Revisions: Visual, ORAL & Written Communication

Summer 2008

Nuts & Bolts Information for UN2001 Section R08

Instructor’s Name & Office: David Clanaugh, Walker 148 (Walker 149 toward the end of the semester).


Instructor’s Office Hours: Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11 AM-Noon, and by appointment.

Instructor’s Phone & Email: 487-3279; clanaugh@mtu.edu – I will typically reply to your emails within 24 hours – put a subject line referencing the class and topic. Please use your MTU address for all email communication.

Listserv: The listserv address is claR08-I@mtu.edu. Check your email daily for possible class news.

To Drop Off Assignments: At my office or in my mailbox in the Humanities Dept. Office adjacent to Walker 319.

Required Textbooks & Materials:
- There may be occasional supplementary readings available through the class listserv/website.
- Spiral notebook (for note taking and jotting of ideas and questions) and two folders (one to organize class materials & the other to compile TYPED journal entries).
- Three Ring Binder to organize materials for end-of-semester portfolio.

Course Overview... “Awareness is the essence of intelligence” – (John Dewey)

Underlying Assumptions:
This course is grounded on the proposition that “People cannot NOT communicate.” The real issue, therefore, is whether we communicate in a mindful and skillful manner with awareness of and attention to the wide variety of purposes, audiences, contexts, mediums, and methods we encounter in our personal, social and professional journeys. We are meaning-seeking and meaning-creating creatures; the communication technologies, methods and strategies we use to create and discover meaning have many nuances with significant impacts on how we experience and convey meaning.

A parallel proposition is that communication is an imprecise and fluid process – technologies, methods and strategies constantly evolve in ways that the products of communication can never can be exhaustively defined or fully understood. For example, go back and read something you wrote as a high school freshman and you will quite likely find yourself asking questions like, “Did I write that? Did I mean that? What is it that I really meant?” Therefore we need to approach communication with a sense of humility and humor knowing that our processes and products will have lives of their own, and can yield an ever-changing variety of interpretations.

Does this mean that we throw our hands up in despair and give up trying to communicate effectively and clearly? NOT AT ALL!! As humans there is something intrinsic in each of us that leads us to seek connection – to commune – with one another through sharing what we are experiencing and learning during our life journeys.
**Purposes, Goals & Methods:**

Individually and together we can become more aware, mindful and skillful as communicators, and thus experience success and satisfaction about our efforts to connect, share, and learn through communication.

During this course we will work (and play) with various modes of communication (visual, written, oral and multimodal) to:

- Analyze examples of communication through the concepts of context, purpose and audience.
- Develop our rhetorical skills to examine how communication relies upon (in various combinations) reason and logic (logos), appeals to emotion (pathos), and shared worldviews or ethical perspectives (ethos).
- Become more effective in how we conceptualize and compose our communications.
- Utilize group and individual communication experiments and assignments (some graded, some not graded, yet all required) to move beyond merely analyzing the communication processes and products of others to ourselves becoming more rhetorically effective communicators.
- Become comfortable with (and use) the awareness that we can constantly improve our work through reflection and “re-visioning” – to see our communication practices with new eyes and in new ways.

Because the goal here is your personal and professional growth, there will be opportunities to tailor course experiences, activities and projects to your personal interests and goals. Whatever interests and goals you pursue after this course, your enhanced communication skills afterwards will help you better achieve academic, professional and personal success.

**Course Work**

**Assignment Sequences:**

There will be three extended assignment sequences during this semester:

- **Sequence One** (all elements due July 17) will focus on visual representation and design, yet will also have room for written and oral aspects. This project will involve developing a poster, flyer, brochure, or comparable item to promote an event, address an issue, or communicate about an organization and its work to your audience of classmates for a specific purpose. After everyone presents their projects to the class, 3-5 page reflective papers will conclude the assignment sequence.

- **Sequence Two** (all elements due July 28) will be an oral communication project/presentation. Teams of 3-4 people will script and produce brief podcasts based on one of their visual designs.

- **Sequence Three** (all elements due 8/12/08) will involve a 10-15 page written group research project about a local or regional issue (current or past) primarily addressed through at least two different print media (this can include one Web-based medium). Teams of three to four students can also utilize visual and oral media, but written media must be primary. This sequence will provide a great chance to use the library and public archives, to develop research skills, to develop a critical perspective toward media, and to integrate awareness and use of rhetorical skills. The concluding group presentations will be multimodal (a combination of oral, visual & written modes) and will provide an opportunity to integrate and showcase your skills. Each team member will also produce a distinct 2-3 page persuasive opinion piece about the issue, and will make reflection about this project as the integrating class experience a primary element in their 4-5 page portfolio reflection paper. I strongly encourage groups to use the Writing Center during this project!

Each assignment sequence will be broken down into smaller parts that will promote a process orientation for creating your “final” product. These small parts will include: research proposals and plans, rhetorical analyses, journaling, peer reviews, oral presentations, and post-project reflection papers. A
passing course grade requires completing all assignments. I must have hard copies of all assignments and will not accept assignments via email.

Late Assignments:

I will accept late assignments only in the most extenuating of circumstances such as major medical issues or death of a loved one. You must consult with me and provide some information about these or other serious circumstances (for example, a written doctor’s excuse or statement from the Dean of Students).

Journals:

Take at least three times each week for JOURNALING. This important on-going class assignment provides opportunities to reflect on class readings, discussions and activities; to free write about topics of your choosing; and to develop your ideas and plan out your projects. Also feel free to recount out-of-class conversations you have with fellow students about what you are learning, solving problems, developing your ideas, and so forth. Each typed double-spaced entry should be 150-200 words, including a “title,” the date, and time of day. You can also include drawings and diagrams in your journal. DO NOT UNDULY WORRY ABOUT SPELLING, GRAMMAR, PUNCTUATION & MECHANICS!! This journal will be assessed only on the basis of whether you make the minimum number of entries; feel free to journal more frequently than the minimum. Journals are due on Thursday, July 24 and Wednesday, Aug. 13. Include an entry from the first and second halves of the semester in your Portfolio.

Final Portfolio:

The University assesses the effectiveness of the Revisions course through reviewing a cross-section of anonymous portfolios. Your portfolio will contain all the assignments you did for the class (either the actual assignments or a discussion of those that are not practical to be included in the portfolio’s reflective cover letter). Purchase a three-ring binder, and begin placing in it copies of all your work (including the assignment guidelines) that have been “scrubbed” of identifying any information. More information will be provided later. Portfolios will be due in class on Thursday, Aug. 14.

Class Participation (during class and also outside class though Journaling and peer interaction):

Our work together will benefit greatly from an atmosphere of collaboration and active involvement by all students in this class. Individual and group successes go hand in hand, mutually reinforcing each other. As a result, your engagement and participation are vital whether through active listening, sharing your point of view, asking thoughtful questions, and providing respect and encouragement to your colleagues.

Grading:

I do not grade based on bell-shaped curve because each class is a unique collection of individuals. There is no greater satisfaction to me than to have a maximum number of students feel successful the final day and to have their final grades reflect outstanding effort and work. Your final grade will be determined in this manner:

| Assignment Sequence #1 (visual argument project) | 10% |
| Assignment Sequence #2 (oral podcast project based on visual design) | 20% |
| Assignment Sequence #3 (print media research/persuasion project) | 30% |
| Class Participation, Attendance, and Social Practices | 15% |
| Journaling | 15% |
| Final Portfolio | 10% |

Your Final Letter Grade will be based on the following scale:

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Policies

Grading and Group Work:

Group work can create anxiety when it comes to individual grades. Should there be a rare group in which an individual member does not pull his or her weight, I will consider the grades of group members on other projects and general class performance to compensate for this situation for all group members.

A Safe & Respectful Classroom:

I expect all students to actively contribute to a safe classroom environment through using respectful and appropriate language, as well as listening in a respectful manner to each other — especially when there are differences of outlook and opinion. Please avoid language and behaviors (such as body language that can be construed as sexist, racist, disrespectful, and objectifying of and demeaning toward others. 

As part of this perspective, I am a proud member of Safe Place. Safe Place's Mission Statement is: "The GLBT Safe Place Program strives to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on Michigan Tech's campus. Through education, advocacy, and awareness, the program contributes to an open campus climate that is safe and accepting to all members of the University community" (from www.safeplace.mtu.edu). Thanks!

Attendance and Communication Policy:

Everyone brings unique gifts, points of view and interests to this class; working and learning together helps everyone expand and reach their goals. We need everyone present on a consistent basis to help us make the most of this learning experience! Your absence (physical or otherwise) not only shortchanges you, it shortchanges your fellow students.

Yet "real life" sometimes requires missing a class. As a result, you are permitted two unexcused absences. After that each unexcused absence lowers your grade 5 percent. Sleeping, text messaging, and so forth qualify as absences — please turn off your cell phones before coming to class. Two tardies count as an unexcused absence; each subsequent tardy counts as another absence.

Excused absences must be documented and will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If you know you will be absent (excused or unexcused), notify me by email as soon as possible.

Syllabus Content and Course Schedule:

I reserve the right to revise the syllabus and/or schedule of work to better serve student needs and course objectives. My goal is to stay as close as possible to major assignment due dates.

MTU's Policy on Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. They are defined as "knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation." This policy covers copying sections or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers written by students for other classes or purchasing academic papers. Plagiarism and cheating are dishonest, but they also cheat you out of learning — the prime reason you are here. If you have questions about this issue, please talk with me or consult a Writing Center coach.

MTU's Policy on Discrimination and Harassment:

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).