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# COMMUNICATION STUDIES CAPSTONE SEMINAR

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## **INTRODUCTORY ESSAY**

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This *COM 499 Capstone Seminar* syllabus is designed to prepare graduating seniors to complete their time in the Department of Communication Studies by showcasing their competence in communication. A capstone course provides a venue for "assessing how successfully the major has attained the overall goals" (Wagenaar, 1993, p. 214). As such, many departments require a fairly involved capstone project that counts for a significant part of the grade and allows students to showcase a variety of desired student learning outcomes. In this COM 499 course, students are asked to complete assignments that demonstrate their academic development (e.g., capstone project) and professional development (e.g., resume, interview, portfolio, self-reflection papers).

The discipline of communication studies is a rich tapestry that includes threads from both the social sciences and the humanities, which can be both exciting and confusing for students as they navigate the major. Olsen, Weber, and Trimble (2002) wrote that a holistic capstone course helps to clarify disciplinary identity and to defuse dialectical tensions for fields and majors that combine multiple scholarly traditions. *COM 499 Capstone Seminar* seeks to give students an opportunity to integrate and synthesize what they have learned in the Communication Studies major by completing their own original research projects to demonstrate what they have learned.

Rodrick and Dickmeyer (2002) wrote that "the capstone experience not only benefits our students' understanding of communication, it also provides them with the values and benefits of undergraduate research in general" (p. 47). Undergraduate research is a central component of the COM 499 capstone course. The COM 499 course challenges students not only to locate and cite academic sources that illuminate a central research question, but also to conduct their own original research. In short, students in COM 499 should receive the message that knowing how to conduct and interpret research will benefit them in their future chosen professions and careers.

Taught as a seminar class, this COM 499 course syllabus offers flexibility for professors to mentor students' capstone projects in a way that fits with their own academic background and strengths. This introductory essay provides context and explanation to help instructors implement this course syllabus if they choose to do so.

### **ASSESSING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCY IN THE CAPSTONE COURSE**

The capstone project in communication studies allows students to showcase a variety of desired learning outcomes, such as the ones provided by the *National Communication Association* (NCA) in 2015. Integrating NCA's communication competencies into this course syllabus and assignments allows COM 499 students to reflect on the work products they have created that best demonstrate their communication proficiency.

This course syllabus is but one of many other academic programs that contain a highly involved capstone project as part of the capstone course. One example of this type of culminating work includes having students organize and host a departmental conference or event, like the COMS Day presented by seniors at Montevallo University (Ozley, Wang, Ford, & Hardig, 2017). Having students complete this type of capstone project results not only in positive student learning outcomes, but also provides rich data that can be analyzed in making future programmatic changes.

As part of the course proposed in this syllabus, COM 499 students are asked to upload specific assignments to a class website portal called the *Learning Achievement Tool (LAT)*, which is an e-portfolio site hosted and sponsored by the university's Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Students are asked to upload the: 1) capstone paper, 2) resume, 3) portfolio items, and 4) final reflection paper to the LAT website. These four major assignments, along with other designated assignments, are also uploaded to the course learning management system (e.g., blackboard) that is managed by each individual COM 499 instructor. For the purposes of assessment, access to the LAT website is granted to all COM 499 instructors and to the chair of the department.

### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

While the COM 499 course objectives are clearly described in the syllabus and course packet, the desired student learning outcomes are shared only among COM 499 instructors for planning and assessment purposes. The student learning outcomes, heavily reliant on the communication competencies provided by the National Communication Association (NCA), have been agreed upon by the sponsoring department's undergraduate program committee and used to assess the effectiveness of the course. By the end of *COM 499 Capstone Seminar*, students should be able to:

- Explain theories and concepts and communication. (disciplinary knowledge).
- Apply communication theories of communication to specific contexts. (application of knowledge).
- Select appropriate conceptual and analytical tools for use in communication analysis. (communication inquiry).
- Adapt communication messages to the audience and occasion. (audience adaptation).
- Prepare and present well-organized and reasoned oral and written communication. (oral and written communication).
- Demonstrate how communication can be used to solve problems. (problem solving).
- Engage in self-reflection and feedback, through editing and revision of written work. (self-awareness).
- Listen to messages actively and formulate an appropriate response. (listening).
- Attend to messages actively, evaluate messages thoughtfully, and respond to messages mindfully. (critical thinking).

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

On the first page of the syllabus, students receive detailed information about the objectives of the course. In the course packet, students also receive detailed information about how each particular assignment helps them to achieve designated objectives of the course. For example, the successful completion of the capstone project, mock interview, and portfolio assignment helps students to achieve several of the course objectives, which are clearly described for students on the assignment sheets.

### REFRESHER HANDOUTS

Because COM 499 is a capstone course, seniors in the program should have a basic knowledge of communication theory and methods. Thus, COM 499 begins with “refreshers” on communication methods of analysis that students are likely to use for their capstone project: 1) narrative cluster analysis (rhetorical analysis), 2) content analysis (qualitative), 3) content analysis (quantitative), 4) field study and ethnography, 5) fantasy analysis, and 6) frame analysis. Students are asked to download four readings provided on blackboard in order to prepare for these refreshers. A handout is also provided for each refresher. The handout includes a description of the theory/method, supplemental readings about each one, and sample titles from past COM 499 students who utilized that particular theory and/or method in their capstone project. The instructor spends about an hour going over each communication approach and consults students about what approach might be the best fit for the project topic ideas they are beginning to consider. The Appendix of the course packet provides a copy of these refresher handouts.

### SELF-REFLECTION AND ASSESSMENT

Assessment plays an important role in this course. Not only are students required to respond to constructive criticism from faculty, they must also respond to feedback from each other. Self-reflection and responding to constructive criticism (e.g., editing) is central to the course. Students learn to give and receive feedback by exchanging such documents as: 1) the resume and cover letter, and 2) drafts of the capstone paper. By the end of the class, each student’s documents have been critiqued by at least two other people in the class, along with the instructor. For example, for the resume and cover letter assignment, each student should print the resume and cover letter and bring it to class for a peer critique. In that session, the document is read and critiqued by one or two classmates. Then, later that week, each student’s resume and cover letter is posted to the discussion board (e.g., blackboard) and critiqued by an assigned classmate. The draft of the capstone paper is edited through a similar editing and feedback process. Instructors should set the final deadline for the paper and work backwards from that date in order to determine the best days on which to conduct the peer feedback and review.

### REFERENCES

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- NCA’s Learning Outcomes in Communication (2015). What should a graduate with a communication degree know, understand, and be able to do? *National Communication Association*. Retrieved October 12, 2018 from <https://www.natcom.org/learning-outcomes-communication>.
- Olsen, R., Weber, D. E., & Trimble, F. P. (2002). Cornerstones and capstones: A case study on the value of a holistic core in the discipline of communication studies. *Communication Education, 51*, 65–80.
- Ozley, R. Wang, T., Ford, S., & Hardig, S. (2017). COMS Day as a communication senior capstone team project. *Communication Teacher, 31*(3), 177-186.
- Redmond, M. V. (1998). Outcomes assessment and the capstone course in communication. *Southern Communication Journal, 64*(1), 68-75.
- Rodrick, R. & Dickmeyer, L. (2002). Providing undergraduate research opportunities for communication students: A curricular approach. *Communication Education, 51*(1), 40-50.
- Wagenaar, T. C. (1993). The capstone course. *Teaching Sociology, 21*(3), 209-214.

# SYLLABUS: COM 499 CAPSTONE SEMINAR

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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Gives advanced students an opportunity to integrate and synthesize what they have learned in the Communication Studies major. Prepares students to be competent communicators in their personal, civic, and professional roles. *A minimum grade of C- in COM 499 is required for graduation.*

*YOUR KEYS TO SUCCESS IN THIS COURSE: DILIGENCE, DRIVE, AND DETERMINATION!*

## COURSE OBJECTIVES:

In this course, students will learn to:

- Create, execute, and present a capstone project on a communication topic.
- Showcase professional readiness by producing an effective resume, cover letter, and portfolio.
- Demonstrate proficiency in academic writing, APA Style, and the citation of academic journals.
- Engage in self-reflection and feedback, through editing and revision of written work.
- Identify and articulate the connections between theory and practice of communication studies.
- Apply appropriate conceptual and analytical tools to various contexts.
- Adapt communication messages to a diverse variety of audiences.
- Prepare and present well-organized and reasoned oral and written communication.
- Demonstrate how critical thinking can be used to solve problems.

## REQUIRED READINGS

- Com 499 Course Packet.
  - Print the packet and bring it with you to class each day.
- Scholarly reading will be done by each student for the Capstone Project.
- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). 6th ed. Available on amazon.
- Available on blackboard:
  - Bormann, E. G. (1972). Fantasy and rhetorical vision: The rhetorical criticism of social reality. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 58, 396-407.
  - Goodall, H. L. (2014). Field guide to studying organizational comm. In *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity & constraint*. Eisenberg, Goodall & Trethewey (Eds). Boston:Bedford/St. Martin's.
  - Lemert, C. and Branaman, A. (1997). *The Goffman Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
  - Walker, R. and Monin, N. (2001). The purpose of the picnic: Using Burke's dramatic pentad to analyze a company event. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 14(3), 266-279.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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**CAPSTONE PROJECT** (600 points, or 60%) - You will complete a set of written activities focused on a chosen research topic. First, you will identify a research question relevant to a topic or problem of interest to you. Then, you will locate journal articles, prepare a source list, select a method of analysis, and analyze the text or data you collect. Next, you will write a draft of the research paper to be edited, before then

writing a full paper that will subsequently be presented to the class and on the class website. *Details in course packet.*

### **STEPS IN THE PROJECT:**

1. Research Question
2. Source List (100 points or 10%)
3. Text or Data for Analysis (100 points or 10%)
4. Draft of the Paper (pass/fail, required)
5. Self-Reflection Paper (pass/fail, required)
6. Oral Presentation (50 points or 5%)
7. Full Capstone Paper (250 points or 25%)
8. LAT Website (100 points or 10%)

**RESUME AND COVER LETTER WRITING** (150 points, or 15%) – You will write a resume and cover letter suitable for a specific job and participate in a thorough editing and critique process of your documents. Locate an advertisement or announcement for a job that you may one day wish to have. Your resume and cover letter should clearly describe how your COM degree and experience prepares you to do this job. *Details in packet.*

1. **Resume and Cover Letter (print and bring to class)** (50 points) - Print your resume and cover letter, carefully composed to position you for the job described in the ad. Letter must contain signature.
2. **Resume and Cover Letter (post on BB Disc. Bd.)** (50 pts) - Post your carefully revised documents.
3. **Resume and Cover Letter Critiques (post on BB Disc. Bd.)** (50 points) - Respond to your partner's post by responding with a three-paragraph critique of your peer's resume and cover letter.

**MOCK INTERVIEW AND PORTFOLIO (IN PAIRS, IN CLASS)** (50 points, or 5%) – You will be assigned to work with a peer for a 10-15 minute mock interview in a location of your choice, in which you answer questions and showcase (describe) a portfolio piece. Your portfolio piece can be any printed work product such as a flyer, brochure, communication plan for an event, training materials, newsletter, article, speech outline, writing sample, or website page. You'll both *interview & be interviewed* by your peer. *Scoring sheet in course packet.*

- **EACH INTERVIEWEE** – Bring a copy of: 1) your resume, 2) a cover letter, 3) a portfolio piece, and 4) an advertisement or announcement (description) for a job that you may one day wish to have.
- **EACH INTERVIEWER** – Ask some questions below, and add a few of your own, after asking: “what job are you applying for and why?” Be creative and do your best to make the interviewee comfortable.
  - Describe a specific project or division of our organization that appeals to you and tell us why.
  - Tell us about a work product that you designed or created to solve a work/class problem.
  - Describe a specific example of a time that you averted or defused a potential crisis.
  - What is the biggest problem happening in our industry right now and how would you solve it?
- **EVALUATORS** - Rate the specificity and clarity of each interviewee's answers. *Use scoring sheet and pen.*
- **SELF-REFLECTION** - Use the scoring sheet to grade your own performance.

**FINAL PAPER (DUE ON BB)** (100 points, or 10%) – In this paper, you will demonstrate your proficiency in the competencies below by providing specific examples of assignments that showcase your ability in each area. For each competency, describe how the successful completion of a particular assignment (e.g., paper, speech, research project, conference presentation) demonstrates your communication proficiency. In the **Appendix** of the paper, include a portfolio piece(s) such as a paper or speech outline that best illustrates how your past work in COM clearly aligns with these competencies. No sources required. *This paper should be 4+ double spaced pages, not counting the Appendix/Portfolio.* The competencies are:

1. **COMMUNICATION THEORY AND PRACTICE** – *ability to explain, synthesize, apply, and critique theories and concepts.*
2. **COMMUNICATION INQUIRY** – *ability to apply appropriate analytical tools to answer a question or solve a problem.*
3. **AUDIENCE ADAPTATION** – *ability to adapt messages (oral and/or written) to the diverse needs of an audience.*
4. **CRITICAL THINKING** – *ability to listen to messages actively, evaluate messages thoughtfully, and respond to messages mindfully.*

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION** (100 points, or 10%) - Daily class, peer, and writing activities will be graded on quality of contribution, promptness, and evidence of preparation. Participation in a rough draft editing process is required. Each student will create a Learning Achievement Tool (LAT) website to showcase his/her resume, portfolio, paper, and oral presentation. Writing consultations are offered in class on designated dates, to allow small groups of the course (as indicated by pairings) to convene in class and share ideas about the capstone project. Thoughtful and active participation is essential.

## TENTATIVE DAILY CALENDAR

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<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC AND ACTIVITY/HOMEWORK</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Course introduction: Overview of Capstone Seminar <b>Self-Introductions and Assign Syllabus Quiz</b>	Syllabus Quiz (packet p. 6)
	Narrative Cluster Analysis <b>Assign Peers and Peer Introduction</b> <b>Work On:</b> Collection of Information about Your Peer ( <i>can also be done via email</i> )	COM 499 Glossary Walker & Monin reading (bb)
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Due: Introduce Your Peer in Class</b> 2-minutes: hometown, career goals, turning point(s) in college, Com 300/310 project, primary role model or influencer. <b>Due on BB by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Syllabus quiz answers	
	Content Analysis (Qualitative) – Refresher Content Analysis (Quantitative) – Refresher <b>Assign Capstone Project</b>	COM 499 Glossary Assignment description, rubric, samples
<b>Week 3</b>	What is a Personal Narrative? <b>Assign Personal Narrative</b>	Personal Narrative packet p. 7
	Field Study and Ethnography – Refresher Frame Analysis – Refresher	COM 499 Glossary Goodall reading (bb)

		Lemert & Branaman reading (bb)
<b>Week 4</b>	Fantasy Theme Analysis – Refresher <b>Due on BB by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Personal Narrative (Parts 1-6) <i>Note: Topic declared today; it may evolve over next 2 wks.</i>	COM 499 Glossary Bormann reading (bb)
	Resumes and Cover Letters <b>Assign Resume and Cover Letter</b>	Assignment, rubric, dates
	Nail the Interview What is a COM Portfolio? <b>Assign Mock Interview and Portfolio</b>	Assignment, rubric, dates
<b>Week 5</b>	Building a Narrative: Establishing Your Professional Identity <b>Assign LAT Website</b> <i>Online portal where you carefully organize and present your resume, portfolio items, capstone paper, and final reflection paper.</i> <b>Due on BB by 8:00 p.m.:</b> LAT Set Up (URL link)	LAT – Getting Started Instructions
	Resume and Cover Letter Workshop (Student Pair #1-3) <b>Due in Class:</b> Printed copy of your resume and cover letter Murphy’s Law of Technology: Plan accordingly. Print ahead of time.	Resume samples on blackboard
	Resume and Cover Letter Workshop (Student Pair #4-7) <b>Due in Class:</b> Printed copy of your resume and cover letter <b>Due on Disc. Bd. by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Resume & Cover Letter <i>(Discussion Board is under Tool Panel).</i>	Resume samples on blackboard
<b>Week 6</b>	Resume and Cover Letter Workshop (Student Pair #8-12) <b>Due on Disc. Bd. by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Critique of Peer’s Resume & Cover Letter	
	<b>Mock Interviews and Portfolios</b> (Student Pairs #1-4)	Mock Interview Scoring Sheet
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Mock Interviews and Portfolios</b> (Student Pairs #5-8)	Mock Interview Scoring Sheet
	<b>Writing Consultations</b> (Student Pairs #1-3)	
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Writing Consultations</b> (Student Pairs #4-6)	
	<b>Writing Consultations</b> (Student Pairs #7-9) <b>Due in Class:</b> Self-Reflection-Mock Interview (2 paragraphs, grade self)	
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Writing Consultations</b> (Student Pairs #11-13) <b>Due in Class:</b> Capstone Project Topic (1-paragraph description)	
	How to Evaluate a Journal Article Print <i>Journal Article w/ Labeled Parts</i> and bring to class	Journal article sample on bb
	Skill Review: Sources & Citations <b>Draft of Capstone Paper due in 1.5 weeks (reminder)</b>	Academic Writing Guidelines, APA Style, COM Journals List
<b>Week 10</b>	APA Style Refresher <b>Due on BB by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Source List with annotations	APA Style Manual

	Bring field notebook or text/data to class – prepare to upload to bb <b>Due on BB by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Text/Data Set or Fieldnotes	Sample field notes and data set on blackboard
	Lab Day for LAT <b>Due on LAT by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Resume and Portfolio Item(s)	
<b>Week 11</b>	Giving and Receiving Effective Feedback <b>Assign Final Reflection Paper</b>	
	No Class – Fall/Spring Break	
<b>Week 12</b>	Rough Draft Critiques ( <i>Last Names A-M</i> ) <b>Due in class (printed):</b> Draft of Capstone Paper Murphy’s Law of Technology: Avoid last-minute problems. Print ahead of time. <i>Last Day to Drop with a “W”</i>	Paper scoring rubric
	Rough Draft Critiques ( <i>Last Names N-Z</i> ) <b>Due in class (printed):</b> Draft of Capstone Paper Printed copy required for participation. No excuses. Pros print promptly.	Paper scoring rubric
<b>Week 13</b>	Revised Draft of Capstone Paper <i>Send your revised draft to your peer</i> <b>Due via email by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Draft of Capstone Paper ( <i>emailed to peer</i> )	
	Peer Feedback and Consultations <b>Due via email by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Feedback on Peer’s Draft ( <i>emailed to peer</i> )	Paper scoring rubric (in packet)
	<b>Due on BB by 8:00 p.m.:</b> Self-Reflection Paper	
<b>Week 14</b>	Revised Draft of Capstone Paper <i>Send your draft to your “regular” peer</i> <b>Due via email by 6:00 p.m.:</b> Draft of Capstone Paper ( <i>emailed to peer</i> )	
	Peer Feedback and Consultations <b>Due via email by 6:00 p.m.:</b> Feedback on Peer’s Draft ( <i>emailed to peer</i> )	Paper scoring rubric (in packet)
	<b>Due on BB by 6:00 p.m.:</b> Self-Reflection Paper	
<b>Week 15</b>	How to Submit to and Present at a Conference Applying to Graduate School and Future Opportunities	
	Salary Negotiations and Dinner Etiquette	
<b>Week 16</b>	Oral Presentations	
	Bringing it all together: Course Overview	Course objectives (syllabus)
<b>Exam Wk</b>	<b>Due on BB by 6:00 p.m.:</b> Final Paper	
	<b>Due on LAT by 6:00 p.m.:</b> Full Capstone Paper <i>and</i> Final Paper	

## COURSE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

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**ATTENDANCE:** Your grade will be affected if you are not in class. You have three (3) absences to use as necessary; your final grade will drop one letter grade for each additional class that you miss.

**MAKE-UP WORK:** No make-up work (e.g., paper, presentation, project component) is accepted without appropriate documentation. No assignment may be rescheduled without documentation at least a week in advance. All make-up work must be resolved within a week of the original due date.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENT COMPLETION:** Failure to complete any major requirement (e.g., paper, presentation, project component) of the course will result in an "F" for the final course grade.

**TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS:** Make special note of *how* each assignment is due (e.g., *in class, on discussion board, on bb, via email, LAT*). Assignments submitted through instructor's email will not receive a grade.

**GRADES:** The "24/7" rule is in effect. The instructor will discuss grades 24 hours after and *within one week* of handing back an assignment. Appeals will be considered in writing only.

**GRADING SCALE:** 90-92.9 (A-); 93-98.9 (A); 99-100 (A+); 80-82.9 (B-); 83-88.9 (B); 89-89.9 (B+); 70-72.9 (C-); 73-78.9 (C); 79-79.9 (C+); 60-62.9 (D-); 63-68.9 (D); 69-69.9 (D+); and 0-59.4 (F).

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Any behavior which violates UA policies on academic integrity will result in a failing course grade, along with possible indefinite suspension from the university.

**CLASSROOM DECORUM:** You will be asked to leave the classroom if you display distracting conduct, such as sidebar conversations, phone usage, chronic lateness, or other interruptions to classroom discourse.

**PHONES AND LAPTOPS:** You will be counted absent and/or asked to leave the classroom for using a mobile device during class. Alert me ahead of time if an emergency warrants the use of your phone.

**FEEDBACK:** Please ask for feedback on your writing at least a week before written work is due. This allows the instructor sufficient time to read and comment on drafts and for students to make suggested revisions.

## COURSE PACKET FOR COM 499: CAPSTONE SEMINAR

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### **SYLLABUS QUIZ**

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1. What are the steps of the Capstone Project?
2. How many academic journal article citations are required in the Capstone Paper?
3. What are the steps of the Personal Narrative?
4. Describe the content and length of the Self-Reflection Paper.
5. Describe the steps of the Resume and Cover Letter Writing assignment.
6. What should you bring to your Mock Interview?
7. What belongs in a COM portfolio?
8. Describe the content and length of the Final Reflection Paper.

## PERSONAL NARRATIVE

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A personal narrative is a summary of who you are in relation to the research you pursue this semester. The purpose of this personal narrative is: 1) to help you figure out how your personal experiences, beliefs, and/or feelings may affect your research, and 2) to help you to communicate about yourself with others.

### Assignment Instructions

1. Begin by writing two or three concise sentences about the research you intend to pursue in the capstone project this semester. This is the only part of the assignment where length is predetermined. Only two or three concise sentences that speak directly to your research interests!
2. Write a personal account of why you have decided to undertake research concerning the topic you have just concisely outlined. There is no page limit for this step in the assignment. Through your narrative, try to connect significant life experiences you have had to your academic/research goals.
3. After completing the narrative, wait a few days, and then reread what you've written. As you reread your narrative, respond in writing to the following questions:

*What does this narrative say to you? What does your narrative teach you? What could it teach a reader about you?*

4. Go back and describe in writing, as accurately as you can remember, an actual experience that formed one of those significant life experiences you have previously discussed. If it was a conversation, write it out as it happened. If it was a private reflection, try to capture the mood and flow of your thoughts at that time. Think about how to account for silences, absences, implied meanings.
5. Write a brief autobiographical account of yourself using only (or mostly) proper nouns. For example:
  - Places: Chicago; Muncie, IN; Columbia, MO; Topeka, KS; Princeton, NJ; Clemson, SC; Tuscaloosa, AL.
  - Schools: Skyland Elementary; Westlawn Middle; Central High-West; Central High-East; Ball State University; Samford University; University of Missouri; Yale University; Washburn University; Princeton University; Clemson University; University of Alabama.
  - Jobs/Roles: Exchange Student; Wait Staff; Nanny; Teaching Assistant; Instructor; Advisor; Speech and Debate Competitor; Speech and Debate Coach; Graduate Student; Assistant Professor.
  - Favorites: Family and friends; shape note music; piano; poetry; rural folklore; documentaries; Christopher Guest; Ken Burns; Robin Williams; Alan Lomax.

What kind of person do you think emerges from these (mostly) nouns? Look at the list of nouns you made to describe your life. What do these nouns say about you? What (besides the verbs) gets left out?

6. This final step in the process will serve as the final draft of your "Personal Narrative" paper. To fully develop the personal narrative, connect your responses from items 2-5. What do the events, the persons, and the conversations in your life add up to? What themes emerge so far? And, finally, how do these themes relate to your research interests? Conclude your Personal Narrative with the sentences from Part 1. If the original sentences from Part 1 no longer "fit," revise them.

Your assignment should be formatted in the following way:

Part 1: 2-3 concise sentences that outline your research interests/topic.

Part 2: Personal account of why you have decided to pursue your currently identified research topic.

Part 3: Response to Part 2 (using questions given above).

Part 4: Detailed life experience that relates to your identified research topic.

Part 5: Autobiographical account using all/mostly proper nouns.

Part 6: Full Personal Narrative - 3-6 pages D.S., ending with the sentences from Part 1 of the assignment.

## CAPSTONE PROJECT

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You will complete a set of written activities focused on a chosen research topic. First, you will identify a research question relevant to a topic of interest to you. Then, you will locate 5+ academic journal articles and prepare a source list. Next, you will write a draft of the research paper for your classmates to edit before writing a full research paper that will be subsequently presented to the class, the class website, and any other relevant audiences.

### Steps in the Writing Process:

1. **Topic Description** - Two paragraphs that describe how you'll conduct your capstone project.
2. **Academic Journal Articles and Scholarly Sources** - Locate 5+ scholarly articles and sources that illuminate your topic/research question.
3. **Source List w/ Annotations** - Cite 5+ scholarly sources in APA style. Include a brief summary of each article, describing what the authors *did* and what they *found* in the study, and how the findings of this past research illuminate your current research project.
4. **Fieldnotes, Text, or Data for Analysis** - Provide a data set of the text and/or artifacts (e.g., fieldnotes, transcripts of interviews, online postings, speech transcripts) you intend to analyze for your project.
5. **Draft of the Research Paper** - Print your draft and bring it to class for editing and feedback. You'll also edit a classmate's draft via email.
6. **Self-Reflection** - Write 3-5 pages assessing your writing so far. How is your choice of theory and/or method shaping your analysis? What've been the hardest obstacles to overcome? What are 2 things about your writing that have improved and 2 things that still need work?
7. **Full Capstone Paper** - 12-15 double spaces pages. 5+ academic source citations. *See rubric.*
8. **Oral Presentation** - Present your research findings in a 5-7 minute speech during class. One-page speaking outline and bibliography required at the beginning of your speech day. At least two sources must be cited during the speech and in the one-page speaking outline.

**Editing Process** – Rough drafts of your paper are required a couple of weeks before the final draft is due. You'll receive a pass/fail grade for participating in a rough draft editing process and the quality of your writing will be assessed. Your ability to respond to evaluative feedback will be assessed.

**Pass:** Draft contains 3 main sections, 5+ scholarly citations, and 3+ thoughtful conclusions.

**Fail:** Absence of any of the above requirements.

**Source Citations** – Academic journal articles must be cited in APA style: 1) in the text of the paper, and 2) in the bibliography. Generic internet research (e.g., .com or .org) should be limited. *See rubric.*

**Learning Outcomes:** Successful completion of this assignment demonstrates each student's ability to:

- Create, execute, and present a Capstone Project on a communication topic.
- Demonstrate proficiency in academic writing, APA Style, and the citation of academic journals.
- Engage in self-reflection and feedback, through editing and revision of written work.
- Identify and articulate the connections between theory and practice of communication studies.
- Apply appropriate conceptual and analytical tools to various contexts.
- Adapt communication messages to a diverse variety of audiences.
- Prepare and present well organized and reasoned oral and written communication.
- Listen to messages actively, evaluate them thoughtfully, and respond to them mindfully.

## **CAPSTONE PAPER EVALUATION CRITERIA**

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	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Needs Work</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>Topic focus</b>	Topic is narrowed to fit assignment. Clear thesis.	Topic is focused but lacks clear direction. Thesis is present.	Topic is too broad for the scope of this assignment.	Topic is not clearly defined. Need a thesis statement.
<b>Depth of discussion</b>	In-depth discussion and elaboration in all sections.	In-depth discussion and elaboration in most sections.	Pertinent content omitted. Does not explain quotes.	Cursory discussion in most sections. Brief and unspecific.
<b>Cohesiveness</b>	Ties together info from all sources. Paper flows and is easy to follow.	For the most part, ties together info from sources. Minor disjointedness.	Ties together info from some sources. Disjointed sections.	Does not tie together info. Paper does not flow and is disjointed.
<b>Knowledge of Theory</b>	Clearly explains a theoretical foundation for the project.	Explains a theoretical foundation for the project.	Explains little theoretical foundation for the project.	Unclear theoretical foundation for the project.
<b>Application of theory</b>	Clearly explains the application of a theory in past research.	Explains the application of a theory in past research.	Explains little application of a theory in past research.	Does not explain the application of a theory in past research.
<b>Method</b>	Clearly describes a method of analysis used to conduct the study.	Describes a method of analysis used to conduct the study.	Unclear method of analysis used to conduct the study.	Describes no method of analysis used to conduct the study.
<b>Spelling and grammar</b>	No spelling or grammar mistakes.	Minimal spelling or grammar mistakes.	Noticeable spelling and grammar mistakes.	Unacceptable spelling, grammar mistakes.
<b>Sources</b>	5+ articles from credible academic journals.	5 articles from credible academic journals.	3-4 articles from credible academic journals.	0-2 articles from credible academic journals.
<b>Citations</b>	Cites all sources. APA citation style is clear and consistent.	Cites most sources. APA citation style is used both in text and bibliography.	Cites some sources. Citation style is inconsistent or incorrect.	Does not cite sources. No consistent style.

## ACADEMIC WRITING GUIDELINES

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**Topic Justification** – Assume that your reader is a student in your class: informed, slightly skeptical, but not hostile. After gaining readers’ attention appropriately about your paper topic, motivate them to continue reading. Provide evidence from academic journal articles as to why your topic is important or socially significant. Answer the question: “why should I bother reading this paper?”

**Paper Structure** – Treat your paper as if it is a checklist: you have points that you must cover in order to do the topic justice. Preview those main points in your introduction. Use transitions throughout the paper to show how you are checking off the items on your “list,” and review your main points in the conclusion.

**Writing Idiosyncrasies** – Be aware of words you may overuse. Writers tend to overuse “that” and “which,” without identifying a referent for that word. Use concrete action words, so that words are economical, parsimonious and meaningful.

**Paragraph Length** – Avoid writing unnecessarily long paragraphs. Paragraphs should address *one idea only*. If a paragraph is over a page long, chances are that it has more than one idea discussed in it. Hints:

*One idea per paragraph.* Take one idea and give examples.

*One paragraph per idea.* Each idea should be found in only one place.

*No one-sentence paragraphs.* Your paragraph should *develop* the idea in it.

**Pronoun Usage** – The noun and pronoun in each sentence must agree. Do not over-use second-person pronouns such as “you.” Pronouns must *match* antecedents. For example:

WRONG: When an individual realizes the importance of communication, they are effective participants.

OKAY: When an individual realizes the importance of communication, he or she is a more effective participant.

BETTER: When individuals realize the importance of communication, they are more effective participants.

BEST: An individual who realizes the importance of communication is a more effective participant.

**Quotation Marks, Commas, and Apostrophe** – When a word or sentence is set in quotation marks, remember to follow the rules of punctuation. While commas and periods belong inside quotation marks, colons and semi-colons should be placed outside. Whether or not you are using quotation marks, use the *apostrophe* in its proper place and omit it when it’s not needed. Commas should be used sparingly and appropriately as well.

**Words to Eliminate from your Vocabulary** - absolutely, honestly, very, really, always, never, literally, just, maybe, thing(s).

### Various Tips...Not!

Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.

And don’t start a sentence with a conjunction.

It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.

Avoid clichés like the plague. (They’re old hat.)

One-word sentences? Eliminate.

Who needs rhetorical questions? (No one).

Understatement is always the absolute best way to put forth earth-shaking ideas.

## APA STYLE BASICS

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### SAMPLE CITATIONS

**Help Using APA** - consult the APA Manual and one of the web pages below for help with format.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/citation.html>  
[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_apa.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html)  
<http://www.apa.org/journals/faq.html>

### BOOK:

Author/s (if given). (Year of Publication). *Title of book*. Place of Publication: Publisher.

Bloom, A. (1987). *The closing of the American mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

### \*\*No Author or editor

*Title*. (Year of Publication). Place of Publication: Publisher.

*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

### \*\*Chapter of a book

Author/s. (Year of Publication). Title of chapter. In [Editor Name] (Ed.). *Title of the book* (chapter pages). Place of Publication: Publisher.

Agnew, J. (1994). The consuming vision. In R. B. Yeazel (Ed.), *Henry James: A collection of critical essays* (pp. 90-206). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

### ARTICLE (journal, magazine, newspaper):

Author/s (if given). (Year of publication, add month and day of pub. for daily, weekly, or monthly pub.) Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, Vol(issue # if pagination is by issue), pages.

Borman, W.C., Hanson, M.A., Oppler, S.H., Pulakos, E.D., & White, L.A. (1993). Role of early supervisory experience in supervisor performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 443-449.

### WEB PAGE:

Author. (year). *Title of Page*. Retrieved [month day, year] from URL  
American Psychological Association (2011, August 11). *APA Style: Electronic Reference Formats Recommended by the American Psychological Association*. Retrieved September 19, 2011 from <http://www.apa.org/elecref/elecref.html>

## COMMUNICATION STUDIES JOURNALS

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### PEER-REVIEWED ACADEMIC JOURNALS

#### Communication Studies (General)

Journal of Communication  
Communication Monographs  
Human Communication Research  
Southern Communication Journal  
Western Journal of Communication  
Communication Theory  
Communication Reports  
Communication Quarterly  
Health Communication  
Political Communication

#### Interpersonal Communication

Journal of Language and Social Psychology  
Journal of Applied Communication Research  
Journal of Family Communication  
Research on Language and Social Interaction  
Discourse Processes  
Communication and Aging  
*Also: The Handbook of Interpersonal Comm.*

#### Organizational Communication

Journal of Applied Communication Research  
Administrative Science Quarterly  
Management Communication Quarterly  
Journal of Business Communication  
Group and Organizational Studies  
Journal of Management Inquiry  
Leadership Quarterly  
Small Group Research  
The Handbook of Organizational  
Communication  
The SAGE Handbook of Organizational  
Communication

#### Public Rhetoric

Quarterly Journal of Speech  
Philosophy & Rhetoric  
Rhetorica

#### Media Effects

Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly  
Mass Communication Review  
Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media  
Public Opinion Quarterly  
Media Psychology  
Journal of Mass Media Ethics  
Human Computer Interaction  
Int'l Journal of Human-Computer Interaction  
Computer Mediated Communication

#### Media and Culture

Cultural Studies  
Critical Studies in Mass Communication  
Discourse & Society  
Mass Communication and Society  
Journal of New Media  
Journal of Communication Inquiry  
Information Communication & Society  
New Media & Society

## COM 499 GLOSSARY

COMMUNICATION THEORIES

You may wish to use one of these theories as a lens through which to conduct your Capstone Project.

	<b>Theory</b>	<b>Key Terms</b>
1	Organizational Culture (Edgar Schein)	Understanding a culture by observing artifacts (mission statement, creeds, slogans) & the actions/behaviors of members. Rites & rituals. Myths & stories. Symbols. Heroes.
2	Socialization (Van Maanen)	Organizational newcomers. Adjustment. Learning the ropes. Rules, norms, and behaviors expected of members. Institutionalized vs individualized tactics. Org com.
3	Narrative/Cluster Analysis (Kenneth Burke)	Story. How a story gets told & who's telling it. Language as action. Dramatism. Clusters (key terms): God/devil. Guilt/redemption. Victim/blame. Mortification. Rhetoric.
4	Multiple Stakeholder (Stanley Deetz)	Who's involved in organizational decision-making. Managerialism. Participation. Stakeholder democracy. Voice. Workplace democracy. Concertive control. Org/rhet.
5	Frame Analysis (Erving Goffman)	Frames. Framing. Self-presentation. Face. Facework. All the world's a stage. Roles. Impression management. Talk in everyday life. Symbolic interactionism of G.H. Mead.
6	Organizational Assimilation (Jablin)	How new members make sense of a new organization. Norms. Expectations. Assimilation. Anticipatory socialization. Encounter. Metamorphosis. Org com.
7	Seven S Model (McKinsey)	7-S Model of Strategic Alignment. Organizational excellence. Mission. Values. Goals. 7 S's: Strategy, Superordinate goals, Structure, Systems, Staffing, Skills, Style. Org com.
8	Symbolic Convergence (Ernest Bormann)	Rhetorical vision. Sharing a reality. Cohesion. Group cohesion through stories and chain reactions. Fantasy. Reality. Chain reactions. Fantasy theme analysis. Rhetoric.
9	Uncertainty Reduction Th. (Berger & Calabrese)	Uncertainty reduction, tolerance for uncertainty, verbal comm, nonverbal warmth, self-disclosure, reciprocity, similarity, shared networks, the 8 axioms. Interpersonal.
10	Expectancy Violations Th. (Judee Burgoon)	Expected physical distances (public, social, personal intimate), risks & rewards in nonverbal (space) violation, <i>close enough/too close</i> , expectations vs reality. Interpersnl
11	Identification (Kenneth Burke)	Identification. Common ground. Sense of "oneness." Consubstantiation. Persuasion. Identifying w an audience. Identifying in corporations (G. Cheney). Org com. Rhetoric.

12	General Systems Theory (Von Bertalanffy)	Wholeness, interdependence, equifinality, openness, feedback, biological metaphor for how organizations relate to the internal/external environment. General comm.
13	Conflict Management (Thomas-Kilmann)	Conflict. Negotiation. Managing conflict. Scarce resources. Collaborating. Compromise. Accommodating. Avoiding. Competing. Interpersonal/org com.
14	Sensemaking Model (Karl Weick)	Dealing w change, ambiguity, crisis in an org. Enactment. Selection. Retention. Loose/tight couplings. Central/decentralized systems. Feedback loops. Org com.
15	Interaction Analysis (Robert Bales)	Classic analytical tool used to study small group meetings. Units of interaction. Utterances & comments. Instrumental leadership. Socio-emotional leadership. I/Org.
16	Strong Org Culture (Deal & Kennedy)	Supportive business environment. Vision. Values. Corporate heroes. Rites and rituals. Formal and informal communication networks. Org com.
17	Servant Leadership (Jill W. Graham)	Leading as servant. Listening. Empathy. Stewardship. Building community. Persuasion. Openness. Commitment to the growth of others. Influence. Interpersonal/org com.
18	Theory Y (Douglas McGregor)	Human relations. Human resources. Employees are autonomous, responsible, self-directed, and innovative participants in organizations. Recruit. Train. Retain.
19	Attribution Theory (Heider)	External/internal attribution. Common-sense psychology. What makes us do what we do. Blaming. Excuses. Scapegoats. Explanations for behavior. Interpersonal com.
21	Person-Centered Messages (Burlison)	Supportive messages, persons-in-conversation, dialogue, I-Thou communication (Martin Buber), Coordinated Management of Meaning (Pearce and Cronen). Interpers.
21	Groupthink (Irving Janis)	Group process. Decision making. Team members tend to go along with, rather than to evaluate or analyze, the group's proposals or ideas. Peer pressure. Cultural gridlock.

## FINAL REFLECTION PAPER

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In your final reflection paper, you will demonstrate proficiency in the competencies described below by providing specific examples of assignments that showcase your ability in each area. For each competency, describe how your successful completion of a particular assignment (e.g., paper, speech, project, field experience) demonstrates your communication proficiency. No sources required. *This paper should be 4+ double spaced pages, not counting the Appendix/Portfolio.*

In the **Appendix** of the paper, include a portfolio piece(s) such as a paper or speech outline that best illustrates how your past work in classes, internships, study abroad, and/or field experiences clearly aligns with these competencies. The competencies are:

1. **Communication Theory and Practice** - *ability to explain, synthesize, apply, and critique theories and concepts.*
2. **Communication Inquiry** - *ability to apply appropriate analytical tools to answer a question or solve a problem.*
3. **Audience Adaptation** - *ability to adapt messages (oral and/or written) to the diverse needs of an audience.*
4. **Critical Thinking** - *ability to listen to messages actively, evaluate them thoughtfully, and respond mindfully.*

As an example, you might reflect on how clearly your COM 499 capstone project conveys your communication proficiency in several of the competencies. You could describe how you demonstrated *Competency #1: Communication Theory and Practice* by selecting the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory of Graen and Scandura (1984) in order to analyze a local nonprofit, the Red Cross, for your senior communication project. For instance, the LMX theory describes how leaders of an organization communicate with employees, so you were able to observe leaders interacting with employees at the Red Cross and later draw some conclusions and make some recommendations to the Red Cross to improve their employee communication and be an even more effective organization than they already are. Explain and give examples. To further this example, you could reflect on how your COM 499 project also allowed you to demonstrate *Competency #3: Audience Adaptation* because you were able to share the findings of your research with the CEO of the Red Cross, who then asked if you would present your findings to the executive board for their input. Presenting your research findings to citizens of your local community clearly demonstrates that you figured out how to adapt your messages to the needs of an audience outside of the classroom. In your Appendix, you could attach a copy of the report that you presented to the Red Cross.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Successful completion of this assignment demonstrates each student's ability to:

Engage in self-reflection.

Prepare and present well organized and reasoned written communication.

Think critically and solve problems.

Adapt communication messages to a diverse variety of audiences.

Show how one's academic experience makes him or her a professional asset to an organization.

## RESUME AND COVER LETTER

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For this assignment, you will write a resume and cover letter suitable for a specific job and participate in a thorough editing and critique process of your professional documents. To begin, locate an advertisement or announcement for a job that you may one day wish to have. The goal of this assignment is to produce a resume and cover letter that clearly aligns with the job as described in the job announcement or advertisement. As such, your resume should list relevant work experience in a clear and organized way and your cover letter should clearly describe how your COM degree and experience prepares you to do this specific job. Carefully select specific examples that you can describe in the cover letter, showcasing how your past experience is tailor fit to the job description.

Steps in the resume and cover letter writing process:

1. **Print your resume and cover letter and bring them to class.** Carefully compose your documents to position you for the job described in the ad. Print the documents and bring them to class for a peer critique and review session. Headings should be consistent in both documents. The cover letter must contain a contact person's name, contact person's complete address, and your signature. Sample resumes and cover letters are available on blackboard.
2. **Post your resume and cover letter on blackboard discussion board.** Carefully revise your documents after the in-class critique session and post them to the discussion board, so that your assigned partner can critique them and provide suggestions and feedback for improvement.
3. **Resume and Cover Letter Critiques (post on BB Disc. Bd.)** – After reviewing your peer's resume and cover letter, respond to their post with a three-paragraph critique that will help them to improve their professional documents and be more competitive for their chosen profession.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Successful completion of this assignment demonstrates each student's ability to:

Showcase professional readiness by producing an effective resume and cover letter.

Prepare and present well organized and reasoned written communication.

Adapt communication messages to a diverse variety of audiences.

Think critically and solve problems.

Show how one's academic experience makes him or her a professional asset to an organization.

## MOCK INTERVIEW AND PORTFOLIO ASSIGNMENT

You will be assigned to work with a peer for a 10-15 minute mock interview in the classroom, in which you answer questions and showcase (describe) a portfolio piece. Your portfolio piece can be any printed work product such as a flyer, brochure, communication plan for an event, training materials, newsletter, article, speech outline, writing sample, or website page. You'll both *interview & be interviewed* by your peer. *Scoring sheet in course packet.*

Assignment instructions:

- **Each interviewee** - Bring a copy of: 1) your resume, 2) a cover letter, 3) a portfolio piece, and 4) an advertisement or announcement for a job that you may one day wish to have.
- **Each interviewer** - Ask some questions below, and add a few of your own, after asking: "what job are you applying for and why?" Be creative and do your best to make the interviewee comfortable.
  - Describe a specific project or division of our organization that appeals to you and tell us why.
  - Tell us about a work product that you designed or created to solve a work/class problem.
  - Describe a specific example of a time that you averted or defused a potential crisis.
  - What is the biggest problem happening in our industry right now and how would you solve it?
- **Critique** - Rate the specificity and clarity of each interviewee's answers and portfolio piece during the interview. *See mock interview and portfolio scoring sheet.*

You and your partner will complete the mock interview and portfolio assignment together as a team and will be peer evaluators for another pair during their mock interview. Carefully note your pair number below, which corresponds to your interview date in the schedule. You and your assigned peer will also work together on capstone paper draft feedback mid-way through the semester.

Pair	Students	Evaluate:
Pair 1	Robert and Colin	Pair 3
Pair 2	Kirah and Sophie	Pair 4
Pair 3	James and Michael	Pair 5
Pair 4	Harley and Brooke	Pair 1
Pair 5	Brandon and Ian	Pair 2

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Successful completion of this assignment demonstrates each student's ability to:

Showcase professional readiness by producing an effective resume and cover letter.

Showcase professional readiness by producing an effective portfolio.

Adapt communication messages to a diverse variety of audiences.

Listen to messages actively, evaluate them thoughtfully, and respond to them mindfully.

Prepare and present well organized and reasoned oral and written communication.

Think critically and solve problems.

Show how one's academic experience makes him or her a professional asset to an organization.

## MOCK INTERVIEW AND PORTFOLIO SCORING SHEET

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Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Applied For: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Bring a copy of your resume, cover letter, portfolio, and job ad to interview.

	<b>You're Hired!</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Needs Work</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>Resume and Cover Letter</b>	Very organized resume and cover letter; lists work experience that is highly relevant to job.	Organized resume and cover letter; lists work experience that is relevant to the job.	Somewhat disorganized resume or cover letter. Weak examples of work experience.	Disorganized resume and cover letter with few to no examples of relevant work experience.
<b>Portfolio</b>	Portfolio piece clearly communicates skills and abilities.	Portfolio piece communicates skills and abilities.	Portfolio piece vague or unrelated to skills and abilities.	Portfolio piece missing or unclear.
<b>Knowledge of the Job</b>	Clearly conveyed knowledge about the job and industry.	Conveyed some knowledge about the job or industry.	Conveyed minimal knowledge about the job & industry.	Conveyed no knowledge about the job or industry.
<b>Apply Knowledge of Self to the Job</b>	Clearly described how his/her professional strengths, skills and abilities will benefit the organization.	Described how his/her professional strengths, skills and abilities will benefit the organization.	Did not describe how his/her professional strengths, skills and abilities will benefit the org.	Poor description of how his/her professional strengths, skills and abilities will benefit the organization.
<b>Responding to Questions</b>	Thoughtful answers. Provided many examples of past work.	Answers were acceptable. Provided examples of past work.	Answers were unclear, brief, or inappropriate. Weak examples.	Answers were unclear, brief, and inappropriate. Few to no examples.
<b>Nonverbal Communication</b>	Excellent handshake and greeting. Highly engaged in the discussion. Very professional appearance.	Good handshake and greeting. Engaged in the discussion. Professional appearance.	Greeting needs work. Somewhat engaged in the discussion. Unprofessional appearance.	Poor greeting and handshake. Not engaged in the discussion. Very unprofessional appearance.