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Computer-Mediated Communication Teaching Project

A Capstone Project submitted to Southern Utah University

For partial fulfilment of the Master of Arts in

Professional Communication program

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Abstract

During spring semester, 2015, I created and taught a communication course called, “Communicating through Technology.” I generated a personal pedagogy, and used that philosophy to teach nine undergraduate students about various aspects of Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC). CMC is a growing field that is an intricate part of American society. The purpose of this course was to teach communication theories in regards to CMC, and increase understanding of the positives and negatives that CMC contributes to human interaction. A mixed teaching method was used including traditional lecture, and Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) discussions. This project also set out to address teachers’ and students’ use of technology in the classroom. I found that students prefer teachers to use technology in an entertaining way, as to improve student attention to the material. Students were mixed about using their personal devices during class. Most of them wanted the freedom to use their cellphones in class, though also admit that other’s using their cellphones in class can be a distraction. They want more opportunities to use their personal devices as aids to their learning in the classroom.

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Computer-Mediated Communication Teaching Project

To achieve my Masters of Arts in Professional Communication at Southern Utah University, I decided to complete a project for my graduate capstone. For my project I created and taught a special topics course on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) called Communicating through Technology. I chose a teaching project because my goal when I graduate is to be a community college professor, and I didn't want to just complete a graduation requirement, I wanted to gain experience in my ideal career. After teaching for a year or two I'd like to apply for a PhD program in Communication to teach at a university level. I also hope that I will obtain a teaching assistantship where I go to school. I am very grateful for the opportunity I was given to teach before I graduate. Most students who become teachers and don't get an opportunity to teach while still in school end up mimicking their teachers teaching models instead of developing a model of their own (Hill, 2014). This project allowed me to develop my own teaching model, and solidify my passion in this career.

I taught a class on CMC because it is an area of communication that is growing and changing quickly. It will never stop doing so. As technology progresses, there will be more ways to connect with other people, and it is something that is nearly unavoidable in our society. CMC includes social media, texting, video chat, email, and any other way technology is used to converse with others. I believe it is important to understand how to use these mediums, how they are changing the way we communicate, and how it is affecting our non-computer-mediated communication.

I also chose to teach a class on CMC because it is where I have a lot of experience. I am one of two social media marketers for the communication program here at SUU, I have done social media work for several companies, and throughout my six years here at SUU, I have d

dedicated a lot of my time to projects and papers pertaining to CMC. I feel that it is the subject where I am most competent. According to McCroskey (1992), a teacher is seen as competent when he/she is perceived to know what they are teaching. It is a subject that intrigues me greatly, and I am passionate about how we as a society use it and adapt to it.

For this project I worked with my Chair, Art Challis, to develop my syllabus, teaching materials, assignments, grading rubrics, and personal teaching style. Although I taught the course myself, I used all of the advice and structure given to me by my chair and committee. I learned a lot about being a teacher, and look forward to using all that I've learned in the future. Aside from improving my teaching skills, I used this project as an opportunity to better myself as a researcher, student, listener, and writer.

This hands-on project gave me the experience I needed to leave school confident, knowledgeable, and a well-organized educator. I have been lucky enough to be a student of several inspiring communication professors here at SUU, and I used some of their teaching methods in my class. I saw great use of technology, real-life examples, content applicable assignments, and overall teaching styles that I incorporated.

My class, called COMM 4600-02: Communicating through Technology, was taught Tuesday and Thursday from 1:00PM to 2:20PM in Spring semester, 2015. The class focused on computer-mediated communication (CMC) and its role in relationships, society, and our psyche. I applied CMC theories, as well as traditional communication theories, to current CMC topics. It also focused on blended learning, meaning I had a mix of different teaching and learning methods (Hinterberger, et al., 2004). In this case, I mixed two methods. On Tuesdays, I had a normal lecture-style class, while Thursdays I had more of an open seminar where students used Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) to lead a discussion covering that week's reading.

I taught seven different aspects of CMC. Topics included; privacy & safety, parasocial communication, interpersonal relationships- including romantic, friend, and family relationships, group dynamics, social/cultural dynamics-including generational gaps & resistance, advertising, mass media, future implications, and psychological effects of CMC use. I applied CMC and traditional communication theories to these subjects, and illustrated them with real-life examples. I chose these subjects because of the large amount of research on them, and relateability to my students. I believe they sparked a lot of interest and discussion, and are all relevant to academia and ordinary life.

There were three objectives I wanted students to reach by the time the semester ended, outlined in the syllabus:

1. Students will understand and appreciate the importance that computer-mediated communication plays in today's society. This will be accomplished through weekly quizzes and a final comprehensive exam.
2. Students will be able to apply traditional and computer-mediated communication theories to everyday events. This will be accomplished through written reflections and the discussion leader assignment.
3. Students will learn to clearly state and argue an opinion to persuade an audience. This will be accomplished by weekly discussions and the CMC persuasive speech assignment.

To reach these objectives, strategic assignments were given. One to two page Reflection papers were assigned periodically throughout the semester to gauge the student's understanding, and opinion of the material. A discussion leader assignment was assigned where students chose a course subject and article to lead a discussion. They were expected to create 12 to 15 thought

provoking questions on the article to discuss with the class, as well as apply a current event to the week's topic. After the student's discussion day, they wrote a four to five page paper that summarizes the article, current event application, and reflected on the group discussion. Students will give a 15-20 minute persuasive speech on any subject of CMC they choose. The presentation must include visual aids and at least 10 scholarly sources to build the argument. They will also turn in an outline of their speech including their before their presentation. The final comprehensive exam will have multiple choice, fill in the blank, and essay style questions. Finally, extra credit was offered during the semester, as opportunities organically came up at SUU, including participation in the Flat Matt contest, and attending a Festival of Excellence presentation related to CMC.

All assignments were required to be turned in on CANVAS by 11:59PM the day the assignments were due. When an assignment was past due, it lost 20% of the possible points each day it was late. If a student informed me beforehand of an emergency that prevented them from turning in an assignment, we worked out a new turn-in date. Points were given for attendance on discussion days, and will be given for the class' CMC persuasive presentations at the end of the semester.

Since technology has significantly changed the way students learn in higher education (Zepke, and Leach, 2002, as cited in Senjo et al., 2007), I felt that as a teacher, I needed to learn how to incorporate technology effectively in my classroom. I've learned through a personal research project in my Communication Theory class that social science teachers do not have consensus on what technology to use and not use in the classroom. Through this teaching experience, I have a better understanding of what benefits and challenges accompany technology use in higher education classrooms.

My personal objectives for teaching this class were to:

1. Gain an understanding of the efforts that teaching a college communication course entails. This was accomplished by designing and teaching this course.
2. Discover my own unique teaching style. This was reached by using a blended teaching technique in my class, as well as learning from the teaching knowledge I gained through this project.
3. Better understand how professors can incorporate technology into their classroom. This was achieved through trial and error of using various technology in my classroom, as well as giving the students a say in how they want to see it incorporated.

Literature Review

The following section will discuss why CMC is an important topic to teach, my teaching style that I planned and integrated, and the benefits and drawbacks of using technology in the classroom as a teaching aid.

Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) plays a big role in society today. Nearly 87 percent of Americans use the internet today (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2014). This has gone up nearly 25% since 2003. Some 73% of adults have a social networking account of some kind (Duggan & Smith, 2013). CMC can bring people together, tear people apart, help create new social groups, maintain relationships, and much more. Since social networking, and all aspects of CMC are growing so rapidly, and have become so integral to our society, it is important that this subject is studied and taught.

Social networking is a big aspect of CMC. Nearly 25 percent of all time spent online is on a social networking site (Nielsen, 2011). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) identified several social networking orientations such as “Maintaining relationships, connecting with people with shared interests, and initiating romantic relationships (as cited in Hunt, Atkin, & Krishnan, 2012, p. 188). Romantic relationships are a huge area of study for CMC and could practically stand as a course topic on its own.

Whether you start out a romantic relationship online, or face-to-face (FTF), you end up using technology to communicate. There are benefits, and drawbacks to using CMC in relationships. One benefit is that partners can keep communication lines open when they are unable to be face-to-face (FTF). It is convenient, and cheaper than a written letter, or making a long distance phone call (Dimmick et al., 2000).

A big drawback to CMC relationships, at least when they start online, is safety. It is likely that the person on the other end of the conversation is lying about some aspect of their life. Adults tend to lie about things like their careers, appearance, and age (Walther and Parks, 2002). Cornwell and Lundgren (2001) found that people tend to present themselves favorably, and CMC helps them to do that. These may be smaller lies, and though there are people who lie for dangerous purposes, it’s not as likely you’ll be encountering them. A concern though is that online relationships tend to be quicker when it comes to intimacy and self-disclosure (Tidwell and Walther, 2002), and it may not be safe to disclose such information to someone who might be lying about who they are.

We are definitely better off with CMC, than without it. It gives us the opportunity to stay in contact with romantic partners, family, and friends, when we otherwise may not have the time to see them FTF. There will always be the danger of coming across someone lying for malicious

intent online, but the same sometimes happens F-T-F. It is a risk we take every day, and even though it does sometimes happen online, there are more benefits than drawbacks to CMC.

These have been just a few examples of CMC topics that can be studied. Since CMC is so pervasive in everyday American life, and rapidly growing, I believe it should be taught in higher education as its own class and here at SUU. This way, students can understand the many workings and theories that apply to it, and how it affects our lives. In the next section, I will review technology use in higher education classrooms, and the choices teachers must face while incorporating them.

Technology in the classroom

For research in my Communication Theory class, I learned that social science teachers do not have a consensus on how to effectively use technology in their classrooms. Since I taught a Communication through Technology course, I felt it was important to research the subject. As mentioned before, technology has significantly changed the way information is presented in higher education (Zepke, and Leach, 2002, as cited in Senjo et al., 2007). Its use in the classroom has formed into a necessity, rather than a luxury. Even though technology has many advances, many teachers still resist incorporating technology in their classroom (Hicks, 2011). As technology itself changes, it can be hard to keep up. O’Halnon (2009) found that the greatest reason teachers say that they are resistant to use technology in their classroom is that they are worried that they may not know how to use it correctly, and that they might “look stupid” in front of their students.

Another difficulty for teachers with integrating technology into their classroom is being able to maintain their personal teaching style. Kirkwood and Price (2013) analyzed published,

peer-reviewed articles about applying technology to teaching on the HEA EvidenceNet and Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Infonet websites from 2005 through 2010. They found that Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) is challenging teacher identity in higher education, making it harder for teachers to incorporate their own teaching styles in to the classroom.

Although some teachers are hesitant to keep up with technology, many see the advantage. Brill and Galloway (2007) surveyed US professors about their attitudes towards technology use in the classroom, and all of them used technology in one form or another. They had trouble with their equipment not working from time to time, but “Despite rather frequent equipment failures, most instructors feel that the technology they currently use in their classrooms has a positive influence on their teaching and students’ learning (p.100).” The professors also noted that they were excited to see what new teaching methods the future would bring.

Of course there are ways to aid teachers in learning new education technology, such as formal training. Many universities already have training seminars and classes to introduce teachers to new technology. This training can start even before students leave school to become teachers. Garner and Bonds-Raacke (2013) studied Masters’ students and recent Masters’ graduates who took a course on integrating technology in to the classroom. They found that teachers who took the graduate course on technology integration while still students had an easier transition using technology in the classroom than teachers who had not taken a similar course. Even though these students were able to use the technology with more ease, they were not significantly better at incorporating the technology into their lesson plans. This study supports the idea that teachers need to find a way to not only learn new technologies, but also how to seamlessly incorporate them into their lectures.

It would be hard to discuss technology advances in the classroom without at least mentioning online courses. Fillion, et al. (2009) surveyed 313 undergraduate and graduate students who either studied online or on campus about their learning experience. They found that on campus students received high scores, but online students were more satisfied with their education. With this study in mind, teachers should consider ways to keep their onsite students satisfied with their learning experiences.

Technology that has significant positive reviews from college students is interactive devices in the classroom, and use of social media. Students like being able to give instant answers to questions, and viewing that instant feedback on a screen (Fitch, 2004). Since classroom interaction aids in learning, it makes sense that students want to incorporate technology. That is where social media comes in. Teachers more often are incorporating blogs and social media sites into their teaching methods (Yan, 2008). Social media creates a way not just for the teacher to interact with their students, but the students to also interact with each other with a common scholastic dialogue. For example, teachers can use Nearpod, Poll Everywhere, or Top Hat Monocle to engage their students with the lesson material, and allow students to engage with each other.

It's not just teachers anymore who are incorporating technology in classrooms, but the students as well. Smart phones, laptops, and tablets have become a college student staple (Sharma, 2012). Students bringing their own devices to class is playfully known as BYOD (Bring your own device). BYOD policies are controversial since some teachers believe that these devices hurt in student's learning, while other teachers have seen great benefits to it. Either way, this policy has been rapidly being adopted by organizations in nearly every industry, including education (Gatewood, 2012). One challenge to BYOD found by Sangani (2013) is that even

though the majority of students have smart phones or mobile computers of some sort, not all students do, and this can cause some students to feel excluded. Incorporating BYOD programs into the classroom and in personalized teaching styles may not be an easy transition.

Teaching style

The first thing I had to ask myself while preparing for this project was; what makes a good teacher? When I think of influential teachers I've had here at SUU I first think of their positive teacher immediacy. Immediacy refers to "Communication behaviors that enhance closeness to and nonverbal interactions with another" (Mehrabian, 1969. P. 77). This includes behaviors like; being attentive when students are talking, responding in a timely manner to their questions, having open and friendly posture while teaching, and having an overall friendly demeanor. This pertains to both in person and online contact (when applicable). The more immediate behaviors a teacher presents, the more liked by their students they seem to be (Mehrabian, 1971). Thweatt & McCroskey (1998) found that not only do immediate teachers tend to be more liked by their students, but they are also seen as more credible than non-immediate teachers.

Credibility is also important for all teachers. Students learn substantially more from people they see as credible (Andersen, 1973), and learning is the primary goal for teachers. Keeping immediacy in mind, Teven & Hansen (2004) studied over 400 student responses to teacher behavior scenarios and found that teachers who used more verbal caring were seen as more credible than those who didn't.

One of the biggest strategies for my class was to incorporate Peer Assisted Learning (PAL), which is when students teach each other, as well as traditional lecturing in my class.

Bernot and Metzler (2014) stated “Traditional lectures have come under increasing criticism as research indicates lectures may be less effective in achieving learning outcomes than other teaching methods” (p. 48). Students who have “Grown up with interactive technology are not always comfortable with the information transmission approach of large lectures. Students expect a relevant and engaging learning approach” (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008, p. ix). With this in mind, teachers should be motivated to get students more involved in the learning process with the limited classroom time they have. Blended learning techniques have the potential to meet this goal (Dalsgaard & Godsk, 2007).

While traditional lecturing is still valuable on its own, incorporating PAL leads to a genuine exchange of exploratory thought and assimilation of new ideas between students (Falchikov, 2001). This social interaction facilitates more learning than students can attain on their own. Longfellow, et al. (2008) surveyed college students about PAL programs in their school, and found that they had a positive impact on “Clarification of new knowledge; development of assessment skills; reduction in feelings of intimidation; and the creation of a safe environment for learning” (p. 93). Also, students who take an active role in their education tend to retain information better than students who take a passive role (Feden, 1994). They also have an easier time paying attention and staying motivated (Mannison, Patton, & Lemon, 1994).

Aside from a blended teaching method, I also used technology to aid me in my lectures. As technology advances, it is important for teachers to advance with it to not only capture students’ attention, but to teach them in a language they understand. There are many reasons to use or not use technology in the classroom, the next section will address those concerns.

I feel that I didn’t necessarily have much to prove, but much to learn. I would ask for feedback from my students on how they would like to incorporate technology into their learning

experience, within reason. I also gave them opportunities to make decisions on subjects being taught, and assignment deadlines. I know that with the help of my Chair, committee, students, and research I have done for this project, I have created my own personal teaching style, and learned intricate details of what goes into the critical profession of being a professor.

I created my own BYOD policy and tried to effectively incorporate technology into my teaching style. I used video, PowerPoint, Poll Everywhere, and internet browsers to aid in my lectures, and discuss current news in CMC. I also asked students to look up relevant information on the class topics several times throughout the semester. This allowed the students to use their personal devices for learning purposes instead of as a distraction.

In the next section, I will discuss my method that used for teaching the course, including my pedagogy, the results of my teaching method, and a discussion on my experience through this teaching capstone project.

Method

My class COMM 4600-02: Communicating through Technology, was taught Tuesday and Thursday from 1:00PM to 2:20 PM. Tuesdays were taught in a lecture/discussion format, and Thursdays were held in a seminar/ PAL format. My participants for this project were nine SUU undergraduate students. I advertised the class in my undergraduate psychology courses, and several undergraduate communication courses with permission from the course professors.

There was no book assigned for this class. I assigned weekly articles or book chapters for the class to read and discuss. I found the information I taught in class from communication textbooks, and academic journal articles. Students accessed the readings from CANVAS, and

also used it to submit their assignments. I also communicated with the students mainly through CANVAS, but also through email.

I taught seven different aspects of computer-mediated communication including; privacy & safety, parasocial communication, interpersonal relationships- including romantic, friend, and family relationships, group dynamics, social/cultural dynamics-including generational gaps & resistance, advertising, mass media, future implications, and psychological effects of CMC use. I applied CMC and traditional communication theories to these subjects, and illustrated them with real-life examples. I gave students some say in topics by asking them if they wanted to spend more time on certain topics that I noticed really interested them.

Assignments consisted of one to two page Reflection papers (Appendix B), a discussion leader assignment (Appendix C), and 15 to 20 minute persuasive speech on any aspect of CMC they're interested in with an outline to accompany it (Appendix D). A comprehensive final exam was given during finals week, and extra credit was offered during the semester for a small amount of points. Details on these assignments, and my late policy are outlined in the attached syllabus and appendices.

My BYOD policy in the syllabus states that "Cellphones and laptops/tablets are certainly welcome and will be incorporated into class discussion periodically. I ask that when we are not using these devices for class discussion that they are put away so that you can focus and contribute to the class. Remember that you are choosing to be here, and it is important to respect your education, professors, and each other." If a student's cell phone use became a distraction for other students, I asked them to put their phone away for the rest of the class period.

Pedagogy

The pedagogy used for this project was created through observation of other SUU professors, particularly the members of my committee. I also took into account my six years experience as a college student, and what I gravitate to as a teacher. My pedagogy starts with a broad belief that school should be enjoyable, and that course loads should not distract from what is taught in the classroom. I believe that student's are more present in the classroom if they are less stressed about the workload they are given from the teacher. I assigned homework that was not intensive, but served a learning purpose.

Mixed method teaching, and Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) are staples of my teaching philosophy. I changed up the way I taught material in the classroom, and once a week the students and I had a discussion day over the material where they were held responsible for reading and teaching assigned material to each other.

I believe students should have a say in their education, to an extent. I allowed them to vote on some material that was taught, and deadlines for various assignments. To improve student involvement, I used technology in my classroom including videos, webpages, and online polling. With these technologies, along with PowerPoint slides, I incorporated humor in to the classroom to hold the student's attention, and improve our student-teacher relationship (Gilliland & Mauritsen, 1971).

Measures

In order to measure how students felt about technology in the classroom, they were given an essay assignment and a survey. In their last essay (Appendix B), they were asked to reflect on their cell phone use in the classroom, as well as how teachers could use technology more effectively with lectures. In their survey (Appendix E), they were asked to rank types of

technology and teaching techniques they used in our class as well as others, and rank them from their favorite to least favorite.

Results

Reflection essay

For their final reflection essay, students were asked to:

Write a two to three page reflection from your perspective as a student about using your phone during class. Consider these questions... Were you able to resist the urge this semester? Why or why not? Also reflect on your phone use in your other classes. What drives you to check social media or text during class? What could professors do to help you focus? Should stricter cell phone policies be in place?

The majority of the students said that for the most part, they were able to not use their cell phones as a distraction in our class. Some credited this to me reminding them several times throughout the semester that they were given a challenge to not use them. Several did admit to using it for distractive purposes in other classes. The biggest reason why they said that they were on their phones in class were because they got bored. A male student wrote, "If I am bored, my mind starts to wander. It seeks entertainment or information. When I am interested in the lesson, I do not look for something else to hold my attention." Other reasons included curiosity about who messaged them and wondering if it might be important, and using them as an aid in learning by looking up more information on topics discussed in class.

Suggestions for teacher's use of technology in the classroom were to use it to be more entertaining, and incorporate the student's devices into the lecture. The students said that they like video and other visuals to be used during lectures. A female student wrote, "If professors or

teachers provided some form of colorful presentation that connected with their students or even interacted with them; it would be extremely beneficial.” This connection with the students could help them retain more information.

As for stricter cell phone policies, the students were split. Some recognized that it would probably prevent them from using their phone inappropriately in class, while others cited that they are paying for the class, and should not have strict cell phone restrictions. One male student wrote,

I do not believe that there should be stricter cell phone policies. In my opinion, because students pay for college- either through tuition or taxes- they are, by definition, their professors’ clients. Customer service should be a part of that. If professors have the right to implement stricter cell phone policies then students should have the right to obligate professors to be more interesting.

Not all students felt this strongly, but for the students against stricter cell phone policies, student freedom was a common theme.

Survey

In the survey (Appendix E), the students were asked to rank teaching technologies and techniques they’ve experienced in college on a scale of one to ten, one being their favorite, while 10 being their least favorite. They were also given a “not applicable” option. Results listed from favorite to least favorite from the combined scores are: YouTube, group discussion, PowerPoint, Prezi, websites, Nearpod, Poll Everywhere, Whiteboard, and no visual lecture. One student filled out an entry for the “other” category, and they included “movies that take up a whole class period without discussion time.” Answers to this survey were anonymous.

Discussion

Pedagogy

I stayed true to my pedagogy throughout the semester, and even added to it. Something that I added was the belief that students who put in strong effort should be praised, and struggling students should be motivated. I commended several students for the impressive work they submitted, and spoke to students who seemed to be struggling and offered help. This part of my pedagogy was added due to the extent of how much I care about my students' success. My students seemed to like my pedagogy. I received compliments throughout the semester about lecture material, and teaching style.

Essay and Survey

The most interesting finding in the essay responses was that students generally agreed that they would like to use their personal device in class, but in a separate part of the paper would say that when others use their personal devices in class, it's a distraction. Teachers are responsible for the learning environment in classrooms. These mixed responses make Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policies difficult to create.

In class, I asked the students to not use their phone unless I gave them a reason. I occasionally asked them to look up interesting facts or information on subjects we covered. I also gave them group work where they found videos and ads in teams using their personal devices. I felt that if I gave them a reason to use their phone, and gave them that temporary outlet, they would not be as tempted to look at them during the rest of the class.

The students also seem to agree that teachers need to take on more of an entertainer role. I'm not sure how many teachers get into the education business to be entertainers, but that is what students expect. The balance for teachers is going to have to be being able to make their subject matter entertaining, while making sure they are providing rich information that benefits the student. In my class, I tried to entertain my students by showing a funny video at the beginning of class to wake them up, and to include funny memes on my PowerPoint slides.

In the survey where they ranked technologies and teaching techniques used in the classroom, I was not surprised that YouTube was listed as number one. They seemed to really enjoy anytime I showed a video in class. I was also not surprised that group discussion as second. The area of the class I received the most compliments on was our class discussions. Class discussion days were also the days when the most students came to class.

I like that class discussion was listed second because even though students expect technology use in their classroom, they also appreciate taking the time to connect with each other without technology. For group discussion in our class, we sat in a circle with no personal devices, for the most part, and discussed the reading(s) for the week. Students opened up to each other expressing their personal opinions, and learned from each other's experiences. They enjoyed hearing different perspectives.

The least popular teaching method selected was lectures with no visuals. In such a visual world, it might be hard for students in college to maintain attention to a lecture without visual stimulation. This kind of teaching is different from group discussion, which also doesn't have visuals, because there isn't as much opportunity for students to connect with each other. That connection is what makes PAL work so effective.

Regardless of what teaching/learning style students prefer, it is up to the teacher to choose the teaching style they feel is best for themselves and for their class. Students may not always know what is best for their learning, and at times may be more interested in entertainment rather than education.

Personal Reflection

The following entry is a personal reflection that I wrote regarding my experience as a first time teacher. It is written rougher than the rest of the paper as it is personal.

This project is one of the best things I have ever done in my life. I had several highs and lows, but the appreciation for teaching that I have gained has reassured me that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I couldn't have imagined before teaching my class what kind of joys and challenges were waiting for me.

The first day that I struggled was the day after Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 20th. After the day off of school it was really difficult to engage my students in the material. It seemed like there was nothing I could do to hold their attention, and I walked out of class feeling like a failure. It was my first lesson in school break recovery time. I tried to prepare for the next class day after a break, but again, I could not keep them as engaged as I'd liked. I feel like I need to prepare to be even more entertaining after breaks, so that there will be a good flow in my classroom.

Another thing I struggled with was a student who would be on his phone in class for long periods at a time. I found it distracting and disrespectful, and on two occasions told him to put his phone away. After reflecting on my decision to call him out in class, I felt bad for singling him out. I didn't feel better about it until a student came to me and told me that the student on his

cell phone was distracting her before I talked to him. The cell phone using student also tested me by turning in poorly written work, and then addressing me about his grade in front of the class. I remained professional and told him that he could speak to me after about it, which he did not. By the end of my project, it seems that this student has gained some respect for me by looking at his phone as often, and turning in higher quality work.

I have a great appreciation for technology use in the classroom. On my first day, I couldn't figure out how to connect the sound from the computer to the projector. I had to call I.T. to send someone to my room to fix the problem. The problem was very simple, but I had no reference to know how to fix it. The first time I tried Poll Everywhere, half of the students couldn't figure out how to register their phones to the program and vote on it. It took more class time than I liked to get everyone using the program. I also wish I could have tried Nearpod in my class. I have heard great things about it from multiple people. I remember asking professors in my Communication Theory class why they don't try out new teaching technologies, and a common answer was that they couldn't find the time to teach it to themselves. This was the case for me with Nearpod. With all of my responsibilities this semester, I just couldn't find the time to sit down and learn enough about it to use it effectively.

There were a few things I was definitely not prepared for before this project. First, I didn't know just how much I would care and worry about my students. I genuinely wanted them to do well on every assignment, and take good notes for the final exam so that they would get good grades. When I noticed that some students were not taking notes, I continually reminded them to take them so that they could do well on the final exam. I worried that they would do poorly if they didn't. All I want for them is to learn and succeed. It was a hard lesson for me to learn that students have a right to fail. I have a better understanding of that now. I know

that I have a responsibility to provide them with clear, and accurate information, and their only responsibility is to themselves.

Another lesson that I had to learn was how to take authority of my classroom. As a student myself, and barely older than the students I taught, I struggled to embrace my role as a professor. I often found myself thinking too much about whether they liked me or not instead of whether they respected me or not. I am a people-pleaser at heart, and wanted to be accepted. I remember on the first day being so nervous that they would drop the class because they wouldn't like me. I assume this worry will decrease as I get older and more experienced in the classroom, but I hope it never goes away entirely. I always want to care if my students like me or not because I know that that will make me a more caring and immediate professor. I want make sure that in the future, I always let me student know that I am rooting for them.

On the bright side of things, I had a lot of great experiences teaching this course. I loved seeing lights turn on in student's heads when they made connections related to the material that they found interesting. I loved when the students got in heated discussions over the material I was presenting. I had several students come up to me after class lectures telling me that they really enjoyed the material, and/or my teaching style. One student told me after class once that she wished she could take another class from me. Compliments like these made me feel really good about what I was doing, both as a teacher of that class, and as someone perusing teaching as a career.

I feel like all of the positive experiences could never be fully expressed. This class was one of my favorite things I have ever been given the opportunity to do. I enjoyed planning the lessons, teaching the material, grading assignments, and helping students with questions. I enjoyed receiving advice from my committee, and having them to lean on when I met

challenges. All three of them were there for me however I needed them, through it all. I am grateful for all aspects of this project, and will carry the lessons that I have learned through it for the rest of my life.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this project, I had three objectives in mind:

1. Gain an understanding of the efforts that teaching a college communication course entails.
2. Discover my own unique teaching style.
3. Better understand how professors can incorporate technology into their classroom.

I believe that I achieved all three objectives. First, I have a far greater understanding of what goes into teaching a college course. I understand how much work goes into planning just one lecture. For every hour and a half class I taught, at least three hours went into preparation for that class. I also have a better understanding of the grading side of teaching, and the responsibility I have to grade honestly and in a timely manner. My committee also helped me with my efforts and gave me teaching advice for this specific project, and for my future as an educator. I received advice on balancing work and home life, working with colleagues, and stress management.

For the second objective, I developed my own teaching style by trying out different types of technology in my classroom, and using a mixed method style of teaching. I learned that I am a very discussion-based teacher who uses technology to interact with, and hold attention of my students. I found that I enjoy giving praise to students who excel, and motivating students who struggle.

For my last objective, the students in my class helped give me an idea of what teachers can do to incorporate technology effectively in their classrooms. The reflection assignment and survey helped with this objective. I learned that students gravitate towards videos, group discussions, and PowerPoints the most. At least my students did. Teachers can help students learn by giving them reasons to use their personal devices as learning aids in the classroom, and by using technology in a way that is both informative and entertaining.

After completing this capstone project, I have a greater respect for teachers in higher education. Teaching is a job that requires a lot of patience, caring, and time. Teachers are faced with updates in technology every year and must decide whether or not to incorporate more or different technology into the classroom environment. A great deal can go into that decision, particularly if a teacher wants to change his or hers personal teaching style. I now have a greater understanding of the pressure to enhance the learning environment of the classroom, and provide a good education for students.

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Appendix A

COMM 4600, Section 2: Communicating Through Technology

Tues/Thurs 1:00-2:20, ED 203

Instructor: Corey Petersen

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:30, or by appt.

Contact Info: coreyepetersen@gmail.com, cell #: 435-592-4858

Course Information

This course will focus on computer-mediated communication (CMC) and its role in relationships, society, and our psyche. We will be applying CMC theories as well as traditional communication theories to current CMC topics.

Objectives

- 1- Students will understand and appreciate the importance that computer-mediated communication plays in today's society. This will be accomplished with weekly quizzes and a final comprehensive exam.
- 2- Students will be able to apply traditional and computer-mediated communication theories to everyday events. This will be accomplished with written reflections and the discussion leader assignment.
- 3- Students will be able to clearly state and argue an opinion to persuade an audience. This will be accomplished by weekly discussions and the CMC persuasive speech assignment.

Attendance

Attendance is expected. If you choose to miss class, you will miss out on any points given that day for class participation. All assignments are still due on canvas when assigned whether you miss class or not.

Late Work

All assignments are expected to be turned in by 11:59PM on CANVAS the day they are due. For each day late (including weekends), 20% will be docked from the possible score. If there is an emergency that prohibits you from turning in your work, you must let me know ahead of time so that we can work out a plan for your assignment.

BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) Policy

Cellphones and laptops/tablets are certainly welcome and will be incorporated into class discussion periodically. I ask that when we are not using these devices for class discussion that they are put away so that you can focus and contribute to the class. Remember that you are choosing to be here, and it is important to respect your education, professors, and each other.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent outlined in SUU policy. You are expected to have read and understood the current issue of the student handbook (published by Student Services) regarding student responsibilities and rights, and the intellectual property policy, for information about procedures and about what constitutes acceptable on-campus behavior. Moreover, any student caught cheating in any way on exams or submitting another person's work for written assignments will receive an "F" for the assignment. Plagiarism is unacceptable in this course and will result in a failing grade. Thus, if you are unfamiliar with what constitutes plagiarism please ask to avoid any problems. Students who misrepresent excuses for missing class or turning in late work will also receive an "F" on that assignment. If you would like to work on a project in this class that is similar to another one in a different course, both instructors must agree to this practice before you begin. In such events students will be required to present both projects to the instructor at the end of the course. If you fail to disclose such work, I will consider your assignment to be plagiarized and you will receive an "F" on your transcript.

HEOA Compliance Statement

The sharing of copyrighted material through peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, except as provided under U.S. copyright law, is prohibited by law. Detailed information can be found at <http://www.suu.edu/it/p2p-student-notice.html>.

ADA Statement

Students with medical, psychological, learning or other disabilities desiring academic adjustments, accommodations or auxiliary aids will need to contact the Southern Utah University Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), in Room 206F of the Sharwan Smith Center or phone (435) 865-8022. SSD determines eligibility for and authorizes the provision of services.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

In case of emergency, the University's Emergency Notification System (ENS) will be activated. Students are encouraged to maintain updated contact information using the link on the homepage of the mySUU portal. In addition, students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Emergency Response Protocols posted in each classroom. Detailed information about the University's emergency management plan can be found at <http://www.suu.edu/emergency>.

Assignments

5 Reflection Papers- 1-2 page papers assigned throughout the course to focus your understanding on a subject and clearly state and argue your opinion. 10 Pts each.

Weekly Quizzes- Given each Thursday on your reading for the week. 3-5 pts each.

Discussion Leader Assignment- You will chose a course subject and article to lead a discussion on. You are expected to create 12-15 thought provoking questions on the article to discuss with the class, as well as a current event application. After your discussion day, you will need to write a 4-5 page paper summarizing the article and current event application, and reflect on the group discussion. 100 Pts

CMC Persuasive Speech- Pick any aspect of CMC you're interested in and present a 12-15 persuasive speech on the subject. The speech must include visual aids and at least 10 scholarly sources to build your argument. You must turn in an outline with your sources the day of your presentation. 100 Pts

Comprehensive Final Exam- 100 Pts

Extra Credit/Attendance Points- Extra may be given in the semester for a small amount of points. No late submissions for extra credit will be accepted. Attendance points will be given during final presentations.

Course Schedule

January 6th- Course introduction and Privacy/Safety

January 8th- Privacy/Safety Cont'd

January 13th- Documentary

January 15th- Privacy/Safety Discussion

January 20th- Parasocial Communication

January 22nd- Parasocial Discussion

January 27th- Interpersonal- Romantic Relationships

January 29th- Romantic Rel. Discussion 1

February 3rd- Romantic relationships Cont'd

February 5th- Romantic Rel. Discussion 2

February 10th- Interpersonal- friends

February 12th- Group Discussion

February 17th- Interpersonal-Family

February 19th- Family Discussion

February 24th- Group Dynamics

February 26th- Group Discussion

March 3rd- Cultural/Social Implications

March 5th- Social/Cultural Discussion 1

March 10th- SPRING BREAK!!!

March 12th- SPRING BREAK!!!

March 17th- Mass Media

March 19th- Mass Media Discussion

March 24th- Psychological Effects

March 26th- Psych Effects Discussion 1

March 31st- Psych Effects Cont'd

April 2nd- Psych Effects Discussion 2

April 7th- No Class-Festival of Excellence

April 9th- Presentation Prep (topics due), order selection, & Study Guide

April 14th- Work Day (Outlines due)

April 16th-Review for the Final Exam

April 21st- Presentations

April 23rd- Presentations

April 29th Final Exam 3:00-4:50

Appendix B

Reflection Assignment Descriptions:

Reflection Paper #1- Write 1-2 pages on what you believe are the positive and negative aspects of CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication). Why do you feel this way? Feel free to use examples, and make sure you explain your opinions in a way where the reader isn't left asking "Why?...Why?...Why?"

Reflection Paper #2- Watch the 34 minute film "From One Second to the Next." Write a 1-3 page reflection about what you took away from the film. Questions to consider might be: What does the accident rate of texting and driving say about our society? Why are people willing to take the risk? What (if anything) can be done about the problem? Whose responsibility is it to help?

Reflection Paper #3- Find a ten or more page (not including references) scholarly, peer reviewed article about any CMC relationship (friendship, romantic, family, etc.) you'd like to read about from the Media and Mass Communication Complete database. Then write a 1-3 page reflection including a summary (I do not need a summary of the literature review) of the article, and include the APA 6th edition citation of the article at the end of your reflection.

Reflection Paper #4- Find a social/political movement that sparks your interest and describe how it went through the 4 stages of social movements (or where it is now in the stages), and if it has declined, what was the reason? Then reflect on how effective the movement is/was, and ways the movement used CMC to gain attention. Should they have used CMC differently? What else could they have done/do to gain attention? Please use examples to illustrate your points

Reflection Paper #5- At the beginning of this semester, you were asked to resist the urge of looking at your phone (or social media on your computer) in class, and that you would later be writing about the struggles for students to do so later in the semester. Well, that time is now!

Write a 2-3 page reflection from your perspective as a student about using your phone during class. Consider these questions... Were you able to resist the urge this semester? Why or why not? Also reflect on your phone use in your other classes. What drives you to check social media or text during class? What could professors do to help you focus? Should stricter cell phone policies be in place?

Appendix C

Discussion Leader Assignment Description:

You will choose a course subject and article to lead a discussion on. You are expected to create 12-15 thought provoking questions on the article to discuss with the class, as well as a current event application. After your discussion day, you will need to write a 3-4 page paper summarizing the article, current event application, and reflect on the group discussion. This assignment is due the Wednesday after your discussion day. Include your question list and application when you submit the assignment. No, the question list does not count as a page.

Appendix D

Persuasive Speech Rubric:

Introduction /10		
Attention Getter		
Purpose Statement		
Preview Statement		
Body /40		
Clear Main Points & Organization		
Main Point Distribution & Subpoint Development		
Oral Documentation		
Supporting Material		
Transitions		
Understandable Language & Active Word Choice		
Conclusion /10		
Restated Purpose		
Reviewed Main Points		
Clincher		
Delivery /30		
Posture & Movement		
Enthusiasm & Energy		
Voice (tone, pitch, variety)		
Eye Contact & Reliance on Notes		
Gestures		
Visual Aids		
Overall /10		
Adapted to the Audience		
Adhered to Time Limit		

Appendix E

1-Favorite to 10- Least Favorite. N/A if not applicable

PowerPoint ____

Poll Everywhere ____

YouTube ____

Websites ____

White Board ____

No Visuals ____

Prezi ____

Nearpod ____

Group Discussion ____

Other ____ (please explain_____)