits?

7. Did the speaker appear knowledgeable about the topic?

8. Did the speaker use vocal and other nonverbal delivery techniques to emphasize important points?

9. Did the speaker conclude the speech effectively?

10. Did the speaker attempt successfully to relate the information and/or persuasive content of the speech to the needs of the audience?

11. Did the speaker, in a persuasive speech, make appropriate choices concerning the persuasive approach to the topic?

12. Did the speaker establish, through eye contact and communicative delivery, a good rapport with the audience?

Learning Goal 3

*Students will graduate with an ability to understand, evaluate, and apply contemporary communication theory.*

This learning goal is assessed in three courses.

**First** , the following question is embedded in the COMM 351 (Persuasion) final exam:

We have discussed many theories and concepts this semester that can help you improve your ability to persuade others. For this question I want you to pick the three theories from this course that you believe have the most practical value for you as a would-be persuader. In other words which three theories we have discussed can be most useful to you as you engage in persuasive attempts in the future. In your answer be sure to explain the basic concepts of each theory and your rationale for each choice. This question is worth **25 points.**

**Second** , the following question is embedded in the COMM 322 (Communication Theory) final exam:

Many of the individual theories and approaches we have examined have fallen within the sociopsychological tradition. Considering what you know about the general characteristics of this tradition and the specific theories we have discussed (for example, the Theory of Reasoned Action, trait approaches, Social Judgment Theory, The Elaboration Likelihood Model, etc.) analyze the utility of the tradition as a whole. Specifically, begin by discussing the areas of communication that the tradition is capable of explaining. What are some examples of communication questions sociopsychological research would seek to answer? Finally, discuss in general the scientific and practical usefulness of this approach. Some questions to consider might be: Do these theories accurately represent human behavior, communication, and reasoning? Do they help advance scientific inquiry in a useful way? Does knowing them help you understand the actions of those around you?

**Third** , a question is embedded in COMM 365 (Media Theory) final paper:

Over the semester we have studied the ways in which theories can/should be evaluated. We will also looked at a broad range of theories including those which focus on the media as very powerful/somewhat powerful given context/channel, those which focus on the content of the media (how to measure it/what effects it has) and those which focus on the ways in which the audience use the media (this includes reception based theories as well as uses and gratifications).

Pick four works of a theorist/body of theory from **at least two** of these areas and evaluate the work/body of work using each of the criteria we will study in the second section of the course. Each theory must be analyzed in two ways:

a) by outlining the theory both diagrammatically and/or in words in order to apply the evaluation criteria we will study—and then by applying those criteria to the “raw,” “basic” theory.

by using an example of media—explain the ways in which it would be expected to function/what impact it would be expected to have given the theory AND demonstrate whether or not it does fulfill theoretical expectations/criteria/predictions.

In response to the committee’s comments regarding the need for more indirect methods of assessment we are proposing the following:

·         We plan to administer an online survey inquiring about course experiences to alumni. While we have not had time to develop the exact survey instrument, we are proposing to ask questions such as

o   “What did you learn in your communication courses that you have applied directly to a work or post undergraduate experience?”

o   “Are there any ways that your communication courses at Albion enhanced your communication skills at work?”

o   “Do you feel like your communication courses adequately prepared you for your current job/graduate school?”

\*any suggestions about what questions to use and wording of the questions is appreciated.

**Step 5: Analyze and interpret the data (Due Early Fall 2009)**

**SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE COLLECTED**

            Learning Goal 1

*Students will master a clear understanding of the fundamental*

*concepts and processes of human communication*

This learning goal is assessed through the following question embedded in one of the COMM 101 (Introduction to Human Communication) exams:

One of the key points in class thus far has been the complexity and the multifaceted nature of the communication process.  Early in the semester I asked you to define communication.  For this question you must revisit that idea and, given what we have discussed in class so far, define communication.  In your answer you should address the different processes and components involved with the communication process and how these components fit together as a cohesive whole.   ***(30 points)***

Data for this question were collected from COMM 101 students during Spring semester 2009.  Students who were seen as demonstrating a thorough understanding of the concepts received scores of 25 – 30 (3.0 – 4.0). Students who were seen as demonstrating an adequate understanding of the concepts received scores of 21 – 24 (1.7 – 2.7).  Finally, students who were seen as demonstrating an inadequate understanding of the concepts received scores 20 and below (0 – 1.3).  Based on these criteria, 47 students demonstrated a thorough understanding of the basic concepts and processes, 1 student demonstrated an adequate understanding of the basic concepts and processes, and 0 students demonstrated an inadequate understanding of the basic concepts and processes.

These data clearly indicate that no student completes the introductory, COMM 101 course without at the least an adequate understanding of the basic concepts and processes that comprise human communication and most students complete the course with a thorough understanding.

 Learning Goal 2

*Students will gain a facility with public speaking*

Two instructors (Dr. Erlandson and Ellen Brubaker) examined videotapes of COMM 241

students doing  their final speech. Each graded each speech on a series of 12

questions or criteria each on sliding scale from 1-5 where 1 indicated “poor” and 5

“excellent”. Thus a student could receive a maximum of 120 points for a speech.

The questions/criteria upon which each student was assessment were as follows:

  1. Did the speaker limit the topic appropriately?

  2. Did the speaker have a clearly defined specific purpose?

  3. Did the speaker use an introduction effectively to gain the attention of the audience?

  4. Did the speaker use transitions between main points effectively?

  5. Did the speaker have clearly recognizable subunits to the speech?

  6. Did the speaker use a variety of effective proofs to justify the subunits?

  7. Did the speaker appear knowledgeable about the topic?

  8. Did the speaker use vocal and other nonverbal delivery techniques to emphasize

      important points?

  9. Did the speaker conclude the speech effectively?

10. Did the speaker attempt successfully to relate the information and/or persuasive

       content of the speech to the needs of the audience?

11. Did the speaker, in a persuasive speech, make appropriate choices concerning the

       persuasive approach to the topic?

12. Did the speaker establish, through eye contact and communicative delivery, a good

       rapport with the audience?

The following mathematical system was used to assess the results:

A thorough facility at public speaking required that a student receive at least 4 points

from each evaluator across all 12 criteria, that is 96 points.

An adequate facility at public speaking required that a student receive at least at one 3

from an evaluator and no more than one 2 from an evaluator on each criteria, this is at

least 60 points.

A student with an inadequate facility at public speaking would receive less than 60

points.

Across the 12 students selected at random from sections taught by two different

instructors we found that approximately 100% gained at least an adequate facility with

 the skill of public speaking, 75% had recognizably gained a thorough facility with

the skill. There were no students who gained zero facility with public speaking.

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| Public Speaknig Student | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| total eval 1 | 58 | 38 | 60 | 47 | 50 | 54 | 56 | 38 | 45 | 58 | 48 | 52 |
| total eval 2 | 52 | 42 | 58 | 44 | 51 | 58 | 58 | 36 | 84 | 55 | 46 | 54 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| total | 111 | 82 | 121 | 95 | 106 | 118 | 121 | 82 | 138 | 123 | 105 | 118 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | # | % |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Thorough Facility | 9 | 75% |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Adequate Facility | 3 | 25% |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| No Facility | 0 | 0% |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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Learning Goal 3

*Students will graduate with an ability to understand, evaluate, and apply contemporary communication theory.*

This learning goal is currently assessed in three courses (COMM 351, COMM 322, and COMM 365).  However, since COMM 351 was not offered during the 2008-2009 academic year. Additionally, we cannot evaluate COMM 351 either as Dr. Young who taught this class has resigned and did not leave this information behind. Therefore, we can only present data from 1 of the three courses.

**First**, the following question is embedded in the COMM 322 (Communication Theory) final exam:

In class we discussed several approaches that deal with communication and relationships.  Each of these approaches has strengths and each has weaknesses.  For this question I want you to examine the strengths and weaknesses of three of these approaches: 1) stage theories, 2) contemporary relational communication, 3) relational dialectics.  You can take your answer in several directions but I suggest focusing on the validity of the approaches (do they match real life), the scientific utility (have they driven research), and the practical utility (are they useful for people in the “real world”).  Your answer should be approximately 3-4 pages and must be submitted to the Course Web by Thursday, April 16 at 5:00 p.m.  This question is worth 35 points.

Data for this question were collected from COMM 322 students during Spring semester 2009.  The question was worth 35 points.  Students who were seen as demonstrating a thorough ability to understand and evaluate the theories received scores of 29 - 35 (3.0 – 4.0). Students who were seen as demonstrating an adequate ability to understand and evaluate the theories received scores of 25 – 28 (1.7 – 2.7).  Finally, students who were seen as demonstrating an inadequate ability to understand and evaluate the theories received scores 24 and below (0 – 1.3).

Based on these criteria, 20 students demonstrated a thorough ability to understand and apply the theories, 8 students demonstrated an adequate ability to understand and apply the theories, and 2 students demonstrated an inadequate ability to understand and apply the theories.  Both students who scored in the inadequate range turned in incomplete responses.

were seen as demonstrating an adequate ability to understand and apply the theories received scores of 18 – 22 (1.7 – 2.7).  Finally, students who were seen as demonstrating an inadequate ability to understand and apply the theories received scores 17 and below (0 – 1.3).

Based on these criteria, 12 students demonstrated a thorough ability to understand and apply the theories, 4 students demonstrated an adequate ability to understand and apply the theories, and 0 students demonstrated an inadequate ability to understand and apply the theories.

**Step 6: How will the data collected be used for decision-making, strategic planning, etc. (Due Early Fall 2009)**

We will discuss results at a department meeting and any small changes will be decided by individual instructors. The assessment data does not suggest that curricular changes are necessary at the current time as all our students received adequate score or above on all learning goals with the exception of two students in learning goal three. We see no glaring shortcomings that would nessisicate changes at the current time. In the future our main plans involve integrating assessment for the learning outcomes into more classes providing us with a larger sample across more classes. Our department still finds attaining assessment difficult due to the staffing issues we are faced with. We have only two tenure-track faculty members. Functioning with visiting professors and adjuncts make it difficult to predict what courses are going to be offered and the precise content of these courses as everyone teaches them slightly differently. It is also difficult for one or two persons to complete all the assessment work being asked of us.

·         We would love to track retention, graduation, and placement rates (including internships) but currently lack the appropriate resources to do this.

·         We would eventually like to hold focus groups and provide an exit survey with our seniors, but again, our department lacks the resources to do this.

On behalf of Communication Studies, I hope this follow up has addressed your concerns with program component clarifications and with indirect methods of assessing the program. Please let me know if there is anything else you need from me, I will do my best to accommodate you. Thanks again to all of you for your hard work and specifically to Vicki who spent extra time helping us understand the feedback.