

Basic Communication Course Training at ISU
Prepared by
Cheri J. Simonds

Program

The Basic Communication Course at Illinois State University is entitled, Communication as Critical Inquiry (COM 110). This course is an integral part of the general education program at ISU. It is one of two courses that all ISU students must take in their first-year experience; the other is ENG 101, Composition as Critical Inquiry (ENG 101). The third element of this important first year sequence is Milner Library where students progress from one course to the next in their information literacy skills.

The overall purpose of COM 110 is to improve students' abilities to express themselves and to listen to others in a variety of communication settings. The course emphasizes participation in a variety of communication processes in order to develop, reinforce, and evaluate communication skills appropriate for public, small group, and interpersonal settings. The course content and experiences enable students to assume their responsibilities as speaker-listener-critic in a culturally diverse world. In short, the course is designed to make students *competent, ethical, critical, confident, and information literate* communicators—all in an effort to make them better citizens in a democracy.

As many basic communication courses are quickly becoming integral to general education programs across the country, we as course directors are in the position of offering multiple sections taught by multiple instructors. At Illinois State University, we service over 3,000 students per year, offer approximately 75 sections of our course each semester, and generally have over 50 different instructors (40 GTAs and 10 Adjuncts). Most of our instructors are traditional MA students who have just received an undergraduate degree in Communication with little to no teaching experience. Because our department offers a two-year MA program, we hire 20 new GTAs each year. This leaves us as course directors with the challenge of developing an intensive and ongoing training program to prepare these former students to become teachers in less than two weeks.

Training

Our training is comprised of a two-week summer training workshop, a peer mentor program, and a pedagogy seminar.

Summer Training

Our summer training program involves a thorough orientation to the school of communication and the role of COM 110 in our general education program, instruction on various pedagogical issues including instructional strategies, grading and evaluation, and creating a positive climate in the classroom. Our pedagogy is student centered and focuses on instructional discussion and experiential learning. We provide video instruction on these pedagogical strategies as well as thorough discussion facilitation guides and numerous activities to meet a variety of instructional strategies. Perhaps our most noteworthy and distinctive aspect of our summer training program is our systematic speech evaluation training. (See Sample Table of Contents and Tentative Schedule)

We believe and have evidence to support (Stitt, Simonds, & Hunt, 2003) that this evaluation system is fair, consistent, and reflective of actual student performance—regardless of who is grading the speech. We started with an evaluation form, decided on a criteria or level of expected performance for each skill, and developed models of expected performance for both the students and the instructors involved in the evaluation process. It should be noted that other institutions have adapted these tools for their own purposes.

Peer Mentor Program

The Department of Communication at Illinois State University takes teaching seriously. In addition to the formal instruction presented in COM 110 training, all new teaching assistants in the department are expected to participate in the mentor program. The mentor program has been developed to help teaching assistants refine their teaching skills by working collaboratively with an experienced graduate student. Teaching assistants are afforded the unique opportunity to teach one section of Communication 110 while simultaneously attending a mentor's class to observe how he or she prepares lectures, and structures exercises, conducts class discussion, evaluates students, and deals with the array of situations and issues likely to arise in the classroom. This structure allows the teaching assistant to observe, apply, perform, and discuss instructional techniques with his or her peer mentor. (See Peer Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities).

Ongoing Professional Development Seminar (Com 392)

This course plays a vital role in the ongoing professional development of graduate students teaching COM 110. The purpose of our weekly meetings is to assist students in becoming more effective instructors. To meet this objective, we discuss matters related to course content and instructional theory. Teaching assistants are also afforded the opportunity to practice their teaching and receive constructive feedback. (See Sample Syllabus)

Philosophy

There are several guiding principles that inform our philosophy of our training program.

Clarity

Because our course is integral to general education, we need to be able to make the case that students in one section receive *generally* the same experience as students in another. We accomplish this by being very clear on the expectations of the program while also being clear on where instructors have individual autonomy. For example, we are responsible for addressing and assessing several of the general education goals and must develop intentional and deliberate instruction to ensure student success in these areas. Additionally, students (and parents) are told during a summer preview session that their general education courses will be highly interactive and engaging. Thus, we need to train our instructors for this type of pedagogy. Moreover, the

Illinois Articulation Initiative has basic level requirements that we must meet for our course to transfer to other institutions. And while we have a standard textbook, course goals and objectives, syllabus, assignments, and assessments; we also allow for GTAs to choose from a variety of activities to accomplish course outcomes. To facilitate this clarity, we publish a student workbook that contains all of the standards assignments and assessments and communicate that because all students purchase this workbook, all assignments within it are standard expectations for the course. Thus, the workbook represents in a very tangible and clear way, the expectations of the course.

In terms of autonomy, we also feel it is important to provide new instructors with a variety of options to choose from in deciding how they want to teach course concepts. In fact, we tell them that we will provide them with 200% of what they will need to teach the course and that they can simply choose from the body of activities we provide or develop some of their own. If they develop their own, we ask that they share their ideas with their colleagues and us. Thus, they add to our growing body of activities and are able to contribute to the program for future instructors.

Models

We believe in providing models of expected performance. We do this in terms of our pedagogy and assignments. We tell our instructors that we will demonstrate each and every behavior we expect from them in the classroom. To do this, we provide information and activities on the pedagogies we expect from them and then model what these pedagogies look like in the classroom. For example, we talk about how to lead an instructional discussion and facilitate an activity, and then we model these strategies for them. In addition, we have 2nd year GTA Peer Mentors who come in and model the pedagogies we are looking for.

We also provide models of expected performance for every major assignment we have in the course. We have developed several informative, group, and persuasive speeches that model the difference between what a C and an A looks like. Not only are these models provided for our instructors, but our instructors provide these to our students (in the student workbook, of course).

Socialization

We believe that the strength of our program relies heavily on the climate of collegiality that we attempt to nurture. We continually talk about our community of instructors and the support system that we provide. We share our successes and work through our challenges. We feel that this climate is predicated on socialization. It is important for our instructors to spend time outside of the office together and we are very intentional and deliberate in providing these opportunities early and often. During our summer training program, we provide at least four social opportunities at local eateries, faculty homes, and fellow GTA apartments. Some of these events, we, the directors attend, and some we do not---on purpose. It is important that first-year GTAs have an opportunity to socialize with second-year GTAs and returning instructors and to be able to ask questions about their concerns without us present—and we are OK with that. We host a wine and cheese reception to celebrate the close

of our summer training program. We have been known to organize various faculty/GTA sporting events, chili-cookoffs, and Friday happy hours. We feel that these events help to create the climate of collegiality that we strive for. But beyond that, we have seen longstanding friendships (and yes, even some romantic relationships) develop over the years. In fact, I tell my new instructors on the first day of the summer training program that they are sitting in the room with their new best friends; they just don't know it yet. They come back to me years later confirming this statement.

Feedback

Finally, because we feel that our training program should be designed for the instructors who receive it, we are continually open to their feedback and ideas. We tell them that the program is designed with them in mind, and we want to know what works (and what doesn't) for them. We formally solicit their feedback at the end of the summer training program, at the end of their first semester, and at the end of their first year of teaching. As a result, we have made significant changes to the training program based on their feedback. For example, when we first started delivering the training, we covered the entire course content before the first day of class. Our trainees indicated that this was quite overwhelming and we agreed. Now, we only cover the first two units of the course and address the other three in our ongoing professional development seminar when it is more timely and relevant. Also, we used to have trainees perform a practice teaching unit at the end of the two-week session. This, too, has been moved to the seminar. We have found their feedback to be invaluable to the ongoing success of our program. After all, it is their training program; not ours.



GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT TRAINING

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 Criteria for Evaluating Speeches



GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT (GTA) TENTATIVE

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

AUGUST 8—16, 2012

Directors

Cheri J. Simonds, Ph.D.

John F. Hooker, Ph.D.

General Education Assistant

Suzanne Lumberg

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 8

Room 446—Fell

- 11:00—12:00** Informal Meet and Greet with Peer Mentors (1st floor lobby Fell Hall—Dress Business Casual/Comfortable)
Tour Offices and Speech Lab
- 12:00—1:00** Informal Lunch with Peer Mentors (2nd Floor Atrium)
- 1:00—2:00** Informal Welcome (Fell 446)
Dr. Cheri Simonds, & Dr. John Hooker, Directors of the Communication as Critical Inquiry Course & Suzanne Lumberg
- Introduction of Graduate Teaching Assistants
- 2:00—2:30** Formal Welcome to the School of Communication
Dr. Larry Long, Executive Director, School of Communication
Denise Thomas, Business Manager II
Graduate Program Policies & Procedures
Dr. Steve Hunt, Director of Graduate Studies
Patty Franz—Administrative Aide
- 2:30—3:00** Description of Course Materials (Binder, Book, Spiral)—Dr. Simonds
Description of Com 392.08—Dr. Hooker
Description and Expectations of Peer Mentoring Program—Dr. Hooker
Overview of TA Assignments: Teaching, Forensics, Speech Lab, Computer Labs, Advising—Dr. Hooker
- 3:00—3:15** Break (See Patty to complete I-9s if you haven't already)
- 3:15—4:15** Overview of the General Education Program (Web Page)
Dr. Simonds
Overview of Communication as Critical Inquiry (Philosophy, Goals and Expectations)
Dr. Simonds

Discussion of Communication as Critical Inquiry
Instructor Resources—Reggie Net)—**Read Chapter
1 and Complete P2Ps**

4:15— Meet with Peer Mentors for Q&A
Materials can be left in Fell 446

8:00— **Optional Social at Maggie Miley’s**

THURSDAY, AUGUST 9

Room 446—Fell

8:30—9:00 Coffee and Rolls

9:00—10:30 INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

a. Covering Content—Dr. Hooker

b. Leading Discussions—Dr. Hooker and Video

c. Preparing to Participate—Dr. Simonds

d. Participation Logs/Sheets—Dr. Simonds and Dr.
Hooker

10:30—10:45 Break

10:45—12:00 e. Processing Activities—Dr. Simonds

12:00—1:15 Lunch with Peer Mentors—Create your own sack
lunch in Break Room

1:15—2:45 UNIT 1: IMMERSION

a. Overview Portfolio Assignment—Sample Portfolios

b. CIP & CTSA—Katy Fedderson, Peer Mentor

2:45—3:00 Break

3:00—4:30 c. Unit Goals, Content, and Related Chapters

d. Unit 1 Activities—Mary Sorenson and Kristen Presley, Peer Mentors

(Assign Suzanne Lumberg’s Chapter for tomorrow)

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10

Room 152—Fell

- 8:30—9:00** Coffee and Rolls (Distribute Schedule/Peer Mentor Preferences)
- 9:00—10:30** UNIT 2: MESSAGE CLARITY
a. Unit Goals, Content, and Related Chapters

b. Unit 2 Activities— Robert Self and Anna Wright, Peer Mentors
- 10:30—10:45** Break
- 10:45—12:00** c. Unit 2 Model Class Period—Suzanne Lumberg, Peer Mentor
- 12:00—1:45** Lunch with Peer Mentors
Desk Selection Process Before and After Lunch
- 2:00—4:00** Developing a Syllabus and Lesson Plans Round Robin Workshop—Dr. Hooker & Peer Mentors
- 6:30—11:00** **Social with Returning Graduate Teaching Assistants—Drs. Simonds**

(For your viewing pleasure, Dr. Hooker will post Peer Mentor PTUs over the weekend.)

MONDAY, AUGUST 13

Room 152—Fell

- 9:00—9:30** Coffee and Rolls (**Schedule/Peer Mentor Preferences Due**)
- 9:30—10:45** Evaluating Speeches—Dr. Simonds
- 10:45—11:00** Break
- 11:00—11:45** Classroom and Speech Lab Technology
- 12:00—1:00** Lunch on your own
- 1:00—1:30** Drop/Add policy and procedures/FERPA
Liz Chupp, Academic Advisor
- 1:30—4:00** Schedule Teaching Assignments, Peer Mentors
Office Etiquette

Workshop with Peer Mentors on Syllabus
Construction and Lesson Plans in Fell Hall rooms:
123, 125, 176, and 180.

**(Syllabi and GTA Acknowledgement Forms are
Due Tuesday Morning)**

TUESDAY, AUGUST 14

Room 152—Fell

- 9:00—9:30** Coffee and Rolls
Syllabi Due¹
- 9:30—10:45** Helpful hints on conducting the first day of class
(Credibility)—Dr. Simonds
- Engaging Students (Immediacy)—Dr. Hooker
- 10:45—11:00** Break
- 11:00—11:30** Diversity and Affirmative Action Concerns
Office Equal Opportunity, Ethics, and Access—Jessica
Norris
- 12:00—1:00** Lunch on Your Own and Run Campus Errands (Get
I.D., Pick up keys, parking decals, enroll if
necessary)
- 1:00—3:00** Classroom Management and Community Rights and
Responsibilities —Kevin Meyer, Peer Mentors (Fish
Bowl Activity)
Other instructional issues (procedures for special
students)
- 3:15—4:30** Orientation to School Policies and Procedures
(specifically, those relating to main office, exam
work orders, and communication resource center)
OSHA—Patty Franz—Administrative Aide
The Role of the Graduate Teaching Assistant in the
School of Communication—Graduate Assistant
Policies & Procedures—Dr. Simonds
Discussion Highlights—Dr. Hooker
Exam Security
FERPA/Email
Student Attendance
Office Code of Ethics

**8:00 p.m—Optional Social at Robert and Anna’s (directions will
be provided)**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15

All Day Free time to make local and university arrangements

THURSDAY, AUGUST 16

- 8:30—9:45** ReggieNet Training Fell 108, Dr. Hooker
- 10:00—12:00** Workshop on Library Instruction (All Com 110 and Library Instructors)—Old Main (Light Brunch Provided)
- 1:00-2:00** Communication Resource Center Training for all New Instructors and Speech Lab Attendants—Patty Franz, Mary Sorenson and John Hooker
- 2:00—2:15** All GTAs meet in atrium to unload Com 110 Workbooks
- 2:15—3:30** Returning Instructors Meeting Fell 152, Dr. Simonds
New Policies and Procedures/OSHA (Patty)
New and Removed Spiral Book Materials
Blackboard Updates/ReggieNet Preview
Teaching Evaluations
- 2:00—3:30** New GTAs Set up your desk
- 3:30—5:00** Meet the Faculty Reception in Fell Atrium and Speech Lab—2nd Floor

FRIDAY EVENING, AUGUST 17

Something fun will happen ☺

The School of Communication at Illinois State University takes teaching seriously. In addition to the formal instruction presented in COM 110 training, all new teaching assistants in the department are expected to participate in the mentor program. The mentor program has been developed to help teaching assistants refine their teaching skills by working collaboratively with an experienced graduate student. Teaching assistants are afforded the unique opportunity to teach one section of Communication 110 while simultaneously attending a mentor's class to observe how he or she prepares lessons, and structures exercises, conducts class discussion, evaluates students, and deals with the array of situations and issues likely to arise in the classroom. This structure allows the teaching assistant to observe, apply, perform, and discuss instructional techniques with his or her peer mentor.

In order for the program to be most successful, both parties must be committed to the goal of teaching excellence and take an active part in the process. The following roles and responsibilities are suggested:

Peer Mentors' Roles and Responsibilities

- To serve as a role model for mentees, demonstrating the highest standards of professional and instructional expertise
- To attend mentor orientation/training prior to the beginning of fall semester and additional meetings related to the mentor program that might be called by the Communication 110 course directors or the School Director
- To attend/take part of the Communication 110 training program for new graduate teaching assistants prior to the beginning of fall classes
- To attend/take part of some of the ongoing training and development meetings with new graduate teaching assistants
- To arrange and facilitate weekly meetings with mentees to answer questions, offer advice, discuss problems, provide feedback, etc.
- To explore ways, when appropriate, that mentees might gain additional experience through participation in the mentor's classroom (e.g., team-teaching a lesson, conducting an in-class exercise, helping students with class work/activities, etc.)
- To observe and provide feedback to mentees in their own classroom (can be video observation)
- To provide course directors with feedback regarding mentees teaching progress (Course directors will conduct formal observations of teaching in the Spring semester)
- To refer any major problems directly to course directors
- To provide Communication 110 course directors with assessment information regarding unusual or persistent problems for teaching assistants, strengths and weaknesses of the program, suggestions, concerns, etc.

Mentees' Roles and Responsibilities

- To serve as an apprentice teacher, actively working to acquire the highest standards of professional and instructional expertise
- To attend training prior to the beginning of fall semester and additional meetings related to the mentor program that might be called by the Communication 110 course directors or the School Director
- To attend weekly meetings with mentors to seek answers to questions related to instruction, classroom problems, course content, etc. as well as to share insights with other mentees

- To explore ways, when appropriate, to gain additional experience through participation in the mentor's classroom (e.g., team-teaching lessons, conducting an in-class exercise, helping students class work/activities, etc.)
- To invite mentors to observe them in their own classroom (Formal director observations will be conducted in the Spring semester)
- To provide Communication 110 course directors **with** assessment information regarding unusual or persistent problems that exceed the responsibility of the mentors, strengths and weaknesses of the program, suggestions, concerns, etc.
- To complete the following specific **requirements**:
- Enroll in Communication 392 during the fall semester and attend all class sessions
- Attend the Communication 110 class of the mentor and participate in the day-to-day functioning of the class at a level agreed upon between the mentor and the mentee (e.g., mentors might team-teach lessons, lead a class discussion, help students work on speeches or group presentations, etc.)
- Attend the weekly mentor/mentee meetings established by the mentor
- Assist in the grading of a written assignment and/or presentation. (See training manual for recommendations on how to grade papers and evaluation forms for speeches)
- To complete any of the following **optional** activities as established in consultation with the mentor:
- Submit sample test questions (e.g., closed-ended, essay, and application) to the mentor from selected chapters and lectures
- Ask mentor for feedback on the quality and consistency of the grading
- Mentees might videotape a typical class and use the tape to critique their teaching and/or review the tape with their mentor
- Monitor *Communication Teacher* and related sources for potential classroom activities or instructional practices. These can be shared with other mentees and with the mentor

Instructor: Dr. John F. Hooker
Office: Fell 458
Office Phone: 438-4518
Office Hours: M 2-3 p.m., T 11a-noon, & by appointment when necessary
E-mail: jfhooker@ilstu.edu
Section: 01 (Tuesday 9:35-10:50/Williams Hall Room 313)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course plays a vital role in the ongoing professional development of graduate students teaching COM 110: Communication as Critical Inquiry. The purpose of our weekly meetings is to assist students in becoming more effective instructors. To meet this objective, we will discuss matters related to course content and instructional theory.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

This course—in concert with the COM 110 training workshop, the mentor program, and midterm student and course director evaluations—constitutes your professional development as well as your professional commitment. As such, attendance is both expected and mandatory.

Professional Courtesy. As this is a graduate level course, I feel it is unnecessary to emphasize issues such as respect for the class (attendance, punctuality, active participation, etc.) and the members of the class (respecting others' opinions, being respectful to those who are speaking, and working together in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition). I do, however, want to be clear about my expectations. I believe graduate school is an experience designed to bring professional individuals together to increase and expand knowledge. Thus, I will expect your behaviors and attitudes towards this course to reflect professional courtesy.

Special Needs. Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD).

MY APPROACH TO TEACHING:

I am not here to trick you or to make you look foolish. I want to help you in any way possible to learn the material presented in class and to teach you the basic skills necessary to succeed in front of the classroom. Please do not hesitate to ask questions, or ask for help, in or out of class. (Unless there is a privacy issue at stake, in-class is often best, since your classmates may have the same

questions or concerns that you do, and then you are helping them, too.) If you have any special needs that I should be aware of, please let me know, and I will make accommodations as necessary.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

<u>DATES</u>	<u>TOPICS</u>
Week 1	Introduction Classroom Technology Practice Teaching Units (PTUs) Assigned Training Assessment
Week 2	Grade Books Evaluating CIP's and Artifacts
Week 3	Writing Exams/Quizzes
Week 4	PTUs Chapters 1-3
Week 5	PTUs Chapters 4-6
Week 6	Unit 3--Message Responsiveness
Week 7	PTUs Chapters 7-9
Week 8	PTUs Chapters 10-11
Week 9	PTUs Chapters 12-13
Week 10	Unit 4--Persuasion
Week 11	PTUs Chapters 14-16
Week 12	PTUs Chapters 17-18
Week 13	Grading Portfolios
Week 14	<i>NCA</i>
Week 15	<i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i>
Week 16	Synthesis/Course Assessment—Turn in Peer Mentor Attendance Forms

PRACTICE TEACHING UNITS FOR COM 392

Purpose: To provide new instructors with classroom experience in:

- preparing and delivering content information associated with a specific instructional objective.
- facilitating a discussion based on a Preparing to Participate Box.
- selecting, organizing and debriefing a media interaction and/or a critical interaction.

Instructions: Consider the course content and select any area of interest (e.g. ethical communication, critical thinking, listening, language, etc.). Then, choose one instructional objective within that area. Instructional objectives are included at the beginning of each chapter and end with a Preparing to Participate set of questions.

Format: Each instructor will have 10-15 minutes to present the class material. In preparing the content of your class presentation, consider the objective you'd like to accomplish in your particular section and structure your time to meet that goal. Your presentation should include a brief overview of the content to be covered, inclusion of at least 2-3 discussion questions (stemming from the P2P box), and the facilitation of at least one media and/or critical interaction. While I realize this is a great deal to cover in 10-15 minutes, please attempt to include the above, realizing time may not allow for the actual presentation of everything you had planned.

Each presentation will be taped with informal group feedback to follow. Videos can be used should the instructor desire a more detailed evaluation with a course director at a later date.