NCA’s Monthly Teleconference Series
CARD Calls: Communicating About Research and Professional Development

Teaching the Basic Course in Communication

Featured Speakers:
Janis Andersen, Dean, School of Communication, Emerson College;
Isa Engleberg, Professor Emerita, Department of Speech Communication, Prince George’s Community College; and
Kevin Meyer, Vice Chair, Basic Course Division, NCA & Assistant Professor, School of Communication, Illinois State University

Moderator:
Brad Mello, Associate Director for Educational Initiatives
National Communication Association

Thursday, October 14th, 2010
12:00pm Eastern time
Teaching the Basic Course in Communication

Janis Andersen
Dean, School of Communication
Emerson College
The Role of the Basic Course in Defining a Discipline

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Janis Andersen, Dean, School of Communication, Emerson College

- Currently Dean of a “Communication College”
- Faculty member, full professor, well published scholar
- Department Chair, Chair of Faculty Senate, SDSU
- System administrator – California State University
- Central administrator, SDSU, including graduate dean
- Public and private higher education
- Directed a required basic speech communication course for 5 years – 60 sections a semester
- Taught TA’s to teach basic course—created a week long orientation program and a year long course for communication.
- Initiated a university-wide TA training program
- Doctoral degree is in Educational Psychology/learning theory with emphasis in Communication
Assumptions

- Basic course is different from Intro to major but often serves that purpose
- Mission of the institution influences interpretation/context and role of the basic course
- These are overgeneralizations designed to be provocative and begin a conversation that eventually results in large disciplinary changes
- My perspective is more of an administrator’s viewpoint; pragmatic but rooted in faculty values and academic culture
- It is the Communication Century and our discipline is missing the opportunity to play a central role
Visible characteristics of a discipline

• Shared name
• Shared centrality with blurred boundaries
• Agreement around appropriate methods
• Generally predominant or preferred method of knowledge acquisition
• Shared narrative on history & roots
• Basic course content that is the same from department to department
Basic Course Textbooks

• Written by well respected, accomplished disciplinary leaders
• Relatively few, well developed texts
• Image of respectability is important
• Visible window into the intended image of the discipline
• Course supplemental packages that facilitate effective teaching by TA’s, adjuncts, and instructors.
Communication Basic Course

- Fragmented
- Large differential in quality among the books/author reputations
- Difficult to know what the student learned
- Don’t even have uniformity in approach to the area
Political consequences

• Provosts and deans discuss departments and their curriculum at national meetings; communication loses respect due to a confusing identity

• Our curriculum looks amateurish in comparison to well sequenced disciplines

• We become easy targets for lesser status in the academy; consequences range from academic lifestyle to very existence
Remedies

• Need to agree on elemental attributes of disciplinary definition
• Need to create a uniform basic course that is transferable/articulated/respected
• Research in the discipline needs to find its way into the basic course; central tenets need to be researched
• Need the basic course to be a door into our discipline (major enrollment is the target)
• Need to create minimum standards for basic texts we find credible (stamp of approval committee)
• Need to create symbiotic relationships between authors, NCA, and publishing houses that position us effectively
Teaching the Basic Communication Course

Isa N. Engleberg (isajk@aol.com)
Frequently Asked Questions

Question Sources

• Contemporary Communication Research
• Visits to College Campuses as a Basic Course Consultant
• Participants at the 2010 NCA Faculty Development Institute, Randolph Macon College
• Basic Course Instructors
• Textbook Writing Challenges
Selected Questions

• How to teach listening
• How to teach informative speaking
• How to teach group communication

Others Areas: Outlining, Personality Traits, Generating Audience Interest, Group Roles, Interpersonal Needs, Emotional Support, Decision Making and Problem Solving, etc.
The Problem with Listening Instruction

The Research Question: Do “students’ self-perceived and performance-based listening competence change from the beginning to the end of a basic communication course?”

The Answer: No

What Not to Teach: Listening Styles

Watson, Barker, and Weaver’s People-, Action-, Content-, and Time-oriented Listening Styles

The “four styles as represented by the LSP-16 are not ‘pure’ but are related in ways that have yet to be fully appreciated in most explanations of listening styles to date.”

How to Teach Listening

• Begin with an instructive listening test to demonstrate the need for better listening (e.g., Engleberg’s WOW Listening Test)

• Focus on two or three skills (e.g., attention, paraphrasing)

• Use pop listening quizzes after 10-minute “lectures” throughout the semester
The Problem with Informative Speaking Instruction

The Question: What specific theories or strategies do basic course textbooks offer in Informative Speaking chapters?

The Answer: None

Most textbooks only provide examples of organization formats, selected “tips,” and little more.
How to Teach Informative Speaking

Katherine Rowan’s Informatory and Explanatory Communication Theory

Explains how to make strategic decisions about the content and structure of informative presentations by understanding the nature of the information and the audience.

Rowan’s Informatory and Explanatory Communication Theory

Informative Communication
Goal: To share information

Informatory Communication
Goal: To create or increase awareness

Informatory Function
• To report new information

Explanatory Communication
Goal: To deepen understanding

Explanatory Functions
• To clarify difficult terms
• To explain quasi-scientific phenomena
• To overcome confusion and misunderstanding
Informative Strategy *Example*

**Strategies for Explaining Difficult Terms**

- Define the term’s essential features.
- Use various and typical examples.
- Contrast examples and nonexamples.
- Quiz the audience.
Explaining Heuristics, *Example*

- **Purpose:** To explain how heuristics affects persuasion
- **Value Step:** Understanding heuristics can help you persuade others and reject invalid heuristic-based arguments.
- **Topical Arrangement:** (A) Essential features, (B) Common heuristics, (C) Contrast heuristics and valid arguments, (D) Quiz listeners about heuristics
The Problem with Group Communication Instruction

The Question: Are we including validated, contemporary theory and skills in group communication units and courses?

The Answer: No. Many of the theories and models are old and unsubstantiated but still used.
What Not to Teach: Gibb

“We are forced to conclude that the confidence placed in Gibb’s theory of supportive and defensive communication as currently construed, has been facile and empirically unwarranted.”

What Should We Teach in Group Communication?

**Teach**
- Burleson’s Emotional Support Model
- Schutz’s Three Interpersonal Needs
- Belbin’s Team Roles
- Poole’s Multiple-Sequence Model of Decision Making

**Not Teach**
- Only Gibb’s Supportive & Defensive Communication Behaviors (1948)
- Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (1943)
- *Only* John Dewey’s Reflective Thinking agenda for Problem-Solving (1910)
- *Only* the 29 Benne and Sheats Group Roles (1961)
## More Frequently Asked Questions

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<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
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<td>• Is outlining the best way to teach speech organization?</td>
<td>• <strong>No.</strong> Consider mind mapping, the speech framer, chunking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Should we include personality traits in interpersonal and group units?</td>
<td>• <strong>Yes.</strong> Consider the Big Five personality traits and Myers-Briggs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do we specify strategies and skills for generating audience interest?</td>
<td>• <strong>No.</strong> Consider adding units on storytelling, using humor, audience interaction, and more</td>
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Teaching the Teachers

• Learn more about and integrate valid, contemporary communication theories, research, strategies, and skill development into the basic course.

• Use effective hands-on activities to demonstrate communication theories and strategies.

• Provide opportunities for students to observe, practice, and apply effective communication strategies and skills.
Improving Instruction

• Make a commitment to *intellectual rigor* in all basic communication courses.

• Provide *more resources* to support basic course instructors, e.g., training, consultants, conferences, quality Instructor’s Manuals.

• Conduct *communication education research* that asks: What teaching strategies help students learn how to communicate effectively and ethically in a variety of contexts?
Theory, Strategies, and Skills

• **Theories:** Explain or predict behavior (e.g., why groups satisfy interpersonal needs)

• **Strategies:** Methods, guidelines, procedures (e.g., why satisfying a member’s inclusion need improves group productivity)

• **Skills:** Explain how to perform a strategy. (e.g., why appropriate praise and feedback satisfies a member’s inclusion need.

Without theories, it’s difficult to choose an appropriate strategy. Without the right strategies, it’s difficult to know which skills to use.

Based on Peter Senge et al, *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*
For additional information and resources, contact:

Isa N. Engleberg
isajk@aol.com
Assessment, Training, and Pedagogy in the Basic Course

Kevin R. Meyer, Ph.D.
Illinois State University
Basic Course Assessment

• Assessment needed to justify as part of General Education Curriculum
• Assessment should be pro-active
• Can use portfolio assessment
• Assessment should be ongoing
• Create a paper-trail to justify the importance of the basic course
GTA Training

• Mix content training with pedagogical training
  — Example: Classroom Management Training
• Socialization into Graduate Student life as a scholar/teacher/researcher
• Pedagogical training should be pre-emptive; experience alone is a slow learning curve
• One to two week training programs are ideal
Student Participation

• What does Student Silence mean?
• Prevalence of Participation Grades
• Student Engagement Styles include non-oral means of participation
• Use Instructional Discussions to facilitate oral student participation and reduce student silence
Conference Submissions

• NCA’s Basic Course Division
• State of Current Research
  – Multi-method
  – Assessment and SoTL projects
  – Empirical and rhetorical studies
• Need more data-driven research!
• Need more programmatic assessment!
To register for one or more of the teleconferences, please fill out this form and return it to Melissa Anderson via email manderson@natcom.org or fax (202) 464-4600. Please note that the registration deadline for each teleconference is 72 hours prior to the start of the teleconference. However, there will be a registration limit of 100 phone lines (more than one person can be participating from a single phone line), so please register for the teleconferences that interest you as soon as possible to ensure that you get spots. You will receive a registration confirmation email within 48 hours of submitting this form. Slides for the presentation and dial-in information will be sent to all registered teleconference participants 48 hours before the teleconference.

Name:  
Affiliation:  
Email Address:  
Phone Number:  
Registration for:  (please X all teleconferences for which you would like to be registered)

• **Defining Marriage in California: An Analysis of Public & Technical Argument**  
  Edward Schiappa, Paul W. Frenzel Chair in Liberal Arts & Department Chair, Department of Communication Studies, University of Minnesota & NCA Distinguished Scholar  
  Friday, November 5, 2010—12:00pm Eastern

• **Communication Scholarship and the Public**  
  Kathleen Jamieson, Elizabeth Ware Packard Professor of Communication, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania; Joann Keyton, Professor, Department of Communication, North Carolina State University; and Katherine Rowan, Professor, Department of Communication, George Mason University  
  Tuesday, January 18, 2011—1:00pm Eastern

• **Research Presentation- Title TBD**  
  Joseph Turow, Professor, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania & NCA Distinguished Scholar  
  Thursday, February 17, 2011—2:00pm Eastern

• **Technology and the Discipline**  
  Christina Yoshimura, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication Studies, University of Montana  
  Friday, March 18, 2011—3:00pm Eastern

• **Research Presentation- TBD**  
  John Daly, Professor, Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas, Austin & NCA Distinguished Scholar  
  April—12:00pm Eastern

• **The Post Ph.D. Job Search**  
  William Elwood, Scientific Review Officer, Community-Level Health Promotion Study Section, Center for Scientific Review, National Institutes of Health; Robert Leonard, Associate Professor, Department of Communication, Sinclair Community College; and Don Stacks, Professor, School of Communication, University of Miami  
  Thursday, May 12, 2011—1:00pm Eastern

If you have any questions about the teleconference series, please contact Melissa Anderson at manderson@natcom.org or (202) 534-1111.
October 14, 2010 Conference Call: Dial-In Information

• Dial the Access Number: **1.800.920.7487**
• When prompted, enter the Participant Code followed by #
• Your Participant Code is **66623635#**

Participant Star Commands

• *4- Volume: Pressing *4 will increase/decrease the volume

• **Q &A Session:** Participants press *1 to ask a question, and the moderator will take your questions in the order that they arrive

• For technical assistance during the teleconference, contact Customer Service at **1.800.989.9239**