**General Education Course Inclusion Proposal**

**INTEGRATIVE THINKING**

**Course Name and Number:** SP 110 – Interpersonal Communication

**Home Department:** Communication & Performance Studies (CAPS)

**Department Chair Name and Contact Information**: Jim Cantrill, [jcantril@nmu.edu](mailto:jcantril@nmu.edu)

**Expected frequency of Offering of the course**: Every Semester (incl. Summer Session I on-line)

**Official Course Status**: Has this course been approved by CUP and Senate? YES

**Overview of course**

*Course Content*

The goal of SP 110 is to provide students with a survey of the foundations for effective interpersonal communication. This is a field of inquiry spanning a variety of disciplines (e.g., anthropology, communication studies, linguistics, social and cognitive psychology, sociology) and it is expected that the course will contribute to a student’s ability to synthesize various ideas across disciplines. We want students to become more reflective of how they currently communicate in interpersonal settings, to know how to improve upon their abilities, and to understand the extent to which society and psychology influence daily interaction. In the end, we want students to (a) demonstrate knowledge of basic interpersonal communication theories, practices, and competencies, (b) distinguish between functional and dysfunctional forms of communication, (c) show an appreciation for the role of language and cognition in the construction of social meaning, (d) identify elements of verbal and nonverbal communication and indicate how these factors influence human relationships, and (e) proficiently use a few basic theories of interpersonal communication to effectively describe, explain, and predict patterns of interaction in applied communication contexts.

*Component Learning Outcomes* (assessed via written exam answers, reports, and/or class projects)

A. Critical Thinking: In order to satisfy the *Evidence* learning outcome dimension, SP 110 requires students to use information gleaned from text readings and classroom/on-line experience to provide support for arguments they make in responding to course assignments. In order to satisfy the *Integration* learning outcome dimension, SP 110 requires students to cumulatively combine theories and concepts introduced in readings and the classroom/on-line to produce novel analyses related to interpersonal communication situations. In order to satisfy the *Evaluation* learning outcome dimension, SP 110 requires students to critically assess the relative value of related course ideas and frameworks to identify and support pragmatic approaches to managing interpersonal opportunities and challenges.

B. Integrative Thinking: In order to satisfy the *Disciplinary Connections* learning outcome dimension, SP 110 requires students to draw from and synthesize theories and concepts introduced from a range of academic vantages so as to formulate optimal solutions to interpersonal problems. In order to satisfy the *Transfer* learning outcome dimension, SP 110 requires students to identify and use examples or experiences not discussed in the textbook or class/on-line to illustrate the application of theory and concept to “real life” situations. In order to satisfy the Integrated Communications learning outcome dimension, SP 110 requires students to focus on both the form and content employed when completing course assignments. That is, the content of their work must demonstrate the use of perspective-taking skills and person-centered message design logics in examining both process (i.e., reasoning through the symbolic nature of human communication) and performance (i.e., actually engaging in discourse) elements of communication competence. Alternatively, the expository choices students make in deciding the best form for conveying that content (e.g., the organizational structure, design elements such as tables or images to include, the media of conveyance such as a composition or video or performance) are also considered when assessing the extent to which an audience-centered approach is being employed.

*Target Audience*

SP 110 attracts a wide diversity of students—representing everyone from FYE students to graduating seniors in a variety of majors—and typically uses heterogeneous group projects to encourage collaborative and active learning between individuals with varied academic and life experiences. Except for those majoring or minoring in a CAPS-related program, it is often the *only* exposure students have to contemporary research and theory in communication studies. Nonetheless, assessment feedback confirms that most students find it to be one of the most practical courses they take in their university studies.

*Institutional Role*

In contrast to many other universities, NMU does not require undergraduates to take a “communication” course (e.g., interpersonal communication, public address, small group process) *per se*. Consequently, though some now enroll in SP 110 merely as a free elective of interest, most of the some-odd 240 students we teach each year spread across 9 sections come to us as part of their major or minor. The overwhelming majority of CAPS students are required to take the course and it is either formal or “stealth” requirement in several other programs on campus (e.g., in the College of Business or the School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service).

*Additional Considerations*

Currently, although faculty teaching SP 110 adopt the same course objectives and choose the same textbook, pedagogical approaches vary. Some prefer a more “experiential” approach to learning course content (i.e., group exercises and individual journaling) while others lean toward lecture and classroom discussion. The on-line version of the course (i.e., exemplified by the appended sample essay questions and course syllabus) poses its own unique constraints. Regardless of their pedagogical approach to the course or the different kinds of assignments they use, all instructors teaching SP 110 have agreed to coordinate activities so that at least 30% of the graded material can and will be subjected to learning outcomes analysis using the approved rubric and conform to the letter and spirit of the provisions made in this proposal. Historically, we have capped sections at 30 students though the course could be taught to larger numbers through the use of more collaborative group projects as tools for assessment and evaluation. Were the course to become a part of the General Education program, we might adopt this later approach based upon enrollment pressures we predict will accrue with time.

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
CRITICAL THINKING**

*Attainment of the CRITICAL THINKING Learning Outcome is required for courses in this component. There are several dimensions to this learning outcome. Please complete the following Plan for Assessment with information regarding course assignments (type, frequency, importance) that will be used by the department to assess the attainment of students in each of the dimensions of the learning outcome. Type refers to the types of assignments used for assessment such as written work, presentations, etc. Frequency refers to the number of assignments included such as a single paper or multiple papers. Importance refers to the relative emphasis or weight of the assignment to the entire course. For each dimension, please specify the expected success rate for students completing the course that meet the proficiency level and explain your reasoning. Please refer to the Critical Thinking Rubric for more information on student performance/proficiency in this area. Note that courses are expected to meaningfully address all dimensions of the learning outcome.*

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| **DIMENSION** | **DIMENSION GUIDANCE** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Evidence** | Assesses quality of information that may be integrated into an argument | *Task Type*: Group/Individual Essay Examinations, Papers, and/or Projects (subjected to rubric analysis independent of grading scale)  *Frequency*: At Least Twice a Semester  *Overall Grading Weight*: 30%  *Expected Proficiency Rate*: Since SP 110 attracts such a wide range of students, including those at NMU with probationary of transitional status, we expect as much as a quarter of the enrollees could fail to achieve a “proficient” rating. Thus, our criterion level is 75%.  *Link Between Assessment Dimension & Assessment Plan*: Instructors will consider the extent to which students rely upon high quality support (i.e., source citations, quoted material, facts or figures, representative examples) to provide a variety of grounds for they make in addressing assignment directions for the papers they craft, the essays responses they provide, or the oral presentations they give. For example, a student team may be asked to research and give a 20 minute presentation regarding the role that nonverbal behavior plays in projecting a likable image when interacting in a business setting; in turn, the instructor would evaluate the frequency, type, and caliber of supporting materials students explicitly refer to in their presentation. |

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| **Integrate** | Integrates insight and or reasoning with previous understanding to reach informed conclusions and/or understanding | *Task Type*: Group/Individual Essay Examinations, Papers, and/or Projects (subjected to rubric analysis independent of grading scale)  *Frequency*: At Least Twice a Semester  *Overall Grading Weight*: 30%  *Expected Proficiency Rate*: Since SP 110 attracts such a wide range of students, including those at NMU with probationary of transitional status, we expect as much as a quarter of the enrollees could fail to achieve a “proficient” rating. Thus, our criterion level is 75%.  *Link Between Assessment Dimension & Assessment Plan*: Instructors will consider the extent to which students use information gained in the course or from prior experience (e.g., other courses taken, employment settings, personal lives) to provide a well- reasoned and insightful synthesis in addressing assignment directions for the papers they craft, the essays responses they provide, or the oral presentations they give. For example, individual students may be asked to produce a personal reflection paper regarding the relationship between cognitive complexity and message framing in their previous romantic experiences; in turn, the instructor would evaluate the range, clarity, and appropriateness of the ideas and examples they turn to in developing their analyses. |
| **Evaluate** | Evaluates information, ideas, and activities according to established principles and guidelines | *Task Type*: Group/Individual Essay Examinations, Papers, and/or Projects (subjected to rubric analysis independent of grading scale)  *Frequency*: At Least Twice a Semester  *Overall Grading Weight*: 30%  *Expected Proficiency Rate*: Since SP 110 attracts such a wide range of students, including those at NMU with probationary of transitional status, we expect as much as a quarter of the enrollees could fail to achieve a “proficient” rating. Thus, our criterion level is 75%.  *Link Between Assessment Dimension & Assessment Plan*: Instructors will consider the extent to which students rely upon established descriptive frameworks (e.g., the Coordinated Management of Meaning perspective, models of dyadic interaction) to judge the situated propriety of communication strategies and tactics in the papers they craft, the essays responses they provide, or the oral presentations they give. For example, an essay question may require students to evaluate the desirability of using particular impression management strategies when interacting with their professors; in turn, the instructor would evaluate the extent to which their arguments take into account specific framework elements (e.g., different “rules” in the CMM perspective) so as to support their overall assertions. |

**PLAN FOR LEARNING OUTCOMES  
INTEGRATIVE THINKING**

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| **DIMENSION** | **DIMENSION GUIDANCE** | **PLAN FOR ASSESSMENT** |
| **Connections to Discipline** | Makes connections across disciplines | *Task Type*: Group/Individual Essay Examinations, Papers, and/or Projects (subjected to rubric analysis independent of grading scale)  *Frequency*: At Least Twice a Semester  *Overall Grading Weight*: 30%  *Expected Proficiency Rate*: Since SP 110 attracts such a wide range of students, including those at NMU with probationary of transitional status, we expect as much as a quarter of the enrollees could fail to achieve a “proficient” rating. Thus, our criterion level is 75%.  *Link Between Assessment Dimension & Assessment Plan*: Instructors will consider the extent to which students draw upon theories and concepts originating in different academic fields (e.g., self-monitoring theory from psychology and intercultural code-switching from anthropology) to demonstrate their ability to create holistic analyses in addressing assignment directions for the papers they craft, the essays responses they provide, or the oral presentations they give. For example, a journaling assignment may task students to describe and analyze (using 2 or more descriptive lenses presented in the course) their use of social media or the internet to communicate with someone who is very unlike themselves in terms of cultural orientation; in turn, the instructor would evaluate how well students explicitly use comparisons and contrasts between the chosen models to provide insight into the nature of their mediated exchanges. |

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| **Transfer** | Adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations | *Task Type*: Group/Individual Essay Examinations, Papers, and/or Projects (subjected to rubric analysis independent of grading scale)  *Frequency*: At Least Twice a Semester  *Overall Grading Weight*: 30%  *Expected Proficiency Rate*: Since SP 110 attracts such a wide range of students, including those at NMU with probationary of transitional status, we expect as much as a quarter of the enrollees could fail to achieve a “proficient” rating. Thus, our criterion level is 75%.  *Link Between Assessment Dimension & Assessment Plan*: Instructors will consider the extent to which students can illustrate ways in which interpersonal skills introduced in SP 110 (e.g., active listening, conflict management) can be fruitfully applied daily interaction in addressing assignment directions for the papers they craft, the essays responses they provide, or the oral presentations they give. For example, students may be required to produce a research paper that draws upon current studies of friendship development to diagnose and suggest solutions to an ongoing source of tension between themselves and a close associate; in turn, the instructor would evaluate both the appropriateness of their applications regarding the theories and concepts embodied in the examined research as well as the degree to which they produce more-or-less novel skill-oriented solutions to the specifically situated problem. |
| **Integrated Communication** | Communicates complex concepts by choosing appropriate content and form | *Task Type*: Group/Individual Essay Examinations, Papers, and/or Projects (subjected to rubric analysis independent of grading scale)  *Frequency*: At Least Twice a Semester  *Overall Grading Weight*: 30%  *Expected Proficiency Rate*: Since SP 110 attracts such a wide range of students, including those at NMU with probationary of transitional status, we expect as much as a quarter of the enrollees could fail to achieve a “proficient” rating. Thus, our criterion level is 75%.  *Link Between Assessment Dimension & Assessment Plan*: Instructors will consider the extent to which both the form and content employed in addressing assignment directions for the papers they craft, the essays responses they provide, or the oral presentations they give. For example, pair of students may be asked to choose among a range of resources (e.g., textbooks, interviews, internet searches) to develop and present (in a form of their choosing such as an annotated script, storyboard, or video) a role-playing scenario dealing with the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic dimensions of a typical employment interview question-answer sequence; in turn, the instructor would evaluate the students’ adaptation to the target audience (i.e., the rest of the class and/or the instructor), clarity of expression given the chosen format, and quality of resources drawn upon to meaningfully convey integrated ideas in their delivered project. |

**SP 110 Sample Essay Questions Assessed via the Critical Thinking & Integrative Thinking Rubrics**

1. To what extent does having access to the psychological level of analysis in interpersonal situations serve to reduce the problem of confusing the observer's with the actor's perspective regarding judgments of performance competence when determining if someone has met the felicity conditions for using speech acts in a conversation? Why does or doesn’t this level of analysis reduce the confusion between these two perspectives when judging another’s competence in the use of speech acts?
2. If the meaning of “messages” are always something that is created in an individual’s mind, why is it that the semiotic nature of language influences the meanings people have when they apply constitutive, regulative, and contextual rules in the process of decoding what each other says or does?
3. For each the four different dimensions (discussed in webinar but not the text) we use to distinguish various types of relationships in general, what role does relevant knowledge play when someone decides whether to compensate or reciprocate another person’s nonverbal behavior? That is, how does relevant knowledge related to each independent dimension influence the reactions people have to other’s nonverbal displays?
4. Describe how differences between high vs. low self-monitoring could influence each of the five stages of information processing (discussed in webinar but not in the text) when a target is being presented with the Door-in-the-Face tactic of interpersonal influence.  That is, for each separate stage, analyze what might be different in the way high self-monitors make sense of this sequential request technique in contrast to low self-monitors?
5. What role is played by self-schema in managing each of the three interpersonal objectives when someone is dealing with the various stages of romantic relational dissolution (e.g., trial rejuvenation)?  That is, when a romance is “falling apart,” describe the relationship between partners’ self-concepts and their balancing of the separate “issues” (e.g., “instrumental”) they must simultaneously address when influencing and interacting with one another.
6. To what extent does a student’s level of psychological reactance to a professor’s attempt to change his or her behavior depend on (a) the student’s perceptions of the professor’s level of interpersonal power and  (b) whether the student has a relatively high- or relatively low-level of cognitive complexity in the interpersonal domain?  That is, how much does this type of mental reaction depend on both the social power of the agent as well as the social experience of the target?