



The development of a set of core communication competencies for introductory communication courses

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ABSTRACT

In most academic disciplines, there is *one* introductory course that presents an overview of the discipline and introduces fundamental, discipline-specific principles and competencies. However, in Communication Studies, the discipline recognizes and offers multiple course options that may serve as the introductory course. This project sought to identify a set of core communication competencies that should constitute the basis for *any* and *all* introductory communication courses within and across a variety of communication contexts. Working in four phases over a three-year period using a modified Delphi method and conducting seven focused group sessions with 125 participants, seven core competencies for the introductory communication courses were identified: Monitoring and Presenting Your Self, Practicing Communication Ethics, Adapting to Others, Practicing Effective Listening, Expressing Messages, Identifying and Explaining Fundamental Communication Processes, and Creating and Analyzing Message Strategies.

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In most academic disciplines, there is *one* introductory course that presents an overview of the discipline and introduces fundamental, discipline-specific principles and competencies (e.g., introduction to or fundamentals of biology, psychology, marketing). The communication discipline, however, offers a menu of multiple course options (e.g., introduction to human communication, public speaking, interpersonal communication, group communication, argumentation and debate, business and professional communication) that qualify as introductory courses and purportedly introduce students to the core principles and best practices of effective and ethical communication. While some departments offer only one of these courses—most frequently public speaking—other programs offer a different course or a variety of introductory courses. According to Morreale, Myers, Backlund,

and Simonds (2015), more than half of all introductory communication course students take a public speaking course, whereas other students take either a hybrid course that typically includes units in interpersonal communication, small group communication, and public speaking or a course that focuses on a particular communication context such as interpersonal communication or small group communication.

While few communication educators dispute the centrality of an introductory course in the communication curriculum and its importance as a general education requirement, the nomenclature and content of these introductory communication courses lack consistency. Too often, this apparent inconsistency may raise suspicions among college administrators and noncommunication faculty members about the legitimacy of communication studies as a coherent and rigorous academic discipline. Rich West (2012), a past president of the National Communication Association (NCA), noted that the consistency found in the introductory courses of other disciplines “does not exist in communication ... I’m left wondering about the value of our content diversity, especially as we try to articulate the foundation of our field to the uninitiated” (p. 1). Sellnow and Martin (2010) expressed concern about the perception “outside the discipline that our own field does not even know of—or at least cannot agree on—the fundamental communication concepts/skills/competencies that should be addressed in the basic course” (p. 38), further noting that “the time has come to share a unified answer to the question that we have grappled with for over 40 years: just what is fundamental in the basic communication course?” (p. 42).

However, to abandon the rich traditions of the communication discipline (for a thorough discussion of the traditions of communication, see Craig, 1999) and attempt to develop a standardized introductory course that all communication programs would use is for many individuals unthinkable and, from a practical perspective, undoable. That said, maintaining the status quo leaves the communication discipline with a seemingly inconsistent approach to the introductory communication course. This challenge raises a significant question, the responses to which often provoke heated debate: Are the communication principles and skills taught in introductory courses applicable across a variety of contexts? Would, for example, a student completing a public speaking course be able to communicate effectively in interpersonal, small group, intercultural, business/professional, and mediated contexts? Would a student completing an interpersonal communication course feel confident and competent when asked to prepare and deliver a presentation? An inability to answer “yes” to such questions, based on the lack of relevant research and agreed-upon core competencies in the communication discipline, led to this research project.

Core Communication Competencies project

Shortly after the 2011 NCA Convention, five colleagues from institutions of higher education across the country created the Core Communication Competencies Group (CCCCG) based on a mutual interest in identifying core competencies applicable to introductory communication courses within and across a variety of contexts. Expanding the original group to add another member to support methodological analysis and focus, the CCCC began a three-year, iterative, grass-roots approach involving expert input and direct face-to-face interaction with faculty members who teach and administer

introductory communication courses throughout the country as a way to close this gap.¹ The research team began its investigation with a literature search in higher education and Communication Studies.

Competency literature in higher education

The research conducted in higher education generally reflects both the value of competency-based learning as well as the importance of communication competencies in a variety of disciplines. Most noteworthy is the Association of American Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) "Liberal Education and American's Promise," or LEAP initiative. Launched in 2005, LEAP focuses on ensuring that institutions of higher education design and deliver comprehensive, integrated, and effective curricula to all students (Association of American Colleges and Universities, n.d.). The AAC&U recommends a comprehensive and unified curriculum development plan that focuses on achieving essential learning outcomes, which, incidentally, includes communication competencies ranging from essential skills (e.g., oral communication, teamwork, problem solving) to the application of communication principles and practices to challenges in the 21st century. More recently, a 2015 survey conducted by Hart Research Association on behalf of the AAC&U asked employers and college students to identify the most important skills needed in today's workforce. The two most important learning outcomes for all students, regardless of their chosen field of study, were (a) the ability to effectively communicate orally and (b) the ability to work effectively with others in teams (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015).

Competency literature in Communication Studies

Although research identifying and recommending competencies is prevalent in disciplines such as business (Harvey, McIntyre, Moeller, & Sloan, 2012), public affairs (Emerson & Smutko, 2011; Morse & Stephens, 2012), research and development technology (Wu, 2012), social work (Miehls, 2012), food safety (Barbera, Layne, & Gunawardena, 2014), library science (Saunders, 2012), and health care (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education Program and Institutional Accreditation, n.d.; Ezaki, 2012; Lurie, 2012), there is a dearth of discipline-specific research on core competencies in most social sciences, and in particular, communication.

Competency research in the communication discipline primarily focuses on one of two academic domains. The first domain investigates competencies related to the large-scale goals of developing and implementing standards for departments, programs, and/or degrees; the second domain centers on learning objectives and competencies, the assessment of those competencies, and pedagogy for teaching individual courses or units within a curriculum (e.g., McCroskey, 1982; Phillips, 1984; Staley & Shockley-Zalabak, 1985). A significant gap between these two domains in the competency literature exists in that there is little or no research dedicated to identifying and justifying core communication competencies that constitute the basis for introductory communication courses across a variety of contexts.

The recent NCA Lumina Foundation-funded Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOC) project should not be construed as addressing the need for or identifying introductory course competencies. The LOC initiative was specifically designed to identify the core

of the communication discipline through the development of learning outcomes for communication majors. Project members were charged with answering a single question: What should a graduate with a Communication degree know, understand, and be able to do? (Dannels, 2015; Kidd, 2015). Their overall goal was to identify critical communication competencies for individuals earning an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Master's degree in Communication (see "NCA's Learning Outcomes," 2015). Working independently of the LOC project, the CCCG project sought to identify a set of core communication competencies for introductory communication courses, as opposed to learning outcomes for communication degree programs.

Rationale

While recent communication literature focused on the introductory communication course describes the general state of the basic/introductory course (Morreale et al., 2015), critical thinking within the course (Mazer, Hunt, & Kuznekoff, 2007), and the evolution of the course (Valenzano, Wallace, & Morreale, 2014), none of these studies addresses the challenge of identifying core communication competencies in introductory courses, nor have they suggested a framework for developing such competencies. Concomitantly, they do not address Sellnow and Martin's (2010) earlier question about what constitutes the fundamental nature of the introductory communication course, nor does this collective body of research address the importance and value of a set of core competencies or provide a justification for the various context-based introductory communication courses. Accordingly, there is a need to establish a domain of communication education research that specifically focuses on investigating, identifying, justifying, and operationalizing core competencies in introductory communication courses without limiting an institution's freedom to define and pursue a curricular path that best serves its various stakeholders. As such, the following research question is posed:

RQ: What core communication competencies should constitute the basis for introductory communication courses within and across a variety of communication contexts?

Method

The CCCG project was completed in four phases over three years using a modified Delphi methodology. Developed by the Rand Corporation in the 1950s as a way to use the informed, intuitive judgement of experts to analyze a phenomenon and predict the future, the Delphi methodology is an iterative group process in which experts only share written responses and feedback with one another in order to aggregate judgments and make decisions (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). A modified Delphi technique uses both written responses and face-to-face discussions and deliberation to aggregate judgments, analyze results, and reach a workable consensus. This modified Delphi technique is often used by competency researchers across academic disciplines (Barry, Battel-Kirk, & Dempsey, 2012; Johnston et al., 2014; Lindberg, Lundström-Landegren, Johansson, Lidén, & Holm, 2012; Schultz, Koenig, Whiteside, Murray, & National Standardized All-Hazard Disaster Core Competencies Task Force, 2012; Shaikh & Khoja, 2014).

Phase 1: preliminary identification of competencies

In phase 1, a set of preliminary core communication competencies that constitute the basis for introductory communication courses within and across a variety of contexts was generated. Based on his or her individual expertise, research, and teaching experiences, each team member developed a list of core communication competencies, which then were consolidated into 21 nonduplicated competencies. At the same time, the CCCG collectively developed a definition of a core communication competency after reviewing the educational literature compiled on the development of core competencies in academia. Based on this review (Albanese, Mejicano, Mullen, Kokotailo, & Gruppen, 2008; Campion et al., 2011; Hager, Gonsci, & Athanasou, 1994), we defined a core communication competency as an expected level of performance that integrates appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes; is stated in general terms; and broadly applies to the majority of introductory communication courses in higher education. We then developed a set of criteria for a core competency for an introductory communication course, which required each competency to (a) reflect the expectations articulated in valid communication scholarship for introductory courses, (b) be expressed clearly in terms of measurable behavior, (c) apply within and across a variety of communication contexts, (d) use understandable standards for judging competencies that are not dependent on the performance of other learners, (e) inform learners as well as academic professionals and publics about what is expected in an introductory communication course, and (f) possibly include performance elements that incorporate and measure multiple core competencies. These 21 member-generated competencies were then evaluated against this definition of a core communication competency and the set of criteria for identifying the characteristics of a core communication competency. After several months of deliberation and using a modified Delphi technique that relied on e-mail exchanges among team members, the 21 items were revised and reduced to 12 communication competencies.

Phase 2: competency-specific templates

When the 12 core competencies for introductory communication courses were identified, the team developed a detailed template for each competency. Doing so substantiated the unique qualities of each competency and provided evidence that validated the significance, breadth, and depth of each competency. Each template included five sections: (a) a statement that offered a conceptualization of the competency area, (b) a brief rationale that established both the theoretical and practical importance of the competency area, (c) a series of selected subtopics and units that could be taught in the competency area, (d) a series of selected measures that could be used to assess the competency area across various communication contexts (e.g., public speaking, interpersonal, small group, intercultural, professional, mediated communication), and (e) a compilation of selected classic and contemporary references to support each competency.

Phase 3: focused group sessions

As a result of further deliberation and revision, the core communication competencies and their corresponding templates were prepared for distribution in seven focused

group sessions conducted at national, regional, and state conventions between November 2012 and April 2015. These conventions included the NCA (one session each in 2012, 2013, and 2014), the Eastern Communication Association (ECA; two sessions in 2013, one session each in 2014 and 2015), and the Virginia Association of Communication Arts and Science (one session in 2014). Collectively, the seven group sessions were attended by more than 125 individual participants.

In each session, participants were given the most up-to-date list of communication competencies and the corresponding templates. After a presentation describing the research project's goal and methods, a modified Delphi method was used in which participants reviewed the competencies and templates; indicated their preferences for particular competencies; and offered suggestions on whether and how the competencies could be strengthened, expanded, modified, combined, separated, or eliminated. After the first session conducted at the 2012 NCA convention, the list of 12 communication competencies was reduced to seven distinct core communication competencies. Based on participant feedback after each subsequent session, the seven competencies were further revised and strengthened.

Phase 4: results, analysis, and recommendations

Upon completion of the first six group sessions, the seven core communication competencies, templates, and supporting documents were submitted to NCA president Steve Beebe for consideration. In January 2014, these materials were accepted and approved by the NCA Executive Committee. The seventh session in May 2015 provided feedback that resulted in minor revisions to the wording used in the competencies and the templates.

Results

The research question asked about the core communication competencies that should constitute the basis for introductory communication courses within and across a variety of communication contexts. Based on the work of the research team and feedback from participants attending seven focused group sessions between 2012 and 2015, seven core

Table 1. Seven core communication competencies.

1. *Monitoring and Presenting Your Self:* The ability to monitor and present yourself to others within and across a variety of communication contexts
2. *Practicing Communication Ethics:* The ability to identify, evaluate, and demonstrate appropriate ethical behavior within and across a variety of communication contexts
3. *Adapting to Others:* The ability to understand, respect, and adapt messages to a diversity of human characteristics and attitudes in order to accomplish a communication goal within and across a variety of communication contexts
4. *Practicing Effective Listening:* The ability to listen effectively and respond appropriately to the meaning of messages within and across a variety of communication contexts
5. *Expressing Messages:* The ability to select, demonstrate, and adapt appropriate forms of verbal, nonverbal, and mediated expression that support and enhance the meaning of messages within and across a variety of communication contexts
6. *Identifying and Explaining Fundamental Communication Processes:* The ability to identify and explain how specific communication processes influence the outcome of communication interactions within and across a variety of communication contexts
7. *Creating and Analyzing Message Strategies:* The ability to create and analyze message strategies that generate meaning within and across a variety of communication contexts

Note: The numbering does not indicate an order of preference, but is used to more easily identify and discuss each competency.

communication competencies were identified (see [Table 1](#)). These seven core competencies are consistent with the NCA's definition of the Communication discipline, which is "The discipline of communication focuses on how people use messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media. The discipline promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication" (National Communication Association, 2015). Accordingly, introductory communication courses focus on how people (self) create (message strategies), adapt (to others), express (verbal, nonverbal, mediated), and respond (listening) to messages that effectively and ethically (ethical communication) generate meaning (communication processes) within and across a variety of contexts (message strategies).

Each of the seven competencies is supplemented with a template that includes the competency statement and a brief rationale for its inclusion as well as a selection of sub-topics and units, assessment methods, and references. While the templates are not intended to be comprehensive, they can serve as a guideline for instructors developing or strengthening competency-based learning objectives (see [Appendices 1–7](#)). Moreover, for departments and faculty members searching for ways to strengthen or defend their introductory courses, the competencies and templates, when taken as a whole, provide a strong case justifying introductory communication courses as general education and graduation requirements.

Discussion

The purpose of this research project was to identify a set of core communication competencies that should constitute the basis for any and all introductory communication courses within and across a variety of communication contexts. Over a three-year period, the research team and focused group participants identified seven core competencies.

The competencies for introductory communication courses and their supporting templates are not meant to be fixed, inflexible, or limited in scope. Ideally, they should change given advances in the Communication discipline, research conducted in the communication education subdiscipline, and analyses of institutional, department, and faculty goals. The corresponding templates explain and enlarge the scope of each competency in terms of its meaning, rationale, and application to various introductory courses. These templates are also designed for further development, including more resources as well as measurable rubrics specific to particular assignments and contexts.

The seven core communication competencies and their associated templates serve the needs of department chairs, introductory course directors, instructors, and students as well as Communication Studies programs and the Communication discipline as a whole in many ways. A set of core competencies for introductory communication courses provides:

- the criteria necessary for assessing learning outcomes in introductory communication courses;
- the persuasive arguments administrators can use when making the case that introductory communication courses be included as part of general education and/or graduation requirements;
- evidence that further authenticates the communication discipline as different from, but supportive of, other academic disciplines;

- a justification for the diverse approaches taken to teaching introductory communication courses across a variety of contexts;
- the essential knowledge and educational credentials needed by, and required of, introductory communication course instructors;
- criteria that can be used for supporting the transferability of introductory communication courses to other institutions;
- a model for undergraduate curriculum development and assessment;
- a basis for defining the communication discipline in introductory communication courses across a variety of contexts.

As such, a set of core competencies in introductory communication courses within and across a variety of contexts demonstrates the inherent value and unique nature of the Communication discipline. When asked to explain how introductory communication courses contribute to students' general education curriculum and career success, an answer based on competencies reflects the knowledge, behaviors, and motivation needed to effectively and ethically create and respond to verbal, nonverbal, and mediated messages that generate meaning across a variety of contexts.

Of course, no project is without its limitations. One limitation is that because this project represents a first attempt to research and identify a set of core competencies that constitutes the basis for introductory communication courses, it is possible that a different group of researchers—as based on each researcher's individual background, experience, and needs—might have collected, analyzed, and identified a different set of core communication competencies for use in focused group sessions. A second limitation is that the choice of seeking feedback from participants, primarily at the NCA and ECA conventions, could reflect a limited perspective based on these association's participants' levels and type of professional membership and involvement. A third limitation, which should be considered in future research projects, is that the seven competencies were not reviewed specifically against a representative example of introductory course syllabi and learning outcomes to assess whether and how well existing introductory courses reflect the core communication competencies. While this limitation is not a detriment to this project, introductory course instructors and directors should examine the extent to which the seven core competencies are reflected in their current course syllabi and learning outcomes. Future researchers should also focus on the creation of a set of rubrics for each of the seven core competencies, including specific rubrics that apply to each of the competencies expressed in different contexts.

Conclusion

Unlike many studies published in communication journals, this study was born from a pressing need expressed by introductory course instructors and directors as well as community college and small college department faculty and chairs. The current state of introductory communication courses is such that faculty members may have difficulty justifying the course as a relevant and rigorous educational experience, even though the course addresses and achieves a significant number of the essential learning outcomes for a college degree as set forth in national initiatives such as the AAC&U's LEAP initiative. The CCCG project emphasizes the value of core communication competencies as a means

of strengthening the integrity of the communication curriculum and enhancing the rigor, relevance, and validity of the discipline's introductory courses serving the general education protocol; it also serves as an impetus for future research that focuses on the need, value, and implementation of core competencies in introductory communication courses across a variety of contexts.

The nomenclature and diversity of contemporary introductory courses imply that the communication discipline is context-based rather than competency-based. Core communication competencies are guidelines that ask whether a single introductory course or group of courses reflects the fundamental principles of Communication Studies. Equally important, these competencies help answer the aforementioned research question: *What core communication competencies should constitute the basis for introductory communication courses within and across a variety of contexts?* The seven core communication competencies identified in this study provide a common understanding and basis for advocating communication studies for those individuals *in* the communication discipline as well as those individuals *outside* the discipline.

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Note

1. During the research team's three-year investigation, then NCA President Steven Beebe requested that the CCCG become a special, ad hoc NCA Task Force aligned with his initiative of strengthening introductory communication courses. Before accepting such a role, the CCCG copyrighted its core competencies and templates to ensure that (a) CCCG members are acknowledged and credited with their original work, (b) the method is included as an integral component of the project and disseminated documents, and (c) the CCCG may advance the project and seek dissemination to professional associations and educators within and across academic disciplines and educational institutions. The previous clauses do not restrict the free use of the core competencies for research, teaching, program development, and discipline advocacy. The NCA Core Competencies Task Force Report (December 2013) can be viewed at http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/Teaching_and_Learning/NCA%20Core%20Competencies%20Report,%20December%202013%281%29.pdf. An updated report (April 2014) titled *The Case for Core Competencies in Introductory Communication Courses* can be viewed at http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/Teaching_and_Learning/The%20Case%20for%20Core%20Competencies%20in%20Introductory%20Communication%20Courses,%20April%202014%281%29

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Appendix 1

Competency 1: monitoring and presenting yourself

Competency Statement	The ability to monitor and present yourself to others within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Rationale	Introductory communication courses address this competency, albeit in different ways for different contexts. Survey and interpersonal communication courses devote significant attention to self-concept, self-esteem, communication behaviors, and perception; group courses focus on identifying and adapting to member roles, styles, traits, and strengths; public/presentation speaking courses emphasize speaker credibility as a key variable in speaking success; in online contexts, communicators may assume and present a variety of selves to others.
Selected Subtopics/ Units	Self-concept; self-esteem; self-disclosure; communicator styles; decision-making styles; the interaction of personality traits/types; perception and attribution; communicator credibility; assertiveness; personal presentation styles; communication apprehension and confidence; rhetorical sensitivity.
Selected Assessment Measures	(1) Analyze the results of one or more self-assessment instruments and discuss ways of improving self-related communication strategies and skills. (2) Introduce yourself to a group of listeners as a way of presenting yourself clearly, accurately, and positively. (3) Assess your introduction of yourself to a group (e.g., how well did you manage your communication apprehension? What information did you choose to disclose?). (4) Explain how, regardless of context, your credibility derives from how others perceive your character, competence/expertise, level of caring/goodwill, and charisma/dynamism. Describe how you can or cannot influence others' perceptions of these variables. (5) Analyze your relationship with a close friend or colleague in terms of how each of you monitor and present yourself to one another. (6) Modify and analyze the differences between a generic or formal message provided by the instructor and a modified version that includes <i>your</i> personal experiences, opinions, and/or connection to the content. (7) Explain the creation of your Facebook (or other social media) profile, focusing on how self was developed and is continually evolving. Other options: _____
Selected References	Alberti, R., & Emmons, M. (1970). <i>Your perfect right: A guide to assertive living</i>. San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact. Buunk, A. P., & Gibbons, F. X. (2007). Social comparison: The end of a theory and the emergence of a field. <i>Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes</i>, 102, 3–21. doi:10.1016/j.obhdp.2006.09.007 Campbell, K. K., Burkholder, T. R., & Huxman, S. S. (2014). Obstacles arising from the rhetor. In <i>The rhetorical act: Thinking, speaking, and writing critically</i> (3rd ed., pp. 224–247). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Goffman, E. (1959). <i>The presentation of self in everyday life</i>. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Goleman, D. (1995). <i>Emotional intelligence</i>. New York, NY: Bantam Books. Guerrero, L. K., & Afifi, W. A. (1998). Communicative responses to jealousy as a function of self-esteem and relationships maintenance goals: A test of Bryson's dual motivation model. <i>Communication Reports</i>, 11, 111–122. doi:10.1080/08934219809367693 Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., & Afifi, W. A. (2014). <i>Close encounters: Communication in relationships</i> (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage. McCroskey, J. C. (2009). Communication apprehension: What have we learned in the last four decades. <i>Human Communication</i>, 12, 157–171. doi:10.1.1.527.8198 Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., & Wrench, J. (2013). <i>Communication: Apprehension, avoidance, and effectiveness</i> (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. McCroskey, J. C., & Teven, J. (1999). Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. <i>Communication Monographs</i>, 66, 90–103. doi:10.1080/03637799909376 Myers, I. B., & Myers, P. B. (1980). <i>Gifts differing: 10th anniversary edition</i>. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press. Norton, R. (1983). <i>Communicator style: Theory, applications, and measures</i>. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. Schutz, W. (1958). <i>FIRO: A three-dimensional theory of interpersonal behavior</i>. New York, NY: Rinehart. Turnley, W. H., & Bolino, M. C. (2001). Achieving desired images while avoiding undesired images: Exploring the role of self-monitoring and impression management. <i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>, 86, 351–360. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.86.2.35

Appendix 2

Competency 2: practicing communication ethics

Competency Statement	The ability to identify, evaluate, and responsibly address ethical issues within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Rationale	“Questions of right and wrong arise whenever people communicate.” “Unethical communication threatens the quality of all communication and consequently the well-being of individuals and the society in which we live.” (NCA Credo for Ethical Communication) Regrettably, a number of critics indict our discipline for teaching students how to influence—even mislead—others regardless of the ethical consequences. It is therefore imperative that all introductory communication courses should integrate the study of communication ethics in a way that responsibly applies ethical principles and practices within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Selected Subtopics/ Units	Ethical reasoning; morals and values; ethical tensions (e.g., truthfulness/deception, reasonable uses of emotion, common fallacies of reasoning); legal/illegal and ethical/unethical uses of others’ ideas and information; differences between ethics and law; civil disobedience; freedom of expression; reciprocity and responsiveness within and across communication contexts; ethical principles in the NCA Credo for Ethical Communication and the NCA Credo for Free and Responsible Communication in a Democratic Society.
Selected Assessment Measures	(1) Apply five of the nine principles in the <i>NCA Credo for Ethical Communication</i> to communicative behavior in one or more personal situations or a situation provided by the instructor (e.g., classroom, workplace, political campaign, group decision making, family and friendship crises). (2) Use a case study, short scenario, or mediated message to identify, evaluate, and responsibly address any ethical issues in the message or presentation. (3) Develop guidelines for ethical classroom behavior. Create and analyze a case involving conflicts between two or more of the guidelines. (4) Analyze a communicator’s arguments and use of sources. To what extent do the arguments and resources enhance or diminish a speaker’s credibility? (5) Identify three ethical guidelines you advocate for communicating with others in interpersonal and small group communication contexts. Explain how these guidelines can enhance the quality of communication. (6) Discuss the ways in which the principles of ethical communication and freedom of speech support or contradict one another. (7) Identify, analyze, and responsibly resolve a conflict between two or more ethical principles commonly encountered in interpersonal, group, presentational, or mediated communication contexts. Other options: _____
Selected References	Aristotle. (1984). <i>Nicomachean ethics and Eudemean ethics</i>. In J. Barnes (Ed.), <i>The complete works of Aristotle Vol. 2</i>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published in antiquity) Arneson, P. (Ed.). (2007). <i>Exploring communication ethics: Interviews with influential scholars in the field</i>. New York, NY: Peter Lang. Arnett, R. C., Fritz, J. M., & Bell, L. M. (2009). <i>Communication ethics literacy: Dialogue and difference</i>. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. Ballard, R. L., et al. (2015). Teaching communication ethics as central to the discipline. <i>Journal of the Association for Communication Education</i>, 33, 2–20. Cheney, G., May, S., & Munshi, D. (Eds.). (2011). <i>The handbook of communication ethics</i>. New York, NY: Routledge. Englehardt, E. E. (2001). <i>Ethical issues in interpersonal communication: Friends, intimates, sexuality, marriage, and family</i>. Ft. Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers. Fritz, J. M. (2013). <i>Professional civility: Communicative virtue at work</i>. New York, NY: Peter Lang. Johannesen, R. L. (2002). <i>Ethics in human communication</i> (5th ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. Johnson, C. E. (2012). <i>Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or shadow</i> (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Makau, J. (2009). Ethical and unethical communication. In W. F. Eadie (Ed.), <i>21st century communication: A reference handbook</i> (pp. 435–443). Los Angeles, CA: Sage. National Communication Association. (1999). <i>Ethical statements platform</i>. Retrieved from http://www.natcom.org/ethicalstatements/ Neher, W. W., & Sandin, P. J. (2007). <i>Communicating ethically: Character, duties, consequences, and relationships</i>. Boston, MA: Pearson. Noddings, N. (1984). <i>Caring, a feminine approach to ethics & moral education</i>. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Rawls, J. (1999). <i>A theory of justice</i>. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Roberts, K. G., & Arnett, R. C. (Eds.). (2008). <i>Communication ethics</i>. New York, NY: Peter Lang. Tompkins, P. S. (2011). <i>Practicing communication ethics: Development, discernment, and decision-making</i>. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Appendix 3

Competency 3: *adapting to others*

Competency Statement	The ability to understand, respect, and adapt messages to a diversity of human characteristics and attitudes in order to accomplish communication goals within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Rationale	Competent communicators adapt their messages and behaviors to others in order to meet interaction goals within and across a variety of communication contexts. These contexts extend beyond the personal and professional environments into both civic and cultural arenas. Also, as the world becomes “smaller” through technological integration, the ability to adapt to others becomes a distinguishing feature of all introductory communication courses.
Selected Subtopics/ Units	Adapting messages and behaviors to the demographics, cultures, abilities, orientations, attitudes, values, and expectations of others; engaging in feedback-induced adaptation; overcoming misperceptions and misinterpretation, particularly as reflected in ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination; identifying and adapting to cultural dimensions such as individualistic/collectivistic and high/low context communication styles; demonstrating person-centered communication/empathy; developing rhetorical sensitivity to the potential and tangible effects of communicative acts.
Selected Assessment Measures	(1) Using results based on a communicative adaptability instrument, analyze how well you perceive the nature of sociointerpersonal relationships and adapt your communicative behavior accordingly. (2) Analyze a live or video of an interpersonal interaction, group communication session, and/or presentation in terms of how well the communicator(s) understand and adapt to one another or audience members. (3) Identify how <i>your</i> demographics, attitudes, and cultural background affect how you communicate with others. (4) Identify the primary demographic of an advertisement of your choosing. Discuss how the advertisement could be changed in order to adapt to a different demographic. (5) Apply at least two cultural dimensions (e.g., power distance, individualism-collectivism, monochronic-polychronic or short term-long term time, gender expectations, high-context/low-context) to a recent interaction with an individual from another culture. Explain how these dimensions affected the quality and outcome of the interaction. (6) Present an oral report and written paper that discusses specific cultural differences after researching and interviewing a person from a culture (e.g., ethnic, religious) significantly different than yours. (7) Are men from Mars and women from Venus or are men and women more similar than different here on Earth? Other options: _____
Selected References	Baxter, L. A., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2008). <i>Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives</i>. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. Burgoon, J. K. (1993). Interpersonal expectations, expectancy violations, and emotional communication. <i>Journal of Language and Social Psychology</i>, 12, 30–48. doi:10.1177/0261927X93121003 Collier, M. J. (2014). <i>Community engagement and intercultural praxis: Dancing with difference in diverse contexts</i>. New York, NY: Peter Lang. Duran, R. L. (1992). Communicative adaptability: A review of conceptualization and measurement. <i>Communication Quarterly</i>, 40, 253–268. doi:10.1080/01463379209369840 Giles, H., & Wiemann, J. M. (1995). Language, social comparison, and power. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), <i>The handbook of communication science</i> (pp. 350–384). Newbury Park, CT: Sage. Hofstede, G. H. (2003). <i>Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations</i> (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Hullman, G. A. (2007). Communicative adaptability scale: Evaluating its use as an ‘other-report’ measure. <i>Communication Reports</i>, 20, 51–74. doi:10.1080/08934210701643693 Jackson, J. (Ed.). (2014). <i>The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication</i>. New York, NY: Routledge. Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). <i>Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change</i>. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag. Ting-Toomey, S. (2005). The matrix of face: An updated face-negotiation theory. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), <i>Theorizing about intercultural communication</i> (pp. 71–92). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Whaley, B. B., Samter, W., Giles, H., & Ogay, T. (2007). Communication accommodation theory. In <i>Explaining communication: Contemporary theories and exemplars</i> (pp. 293–310). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Appendix 4

Competency 4: practicing effective listening

Competency Statement	The ability to listen effectively and respond appropriately to the meaning of messages within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Rationale	We spend most of our communicating time listening, a skill critical to effective interaction in personal, social, academic, professional, political, and civic contexts. However, as significant research demonstrates, most people are not skillful listeners. Although teaching listening is both a complex and difficult process, listening training has proven effective when based on validated scholarship and instructional methods.
Selected Subtopics/Units	The listening process; effective and ineffective listening habits and strategies; listening styles; short-term, working, and long-term memory; ethical listening; empathic and therapeutic listening; accurate and effective paraphrasing; listening to hear, comprehend, remember, interpret, evaluate, appreciate, and respond; listening and responding to cultural, gender, personality, and hearing ability differences; barriers to listening; listening in a variety of contexts (educational, organizational, legal, artistic, mediated).
Selected Assessment Measures	(1) Take a listening test that focuses on listening comprehension and interpretation after which you analyze how well you listen and how you can improve your listening skills. (2) Administer and analyze a validated pre- and postlistening test. Compare and analyze the results. (3) Using a listening inventory that identifies your strengths and weaknesses in specific contexts (e.g., family, social, work, academic, public setting), identify the listening skill you wish to strengthen and the strategies you will use to achieve that goal. (4) Identify and critique the major claims and supporting material in a presentation, speech, or argument. (5) Analyze a set of brief scenarios or case studies as a basis for expressing or writing an appropriate paraphrase or supportive response. (6) Identify and justify the effective strategies you would use when listening to a message with which you disagree or a message you believe is confusing, misleading, false, and/or offensive. (7) Identify the barriers you may encounter when listening to a relational partner. (8) Describe effective strategies and skills for "listening" to online messages. (9) Demonstrate the ability to accurately listen and appropriately respond to challenging questions.
	Other options: _____
Selected References	Bodie, G. (2011). The active-empathic listening scale (AELS): Conceptualization and evidence of validity within the interpersonal domain. <i>Communication Quarterly</i>, 59, 277–295. doi:10.1080/01463373.2011.583495 Bodie, G. D., Worthington, D. L., & Gearhart, C. G. (2013). The Listening Styles Profile-revised (LSP-R): A scale revision and evidence for validity. <i>Communication Quarterly</i>, 61, 72–90. doi:10.1080/10904011003744516 Brownell, J. (2013). <i>Listening: Attitudes, principles, and skills</i> (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. Crawford, K. (2009). Following you: Disciplines of listening in social media. <i>Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies</i>, 23, 525–535. doi:10.1080/10304310903003270 Goulston, M. (2010). <i>Just listen: Discover the secret to getting through to absolutely anyone</i>. New York, NY: American Management Association. Jacobson, B., & Kettelhack, G. S. (1995). <i>If only you would listen</i>. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press. Janusik, L. A. (2007). Building listening theory: The validation of the conversational listening span. <i>Communication Studies</i>, 58, 139–156. doi:10.1080/10510970701341089 Langer, E. J. (1989). <i>Mindfulness</i>. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. Nichols, M. P. (1995). <i>The lost art of listening</i>. New York, NY: Guilford Press. Nichols, R. G., & Stevens, L. A. (1957). <i>Are you listening?</i> New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. Shafir, R. Z. (2003). <i>Zen of listening: Mindful communication in the age of distraction</i>. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books. Wolvin, A. D. (Ed.). (2010). <i>Listening and human communication in the 21st century</i>. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. Wolvin, A. D., & Coakley, C. G. (1996). <i>Listening</i> (5th ed.). Madison, WI: Brown and Benchmark. Worthington, D. L., & Fitch-Hauser, M. E. (2012). <i>Listening: Processes, functions, and competency</i>. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Appendix 5

Competency 5: expressing messages

Competency Statement	The ability to select, demonstrate, and adapt appropriate forms of verbal, nonverbal, and mediated expression that support and enhance the meaning of messages within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Rationale	The intended meaning of a message is clarified, enhanced, or misunderstood based on how we express it. Expression refers to how we <i>convey</i> a message using verbal, nonverbal, and/or mediated forms and modes of communication. Whether face-to-face or in cyberspace, expression characterizes the methods we use to share messages with others, regardless of the context. Because “communication is irreversible,” students must learn how to express messages skillfully and strategically in an introductory communication course.
Selected Subtopics/Units	<i>Verbal Expression:</i> Language and meaning (e.g., denotative/connotative; abstract/concrete; symbols/signs); language barriers (e.g., bypassing, exclusionary and offensive language, lying and deception); language styles; figures of speech/rhetorical devices; verbal immediacy; language and cultures; language and gender, age, education, etc.; challenges of translation; conversation rules and rituals. <i>Nonverbal Expression:</i> Nonverbal functions; physical expression (e.g., eye contact, appearance and movement, face, space and territory; touch); vocal expression (e.g., volume, rate, pitch, fluency, articulation, pronunciation, vocal emphasis, timing); environment; time; silence; nonverbal immediacy; nonverbal deception; nonverbal expression and cultures. <i>Mediated Expression:</i> Visual, audio, digital, and multimedia forms; cognitive and visual design principles; ancillaries (notes, handouts, objects); synchronous and asynchronous elements of messages; hardware and software; social media channels.
Selected Assessment Measures	(1) Observe and explain how eye contact is used to invite and regulate conversation, group participation, and oral presentations. (2) Observe a video recording of yourself in a conversation, in a group discussion and/or in a presentation situation. Evaluate your performance by responding to items on an evaluation form that focuses on expression. Suggest ways to improve your abilities to express a message. (3) Critique the effectiveness of computer-generated slides using a set of validated design principles. (4) Read aloud the first minute of a draft introduction to a class presentation. Based on instructor and students feedback regarding language use, revise the introduction using a more effective verbal style. (5) Give examples of “trigger” words that can negatively impact or have negatively impacted a communication climate and describe how to use more appropriate word choice. (6) Assess the verbal and nonverbal immediacy of an instructor, colleague, or friend and how that person’s immediacy affects your interactions with and feelings about that person in terms of their effectiveness as a communicator. (7) Analyze an online video clip and describe the nonverbal codes used by the individuals in the clip. (8) Follow a blog response thread to determine if dimensions of time affect the affective or cognitive dimensions of a response. Other Options: _____
Selected References	Burgoon, J. K., Guerrero, L. K., & Floyd, K. (2010). <i>Nonverbal communication</i>. Boston, MA: Pearson. Carpenter, R. H. (1999). <i>Choosing powerful words: Eloquence that works</i>. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Donnellon, A. (1996). <i>Team talk: The power of language in team dynamics</i>. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. Duarte, N. (2008). <i>Slideology: The art and science of creating great presentations</i>. Beijing, China: O'Reilly Media. Finch, G. (2013). <i>Word of mouth: A new introduction to language and communication</i>. London, U. K.: Palgrave Macmillan. Hayakawa, S. I., & Hayakawa, A. R. (1990). <i>Language in thought and action</i> (5th ed.). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Jamieson, K. H. (1988). <i>Eloquence in an electronic age: The transformation of political speechmaking</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Mayer, L. V. (2004). <i>Fundamentals of voice and articulation</i> (13th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. Mayer, R. E. (2009). <i>Multimedia learning</i> (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Pearce, B. (2005). The coordinated management of meaning (CMM). In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), <i>Theorizing about intercultural communication</i> (pp. 35–54). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Richmond, V. P., McCroskey, J. C., & Hickson III, M. L. (2012). <i>Nonverbal behavior in interpersonal relations</i>. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Appendix 6

Competency 6: identifying and explaining fundamental communication processes

Competency Statement	The ability to identify and explain how fundamental communication processes influence the outcome of communication interactions within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Rationale	Effective communication requires the ability to analyze and apply communication principles and understand how they affect the outcome of communicative acts. Effective communicators recognize the consequences of using or failing to adapt to feedback; of appreciating different conflict and leadership styles; of recognizing the value of appropriate norms and roles in groups; of being able to select from a repertoire of decision-making methods; of assessing the dialectical tensions in a relationship, group, presentation, mediated message, or organization.
Selected Subtopics/ Units	Communication models; leadership development and styles; conflict styles; decision making and problem solving methods; language styles; group norms and roles; groupthink; interpersonal and group dialectics; primacy and recency effects; narratives and storytelling models; informative and persuasive message guidelines; relationship and group development; organizational schemes in messages.
Selected Assessment Measures	(1) Analyze the results of one or more style assessment instruments (e.g., conflict, leadership, argumentativeness, decision-making, conflict) and discuss how you could use these results to improve your interactions with others. (2) Identify a historical, political, professional, or family situation in which groupthink affected the ability of members to make sound decisions. (3) Identify and analyze the conflict styles used in a video or film clip of an argument in order to assess the appropriateness and value of the styles used by those involved in the conflict. (4) Based on leadership models and principles, explain the characteristics that often differentiate an excellent leader from a substandard leader. (5) Identify and evaluate the effectiveness of three different decision-making procedures used in a group. (6) Identify and provide an example of three characteristics of an emotionally supportive message (7) Using a model of relational development, trace the development of one of your close friendships. (8) Compare and contrast the relational dialectic tensions that occur in interpersonal and small group settings. Other Options: _____
Selected References	Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1996). <i>Relating: Dialogues and dialectics</i>. New York, NY: Guilford Press. Belbin, R. M. (1993). <i>Team roles at work</i>. Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann. Burleson, B. R. (2003). Emotional support skills. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds.), <i>Handbook of communication and social interaction skills</i> (pp. 551–594). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Collins, R., & Cooper, P. (1997). <i>The power of story: Teaching through storytelling</i> (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Daft, R., & Lengel, R. H. (1984). Information richness: A new approach to managerial behavior and organizational design. <i>Research in Organizational Behavior</i>, 6, 191–233. Dainton, M., & Zelle, E. D. (2014). <i>Applying communication theory for professional life: A practical introduction</i> (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Dennis, A. R., Fuller, R. M., & Valacich, J. S. (2008). Media, tasks, and communication processes: A theory of media synchronicity. <i>MIS Quarterly</i>, 32, 575–600. doi:10.2307/25148857 Festinger, L. (1957). <i>A theory of cognitive dissonance</i>. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Hofstede, G. H. (2003). <i>Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations</i> (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Infante, D., & Rancer, A. (1982). A conceptualization and measure of argumentativeness. <i>Journal of Personality Assessment</i>, 46, 72–80. doi:10.1207/s15327752jpa4601_13 Janis, I. L. (1992). <i>Groupthink</i>. Carlsbad, CA: CRM Learning. Jones, S. M., & Wirtz, J. G. (2006). How does the comforting process work? An empirical test of an appraisal-based model of comforting. <i>Human Communication Research</i>, 32, 217–243. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2006.00274.x LaFasto, F. M., & Larson, C. E. (2001). <i>When teams work best: 6,000 team members and leaders tell what it takes to succeed</i>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Norton, R. (1983). <i>Communicator style: Theory, applications, and measures</i>. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974). <i>Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument</i>. Tuxedo, NY: XICOM.

Appendix 7

Competency 7: creating and analyzing message strategies

Competency Statement	The ability to create and analyze message strategies that generate meaning within and across a variety of communication contexts.
Rationale	Effective communicators are critical thinkers. Their success in conversations, group interactions, presentations, and mediated communication environments relies on the ability to think critically, create strategic content for, and respond appropriately to a variety of diverse messages. These skills go well beyond a rigid set of rules or recipes for communicative success. Rather, they call upon the ability to identify and select from a repertoire of valid strategies to achieve specific communication goals. The ability to select, apply, and analyze message strategies requires well-thought-out decisions about the multitude of variables in every communication transaction.
Selected Subtopics/ Units	Thinking critically; using appropriate self-disclosure and constructive feedback; selecting applicable decision-making methods in a variety of individual and group contexts; employing appropriate conflict management strategies and styles; creating a supportive communication climate; reporting new information, clarifying difficult concepts, explaining complex processes, and/or correcting misunderstanding; adapting to receivers who agree with, disagree with, and/or are undecided about a message; evaluating the quality of evidence and arguments in persuasive messages; generating receiver interest; demonstrating the value of message content; making strategic decisions about interrelated message components such as purpose, content, language, organization, and mode(s) of expression; choosing appropriate methods for resolving relational and group dialectical tensions; applying appropriate conversation strategies; identifying and correcting fallacious reasoning.
Selected Assessment Measures	(1) Develop a one-minute/one-page/one-slide message that achieves a specific communicative purpose. (2) Create and compare the validity and effectiveness an argument that includes at least a claim, warrant, and evidence to a message that only reports evidence. (3) Describe and justify your choice of at least two strategies you would use to manage an interpersonal conflict or a conflict within a group. (4) Describe three explanatory strategies you would use for each of the following informative communication goals: (a) clarify a difficult term, (b) explain a complex phenomenon, or (c) correct a misunderstanding. (5) Prepare and deliver a persuasive message to listeners who disagree with you. (6) Explain how to recognize and respond to different stages in each stage of a close personal relationship. (7) Write and share a written and/or oral critique of another student's communication skills in an interpersonal interaction, group discussion, and/or presentation in the classroom. (8) Write an argument for an oral presentation and the same argument for an online presentation. Other Options: _____
Selected References	Avtgis, T. A., Rancer, A. S., & Liberman, C. J. (2012). <i>Organizational communication: Strategies for success</i> (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt. Dillard, J. P., & Pfau, M. (Eds.). (2002). <i>The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice</i>. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Duarte, N. (2010). <i>Resonate: Present visual stories that transform audiences</i>. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. DuBrin, A. J. (2012). <i>Leadership: Research findings, practice, and skills</i> (7th ed.). New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin. Folger, J. P., Poole, M. S., & Stutman, R. K. (2005). <i>Working through conflict: Strategies for relationships, groups, and organizations</i> (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. Gabor, D. (2001). <i>How to start a conversation and make friends</i>. New York, NY: Fireside Books. Greene, J. O., & Burleson, B. R. (Eds.). (2003). <i>Handbook of communication and social interaction skills</i>. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Kelsey, D., & Plumb, P. (2004). <i>Great meetings! Great results: A practical guide for facilitating successful, productive meetings</i>. Portland, ME: Hanson Park Press. Meyers, P., & Nix, S. (2011). <i>As we speak: How to make your point and have it stick</i>. New York, NY: Atria Books. Perloff, R. M. (2014). <i>The dynamics of persuasion: Communication and attitudes in the 21st century</i> (5th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. Rowan, K. (2003). Informing and explaining skills: Theory and research on informative communication. In J. O. Greene & B. R. Burleson (Eds.), <i>Handbook of communication and social interaction skills</i> (pp. 403–438). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Toulmin, S. E. (1958). <i>The uses of argument</i>. London, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

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