General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Comm 20/Public Speaking

GE Area: A1

Results reported for AY 2014-2015  # of sections 70  # of instructors 36

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Department Chair: Deanna Fassett

College: CoSS

Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be electronically submitted, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by October 1 of the following academic year.

Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

SLO 1: Students will be able to identify and assess socially significant and intellectual topics, then compose and deliver extemporaneous oral presentations on these topics.

(2) What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

Out of approximately 1,820 students assessed, what percentage would you estimate:
Mastered the SLO at a high level 54% (averaged a “B+” or better on assessment activities)
Mastered the SLO at an average level 38% (averaged a “C” or better on assessment activities)
Either failed to master the SLO, or did so at a marginal level 8% (“C-” or below on assessment)

- Students in two sections filled out a survey about the SLO’s. About 90% said the “Dinner Party” discussions really helped them conceptualize this SLO. My students also thought our public policy debates helped them practice this SLO. Many of my students said these two activities helped them become more familiar with extemporaneous speaking. They also said they felt much more prepared for their speeches because of these activities. Both of these activities guided the students towards thinking critically about various topics. From there, the students were able to choose socially significant topics that resonated with them.
- Assign a topic analysis worksheet for each of the three major speeches to help them choose a socially significant and intellectual topic. Students first do this activity at home and then in class we go over it, first in groups and then as a class. From these topics students then present their demonstrative, informative & persuasive speeches in an extemporaneous mode.
- Conduct student-interviewing sessions, during class time, to help students gain a deeper understanding of what constitutes a socially significant topic. Extemporaneous speaking style has been difficult to promote in the classroom, however I don’t think that this concept was given as much focus as some of the other concepts within the course.
- The three major speech assignments taught students how to construct outlines in preparing their speeches. They also learned the basic concepts of speech construction: effective attention getting techniques, establishing credibility, the utilization of appropriate supporting materials, transitional devices, and crafting conclusions that supply psychological closure. The persuasive speech also afforded them the
opportunity to gain experience appealing to audience pathos and logos, and they also learned audience analysis techniques to help them make more effective appeals. Each speech also provided them with a vehicle to practice their extemporaneous delivery skills, and to improve their ability to engage an audience.

- Used a “sustainability” themed class in which all the major speech topics related to sustainability.
- Implemented group speeches for major speeches 2 and 3 (the informative and persuasive). I “piloted” the group speeches at another school and during the summer here at SJSU and they went very well. I found the speeches to be much more in-depth, with better quality research, analysis, and social significance. Delivery also improved.
- Gave students multiple opportunities for impromptu speeches, which they claimed helped them to feel more comfortable speaking in front of the class.
- Altered the speeches to have students give speeches on cultures they are not a part of, with each subsequent major speech building off of the previous speech, so that by the end of the semester they are giving advanced speeches about socially significant topics.
- Throughout the semester the majority of our classroom activities surrounded the development of their skills both as critical thinkers as well as good public speakers. For instance, for several class periods we focused on the news, assessing the social significance of the topics as well as discussing issues of bias and subjectivity. I then had the students create their own news broadcasts for various time periods I assigned.
- Developed an extemporaneous speaking activity requiring students to read different slam poems as groups in front of the class. I used slam poems, in part, to help teach the students different ways to construct an argument about socially significant topics. This activity helped to foster the student’s public speaking skills as well as their understanding of socially significant topics.
- Themed my course “global awareness,” thus, providing students with parameters for topics that are socially significant and intellectually. In past semesters, when I have done this students are a bit intimidated because they generally tend to be unaware of what’s happening in the world or why it should matter to them. This class however, embraced the theme and ran with it.
- Assigned more in-class group work, which seemed to help them process the material best when discussing it with each other. Although lecture was needed, especially for more complicated concepts, the energy in the room and the student’s attention levels was high during the group work.
- Introduced “Sharing the News” as a new in-class engagement. The students were required to find an article that was socially significant and relevant to their classmates. The other portion of the assignment was each student to present a one minute speech on the article and show why their audience should find this news article important.
- Integrated an element of culture in each speaking assignment. For example, for their first (demonstrative) speech, students chose a skill that was very significant to their culture to demonstrate to the class. This may include demonstrating how to cook a dish, play a sport, practice an art form, etc. For their second (informative) speech, students chose an aspect about their country of birth that they want their audience to know. This may be a certain geographic location, public figure, historical event, etc. Therefore, all the topics chosen were significant to their cultural/ethnic/native background. Additionally, students were proud and happy to share their culture with others. Many students share the same culture, and through that, they developed a bond and friendship that extended outside the classroom. Finally, students had an easier time choosing a topic relating to their cultural background. For the most part, they had a pretty clear idea of their speech topic soon after the speeches were assigned.
- Required students to choose topics because they appealed to their university-level audience and because they themselves wanted to learn more about.
- Use videos, articles, and other materials from my own collection and from organizations such as VICE NEWS, TED, and general major news outlets to open dialogue and discussion on socially relevant issues and current events. This is very effective in generating and assessing students’ ability to identify, analyze, and articulate important ideas and issues.
- I learned that practical application is key and that Canvas activities and lecturing really don’t prepare my students to be capable, engaging and dynamic presenters. Yes, they need some tools to build their innate abilities, but this is very fundamental and ultimately it’s about nurturing their creativity and confidence.
- I tried a new approach this semester. Students chose a theme for the semester and topics had to pertain to the theme and they had to submit a proposal for the topic and how it fit the theme. Section 6 chose social
media. The topics ranged from bullying, issues regarding relational communication, to the ethics of conducting business using social media. Section 7 chose equility/inequility. Their proposed topics covered gentrification of low income neighborhoods, health care, minimum wage, etc. I loved listening to these speeches and the sincerity of the approaches of the speakers. In the final exercises they spoke of the importance of the topics to each speaker.

- In class: In assessing their topics, I assign the appropriate chapter for this discussion ahead of time-for the Jaffe text it’s Ch. 5 Selecting Your Topic and Purpose. I explain general and specific speech purposes and how each speech will differ in their objectives. Then I have them actively brainstorm (timed) each step in selection process, starting with a general survey of their interests. Next, they brainstorm their expertise or special knowledge. Students share their ideas both in groups and to the entire class. I find they often discover good topics by listening to what others are interested in and willing to talk about. Here I tie in the audience element-students brainstorm and write what their audience knows/needs to know/how they can offer fresh insight, how they can make their audience care. I suggest to some students they hold onto their topic for the persuasive round if it sounds particularly controversial. We evaluate what makes a specific topic exciting vs. a topic that might be less interesting or significant. Finally we discuss if it’s appropriate for the setting of the class, the time allotted, and whether they’ll be able to acquire responsible knowledge. Little by little they narrow down their list throughout this process. My objective is for them to leave class with at least 3 possibilities they can start researching before our next class meeting. This leads to their homework assignment that follows.

- Homework: Students read and explore three different topics, developing a rational that addresses the following questions: Why you want to speak on this issue? Who does the issue affect? What are some of the key issues you will focus on? (in other words, what main points might you want to cover). Can you develop responsible knowledge on this topic? Do you have any personal experience with this topic? Do you think it will interest your audience? How will you make it relevant to them? Write down one value and one Maslow’s need that will help tie your topic to your audience’s needs. What you hope to accomplish (this is called your specific purpose). A specific purpose answers this question: “if there is one goal I would like to achieve in this speech, it would be…”(fill in the blank). Emphasize the behavior you want the audience to adopt. Your text explains specific purpose in more detail on p. _____(depends on the textbook). Write a sample thesis statement for each topic (text, p.______). A source citation for each topic in APA format, with sources coming from newspapers, respected magazine articles and journals, etc.APA format is discussed beginning on page ____ in your text.

- In class: Some semesters I have taken them into the library for a workshop on how to use the databases. Our new communication liason, Nyle Monday, has a comprehensive presentation that has helped students become more familiar with the library itself and where to find approved sources.

- For the two persuasive speeches (problem solution and refutative) I don’t carve out time for them to brainstorm in class but we frequently open class discussion about what’s in the news and some of the points that are compelling for the controversial topics and how they tie into persuasion. At this point I trust that they know the basics of picking out a relevant topic that they can adapt to their audience. They do complete a homework assignment that offers me the ability to give them feedback before they present. The following questions are addressed: What is your topic for the persuasive speech? What is your thesis (proposition of public policy) for the persuasive speech? What is the status quo (current situation) regarding your policy statement? What is wrong with the status quo? Why do you want to make a change? Whose domain is, or what public body is, responsible for upholding the status quo? Who, what agent, would be able to make, or enact a change to the status quo? I started the semester grading student speeches and outlines with upmost attention to meeting speech parameters—elements of intro, body, and conclusion—grammar, formatting, and delivery—nonverbal, vocals, extemporaneous, etc. The first speech and outline grades ranged in the low C/C-. I used the experience as a lesson in following the parameters discussed, multiple times I might add, in class. This had the numerous positive effects. Subsequent speeches, for the most part, followed assigned speech organizational, content, and delivery parameters. Their informative and persuasive speeches improved drastically. Their grades jumped dramatically, which led to a final overall point average in the upper 85% range. They earned the higher averages, but they cased the courses overall score to rise above the suggested point average discussed in training and discussion. I firmly believe we should grade based on the true value of student’s work, and not on the recommended curve. I will, though, ensure their grades
are representative of both their true performance and the suggested grade point curve. If I find their performance is exemplar, I will grade according to that reality.

- I learned the importance of developing activities that allow students to find what they are passionate about and to see the world outside of their one existence. Different thinking, writing, artistic, and discussing activities provoked thoughts on socially significant topics. Establishing a mechanism for determining common knowledge would be of benefit to help guide students toward selecting useful topics.

- My goal was to cut down on the number of students who are publicly reading. I had students in my COMM 20, section 28 class deliver their speeches in person only, in class, and the consensus from them was that they preferred to deliver their classes in the classroom instead of recording and uploading them (I took a vote at the beginning of the semester). My COMM 20, section 17 class was a hybrid class, so students delivered their speeches to one another outside of class, recorded them, and uploaded them in Canvas. I learned students need me in order to re-direct them away from reading and toward engaging. They needed me coaching them toward extemporaneous speaking. I intend to continue to have them deliver their speeches in class.

- My students were amazing this semester. I have never had a class like this one. All of my students chose topics that were engaging and significant. They also consistently stopped by my office hours to practice their speeches and receive feedback. My students were also required to work with a tutor before their first speech presentation. This greatly improved the quality of all the speeches.

- In 20N, most of my students are non-native English speakers and were born in a different country. For speech topics, I ask students to speak about topics pertaining to their cultural background. Something that I encountered this semester was that many students preferred to choose demonstrative speech topics pertaining to a sub-culture, rather than their ethnic/cultural background (i.e., “how to play video games”). When I asked students why this was, their response was that they preferred to teach the class something that was relevant to them, and a skill that they would actually use in their lives. So, students who actually chose a demonstrative speech topic that pertained to their ethnicity/culture, made sure that it applied to the audience (i.e., “how to perform karate for self-defense”). For persuasive speeches, in which students must advocate a proposition of policy, many students wanted to implement a policy for their country of birth. I decided that even though this does not directly apply to students who don’t come from that country, it is a great learning experience for all of us. So, thanks to students who advocated for a policy change for their native country, we were all able to learn about the politics of foreign countries. From these examples, I learned to be more open-minded when it comes to speech topics because my goals are for all my students to be excited about WHAT they’re speaking about, just as much as HOW they speak.

(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

- Spend more time debriefing the topics explored in each speech. I plan on engaging in even more discussions about what the students have created, and what they have left out. I think these discussions will help the students think more critically about their topics and the power in their words.

- Incorporate a free write at the beginning of the semester, essentially gaging what the students would like to change in the world, and what their biggest concerns are. I am hoping to create a theme to outline the course, which will promote civic engagement and responsibility both in and outside of the classroom.

- To encourage great extemporaneous speaking styles, have the students create a speaking outline with a word limit, to prevent “public reading,” and encourage public speaking.

- Focus extra time on Persuasive speeches, intellectually challenging/socially significant topic selection, fine-tuning the most helpful activities for students, and replacing those that did not resonate.

- Assign more impromptu speaking activities throughout the semester.

- Schedule more group activities with opportunities for students to identify a multitude of topic areas while performing, practicing, and rehearsing extemporaneous delivery.

- Use more videos and examples of people speaking publicly about important issues. My hope is that those examples about socially and culturally significant topics will help facilitate better presentations on important topics.
Discuss and define “social and intellectual significance” and how to frame topics so they meet this standard earlier in the semester.
More practice identifying most effective evidence/support (compare types and effectiveness).
Add more analysis of speech exemplars and other examples to lessons.
Practice writing and delivering different types of introductions and conclusions, discuss benefits and limitations.
Change the order of the engagements so that audience analysis will be earlier in the semester.
I will make all submissions for all assignments online only.
“Audience engagement” will be added to all rubrics.
I plan on having more low risk speeches to have the students work on their speaking skills to address the extemporaneous section of this SLO.
Conduct a topic selection activity at the beginning of the semester. They need to do this the first week. A speech is only as good as its outline, and both start with a socially significant and intellectually challenging topic.
Need to clarify disparate definitions and interpretations of “socially significant and intellectual.”
Include more structured lessons on evidence and support.
Include more analysis of and practice with compelling introductions and conclusions needed.
More reinforcement of specific speech elements (preview and review of main points) needed.
Consistent and varied exercises needed for speech anxiety, speech rate, and vocal variety.
In the Fall, I plan to frame the discussions around the theme differently in an effort to assist students in their understanding of why global awareness, global diplomacy, and global citizenship are important. I also plan assess students’ academic and career goals to identify the ways in which they will directly interact with global issues at some point in their lives. My hope is that this will make the theme more personal for them and increase their interest in engaging with the topics that surface along the way.
This semester, I themed my course “global awareness, global diplomacy, and global citizenship” (as opposed to just “global awareness,” which was last semester’s theme). I decided I would challenge my students to think beyond just “awareness” of what is happening in the world. Instead, I wanted them to understand the deeper implications surrounding global diplomacy, what it means to be a global citizen, and what would happen without them. Moreover, I utilized Canvas extensively to post articles, videos, and assign discussion topics that informed their perspective on America’s role in the world. In class, I incorporated new activities for students to critically engage with the theme and with each other. After a few assignments, most students were able to identify and assess socially significant and intellectual topics and incorporate them into their speeches.
What I learned from the assessment this semester is that although it was more difficult to get my students to the level of understanding I aimed for regarding global awareness, global diplomacy, and global citizenship as a socially significant and intellectually challenging theme, the quality of work and the compelling arguments that surfaced in their final speeches made it worthwhile. Many of the students in my class were able to link why their topic around global awareness, global diplomacy, and/or global citizenship was not only important to them, but why it should matter to more Americans.
There were a few students who didn’t seem to care much about the theme/topic selection parameters and mentioned that they found it too challenging since they were not “experts” on the issues and thought they would be better equipped to speak about topics like “picking up girls,” “choosing the right dress for your wedding,” and “legalizing marijuana.”
Overall, the class did an excellent job in reaching an understanding about why the issues covered by the theme of the course mattered and they developed the skills necessary to develop strong, extemporaneous speeches.
I plan to do more in-class learning activities and development exercises. These keep the students engaged, interested, and happy to come to class.
I plan to use a themed approach again next semester, perhaps with some changes.
I noticed that overall my students delivery didn’t improve that much from the beginning of the semester to the end. They either started off strong and ended strong, or started off as a reader of notes and ended up a reader of notes. They understood that their final grade is based on their improvement in content, organization and delivery, so I was actually surprised how few incorporated key improvements. This has to do with procrastination. Even though we have deadlines along the way to make sure this doesn’t
happen, I think sometimes they are over-confident and don’t set aside enough time to practice. Boring their audience is always at the top of their list of fears, so the fact that they don’t spend more time becoming comfortable with their notecards, allowing a more conversational quality, is beyond me. They had a workshop day before the first round began and everyone was required to give their speech to their group, which was one method I thought would help them in this area. If I had more time I’d do this for each speech but now our caps are fairly high and I can’t seem to squeeze in two more days of workshops.

- This semester I placed civic engagement at the heart of the course. Next semester I hope to infuse a business or professional aspect as well. Perhaps I will teach the class from a perspective of a “community engagement department” of a corporation. I believe this addition could help many students grasp the concepts.

- One modification I am looking to make is develop a more structured way of determining common knowledge. That may be a simple document that outlines the parameters of common knowledge, but I might also have the students propose their speech ideas to the entire class and use those responses to gauge what the current common knowledge of the class is. This would be valuable for persuasive speeches when a student picks an advocacy that the whole class already agrees with.

- I plan on using different outline examples, and lecturing even more extensively than I already do on outlining and APA format.

- I will always require my students to work with a tutor in the Comm Center before their first round of speeches. My students greatly benefited from this experience. The tutors helped the students build a strong foundation for their speeches. This carried over in every assignment they completed. I look forward to seeing if this choice results in the same outcome as this semester.

- I plan on showing more Ted talks. I think it’s important for students to see examples of fun, interesting, dynamic speakers presenting various topics.

## Part 2

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes, the course coordinators and instructors are doing a good job keeping the goals, SLOs, content, support, and assessment consistent across sections. Regular communication between the coordinator and instructors and between the instructors maintains continuity within and across sections.

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE SLOs for writing.

We cap enrollment in Comm 20 to 25 students, allowing instructors to add only two students beyond the cap. Since we do not offer larger sections, students are able to receive thorough feedback and engage in practice and revisions of their writing within the current configuration of the course and workload of the instructors.