

COMM 494 (495): Capstone in Communication
Dr. Helen Sterk, FAC 132. Office Hours: by appointment
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Tuesday: 4-4:55 p.m.

As of 2015, the policy on capstone has changed. For Corporate and Organizational majors, COMM 489, the internship course, fulfills the capstone requirement. For Communication Studies majors, either COMM 489 or COMM 494 fulfill the capstone requirement. Please see Prof. Crawley to fill in some paperwork if you would like to take advantage of this new requirement. If you would prefer to remain under your catalog year's requirement, you may do that. If you have a double major and prefer to use that major's capstone, you may. If you are completing an Honors thesis, you may substitute that for this capstone course. If any of these apply to you, please see Prof. Crawley for the appropriate paperwork.

Required Materials

Access to Blackboard

Course Description and Objectives

The Capstone in Communication is intended to provide an 'exit ramp' for senior majors in Communication Studies. In it, we will discuss together and prepare documents that will be of central concern as you plan to graduate: What does the Communication degree mean to you? How can you present yourself well to future employers? What do a good cover letter and resume look like? And, how do you handle a job interview? Your active engagement is crucial to your success not only in this class, but also in your future.

Because I am committed to your success in this class, you are invited to submit any written work to me in advance of a due date for my feedback and you are encouraged to rewrite any assignment after receiving your first grade on it, for grade reconsideration. You will receive the higher of the two grades. Since the mock interview and persuasive speech are presentations, they do not qualify for revision.

At the end of this course, you will have

- prepared a **new** professional-looking cover letter and resume, ready to present to future employers.
- completed a professional level practice interview, to show yourself how ready you are to apply for jobs.

- written one interview-based essay, in which you interview an alum and write up a narrative of their insights on communication and their career and project those insights meaningfully into your own career future.
- written one research-based essay, in which you synthesize your learning about Communication
- presented a five minute long persuasive speech, supported with professional quality visuals (PowerPoint or Prezi or an equivalent software) to a COMM 145 class, giving good reasons for choosing to major in Communication Studies or Corporate and Organizational Communication.

Grading

All assignments must be uploaded to Blackboard where they will be analyzed by SafeAssign.

1. Regular attendance is expected. One unexcused absence is allowed. Penalties may be imposed for more than one absence.
2. Preparation of a professional quality cover letter and resume (15 points).
3. Complete a practice interview in the Center for Career and Professional Development (10 points).
4. Synthesis essay (30 points).
5. Alumnus/a interview essay (30 points).
6. Persuasive speech (15 points).

Criteria for cover letter and resume assignment (15 points):

- The cover letter and resume need to be created for this class, not recycled from another class.
- Professional 'look'—simple, clean, one page each
- Professional level presentation of information—solid wording, no errors, concise descriptions
- **Job description:** find a job description suitable to your education and experience and print it to include with your cover letter and resume
- **Cover letter**
 - One page, centered on the page
 - Appropriate format
 - Appropriate structure
- **Resume:**
 - One page only—edit and design to fit
 - Contact information
 - Education
 - Skills
 - Work experience
 - Honors / Achievements (Optional)

- Activities (e.g., campus/community activities, leadership/volunteer positions)

An excellent source for advice on cover letters can be found at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/6/22/> and on resumes, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/6/23/>

Criteria for practice interview (10 points):

- Sign up for the practice job interview with Jacob Hamlin at the Center for Career and Professional Development. See http://www.wku.edu/career/services/practice_interviews.php
 - **Two business days before the interview**, send Mr. Hamlin your job description, resume and cover letter via this site: <http://www.wku.edu/career/faculty/presentationrequest.php>
 - After the interview, get the evaluation sheet on your interview from Mr. Hamlin
- Submit the **evaluation sheet** for the interview conducted with Mr. Hamlin in the Center for Career and Professional Development and a **one page self-evaluation** of your performance in the interview
- **Both pieces** must be turned in for any credit in this category
- Points will be assigned based on the combination of the two pieces, with emphasis on the insight shown in your self-evaluation

Criteria for alumni interview essay (30 points):

- 1000-1250 words, roughly 4-5 pages of text (excluding cover page)
- Essay style, with clear introduction, claim, structured body, and conclusion
- Evidence of a thorough interview with an approved WKU Communication alum and ability to craft that interview into a narrative essay in which you think meaningfully and imaginatively about what it takes to develop a career in Communication

The purpose of this essay is to connect you directly with a WKU Communication alum so that you can interview them, finding out how training and expertise in Communication contributes to career development. Choose one of the members of the Communication Advisory Council. Read about them here: http://www.wku.edu/communication/comm_alumni/index.php Choose someone who is doing work that is similar to what you would like to do. Email/call them and set up an interview time of at least 45 minutes. You may interview them over Skype, FaceTime, the phone, or in person. Prepare 5-6 main questions that allow them to respond meaningfully. During the interview, encourage full responses through attentive listening. Be sure to record the interview or to take copious notes during the interview.

Frame the interview carefully. The following questions may serve as starters. Prepare more and allow questions to emerge during the interview:

--What has been your career path? [If they speak briefly, ask follow-up questions to nudge them to tell you more].

--What are the key ways in which education in Communication made a difference in your career? [Again, take a cue from what they say and ask follow-up questions if they speak briefly]

--What Communication skills do you look for in new employees? [Follow up questions, such as why? and Which are most important can get you more information].

--What advice do you have for me as I start and develop my career?

Your essay will present your narrative shaping of the information and opinions you gather in the interview. 'Narrative' means presenting a thesis-based summary of the interview rather than just giving the transcribed questions and answers. Consult <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-an-Interview-Essay> for great advice on preparing, doing, and writing up an interview.

Criteria for capstone 'synthesis essay' (30 points):

- 1500-1750 words, roughly 6-7 pages of text (excluding cover and reference pages, double-spaced, 12 point font)
- Minimum of **five academic communication-related sources** (such as books and journal articles; the COMM 200 theory app and other course textbooks may be used **in addition** to those five sources)
 - Here is how to cite the COMM 200 theory app:
 - Chapter author (2013 or 2016, depending on when you took the class). Chapter title. *Communication theory: The digital textbook*. Bowling Green, KY: WKU Research Foundation
- Appropriate APA format, including a cover page and reference pages according to APA guidelines (refer to OWL at Purdue for answers to any questions on format <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>)

The synthesis essay represents the depth of your learning about effective communication, significant theories within the discipline, and appropriate disciplinary writing. Think of it as your senior thesis, so draw on all your education in Communication to show your ability to take your learning to a high level of analysis and synthesis. Write the essay based on a theme that runs like a red thread through the whole piece. One student in the past used the theme of 'call and response' as the heart of communication; one used the theme of 'effective communication is better than sex.' The theme runs through the essay, giving it focus, a source for examples, and a real purpose.

In addition to a sharp, meaningful **introduction** (prepare this well—start with a set of techniques drawn from what you've learned in Advanced Public

Speaking), **claim** (one sentence statement of the point/conclusion of your paper: what do you claim as the key learning you have accomplished in Communication), and **preview** (stating the elements of your paper that will be used to argue your thesis) (all three=250 words), this essay will have four parts.

First, referring to (and citing) at least three standard **definitions of communication**, you will present and defend **your** definition of communication (250-300 words). Your definition takes on meaning against the backdrop of disciplinary definitions and your claim. You must cite at least three communication peer-reviewed articles or books as evidence of disciplinary definitions of communication. (Look at who is cited in the COMM theory app, Chapter One—read those articles and also see who they cite).

Second, you will define and defend your understanding of the **point and value of theory within communication** (250-300 words). Again, your definition and understanding take on meaning in relation to disciplinary definitions and your claim. You must cite at least one communication peer-reviewed article or book in support of your argument on the value of theory.

Third, you will choose **two related communication theories** that you find most useful or meaningful in bringing to life the processes of communication, arguing for the value of these theories through application to real-life observations and connections (500-600 words). The heart of the assignment, this section is where you will show that you not only know two theories well, but you have taken them beyond the textbook stage to the personal understanding stage. You must cite at least two communication peer-reviewed articles or books in support of your discussion of these two theories. The best sources are original statements of the theories, not a secondary source, such as a textbook. Use the bibliographies in your COMM 200 app to guide you to the appropriate articles.

Fourth, you will develop a conclusion that both **summarizes the major point of the paper and answers the “so what?” question**. So what difference to your life and to the world will it make that you have studied Communication for the past several years? (125-250 words)

Criteria for persuasive speech (15 points):

- Four-five minutes long (NO longer than five minutes)
- Professional quality visuals (PowerPoint or Prezi or equivalent)
- Extemporaneous delivery—confident, few/no notes, enthusiastic
- Presented to one COMM 145/161 classes
- Graded by the instructor of the class section for which you speak using a standard evaluation sheet that you will bring with you

Using your synthesis and interview essays as foundations, you will create a persuasive presentation that visualizes and explains to introductory students the value of a Communication degree. In this presentation, you will bring the meaning of a Communication degree to life in a creative and persuasive way.

Class Policies

- **Academic integrity.** Since this is the senior capstone class, one that assumes your completion of core and elective courses in the major, I hold high expectations of you for academic integrity. All work presented in this class is to be your own work, done freshly this semester, with appropriate credit given to other people's work. **Academic incompetence and lack of integrity includes cutting and pasting your work from other classes into this paper, incorrectly citing sources, presenting someone's work as your own, and making up sources.** To keep yourself honest, make careful notes of your research. In your writing, you must use quotation marks when directly using someone else's words (more than three consecutive words is considered direct use). In your speech, you must give an oral citation, such as "According to.....(give name), in [give source]...". When paraphrasing someone else's ideas, use parenthetical citation to indicate the source at the end of the paraphrase.
- **Penalties for academic dishonesty.** Western Kentucky University, the Department of Communication, and I are committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. **Anyone found guilty of recycling one's own material from other classes, plagiarism, fabrication of sources, or purchasing papers, speeches, or other assignments immediately will receive a failing grade for the assignment.** Depending on the severity of the dishonest actions, I may choose to fail you for the class, as well. Falsified medical excuses and presenting another student's work as your own fall within the guidelines of this academic integrity policy.
- **Classroom civility.** I practice and I expect you to:
 1. Display respect for all members of the class through language that avoids racist, sexist, homophobic, or other language that may denigrate members of our campus and classroom community.
 2. Practice attentiveness to and participation in all classroom conversations.
 3. Give your full attention to what we are doing in the classroom.
- **Attendance** is expected at each session. One unexcused absence is allowed.

Class Schedule

January 23: Introduction to the class.

January 30: Writing a cover letter and a resume.

February 6: Writing the interview essay—advice and ideas.

February 13: Cover letter and resume drafts are due. In class peer-review session.

February 20: No class.

February 27: Writing the synthesis essay—advice and ideas.

Also on February 27, Michael Butterworth will be speaking on ‘taking the knee’ and what the response to the athletes shows about America and race. If you turn in a half page response to the speech on March 6, you will earn extra credit.

March 6: In class presentation of the interview essays, done in a one-to-one format, with debriefing afterward. **Cover letter, resume, and alumni interview essays are due for grading**

March 13: Spring Break. No class.

March 20: Discussion of the persuasive speech.

March 27: In-class presentation and peer-review of **persuasive speeches.**

April 3: How to handle an interview effectively. **Capstone synthesis paper is due for grading.**

Between April 3 and May 1, you will complete your practice interview and your persuasive speech.

You will need to book a time with Career and Development Services for the practice interview. You are expected to complete the interview on the day and time booked. If you miss the interview, you will not be allowed to rebook. The reason for this is that if you miss an interview in life after university, you will not get the job. This practice interview is intended to give you good exposure to normal interview expectations.

Sign up for the practice job interview with Jacob Hamlin at the Center for Career and Professional Development. See

http://www.wku.edu/career/services/practice_interviews.php

Two business days before the interview, send Mr. Hamlin your job description, resume and cover letter via this site:

<http://www.wku.edu/career/faculty/presentationrequest.php>

After the interview, get the evaluation sheet on your interview from Mr. Hamlin.

During these weeks, set a day with a COMM 145 instructor to come and give your persuasive speech. We will have sign up sheets March.

April 10: No class meeting.

April 17: No class meeting.

April 24: No class meeting.

May 1: Summing up your learning in the major.

Practice interview materials, interview reflection paper and persuasive speech evaluation due in class. Pizza!!!

Exam week: No exam.

Title IX Misconduct/Assault Statement

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) at

<https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf>

and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at

https://wku.edu/policies/hr_policies/2040_discrimination_harassment_policy.pdf.

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121.

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and **MUST** report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

ADA Accommodation Statement

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union,

1074. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu . Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.