Texas A&M University
Core Curriculum
Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

Social science is a branch of science that deals with the institutions and functioning of human society and with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as members of society (Merriam Webster dictionary.) COMM 315-Interpersonal Communication examines the identification, critique and transformation of interpersonal communication behavior, which is at the heart of the social construction of human relationships. In COMM 315-Interpersonal Communication, a social science perspective is applied to the study of interpersonal communication behavior in dyads, groups, institutions, society and culture. Interpersonal communication theories provide structure to analysis of messages exchanged between individuals which impact society and shape culture. Key in this study is obtaining the tools to analyze how communication contributes to sustaining relationships, damaging or destroying relationships and repairing relationships through conflict management.

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Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

A critical key to the study of Interpersonal communication is the ability to reflect on one’s own communication behavior and how that behavior is contributing to the development, maintenance or dissolution of a relationship. An example would be a typical empathy task, thinking about how another might be thinking or feeling, and then adjusting one’s response based on that inquiry and analysis. Creative thinking comes into play in the innovation required to weigh, evaluate and synthesize theoretical perspectives with the practice of that communication behavior. An example would be to generate and implement ways to manage conflict in a constructive, mutually beneficial manner. The ability to think critically about interpersonal communication is assessed by student response to standard examination items.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):


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The study of interpersonal communication hinges on the concept of interpersonal communication competence. (see, for example, Spitzberg and Cupach,) Communication competence is the degree to which a communicator’s goals are achieved through effective and appropriate interaction. Therefore, can that communicator maintain the ‘face’ and the ‘line’ of the communication while in interaction with another. A student may write a communication plan for another person, explain competent communication or demonstrate it to show another appropriate verbal or non-verbal skills. Assessment of communication competence can occur through evaluation of written, oral and visual observation of non-verbal behavior. A student is able to become more self-reflective and perform more competent written, oral and visual interpersonal communication. The ability to communicate competently and to evaluate communication competence in others is assessed by performance in in-class activities and by student response to standard examination items.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills (to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions):

Empirical skills are employed to identify, through direct observation and through analysis of conversational transcripts, examples of dialogue that characterize the various stages of relationship development, maintenance and dissolution. Students draw informed conclusions about the stage and nature of an interpersonal relationship based on the type of talk observed. Additionally, students develop informed conclusions regarding appropriate conflict management strategies relevant to interpersonal stage and contextual factors including power dimensions and cultural norms. The ability to apply empirical methods to the study of interpersonal communication is assessed through student response to standard examination items.

Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

Key in the accurate descriptions, interpretation and evaluation of interpersonal relationship status based on talk and non-verbal behavior is the synthesis of knowledge of intercultural norms, including but not limited to genderlects, as well as generational, ethnic, contextual, national and societal considerations. These cultures include, but are not limited to, geographic constructs. In order to use the social science involved in interpersonal communication, each of these factors must be extrapolated across a variety of relationships including romantic relationships, friendships, employer-employee relationships, caregiver-patient relationships, and parent-child relationships, to name a few. Bolstered with this knowledge and skill, communicators will be prepared to engage in communities both similar to and diverse from their own. The ability to exhibit social responsibility competence, through motivation, knowledge and skill is assessed through student response to standard examination items.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.