Overview of Department Learning Objectives

Consistent with the Report of the Hope College Conference on Designing the Undergraduate Curriculum in Communication (2000), the Department of Communication Studies (COMM) at Monmouth College strives to “assist people in becoming effective and ethically responsible communicators who can understand theoretical choices and who can design, express, interpret, and evaluate functional messages.” To that end, our departmental learning objectives emphasize essential elements of meaningful and successful communication encounters including audience analysis, message content, delivery options, and context.

The department’s learning outcome goals are organized into four major objectives:

1. COMM Majors are able to construct effective messages in multiple media for a variety of purposes.
2. COMM Majors are able to demonstrate general knowledge of the field of Communication and specific knowledge in their area of concentration.
3. COMM Majors can apply their skills and knowledge of the field to reach goals and solve problems in practical settings and professional contexts.
4. COMM Majors are able to perform as skilled communicators. Critical thinking, reasoning, and civic engagement are crucial to the successful completion of programmatic departmental learning objectives.

The Major in Relation to the Mission and Purposes of the College

The Communication Studies major is an integrated study in Communication and Media. The goal of the major is to develop competencies in the analysis, understanding, creation and delivery of communicative exchanges, direct or mediated, instrumental or artistic. Human communication takes place in a variety of environments (intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, public) and in private and public settings. It involves understanding of self, message transmission and reception, aesthetic principles, audience analysis, and skill development. It utilizes verbal and nonverbal codes transmitted face to face and through an ever increasing array of communication technologies. Communicating is, quite simply, the formative process of everyday living, and its understanding is crucial for helping our students to: explore multiple perspectives on the human condition and to prepare themselves for rich personal and professional lives...for leadership, citizenship, and service in a global context.

In these ways our major supports the mission and purposes of the college. In fact, communication under girds all education, and the department takes very seriously its commitment to support the general purposes of the College. As one example, our senior “capstone course,” Freedom of Expression and Communication Ethics, explores issues such as artistic freedom, free speech and the ethical dimensions of communication to “promote awareness and exploration of … principles which exist in democracy, pluralism, equality and freedom.” (purpose three). Upper level courses such as Organizational Communication, Small Group Communication, and Radio-TV Production use intensive small group projects to “foster and promote intellectual inquiry through mentoring relationships” (purpose seven). Many of our majors also take a second major; we encourage this exploration as a means of “fostering the discovery of connections among disciplines and of larger patterns of meanings.” (purpose four).

The department seeks to “develop creativity and skills in written and oral communication and artistic expression” (purpose eight) and to “understand the methods of inquiry in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences” (purpose nine) through nearly all of our courses. Monmouth College has created a four year program of study and experiences “in order to foster the discovery of connections among disciplines and of large patterns of meaning” (Mission statement). The Communication Studies Department supports this endeavor through coursework designed for all campus majors (Fundamentals of Communication for all first year students, general education offerings the college’s Integrated Studies Program, through extracurricular offerings, and through its major program). Communication Studies is itself an interdisciplinary “discipline” that overlies other traditional liberal arts majors such as Sociology, Psychology, English, Anthropology, and Political Science, to name a few. In addition, the forms of inquiry and methodologies employed by communication scholars are pluralistic. Communication Studies has elements of social science, interpretive scholarship, and rhetoric.

Senior Year Student Assessment

Senior Year Student Assessment

- Critical Thinking
- Civic Engagement
- Quantitative Reasoning

Submitted by Monmouth College, Department of Communication Studies
Chris Goble, Lecturer
Lee McCaan, Professor, Department Chair
Trudi Peterson, Associate Professor

Overview of the Assessment Plan

1. Analysis of Course Syllabi - Closely examine syllabi from the courses listed below to identify course content and assignments that advance critical thinking, reasoning, and civic engagement. In other words, to discover what we already do to meet these objectives.
2. Comparison of Institutional and Departmental Learning Objectives - Compare and contrast departmental learning objectives with the overarching learning objectives of our liberal arts institution. Where are we in alignment? Are there intersections that we could further develop?
3. Examination of Departmental Course Sequencing - An examination of departmental course sequencing to discover how our courses and the general education goals of our new Integrated Studies Curriculum enhance each other, especially in terms of how students develop progressively through their four years at Monmouth College and over time in the major.
4. Senior Exit Survey - Add additional questions to our current senior exit survey pertaining to the development and use of critical thinking skills, quantitative and non-quantitative reasoning, civic engagement and oral communication experience and skill. The latter data would be useful exit data for the assessment of the college’s Communication across the Curriculum initiative.
5. Evaluation of Assessment Methods - Continue conversations about our assessment methods, especially in terms of how we can extract additional useful information for program and course revisions from current methods.

Senior Professional Communication Portfolio

Through the construction of a web-based “Professional Communication Portfolio,” students focus intensely on the four major goals of the major: Creation of Effective Messages, Development of (in-depth) Knowledge of the Field, Demonstrated Ability to Apply Skills and Knowledge, and Skillfulness in the Various Forms of Communication. These courses also provide students with an opportunity to learn basic elements of web design or build on previous knowledge, create a professional looking presence for themselves on the World Wide Web and guide students in the process of moving past graduation and into the world of work. Portfolios include work samples from the assessment courses Communication Studies Curriculum and from other courses, especially those in the Communication Studies Curriculum that strengthen the student’s programmatic departmental learning objectives.

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