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BOOKENDS:

CONNECTING COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY FROM GATEWAY TO CAPSTONE

Bookend 1: Connecting Communication and Community in the Gateway Course

As indicated on the syllabus, one of the goals of this course is to give students an opportunity to work as a group to accomplish a shared goal. Another goal of this class is to give you an opportunity to begin to build connections between your communication major and your community. Indeed, communication is a key to building community and a powerful tool for addressing community problems. For this assignment, you will work with a group of your classmates to explore the ways in which communication as a discipline can provide a useful framework for understanding and responding to a particular community issue of your choosing.

General Overview. The class will be divided into five small groups related to the communication contexts represented in our Department: Interpersonal/Intercultural Communication, Organizational/Health Communication, Rhetoric/Public Communication, Media, and Theatre/Performance. Each group will be responsible for designing and carrying out a project that applies theories and concepts from its assigned context in community service. The media group, for example, might produce a video or design a website for a nonprofit organization. The organizational communication group might spend an evening volunteering at Gleaner's Food Bank and analyze the communication that makes this organization that relies so heavily on volunteers function effectively. The theater group might produce a performance that draws attention to a community problem. The possibilities are endless--and potentially lots of fun. You will find examples of previous projects on our class Canvas site. In class on _____, we will take a look at some of these projects and use what we have learned up to this point about the building blocks of communication to evaluate them.

Then your group will have class time to brainstorm and begin planning your project. You will have one month to complete your project. During that time, you are welcome to meet face-to-face, but you should also be able to complete this project online. I will provide a variety of tools that will facilitate your virtual collaboration as you complete your project.

Part of your task as a group will be to agree upon a way to document your group's project for assessment. How you document what you did as your group project will vary depending on the nature of your project. For example, if you produce a product (i.e., a video) you can submit that video for assessment. If you do voluntary service or organize an event, you will need to come up with another way to document your project (i.e., video recording your event, submitting a portfolio describing your project). I will consult with each group about the best way to document your project for assessment.

In class on _____, each group will be given 15 minutes to present their “Connecting Communication and Community” project to the class.

The group project is worth a total of 100 points. The assessment documentation you provide and your group’s in-class presentation will determine 80% of that total, and that portion of the grade will be shared by all group members. The remaining 20 points will be assigned individually, on the basis of peer evaluations of the contributions each individual made to the group.

Your group needs to submit the project documentation only one time. Decide which group member will take responsibility for uploading your project documentation to the Canvas Assignments space.

In addition, each individual needs to download the Peer Evaluation Form, fill it out, and submit it in this Canvas Assignments space.

Bookend 2: Seeking Communication Remedies to Real-World Communication Challenges

One of the learning objectives for this capstone class is for you to be able to “use concepts and theories from the textbook and/or class discussion to explain, interpret, and understand ‘real-world’ events involving communication across cultures.” This analysis paper assignment is designed to assess your learning related to that objective. Specifically, you will be asked to: 1) analyze a current “intercultural communication” event using relevant theories/concepts from our textbook, and 2) propose a pathway towards more competent intercultural communication for that situation.

Here are the steps you will need to take to complete this assignment:

1. Select a current event that you think might be better understood by looking at it through the lens of intercultural communication. Anything that is currently being written about or discussed in the media is fair game. If you want to take on a major international conflict (i.e., Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria), you are welcome to, but you can also look for “smaller”, more local issues that you think might be better understood if we look at them through the lens of intercultural communication.
2. Spend some time researching your chosen topic. NOTE: This essay is not a research paper; I am **not** looking for a lengthy report on the event you have selected, but you will need to understand the event quite well in order to complete the analysis.
3. Select at least one theory/concept from our textbook that you think provides a strong foundation for understanding your chosen event. Perhaps the opposing parties would be able to communicate more effectively if they understood the underlying values or deep structures of the other party. Perhaps the conflict is made worse because the two parties are not aware of the “rules of interaction” expected by the other. Perhaps the problem is linguistic, rooted in culturally diverse meanings of words. As you can see, there are many possible concepts that you can draw upon to frame your analysis. Your goal here is NOT to

work as many concepts into the paper as you can. Your goal is to find the one or two concepts that you think do the best job of explaining the specific situation you've chosen to analyze.

4. Once you have a clear understanding of the intercultural communication factors that may be affecting your chosen issue, spend some time thinking about possible solutions or alternative courses of action. Use the models of competent intercultural communication that we learned in Unit 6 to develop a communication strategy for addressing your particular event. Feel free to integrate relevant concepts from the other courses you have taken in your major as well.
5. Write a 6-10 page analytical report on your chosen topic. Your paper should include:
 - a brief overview of the event you chose to analyze (not more than 2 pages),
 - a clearly-focused and well-developed analysis of how intercultural communication concepts might help us better understand the event/issue (2-4 pages), and
 - a proposed strategy with clearly articulated rationale for more competent intercultural communication in this situation (2-4 pages).

Your essay should have a clear thesis (i.e., the argument you're making about how understanding this situation as intercultural communication will help us understand it better and help us figure out how to move forward) that you "prove" through convincing argument (i.e., with clear claims and effective supporting evidence).

Your application analysis paper is worth 100 points and will be graded according to the following criteria: A paper will receive an A (90-100 points) if it: 1) makes an insightful argument about the assigned topic, 2) supports that argument with logical and well-developed arguments, 3) supports the thesis and arguments with compelling evidence, 4) insightfully uses concepts/theories from the textbook or class discussion to build the argument, and 5) is well written. The paper will receive a B (80-89 points) if it has minor problems in any of the above criteria, a C (70-79 points) if it has major problems in any of the above areas or minor problems in several of them, a D (60-69 points) if it has major problems in more than one area, and a failing grade (less than 60 points) if it fails to meet any of the above criteria.

If you are a Communication Studies major completing this course as your Capstone, you will also need to complete the following:

1. Share your work with beginning Communication Studies students. Prepare a short (not more than 3 minute) oral presentation summarizing your paper. Your presentation should include a brief introduction to the problem you have chosen to analyze and a compelling, theory-based argument for the communication strategies you propose in this situation. You can choose to present your speech in person to a G100 class or to send me a digital video file of your presentation that I can upload into the G100 Canvas site.

2. Reflect on how your ability to connect communication and community has evolved throughout your major course of study. Write a 2-3 page essay in which you reflect on how your understanding of the relationship between communication and community and your ability to leverage communication in addressing complex community issues has changed throughout your course of study. Think back to the community project you completed when you were a student in G100. How has the knowledge of communication and the communication competencies you acquired through your courses changed the way you think about complex community challenges?