

Description

This is purposed to be a small group project—that will serve as a capstone for students taking an introduction to communication studies course. In this project students must write and perform a situational—communication—comedy that lasts approximately seven minutes (no longer than 10), and each student must play a role in the performance. Some examples include shows such as Modern Family, The Office, Scrubs, and Blackish. The comedy performance should incorporate the five communication concentrations at our university by incorporating different types of communication that relate to corporate, media, interpersonal, rhetoric, and health communication as they are our five concentration areas as a way to distinguish the concentrations.

In addition to the script and performance students must provide a rationale for their choices. In particular, how they distinguish the five concentration areas and how the story narrative or situation aligns with each area. After the brief performance students lead a discussion about their situational—communication—comedy. Each group must prepare four to five discussion questions that highlight the communication situation or communication theory incorporated in order to draw the classes' attention to each area. After the in-class presentation students are asked to reflect on their experience. Below are the deliverables for the aforementioned project:

- Script for situational—communication—comedy
- In-class performance
- Rationale: characters and character choices (supporting document)
- Discussion questions (4 – 5 questions)
- Individual reflection (1 – 2 pages)

Rationale

We were struggling to help our students understand the differences among the five concentration areas that we offer within our communication studies department (corporate, media, interpersonal, rhetoric, and health). One day, while brainstorming how to work through this problem we were trying to think of situational comedy that we could incorporate into a class lesson in order to analyze representations of our five concentration areas. We were not able to think of one situation comedy that accomplishes this goal. Instead, we thought that it might be helpful to create our own (or have our students create one). This activity serves well as a capstone to an introduction to communication studies course incorporating, team work, testing of conceptual knowledge, critical thinking, presentational skills, creativity. Student learning outcomes:

- Understanding concepts of communication studies
- Applying communication concepts through team work
- Analyzing the differences among communication studies concentrations (corporate, media, interpersonal, rhetoric, and health)
- Evaluating performance through discussion
- Refining presentation skills through the discussion component
- Creating a script and performance

Theory, concepts & practice

The introductory communication class discusses a wide variety of communication theories during the semester. This project allows students to apply those theories to fictional scenarios and analyze human interaction as it applies to communication studies. For example, interpersonal theories about identity, social learning theories, and verbal/nonverbal speech are discussed. Students will be expected to utilize these course concepts as part of their comedy. A conversation may occur in the presentation that shows two characters comparing themselves to others, and commenting about this social comparison. The setting of the comedy may be a

hospital, and students may use comedy to highlight competent (or incompetent) communication between patient and provider. This activity offers students a way to create fictional scenarios from the course concepts and incorporate context, gender, and the richness of a face-to-face element. By asking students to incorporate all five areas, we allow them to see the interconnected nature of communication studies, as well as the overlap between areas.