Closing the Loop

Department: Communication Studies

Department Contact: Dr. Karen Lovaas (Department Chair)

College: Liberal & Creative Arts

Please list your program learning goals.

In Spring 2012, Communication Studies adopted the following Program Learning Outcomes [PLOs]:

1) Theory: Communication Studies majors will be able to articulate and use appropriate theories to analyze communication in a way that is methodologically consistent in paradigm and context.

2) Ethics: Communication Studies majors will be able to articulate ethical standards and will be disposed to engage in ethical practice within specific communication contexts.

3) Application: Communication Studies majors will apply course content to aspects of their personal, professional, and/or political life (this could include, but is not limited to delivering public speeches or performances, facilitating mediation or public dialogue, or engaging in structured debate, even if the application happens only in the classroom).
   **revision to PLO#3 approved March 1, 2019

4) Scholarship: Communication Studies majors will be able to read critically and evaluate appropriately original scholarship in the discipline.

The following summary paragraph (reflecting PLOs) was also previously approved for inclusion on all Communication Studies syllabi for courses that can be counted toward the Communication Studies major:

Students earning a baccalaureate in Communication Studies demonstrate articulation and use of appropriate communication theories to multiple contexts, can articulate ethical standards and engage in ethical practice of communication, can read critically and evaluate appropriately communication scholarship, and can apply their knowledge of communication to personal, professional and political life.
What assessment finding(s) is the department addressing?

In AY 2017-18, Communication Studies carried out an assessment project focused on PLO #3, which, at the time, stated: “Communication Studies majors will apply course material to aspects of their personal life, social life, and/or their local communities (e.g., delivering public speeches, performances, or other community focused discourse, even if that delivery happens only in the classroom).”

The AY 2017-18 assessment project revealed that Communication Studies majors are able to highlight diverse assignments related to PLO #3 in an “Application in Communication Studies” ePortfolio entry created within the Communication Studies capstone course. For example, some students describe applying principles of persuasion in speeches they created and delivered. Other students explain specific theories they applied to analyze family communication. Additionally, some students describe principles of conflict resolution that they applied to analyze a multi-part conflict case study. Others describe concepts related to discourse in interaction and how they applied those concepts through a series of field note assignments. The diversity of class assignments highlighted across “Application in Communication Studies” ePortfolio entries created by Communication Studies majors reflects the pervasiveness of “application” throughout the Communication Studies major.

The AY 2017-18 assessment project demonstrated that students had clearly applied course content within the Communication Studies major to aspects of their personal, social, and community life; however, their explanations of the course content they applied and summaries of their work were sometimes underdeveloped and/or their explanation of how their application of course content relates to their personal, social, and/or community life was underdeveloped. In other words, students demonstrated achievement of PLO #3, but Communication Studies faculty believe they could better explain and showcase their achievement.

In our AY 2017-18 assessment report, Communication Studies identified five undertakings for our AY 2018-19 assessment project that were aimed at “closing the loop” in relation to PLO #3. In AY 2018-19, the Communication Studies Assessment Committee would:

1. revise the language of PLO #3 to be more concrete and also parallel to the PLO summary paragraph appearing on Communication Studies syllabi because clarity and consistency in the PLO language enables better understanding of the PLO by Communication Studies instructors, enabling better explanations and support for students;
2. create and distribute a signature writing assignment to Communication Studies faculty whose courses assess PLO #3, which could be used to help
students connect course work to PLO#3 while the work is fresh in their minds;
3. meet with a sample of instructors whose syllabi indicate assessment of PLO #3 to help them articulate what the PLO means and how they are assessing it, ensuring that faculty understand the PLO and its assessment, thus facilitating support for student understandings, insights, and explanations;
4. create a video to be uploaded to the Communication Studies Syllabus Policies iLearn Collaborative Site that helps all Communication Studies faculty better understand the ePortfolio that Communication Studies majors will create in the capstone course and how it requires them to demonstrate PLO achievement through specific assignments from their courses, thus widening understanding of the PLOs and capstone ePortfolio project and potentially spurring greater ability to help students understand how they might showcase specific course work; and
5. identify research demonstrating the value of ePortfolios outside of academia and summarize that information for use within the Communication Studies capstone course, so students can better understand the relevance of robustly showcasing their PLO achievement, including achievement of PLO #3, motivating rich descriptions of course work and the larger capacities reflected in that course work.

What was the process through which faculty considered a response to those findings?

The Communication Studies Assessment Committee Chair undertook all AY 2018-19 assessment tasks and reported outcomes to the T/TT faculty.

What changes have you made or are you seeking to make in order to address the findings?

**1. Revising PLO #3 language to be more concrete and parallel to the PLO summary paragraph on Communication Studies syllabi**

The Communication Studies Assessment Committee Chair drafted revisions to PLO #3. The revisions were aimed at: a) clarifying language and phrasing that had been identified as vague in the AY 2017-18 assessment project and b) ensuring parallel language with the PLO summary paragraph that must appear on all Communication Studies syllabi for courses that can be counted toward the major.

The Assessment Committee Chair shared the draft revisions of PLO #3 with T/TT faculty members who had participated in discussion of the AY 2017-18 assessment project; the goal was to obtain feedback from those faculty members who had identified the need for revision. Revisions were,
subsequently, presented to the full T/TT Communication Studies faculty for discussion and a vote. The revisions were unanimously approved.

Originally, PLO #3 read: Communication Studies majors will apply course material to aspects of their personal life, social life, and/or their local communities (e.g., delivering public speeches, performances, or other community focused discourse, even if that delivery happens only in the classroom).

After revision, PLO #3 now reads: Communication Studies majors will apply course content to aspects of their personal, professional, and/or political life (this may include, but is not limited to delivering public speeches or performances, facilitating mediation or public dialogue, or engaging in structured debate, even if the application happens only in the classroom).

The approved revisions to PLO #3 required no changes to the PLO syllabus summary paragraph.

Revision of PLO #3 aids clarity and understanding of the PLO for all Communication Studies instructors, which supports clear explanation of the PLO to students.

2 & 3. Creating and distributing a signature writing assignment related to PLO #3 and meeting with a sample of instructors whose syllabi indicate assessment of PLO #3 to help the instructors articulate what the PLO means and how they are assessing it

The Communication Studies Assessment Chair combined these project goals. Review of Communication Studies syllabi for Spring 2019 by the Assessment Chair revealed that PLO #3 is frequently identified as being assessed within Communication Studies courses and that PLO #3 is being assessed in courses wherein one would expect “application” to occur. Therefore, it appears that PLO#3 is already well understood by Communication Studies faculty in relation to specific course work; thus, the need is to support faculty in helping students articulate the relationship between specific assignments throughout their Communication Studies course work and PLO #3.

A signature writing assignment would require students to articulate the meaning of PLO #3 and how a specific assignment completed for a course demonstrates achievement of the PLO. Completing the signature assignment within classes assessing PLO #3 would help students connect their course work to larger PLO capacities while the course work is fresh in their minds and help students be better prepared to, later, reflectively
demonstrate PLO achievement in the Communication Studies capstone course.

The Communication Studies Assessment Committee Chair created an Application in Communication Studies signature writing assignment template. The template includes the purpose of the assignment, background to the assignment, requirements, evaluation information, and helpful hints. Elements of the signature assignment that Communication Studies faculty would personalize for their course/assignment were highlighted on the template.

The Communication Studies Assessment Chair used the template to create two sample signature assignments for two different Communication Studies courses wherein PLO #3 is assessed. In other words, the template was completed with course-specific information to model how the template could be used by Communication Studies faculty within their classes.

Furthermore, the Communication Studies Assessment Chair created two sample signature assignment essays reflecting achievement of the requirements outlined in the template/sample assignments. These sample essays can help Communication Studies faculty understand the signature assignment’s goals and could be shared with students to also help them understand the assignment’s goals.

Thus, Communication Studies faculty who are assessing PLO #3 through a specific assignment in their course now have a signature assignment template they can personalize in order to support students in framing that course assignment in relation to a broader capacity developed within the Communication Studies major (i.e., PLO #3). Communication Studies faculty also have models wherein the template has been personalized and they have sample essays to aid understanding of what the signature assignment asks students to produce.

**Please see Appendices A through E for the Communication Studies PLO #3 Signature Assignment Template, two Communication Studies PLO #3 Sample Signature Assignments, and two Communication Studies PLO #3 Signature Assignment Sample Essays.**

The Communication Studies Assessment Committee Chair identified all Spring 2019 syllabi wherein instructors said PLO#3 was assessed. The Assessment Chair met with seven full-time instructors (i.e., three lecturers, one tenure-track faculty member, and three tenured faculty members) to explain the background for and goal of the signature assignment; review the template, sample assignments, and sample essays; and discuss the
potential use of the signature assignment in future courses taught by these instructors.

The Communication Studies Assessment Chair also uploaded the PLO #3 signature assignment template, the two samples of the signature assignment, and the two sample essays to the Communication Studies iLearn Syllabus Policies Collaborative Site. The collaborative site includes the PLOs, PLO summary paragraph, and information supporting assessment of PLOs across Communication Studies courses.

4. Creating a video that helps all Communication Studies faculty better understand the ePortfolio students will create in the capstone course and how it requires them to demonstrate PLO achievement through specific assignments from their various courses

If faculty understand how assignments from their courses relate to the PLOs and the ePortfolio that will be created in the Communication Studies capstone course, they can better support students in connecting specific assignments to the PLOs, including PLO #3, and preparing for the work of the capstone course.

The Communication Studies Assessment Chair scripted an overview of the Communication Studies PLOs, the Communication Studies capstone course ePortfolio, and how both relate to the work students complete throughout their Communication Studies courses. The goal was to help faculty understand the link between the assignments they ask students to complete within their courses and the ePortfolio students create in their capstone course, which frames their Communication Studies course work in terms of PLO achievement.

The Communication Studies Assessment Chair worked with Academic Technology to record and edit a video using the completed script. The video explains the Communication Studies PLOs, offering examples of course work that would reflect each PLO. The video also walks the viewer through a Communication Studies capstone ePortfolio, showing the required entries, explaining how they reflect the PLOs, and explaining how the entries are supported by course work from throughout the major.

The Communication Studies Assessment Chair individually emailed the informational video to all Communication Studies faculty teaching courses that can be counted toward the major in Spring 2019 (T/TT and Lecturer). The video was also uploaded to the Communication Studies Syllabus Policies iLearn collaborative site, as it supports faculty in thinking about what it means for PLOs to be assessed in their courses and how students might showcase assignments from a course in terms of PLO achievement.
**Please see Appendix F for a copy of the video script**

5. **Identify research speaking to the value of ePortfolios outside of academia, so students can better understand the relevance of robustly showcasing their PLO achievement**

If students are motivated by understanding the potential relevance of a well-developed and supported ePortfolio, they may apply more rigor to demonstrating their PLO achievements, including achievement of PLO #3.

The Communication Studies Assessment Chair compiled peer-reviewed research regarding outcomes of capstone courses as well as research regarding employer perceptions of ePortfolios. The result was the creation of an iLearn Page within our online COMM 670 (Senior Seminar) course overviewing the potential value of the capstone course and ePortfolio.

**Please see Appendix G for the content of this iLearn page.**

What assessment activities do you plan to undertake next academic year? Is there a particular program learning goal that you would like to assess? Are there other assessment findings that you’d like to address? In light of your assessment work, changes in the field, or other influences, do you want to take the opportunity to revise the program goals next year? Will you move on to assess a different learning goal?

In AY 2019-20, Communication Studies will focus on assessing achievement of PLO #1. This project will include:

1. reviewing all syllabi for Communication Studies courses that can be counted toward the Communication Studies major in Fall 2019 to determine if: a) the required PLO summary paragraph appears on the syllabus and b) if the instructor further states which of the PLOs are assessed in the class;
2. individually communicating via memo with each Communication Studies instructor for each course they are teaching in Fall 2019, either affirming inclusion of required syllabus content regarding PLOs or indicating need for revision to accurately and completely include required content;
3. selecting a random sample of 10% of ePortfolios completed within the Communication Studies capstone course in Fall 2019 and assessing achievement of PLO #1, using an updated version of a previously-created rubric;
4. reporting results of the ePortfolio assessment to the T/TT Communication Studies faculty by February 2020 in order to determine if an AY 2020-21 Closing the Loop Assessment project is needed regarding PLO #1 and what it would entail; and
5. Creating, by March 2020, a PLO #1 signature assignment template, sample signature assignment, and sample signature assignment essay for distribution to Communication Studies faculty who indicate assessment of PLO #1 on their syllabi.
Appendix A

Communication Studies PLO #3 Signature Assignment Template

COMM [enter your course number]
[enter your course name]
Application in Communication Studies

Purpose of Assignment
This assignment enables you to use one of the program learning outcomes of the Communication Studies major at SFSU to frame your [insert the name of the assignment in your course that assessed PLO #3]. Framing your course work in relation to program learning outcomes relates to work you will do in COMM 670 (the culminating course for the Communication Studies major) and enables you to explain the significance of your course work to non-academics.

Brief Background
On every syllabus for Communication Studies classes that meet a requirement for your major, you will see the following paragraph: Students earning a baccalaureate in Communication Studies demonstrate articulation and use of appropriate communication theories to multiple contexts, can articulate ethical standards and engage in ethical practice of communication, can read critically and evaluate appropriately communication scholarship, and can apply their knowledge of communication to personal, professional and political life.

The above paragraph reflects program learning outcomes [PLOs]—the broad things you walk away from the Communication Studies major understanding and being able to do. The classes you took and work you did weave together to help you develop the larger capacities reflected in the PLO paragraph.

In your capstone course (COMM 670), you will focus on developing strong explanations of the program learning outcomes for the Communication Studies major, their significance, and you will describe, in detail, work that you did in the major that reflects your achievement of those outcomes.

One of the program learning outcomes for Communication Studies at SFSU states: Communication Studies majors will apply course material to aspects of their personal, professional, and/or political life. The [insert name of assignment] is one way that you achieved that outcome. You applied specific course content to complete the assignment and the application/work that you did relates to your [insert personal, professional, and/or political life].
Requirements
In 4-5 pages (typed, double spaced, one-inch margins, 12-pt font), write an essay that adheres to the following requirements:

1. Your first paragraph should begin by stating that the ability to apply course content is developed within the Communication Studies major at SFSU, explain what “application” means, and explain that you have engaged in different types of application within the major (e.g., writing essays in which you analyze communication, creating performances, developing and delivering speeches, conducting a research study).

2. Your second paragraph should explain how the ways in which you have applied course content within Communication Studies relate to communication in your personal, professional, and political life.

3. Your third paragraph should explain why the ability and opportunity to apply course content is important.

4. The remainder of your essay (3-4 pages) should identify and explain how the [insert name of assignment] exemplifies your ability to apply course content. You should specifically explain the focus of the assignment, summarize in detail the course content it applied, and summarize your work in detail.

5. Be clear in your essay how the application you are describing relates to personal, professional, and/or political communication contexts.

6. Provide closure to your essay.

Evaluation
You can earn up to [x] points for this essay, based on your adherence to all requirements, the clarity and quality of your explanations, and the quality of your writing. Content and writing are equally important.

Helpful Hints
A sample paper is attached.
Appendix B

Communication Studies PLO #3 Signature Assignment Sample #1

**COMM 515**

**Family Communication**

Application in Communication Studies

**Purpose of Assignment**

This assignment enables you to use one of the program learning outcomes of the Communication Studies major at SFSU to frame your Family Story Speech. Framing your course work in relation to program learning outcomes relates to work you will do in COMM 670 (the culminating course for the Communication Studies major) and enables you to explain the significance of your course work to non-academics.

**Brief Background**

On every syllabus for Communication Studies classes that meet a requirement for your major, you will see the following paragraph: Students earning a baccalaureate in Communication Studies demonstrate articulation and use of appropriate communication theories to multiple contexts, can articulate ethical standards and engage in ethical practice of communication, can read critically and evaluate appropriately communication scholarship, and can apply their knowledge of communication to personal, professional and political life.

The above paragraph reflects program learning outcomes [PLOs]—the broad things you walk away from the Communication Studies major understanding and being able to do. The classes you took and work you did weave together to help you develop the larger capacities reflected in the PLO paragraph.

In your capstone course (COMM 670), you will focus on developing strong explanations of the program learning outcomes for the Communication Studies major, their significance, and you will describe, in detail, work that you did in the major that reflects your achievement of those outcomes.

One of the program learning outcomes for Communication Studies at SFSU states: Communication Studies majors will apply course material to aspects of their personal, professional, and/or political life. The Family Story Speech is one way that you achieved that outcome. You applied specific course content to complete the assignment and the application/work that you did relates to your personal life.

**Requirements**

In 4-5 pages (typed, double spaced, one-inch margins, 12-pt font), write an essay that adheres to the following requirements:
1. Your first paragraph should begin by stating that the ability to apply course content is developed within the Communication Studies major at SFSU, explain what “application” means, and explain that you have engaged in different types of application within the major (e.g., writing essays in which you analyze communication, creating performances, developing and delivering speeches, conducting a research study).

2. Your second paragraph should explain how the ways in which you have applied course content within Communication Studies relate to communication in your personal, professional, and political life.

3. Your third paragraph should explain why the ability and opportunity to apply course content is important.

4. The remainder of your essay (3-4 pages) should identify and explain how the Family Story Speech exemplifies your ability to apply course content. You should specifically explain the focus of the assignment, summarize in detail the course content it applied, and summarize your work in detail.

5. Be clear in your essay how the application you are describing relates to personal, professional, and/or political communication contexts.

6. Provide closure to your essay.

Evaluation
You can earn up to 10 points for this essay, based on your adherence to all requirements, the clarity and quality of your explanations, and the quality of your writing. Content and writing are equally important.

Helpful Hints
A sample paper is attached.
Appendix C

Communication Studies PLO #3 Signature Assignment
Sample Essay #1

COMM 515
Family Communication
Sample Application in Communication Studies Essay

Applying course content threads throughout the Communication Studies major at San Francisco State. Application means doing something with what you are learning. It is one thing to develop understandings of communication theories, concepts, principles, and practices, but it is another to be able to do something with those understandings. All of my Communication Studies courses required me to apply what I was learning in some way. Throughout the major, I wrote papers, developed speeches, created performances, and even facilitated a public dialogue and created a blog. All of these assignments enabled me to apply the knowledge I was developing.

Within Communication Studies, applying course content relates to personal, professional, and political contexts. For example, in my Discourse and Interaction class, we studied how people manage positive face in interaction and how face can be threatened; this enables me to be more mindful of how communication with important people in my life impacts the positive self-images we want to maintain. In my Advanced Public Speaking class, I developed and delivered a speech regarding Alzheimer’s disease. My ability to apply principles of public speaking relates to professional communication contexts, as I may need to clearly present complex information in the workplace. My application of public speaking principles also
relates to political communication contexts as I have the skills and confidence to advocate for policies relevant to my community.

The ability to apply course content is significant. By applying course content throughout the Communication Studies major, I have been an active learner. I have been a leader, not just a follower. I did not just passively received information; I engaged ideas and helped contribute to my and my peers’ understandings. I have demonstrated that I am capable and have the power to analyze and influence the world around me. In Communication Studies, theories, concepts, principles, and practices are all actively applied, allowing me to enhance my personal, professional, and political communication skills.

In my Communication Studies major, I had the opportunity to apply course content in a Family Story Speech for my Family Communication course. After learning about different types of family stories, the purpose of the assignment was to give a speech that retells a particular family story to the class and analyze how that story is applied to our present perspective on life. With this assignment, I applied my knowledge of family story types and their functions to determine how my communication experience with a family story has influenced my current values and personal standards.

In Family Communication, we discussed Narrative Theory, which describes humans as innate storytellers. According to this communication theory, implied rules are often the product of stories. In family stories, the family is the subject and communicating with each other through these narratives contributes to the creation of wholeness, roles, and behaviors within the family, as well as expectations and
overall family history. There are three types of stories that were focused on in Family Communication: courtship stories, birth stories, and survival stories.

Courtship stories are the parents’ attempt at telling the child how to behave in a romantic relationship. This story is told differently depending on age. A birth story is the child’s origin story that almost always matches their present-day personality. Lastly, a survival story tells stories of tragedy and hardship that promote behaviors for survival. These are stories that are meant to advise family members about what to do when bad things happen.

The Family Story speech assignment in Family Communication required that we tell one of the three types of family stories and describe how it became relatable through Narrative Theory. In an effort to apply course content, I used a family survival story that my father has told me throughout my whole life as the focus of my speech. With knowledge of what family stories are capable of doing alongside the purpose of survival stories, in general, I evaluated my experience with my father’s survival story in order to determine why I still find it to be relevant today. After telling the story, I argued that this family narrative regarding education and work in America has influenced my personal and professional outlooks on life.

Communicating messages of hardship, my father’s survival story details the experiences he faced as a Filipino immigrant in the United States. His story is mainly focused on the struggles of finding work in his field because of the discrimination he encountered as a person of color in an area that lacked diversity. Being the foreigner in his workplace, my father says that many people looked at him as not capable of doing the job. At the same time, those he worked with did not want to take the time
to teach him what he needed to know. Despite having begun his engineering degree and acquiring relevant work experience in the Philippines, he learned that his coworkers were not going to take him seriously until he could truly prove himself, so he was advised to complete his degree.

Adding to the hardship my father was experiencing, he now had a family to care for. When I was born, that is when he decided to finish his degree. Being a working dad and student, he grew more frustrated because of how the extra school work was getting in the way of the job he needed to support his family. Struggling to balance work, school, and family, my father's story explains how he wanted to give up and even considered dropping out of college with only one semester left. With regard to survival, he eventually ended up finishing his degree with encouragement from my mother and finally gained the respect in the workplace he deserved.

Relative to Narrative Theory, there are values that have been produced by my communication experience with this survival story. By applying Narrative Theory to this family story, I can relate the communicated messages to my personal and professional life. In my family’s culture, this story is relevant because it is usually told to emphasize the importance of education. While I heard this story as a child, I hear it more often as a college student. When I talk about my own college struggles, this is usually the story that follows as it is a successful survival story that is used as encouragement while serving its function to promote endurance and hard work.

To explain why I am pursuing a degree, my father’s survival story is also applicable to my professional life. In response to this story, it has become part of my
nature to complete my education in order to avoid the kind of experiences my father faced before accomplishing his goals. Although our experiences greatly differ, the survival story communicates its functions: valuing education as a pathway to success in my professional endeavors.

Every class I took for my Communication Studies major was focused on a topic and meant we were developing knowledge about that subject. In every class, I was able to go beyond learning about something to doing something with what I was learning. I had opportunities to apply theories, concepts, research, and ethical standards for communication to personal, professional, and political communication contexts. I am confident in my ability to apply what I have learned in my major to my personal, professional, and political life.
Appendix D

Communication Studies PLO #3 Signature Assignment Sample #2

COMM 502
Interpersonal Communication
Application in Communication Studies

Purpose of Assignment
This assignment enables you to use one of the program learning outcomes of the Communication Studies major at SFSU to frame your Interpersonal Communication Journal. Framing your course work in relation to program learning outcomes relates to work you will do in COMM 670 (the culminating course for the Communication Studies major) and enables you to explain the significance of your course work to non-academics.

Brief Background
On every syllabus for Communication Studies classes that meet a requirement for your major, you will see the following paragraph: Students earning a baccalaureate in Communication Studies demonstrate articulation and use of appropriate communication theories to multiple contexts, can articulate ethical standards and engage in ethical practice of communication, can read critically and evaluate appropriately communication scholarship, and can apply their knowledge of communication to personal, professional and political life.

The above paragraph reflects program learning outcomes [PLOs]—the broad things you walk away from the Communication Studies major understanding and being able to do. The classes you took and work you did weave together to help you develop the larger capacities reflected in the PLO paragraph.

In your capstone course (COMM 670), you will focus on developing strong explanations of the program learning outcomes for the Communication Studies major, their significance, and you will describe, in detail, work that you did in the major that reflects your achievement of those outcomes.

One of the program learning outcomes for Communication Studies at SFSU states: Communication Studies majors will apply course material to aspects of their personal, professional, and/or political life. The Interpersonal Communication Journal is one way that you achieved that outcome. You applied specific course content to complete the assignment and the application/work that you did relates to your personal and/or professional life.
Requirements
In 4-5 pages (typed, double spaced, one-inch margins, 12-pt font), write an essay that adheres to the following requirements:

1. Your first paragraph should begin by stating that the ability to apply course content is developed within the Communication Studies major at SFSU, explain what “application” means, and explain that you have engaged in different types of application within the major (e.g., writing essays in which you analyze communication, creating performances, developing and delivering speeches, conducting a research study).

2. Your second paragraph should explain how the ways in which you have applied course content within Communication Studies relate to communication in your personal, professional, and political life.

3. Your third paragraph should explain why the ability and opportunity to apply course content is important.

4. The remainder of your essay (3-4 pages) should identify and explain how the Interpersonal Communication Journal exemplifies your ability to apply course content. You should specifically explain the focus of the assignment, summarize in detail the course content it applied, and summarize your work in detail.

5. Be clear in your essay how the application you are describing relates to personal, professional, and/or political communication contexts.

6. Provide closure to your essay.

Evaluation
You can earn up to 10 points for this essay, based on your adherance to all requirements, the clarity and quality of your explanations, and the quality of your writing. Content and writing are equally important.

Helpful Hints
A sample paper is attached.
Appendix E

Communication Studies PLO #3 Signature Assignment Sample Essay #2

COMM 502
Interpersonal Communication
Sample Application in Communication Studies Essay

Applying course content threads throughout the Communication Studies major at San Francisco State. “Application” means doing something with what you are learning. It is one thing to develop understandings of communication theories, concepts, principles, and practices, but it is another to be able to do something with those understandings. All of my Communication Studies courses required me to apply what I was learning in some way. Throughout the major, I wrote papers, developed speeches, created performances, and even facilitated a public dialogue and created a blog. All of these assignments enabled me to apply the knowledge I was developing.

Within Communication Studies, applying course content relates to personal, professional, and political contexts. For example, in my Discourse and Interaction class, we studied how people manage positive face in interaction and how face can be threatened; this enables me to be more mindful of how communication with important people in my life impacts the positive self-images we want to maintain. In my Advanced Public Speaking class, I developed and delivered a speech regarding Alzheimer’s disease. My ability to apply principles of public speaking relates to professional communication contexts, as I may need to clearly present complex information in the workplace. My application of public speaking principles also relates to political communication contexts as I have the skills and confidence to advocate for policies relevant to my community.
The ability to apply course content is significant. By applying course content throughout the Communication Studies major, I have been an active learner. I have been a leader, not just a follower. I did not just passively received information; I engaged ideas and helped contribute to my and my peers’ understandings. I have demonstrated that I am capable and have the power to analyze and influence the world around me. In Communication Studies, theories, concepts, principles, and practices are all actively applied, allowing me to enhance my personal, professional, and political communication skills.

One example of application of course content within my major was a “journal” for my Interpersonal Communication class. Throughout the semester, we had five journal assignments. Each focused on a specific concept or set of concepts we had discussed in class and required us to apply the concepts to our communication experiences. For example, one of the journal entries focused on opposing forms of communication that contribute to communication climate (i.e., the overall feeling of the relationship being defensive and on-guard or comfortable and supportive). In class, we discussed six opposing forms of communication that can contribute to a more supportive or defensive communication climate: evaluation versus description, certainty versus provisionalism, strategy versus spontaneity, control versus problem orientation, neutrality versus empathy, and superiority versus equality.

Evaluative communication labels a person’s behaviors as good or bad, while description explains what one is observing without judgment. Certainty suggests there is one right answer, while provisionalism communicates openness to other perspectives. Strategy is manipulative communication, while spontaneous communication is not
premeditated. Control imposes one’s will on others, while problem-orientation invites a mutually acceptable solution or direction. Neutrality communicates detachment, while empathy communicates shared emotion and connection. Superiority communicates that one is better than others, while equality conveys being on the same level.

Our journal entry regarding communication climate required us to use two of the forms of communication to analyze communication in a personal or professional relationship that significantly impacts our life. I applied evaluation and neutrality to better understand the defensive climate between my father and me. My thesis was that patterns of evaluative and neutral communication create a defensive, on-guard relationship between us.

In analyzing my communication with my father, who lives in Las Vegas, it was important to examine how we both contribute to our communication climate. For example, when I write my father a letter (which is the best way for us to communicate without getting into an argument), I will tell him about things I am doing in school, my job, and my summer plans. When he responds, he does not comment on the information I have shared. Instead, he will talk about his dogs, going to the local casino, or his favorite movie. In my journal essay, I described his response as neutral communication because the absence of comment regarding what I share conveys a lack of care or interest. However, I had to admit that I do the same thing in response to my father. I am not especially interested in his favorite movie or gambling, so I do not comment on what he shares. I like animals, but only minimally comment that I am glad his dogs are well. We are both communicating neutrality (i.e., detachment from one another).
In my journal entry, I also analyzed how my communication with my father reflects mutual evaluation. For example, when I saw my father in person one time, his neighbor was at his house and the neighbor asked what I do. I started to say I was going to school and have an internship, but my father interrupted and said, “She doesn’t work!” I told them that I have an internship, but my father repeated, “She doesn’t work!” My father’s words conveyed negative judgment, suggesting my lack of paid work was a fault or problem. In my journal, I also admitted that my communication with my father is evaluative. When my father talks about being abandoned by his dad and how that has affected him, I respond by pointing out that he has treated me as his father treated him, and that he could have done more to break the cycle. I am evaluating my father’s communication with me over the years, rather than empathizing with what he is telling me.

The journal entries I created for Interpersonal Communication were an opportunity to go beyond memorizing theories and concepts. I was able to apply course content to communication in my personal life and better understand its implications. In the entry regarding communication climate, I could see how patterns of neutral and evaluative communication between my father and me is creating an overall defensive and on-guard relational climate. I also had to admit that it takes two people to build a relationship. We are both creating the defensive climate through mutual neutrality and evaluation. It will take change on both of our parts to create a better relationship.

Every class I took for my Communication Studies major was focused on a topic and meant we were developing knowledge about that subject. In every class, I was able to go beyond learning about something to doing something with what I was learning. I had
opportunities to apply course content to personal, professional, and political communication contexts. I am confident in my ability to apply what I have learned in my major to my personal, professional, and political life.
Appendix F

Script for Communication Studies ePortfolio and PLO Video

Supporting Communication Studies Majors: Linking Course Work, PLOs, and Capstone

[video opening focuses on Assessment Chair]
Hello Everyone. Most of you already know me—I am Dr. Mindi Golden and for the last four years I have served as the Communication Studies Department’s Assessment Committee Chair. I also spearheaded development of COMM 670, which is our department’s capstone course. I realize that you have been hearing lots of talk about PLOs, Communication Studies majors needing to save their course work, ePortfolios, and the capstone course. This message is intended to give you a clearer picture of how all of that relates to the work your students do in your classes.

Program learning outcomes, or PLOs, are the broad things our students walk away from the major understanding and being able to do. There are four PLOs for the Communication Studies major.

• The first PLO says that our majors are able to articulate and use theory to analyze communication. In other words, in various courses, students learn about and develop understandings of specific theories and then use the assumptions of those theories to engage in original analysis of communication. For example, in a Social Semiotics class, students might write an essay in which they analyze food labels using Saussure’s theory of signs. Or, in a Conflict Resolution class, they might write an essay in which they analyze a case study using a specific conflict theory.

• The second PLO for the Communication Studies major says that our majors are able to articulate and engage in ethical communication standards. For example, maybe students in a performance studies class have an assignment wherein they interview someone regarding a specific life experience and create a performance based on their interview. Given course content, they are able to articulate ethical communication standards and considerations from their choice of topic, to their interviewing procedures, the creation of their script, their performative choices, and their presentation to and debriefing with their audience.

• The third PLO says that our majors are able to apply course content to their personal, professional, and political lives. For example, students who take Dialogues Across Differences learn to facilitate dialogue. They learn about systemic questioning and a visions-possibilities-actions model. Students apply what they have learned by facilitating a dialogue and they can explain how the capacities they developed through the course are relevant to communication in their personal, professional, and political lives.
• The fourth PLO says that Communication Studies majors are able to read critically and evaluate original scholarship. For example, maybe each student in an Interpersonal Communication class critically reads and summarizes an original research article, then collaborates with other students to create a presentation wherein they each discuss their study and evaluate overall limitations and future directions for their related areas of research.

As you know, if a Communication Studies class we are teaching can be counted toward the major, we must include a standardized paragraph on our syllabus that summarizes the four PLOs I just described. That paragraph can be found on our iLearn COMM Syllabus Policies collaborative site. In addition, we must state which of the four PLOs are specifically assessed through requirements in our course. Every class we teach does not have to assess all four PLOs. For example, assignments students complete in my Interpersonal Communication class relate to PLOs 3 and 4 regarding application and scholarship. Assignments students complete in my Communication & Aging class relate to PLOs 1, 2, and 3, regarding theory, ethics, and application. Bottom line, our syllabi must include the PLO summary paragraph and state which of those PLOs are specifically assessed through requirements in the class.

At the end of their time in the Communication Studies major, students take COMM 670, which is our department’s capstone course. Every major on campus is required to have a capstone experience for its majors. In our capstone course, students create an ePortfolio. Specifically, they create entries where they explain each PLO, what it means, and why it is important. They also showcase specific ways they achieved each PLO. That means they showcase assignments they completed in their courses—they showcase essays, performances, speeches, debates, websites they created, blogs they wrote, et cetera. This is why it is important that students save their course work! They need it in order to showcase their achievements at the end of their major.

I am going to show you an ePortfolio, so you can better understand what students are creating and how they are incorporating work they completed in your courses.

[Focus on ePortfolio]
Throughout the CSU system, students are able to create an ePortfolio using the Portfolium platform. It is free to them and the ePortfolio is theirs for life.

[Show the profile tab, scroll down then back up]
When you first log on to the ePortfolio, you see a “profile” page. This is the place where the student can share a bit about themselves. They can personalize the introduction, provide information about work history, and provide information regarding their education. The banner image and personal image at the top of the ePortfolio are also completely customizable.

[click and show the portfolio tab]
Within the “portfolio” tab of the ePortfolio, our capstone students are required to create five entries describing their experiences as a Communication Studies major and how they achieved specific outcomes of the major.

[focus on entry one]
• The first entry is called “My Communication Studies Major.” Within this entry, the student explains why they chose the major, what they thought it would be when they declared it, how they understand the major now that they are completing it, and how they can use specific capacities they developed within the major in their future endeavors.

[focus on entry two]
• The second entry is called “Theory in Communication Studies.” This is where the student explains what theory is, why it is useful, and how they used theory to analyze communication within an assignment for one of their Communication Studies courses.

[focus on entry three]
• The third entry is “Ethics in Communication Studies.” Here, the student explains what communication ethics means, describes the richness and complexity of communication ethics, and showcases one example of how they developed and engaged in ethical communication standards within the major.

[focus on entry four]
• The fourth entry is called “Application in Communication Studies.” Here, the student explains what application means, different forms of application, why it is important to actively apply knowledge, and how they applied course content within a specific assignment, as well as how that work relates to their personal, professional, and political life.

[focus on entry five]
• The fifth entry is called “Scholarship in Communication Studies.” Here, the student explains what original scholarship is, what it means to read original scholarship critically and evaluate it, and why this is an important set of capacities. They showcase one project from their major that reflects their reading and evaluation of original scholarship.

[click on Ethics entry to open it]
If I click on one of these ePortfolio entries, you will see where the student has developed the ideas I just described and uploaded a pdf of the course work they refer to within the entry. For example, if I click on this student’s “Ethics in Communication Studies” entry, [scroll down entry] I can read her explanation of what communication ethics is and how she articulated and engaged in ethical communication standards in a specific assignment for a course within the major. If I want to look at the original course work that she refers to in the entry, I can just click on the pdf she has attached. [scroll up and show pdf upload] By the way, students can also upload recordings of performances and speeches, as well as URL links to blogs or websites.

[click back to overall portfolio tab]
A visitor to the ePortfolio can see the entries and click on any of them to read more and see the attached work, work that was originally completed within our classes and is now being used to showcase the broad capacities developed within the Communication Studies major.

[back to Assessment Chair]
I hope this refresher regarding our PLOs and the look at a COMM 670 ePortfolio helps you better understand why students need to keep their COMM course work and how they are potentially using assignments completed within your classes in their ePortfolios.

In all of our COMM GWAR classes, our instructors are introducing our majors to the PLOs and discussing how they relate to course content. They are also helping students set up their ePortfolio as a place where they can save their work from their classes for later use in the capstone class.

The Communication Studies Assessment Committee is also creating signature assignments related to the PLOs that will be shared with faculty. These assignments could be used throughout the major to help students start writing about how work they completed for a class relates to one of the PLOs. This way, they have a start on the thinking, writing, and showcasing required in COMM 670.

We have thoughtful, hard-working, determined majors. By helping them save their work and relate their course work to their accomplishment of PLOs, we help them explain the broad capacities they develop within the major, showcasing themselves and their capacities for others. Many of our capstone students say that in job interviews they are asked about their “take aways” from their Communication Studies major. They say that being able to explain the PLOs gave them an answer.

In Communication Studies, we also have thoughtful, hard-working, accomplished instructors. Thank you for all that you do. I appreciate your time and your ongoing support of the department and its majors.
Appendix G

Content of iLearn Page created for the Communication Studies Capstone Course

Why take a capstone course?

A capstone course:

- comes "at the end of a sequence of courses with the objective of integrating a body of relatively fragmented knowledge into a unified whole" (Durel, 1993, p. 223);
- increases the opportunity to “connect, deepen, and generalize learning beyond the immediate setting where it occurs” (Kinzie, 2013, p. 30);
- helps you articulate the broad capacities you have developed and demonstrate the skills reflected in the work you have completed;
  → This is important because employers are concerned about students' readiness for the workplace.
  → While most employers hold that graduates qualify for entry level positions, they are not as confident about graduates' readiness for advanced levels (Henscheid, 2000). Other studies indicate that corporate executives find students' communication, writing skills, problem-solving, attention to detail, and critical thinking skills are weak (Hart & Associates, 2015; PayScale, 2016);
- greatly improves critical thinking, ability to self-assess, ethical thinking, and understanding of the complexities of the workplace (French, et al., 2015)
  → This is significant as a 2015 study found that students and employers have significantly different opinions about students’ skills.
  → Whereas students rated their ethical judgment, ability to locate, analyze and organize information, written communication, and analyzing complex problems very highly, employers often gave students ratings at half the students’ own ratings. In addition, employers strongly believe that college education should teach students how to solve complex problems by working with people who have ideas different form their own (Jaschik, 2015).

Why create an ePortfolio in the capstone course?

An ePortfolio:

- represents “evidence for the intersection of [your] experiences, accomplishments, and reflections” (Buente et al., 2015, p. 170);
- "often becomes the first impression for...future employers” (Buente et al., 2015, p. 170);
- allows you to document and take ownership of your learning experiences (Buente et al., 2015);
• enables you to “articulate and **reflect** on...achievements and demonstrate how these achievements relate to each other [which] becomes a very useful skill for a job or graduate school interview” (Buente et al., 2015, p. 171)
→ A focus group report out of the University of Notre Dame (2013) showed that 83% of employers surveyed said that an ePortfolio would be very or fairly useful to them in reviewing applicants.
→ A survey conducted by the University of Florida Career Center (2000) found that 87% of potential employers surveyed said they would use an ePortfolio to screen candidates and 71% would use an ePortfolio to supplement a candidate’s interview. The industries surveyed ranged from financial, government, retail, technology, and engineering.