Title III Strengthening Institutions Project
Strategies for Success: Increasing Achievement, Persistence, Retention and Engagement

The Strategies for Success Title III initiative is a major, five-year project (2009-2013) funded by a two million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This initiative is intended to transform Middlesex Community College by improving the academic achievement, persistence, retention, and engagement of its students.

The project focuses on reformed curricula and comprehensive advising. *Reformed Curriculum* involves the design of developmental and college Gateway courses and learning communities embedded with Core Student Success Skills related to critical thinking, communication, collaboration, organization, and self-assessment. Overall, 45 courses will be impacted over the five years of the project. *Comprehensive Advising* involves the design of integrated advising services to include identification of academic and career goals, creation of realistic educational plans, and continuous tracking and intervention with an emphasis on the Core Student Success Skills. Comprehensive Advising Services will be specifically tailored to each program of study.

Cross-division curriculum and advising design teams composed of faculty and staff are designing, piloting, and assessing the curriculum and advising initiatives.

The Title III grant provides resources to support faculty professional development related to designing and piloting new curriculum and advising students. The grant also supports the purchase of advising software programs and the hiring of a Pedagogical Instructional Designer, Learning Engagement Specialist, Advising Coordinator, and two academic advisors. The resources provided by the grant offer an exciting opportunity for the college community to work together to develop the strong programs and services that will increase student success.
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**Introduction**

COM 100 Explorations in Communications introduces communications activities in such areas as Broadcasting, Journalism, Media and Cultural Literacy, Social Media and Public Speaking. The course is hands-on, stresses learning by doing and will integrate learning strategies, study skills and information on college resources to help sharpen the learning skills that contribute to college success.

The course is specifically designed for students who have taken or are taking ENG 071 (Basic Writing) and who need more experience with writing. It is not for those who have completed ENG 101 (English Composition I) or above.

As a part of the Title III grant, Strategies for Success: Increasing Achievement, Persistence, Retention and Engagement, this course has been redesigned to incorporate the following College Student Success Skills (CSSS): Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, Organization, and Self-Assessment. The course materials and activities focus on helping students to develop these key skills which have been linked to success in college classrooms. The purpose of the grant is to help students apply these skills as they learn the course content.

**Curriculum Redesign Team**

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Lesson Plan: Personal Networking Part I-Speed Networking

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:
Explain the importance of personal networking and demonstrate how to initiate communication in a
one-to-one, face – to-face, professional environment.

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Collaboration, Self-Assessment.

Context in the Course: A separate lesson on writing a 30 second elevator pitch might be helpful, but is
not required.

Materials Needed:
• A comfortable, open space
• A hand bell, buzzer or other, noise making device (for the facilitator)
• Business Cards (optional)

Instructions:
The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to practice making professional
connections.

1. Have the students form two equal lines, facing each other.
2. Explain to students that they each have three minutes to talk to the person opposite them. They
   should share their name, their major, and a little bit about themselves. Students should not feel
   that they have to share anything that is too personal.
3. After six minutes, the bell (or other device) rings, and each student steps to the left and starts
   the process over again with another person. Those at the ends may have to go the opposite end
   of the line, in order to have a new person to speak with. Note: you may decide to give students
   a signal after three minutes, so that they know to switch to the other person, or you may not.
   Students often flow somewhere between a well-organized exchange and a freewheeling
   conversation when they meet. This is healthy in that it respects different learning styles, and
   preferences. Experimentation is an important part of the learning process for all students, and
   perhaps especially so for developmental learners.
4. Repeat as many times as time allows (At three minutes for each person, each conversation
   should last six minutes, and so five total conversations could be had by each student in 30
   minutes, give or take time to shift down the line between conversations.)
5. Following the exercise, gather the class for a group discussion so that students can share what
   the experience was like for them, what they felt, and what they think they have learned from it.

Assessment: In addition to the group discussion, you may want to assign a reflection paper in which
students write about their experience, taking time to think and write the same types of thoughts that
were discussed in class (see attached assignment hand out).
**Handout: Reflection Paper on the Speed Networking Exercise**

After taking part in your speed networking session, you have gained some insight into how to initiate a one-to-one conversation in a professional setting.

Reflection papers are designed to help you formally consider what you have been learning and to organize it through writing. Reflective essay writing will help you take an inventory of the things you learned, and sort through those concepts that were most useful to you, so that you may apply them in the future, should you so choose.

In short, you should reflect upon your experience, and explain what you learned from it. You may want to use the following questions to help prompt your thinking on the experience. You do not have to include all, or any of them, but you may find that they help you to reflect on and explain your experience.

- What did you feel when you started your conversation?
- You spent time listening and speaking in turn. Ask yourself if one was more comfortable than the other, and why?
- Did any of the people you spoke with seem especially comfortable with this exercise? What made you think they were so? How did speaking with this person make you feel?
- Would it help to have more time to speak with each person, or did this amount of time seem appropriate in getting to know them in a professional setting?
- Did you do something especially well? Was there something you think that you could improve on the next time you find yourself in a similar situation?
- What advice would you give to someone who asked you how to introduce themselves in a one-to-one professional setting?

**Technical specifications of the assignment:**

- Papers must be typed, use 12 point font and be double spaced.
- Papers should be between 300 and 500 words (1.5 to 2 pages long)

While outside sources are not required for this assignment, they should be cited correctly using MLA or APA format, if used. Citing sources is required whenever you use words, writing, or ideas that belong to someone else. Ask your instructor or see the MCC student handbook for more information on academic honesty: [http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/deanofstudents/studhand2.asp](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/deanofstudents/studhand2.asp)
Lesson Plan: Rhetorical Simulations: What Makes a Persuasive Radio Advertisement?

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify effective writing for audience in radio or podcast ad spots.

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Collaboration

Context in the Course: Anywhere. Works best as an activity within one of the greater topics of radio, podcasting or writing for audience.

Materials Needed:
The writing tools work best in a computer lab situation, or when each student has access to a computer. Alternatively, the instructor may present the simulations at his/her overhead workstation, and then hand out paper copies for students to work through.

Instructions:
This lesson makes use of interactive wiring tools called Rhetorical Simulations to teach students how to write for audience in a radio or podcast spot (ad).

1. Information on Rhetorical Simulations, including a video for instructors explaining the use of the tool, and sample simulations are available on the MCC website: [http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/TitleIII/rhetsim.asp](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/TitleIII/rhetsim.asp)
2. First view the instructional video. The video can also be found directly on YouTube at this location: [http://goo.gl/G1zdQ](http://goo.gl/G1zdQ)
3. The pdf for the simulation used here is available at this link: [http://goo.gl/WuuLe](http://goo.gl/WuuLe)
4. A video explaining how to upload the link for the simulations into Blackboard is available on the main site, but can also be watched, here: [http://goo.gl/VB1Vd](http://goo.gl/VB1Vd)
5. Students sit should sit with a partner at a computer station. Paired discussion is key to the exercise. If there are no computers available for students: bring enough printed copies of the simulation for each student to have one.
6. Instructor should present the concept of the use of a Rhetorical Simulation by presenting it on the overhead screen.
7. Discuss writing for audience in radio or podcast including the following: Knowing your target audience (Who are you trying to reach with your message?) and “writing for the ear” (writing short, clear sentences using repetition in key places) so that the listener can absorb the message without visual cues. The following section is taken from the text of the simulation, and provides an example of each of these concepts:

   **Audience:** The average listener is between 18 – 45, employed, and is listening in the car or at work. You must provide direct contact information for listeners, traditionally done by providing a phone number at the end of the commercial. The number should be
repeated, as listeners don’t always hear this information correctly the first time. Your goal is to persuade the audience that the restaurant is “a great place to relax and enjoy good food with friends”. The location is accessed easily by public transportation and provides validated parking. Given these guidelines, choose which of the following segments combine to create the best ad for the client.

8. “Walk” the students through the simulation by reading the section on audience and then letting them choose the first paragraph from the three offered. Explain to them that they should each choose the paragraph that they think best reaches the audience they are trying to communicate with. If using computers: when they click their choice paragraph, they will automatically be taken to the next option. If using paper, they will have to mark their choice with a pen.

9. Students then choose the second paragraph. They should again choose the one that best reaches the audience.

10. Next, discuss with students which choices they made. Ask them why they made the choices they did. The ability for them to explain why they chose as they did is key: it shows that they thought critically about which example best “spoke to” their given audience.

Note: These tools have been proven to be highly effective with developmental level students, and have been used with explorations and basic writing students at MCC over the course of the last two years. The tool was well received when presented at conference for The National Association of Developmental Education in 2012.

Assessment:
Ask the students to try to write a radio ad of their own using the information they gained form this assignment. Tell them that it will be judged less on how perfect it is, rather than that they can demonstrate why they choose the language they do. Note: if you have not yet discussed listening audience, then you will need to give them an audience to write for, including a target listening demographic (such as the 18 – 45 year old used in this example) and a client (something other than the restaurant: a lawyer, a car dealership or an internet service provider, for example).

OR -

Ask them to write a reflection paper on this experience (see supplementary handout for the exercise Personal Networking Part 1: Speed Networking, for an example of a reflection paper)
Lesson Plan: Choose Your Medium

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the relative capabilities of a variety of communications media to communicate effectively to target audiences.

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communications, Critical Thinking, Organization

Context in the Course: Best used following a general discussion or activity defining communications media, their individual characteristics and the concept of target audiences.

Materials Needed: Handout: “Choose your Medium” and Handout: “Communication Situations”

Instructions:
The instructor begins by brainstorming with the class a list of the media used for communications. Expect students to name examples of the mass media readily, but encourage them to include less obvious interpersonal and other technologies such as word-of-mouth and YouTube videos.

An example of a brainstormed list of media may include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bumper sticker</td>
<td>Leaflet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube video</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper article</td>
<td>Radio PSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graffiti</td>
<td>Feature Film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to the Editor</td>
<td>Rock lyrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>Tweet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instructor and the class brainstorm a list of several ways to compare the characteristic qualities of these media, e.g.:

- Speed (fast, slow, other)
- Cost
- Ability to express in-depth information
- Ability to reach a large audience (high, low, medium)
The instructor then points out the complexity of discussing all these factors thoroughly and efficiently. One useful method to organize our thoughts is to place these them in a grid, or matrix. Draw one on the whiteboard using the media examples and characteristics generated by the class (see Choose your Medium student handout.) Or, provide students with a blank grid and have them enter each medium and each criterion of comparison they have generated as a class.

Students break into small groups of three to four members to evaluate each medium according to the comparative criteria. They fill in the form, appoint a spokesperson and then report their findings to the class. Note any disagreements or alternate perspectives among the groups.

The instructor then asks students if they found any other questions to consider in their process of evaluation that were difficult to judge, even while using the matrix as a guide. Ask if they kept finding themselves thinking, “Well, it all depends.” Guide the discussion toward the conclusion that many times it depends on the situation or, ultimately, on the target audience they are trying to reach. Finally, break students back into their small groups and using the Communications Situations handout, present the students with several audience and situational choices. Each group must choose the best medium to communicate their message to their target audience and also explain the reasons for their choices. The group discusses each situation, fills in the form and chooses a spokesperson. The instructor polls each group, discussing each situation in turn and noting areas of both agreement and disagreement.

**Assessment:** Each student group will submit both the “Choose Your Medium” and “Communications Situations” completed student handouts to the instructor. These forms, as well as student participation in the class discussion will serve as the basis for assessment. Both student forms appear below.
Handout: Choose Your Medium

Group Members: (list all) _______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Just like individual people, some communications media are better for expressing certain types of messages than others. One of the skills communications students need to develop is their ability to match their message with the appropriate medium to communicate it effectively to a particular audience.

Media:
- Bumper sticker
- Newspaper article
- Letter to the Editor
- Leaflet
- Radio PSA
- Rock lyrics
- YouTube video
- Graffiti
- Email
- Website
- Film
- Tweet

We can compare media in terms of their:
- Speed
- Ability to express in-depth information
- Cost
- Ability to reach a large audience

How should we talk about these issues? It’s complicated, since there are many media listed here and several ways to compare them. We could have a general discussion about all of them at once, but it may not be a comprehensive way to discuss them. Another way to organize our thoughts and conduct the discussion is to place these factors in a grid, or matrix as seen below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Ability to express in-depth information</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Ability to reach a large audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(fast, slow, other)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(high, moderate, low)</td>
<td>(high, low, medium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumper sticker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter to the Editor</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaflet</td>
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<td>Website</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweet</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout: Communication Situations

Group Members: (list all) ____________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Now that you’ve learned about some of the communications media available to you and can compare their characteristics in several ways, let’s see if you can apply this knowledge to actual situations when it is necessary to choose a medium that will serve your purpose most efficiently.

• Your friend’s apartment house has just burned down and he has lost all his belongings. A small group of his friends are planning a benefit dance party to raise some money for him and your task is to publicize it to create as large a crowd as possible.

   Medium:

   Rationale:

• You realize that bullying has become a common problem at your school and you want to do something about it. How can you make it a recognized issue and a topic of conversation?

   Medium:

   Rationale:

• Your company has a new product of special interest to skateboarders. How can you get the word out that the product is available and be sure the skateboarding community knows about it?

   Medium:

   Rationale:
- Increases in tuition and fees can result in pricing a community college education out of reach of some students. How can students concerned with this issue communicate their thoughts to the general public?

**Medium:**

**Rationale:**
Lesson Plan: Understanding Propaganda

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify and discuss major techniques commonly employed in propaganda
- Provide examples of the use of propaganda, both historical and contemporary, in such areas as war mobilization, political speech, advertising and public relations

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Critical Thinking

Materials Needed:
Two lesson plans on propaganda are included here. Propaganda Films is the primary exercise and involves the study of propaganda techniques followed by screening propagandistic films and asking students to analyze their techniques used in them.

Instructions
This lesson relies on material provided online by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), an organization formed by social scientists and journalists in the years leading up to World War II. The organization published books and articles from 1937 to 1942. Aaron Delwiche, Professor in the Department of Communication at Trinity University, launched a revamped version of the IPA’s work as a website, http://www.propagandacritic.com, in September 2002.

The IPA defined its mission as follows:

It is essential in a democratic society that young people and adults learn how to think, learn how to make up their minds. They must learn how to think independently, and they must learn how to think together. They must come to conclusions, but at the same time they must recognize the right of other men to come to opposite conclusions. So far as individuals are concerned, the art of democracy is the art of thinking and discussing independently together. [From IPA, The Fine Art of Propaganda, 1939.]

The instructor introduces the subject of propaganda and provides historical examples that may include propaganda posters from World War II (see World War II Propaganda Posters at http://goo.gl/J8hvm).

The instructor points out that propaganda was once considered to be a series of underhanded techniques used mislead unsuspecting people - something done to Americans by its foreign enemies – but it has become a normal part of public communications today, not only seen in warfare, but also in politics, advertising and public relations.

To identify and guard against propaganda, students must be familiar with the logical and rhetorical techniques used to sway public opinion. Several of the most common of these are clearly explained on the Propaganda Critic website. They include the following:
• Name calling  
• Glittering Generalities  
• Euphemisms  
• Transfer  
• Testimonial  
• Plain Folks  
• Bandwagon  
• Fear  
• Logical Fallacies  
• Unwarranted Extrapolation

Divide the class into small groups of two or three students and assign each group one or more of the ten web pages listed above (URLs are listed on the assignment handout). Each group must visit the webpage and prepare a short presentation for the rest of the class to explain what they have learned about the technique, including its definition and an explanation of what they leaned from the website. The group will also generate some additional examples of how the technique is being used today, explaining what they learned from the page and generating additional examples of how the technique is used today. See attached Propaganda Techniques Assignment.

After the presentations and discussion, screen one or more of the following film or video clips for the class. After viewing it, students break back into their small groups and choose a spokesperson. As a group, they decide whether or not the clip is actually propaganda and, if so, identify the persuasion techniques it used. After one group presents its findings, ask if any other group found additional techniques or made other observations.

Assessment:
Students will be assessed on the quality and comprehensiveness of their group's Propaganda Techniques Assignment as well as their responses to the Video Gallery clips available online at http://www.propagandacritic.com/gallery/index.html.
Handout: Propaganda Techniques Assignments

Each group will meet to go online and research one or more of the common techniques of propaganda listed below. Each group will complete a copy of this form for each of the techniques assigned to it and turn it in to the instructor at the next class. The groups will use the information they have researched to report their findings back to the rest of the class in an oral presentation not to exceed five minutes in length.

Group Members: (list all)

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Propaganda Technique: (Choose from the list below. Use a separate form for each assigned technique.)

Name of Technique: ____________________________________________________________

Name calling: http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/ct.wg.name.html
Logical Fallacies: http://www.propagandacritic.com/articles/lf.bl.html
Define the technique:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Examples of the technique (from website):

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Additional Examples (generated by the group):

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Why is this technique considered to be propaganda?

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Handout: Identify Propaganda Techniques

Group Members: (list all)

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

We will now screen some examples of what are considered to be propaganda films. After seeing each, your group will discuss two questions about it, choose a spokesperson and complete this form to turn into your professor at the end of class. The questions appear below:

1. Is this film actually an example of propaganda? Why or why not?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

2. If your group believes the film is propaganda, identify examples of the persuasion techniques it used. Be sure to cite specific examples from the film of how it used these techniques.

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
Lesson Plan: Studio Tours

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe the structure, organization and functions of working media production facilities
- Describe the basic media production process of each facility

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Critical Thinking

Context in the Course:
These facility tours are most beneficial if students first have a basic idea of what to look for in each tour. Students should be prepared by the instructor to have at least a general idea of each facility, the equipment it contains and the personnel and production functions it serves.

Instructions:
Middlesex Community College runs some facilities itself and is allied with other community-based organizations producing communication media. Here are several sites, divided by medium and including the contact person to arrange facility tours.

Newspapers

**The Lowell Sun**  491 Dutton St. Lowell, MA 01854  **978-458-7100**

[http://www.lowellsun.com](http://www.lowellsun.com)

Editor James Campanini serves on the Communications Department Advisory Board.  [jcampanini@lowellsun.com](mailto:jcampanini@lowellsun.com)

Television

**Lowell Telecommunications Corporation** (LTC)

The community access facility serving Lowell.

246 Market St, Lowell, MA 01853-0803  **978-458-5400**

[http://www.ltc.org](http://www.ltc.org)

Executive Director Jessica Wilson serves on the Communications Department Advisory Board.  [jwilson@ltc.org](mailto:jwilson@ltc.org)
Billerica Access TV
Executive Director Sam Schauerman serves on the Communications Department Advisory Board. [sschauerman.batvinc@comcast.net](mailto:sschauerman.batvinc@comcast.net)

MCC Bedford Studio
Professor Bob Matorin 781-280-3927 [matorinr@middlesex.mass.edu](mailto:matorinr@middlesex.mass.edu)

Radio

980 WCAP – Merrimack Valley Radio

MCC Bedford & Lowell Radio classrooms
Professor Bob Matorin 781-280-3927 [matorinr@middlesex.mass.edu](mailto:matorinr@middlesex.mass.edu)

Music Recording

**Wonka Sound** 225 Steadman St., #21, Lowell MA 01851
[http://wonkasound.com](http://wonkasound.com)

Studio owner Bob Nash teaches MCC’s Multi-track Music Recording course at his professional studio.

[prbhnash@wonkasound.com](mailto:sirbobnash@wonkasound.com) 978-453-6300

**Assessment:**
Each student will submit a single-page word processed paper on their thoughts and impressions about the facility. Students should be encouraged to intern at the facility and instructors may consider granting extra credit for any student who does so.
Lesson Plan: Media Survival Kit

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

• Work as a group to prioritize choices and arrive at a group consensus
• Assess the importance of media use and choice decisions to our daily lives

Core Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Organization, Self-Assessment

Context in the Course:
This exercise may be used as an ice-breaking activity early in the course and/or as part of a lesson focusing on media categories and distinctions.

Materials Needed:
See student handout on the next page.

Instructions:
1. The instructor has students count off to form groups of four or five students each. They break into their small groups, receive the student handout and the instructor explains the exercise, making sure each student knows what is required. After about 10 minutes of group discussion, the instructor reminds the groups to select their spokesperson. This allows time for natural leaders to emerge within each group and gives the groups some basis for their selection.

2. During the group discussion (total of 20-30 minutes) the instructor will join each group to check its progress and answer student questions.

3. When groups are finished, the instructor reconvenes the class and polls each crew’s decision medium by medium, recording on the board the variety of responses by the groups, noting any similarities or differences and asking the spokespeople to justify the group choices.

4. At the conclusion of the presentations, the instructor asks students for their opinions on why he/she decided to use class time for this exercise.

Assessment:
Students will not be graded on their work. It is much more important that they interact and negotiate their media choices as a group with the active participation of all team members.
**Handout: Media Survival Kit**

List All Group Members:

Congratulations! You and your crew have been selected as astronauts to participate in a space flight mission to observe the planet Jupiter up close and personal.

This is a three-year commitment on your part, since it will take a year and a half to reach the planet and another year and a half to return to Earth. NASA has taken care of all your needs over the three years, but realizes that spending that much time in a small crew can be extremely boring with no outside stimulation. Although space travel requires severe weight restrictions, your crew will be allowed to bring with it some media to amuse, occupy and entertain its self. Don’t worry about technical manuals or flight instructions, since NASA has already provided for that. You will be allowed to bring the following:

- Three books
- Three music CDs
- Three DVDs

By the way, that applies to the crew as whole, rather than for each crew member. This is because you are expected to share the media help you to build the team as a working unit, rather than isolate each person with his/her favorite media. Your crew must agree on the three items in each category. Appoint a spokesperson to present your media selections to the rest of the class and inform us about the reasons for your decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>SELECTIONS</th>
<th>WHY?</th>
</tr>
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Each group will turn in this sheet to the instructor at the end of class.
Lesson Plan: Brain Teasers

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Develop student skills involving the close reading of materials
- Improve test-taking skills
- Encourage “out of the box” thinking

Core Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration

Context in the Course:
These quizzes can be used as an ice breaking activity or whenever the instructor feels the need to emphasize close reading, help students avoid jumping to conclusions or artificially limiting their problem-solving approaches.

Materials Needed:
Student handouts and instructor answers can be accessed at the “Write 101.com Brain Teasers” website at: http://www.write101.com/brainteasers.htm.

Instructions:

1. Students are assigned an initial brain teaser quiz based upon material from the website. After collecting the first quiz, the instructor should go over the answers and explain the nature of brain teasers and how they can assist students to develop new forms of critical thinking habits.

2. Instructor should then assign another brain teaser quiz. This will enable the instructor to see if students are able to apply new problem-solving strategies.

3. Have students then attempt to solve a quiz in a small group setting. Have students share their problem-solving strategies.

Assessment: Instructors can use the quizzes (non-graded) as a means of gauging their students ability by comparing the first set of quiz scores to the second scores and then to the small group scores.
Lesson Plan: Virtual Communications and the 3D Web

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Explain what is meant by a “virtual world” and the 3D web
- Be able to discuss the potential for use of these tools, and the potential impact to existing methods of communication on the web (email, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, etc.)

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Critical Thinking

Context in the Course:
This exercise should take place later in the semester, after the students have had a chance to learn more about the use of traditional media, Interactive Social Media (such as Facebook, Twitter and Instant Messengers) and other web-communication tools such as e-mail, list servers and/or podcasts.

Materials Needed:
- Computer and overhead projector for the instructor
- Paper and pens, tables (rather than individual desks) for the students (if possible). Otherwise, put groups into circles so that they can work together (see below).

Instructions:
Virtual Worlds, Web-hosted Multi-User Gaming Environments and other 3D communications technologies have been steadily increasing in use since about 1993, with the advent of some of the first text-based MUDs (Multi-User Dimensions). In the following exercise, we will show one of these worlds to students and get them to begin asking questions about the potential and possible impact that these tools may have on existing communications tools and on internet based communications, in general. First, show them the following video which discusses the use of the most popular of these platforms, Second Life for business and other group communications: http://youtu.be/__JKf5WNbyk

Ask them to do a think/pair/share exercise in which they ask themselves the following questions:

- Does this platform look like a good way to communicate with others?
- What tools might be the best available on the platform, for group communication? Is it the built in group text chat? Private Instant messaging? Voice chat? The ability to upload PowerPoint slides, word documents, PDFs and video links?
- What might be some of the disadvantages for using one of these platforms?
- Of the chosen, why is that the best feature for this platform for this task?
- Skype has live video chat. Are there advantages to using a 3D virtual environment that are apparently not available within Skype, Google or other video conferencing systems?
- Given the information in the video about the use of these media by children 3 - 9, does it make sense that businesses, schools and other organizations should start ramping up the use of these tools for the next generation of students and workers? Why or Why Not?
• What might the use of these tools do to the usage of other popular social communications media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn? Will there be major impact, or is it a small trend that will pass, leasing the other huge social media present now as the dominant players in the field?

Next, is the Think/Pair/Share exercise: let students have five minutes to Think about and write down their answers to these questions (or others you have created, or that they come up with for themselves.)

After students have had time to work through the questions and brainstorm a few possible solutions on their own, ask them to Pair up. Alternatively, you may ask them to work in small groups of three or four, depending upon the size of the class and their comfort level with group interaction and this activity.

Lastly, students should be able to Share their ideas with the larger group. A good way to break the ice here is to ask students if they found that they and their partners had very similar ideas, or very different ideas about the subject. After that question, you can ask them to share their thoughts (Being specific helps For example: Could you share the idea that you thought was best from your discussion?)

**Assessment:** The instructor may want to use the group discussion section of this exercise (the “share”) as a kind of informal assessment, or ask students to follow up with an essay on what they think the future of virtual communications and/or the 3D web will be. Ask them to write a fictionalized account of what the world will be like in ten years, with this technological shift, or ask them to write a longer, formal research paper on the subject.

A suggestion: for explorations students you may want to keep the assignment to two or three pages and no more than three citations if this is not to be a major assignment.
Lesson Plan: Exploring Options in Communications Careers

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Create a list of a few of the communications careers that seem interesting to them
- Explain what resources are available to them for further exploring careers in this field

Core Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Critical Thinking, Self-Assessment.

Context in the Course: This activity could be used anywhere in the course.

Materials Needed:
- Computer and overhead projector for the instructor
- Computers OR paper and pens for the students.

Instructions:
1. Communications is an exciting field with many options, but students are sometimes blinded to the wealth of possibilities by the few high-profile “glamorous” jobs within the field (TV Anchor, Sportscaster, Entertainment Reporter, etc).

2. Show students some information on the various jobs available in the field of communications. You may want to start with an occupation outlook site such as the one provided at the U.S. Department of Labor or this one on a small number of representative communications careers posted at about.com.

3. Open a discussion by asking students which careers they each might be interested in. Encourage them to share their career interests, but tell them they are not required to speak about anything too personal, or that they are uncomfortable with sharing.

4. Note: Some students may say “I don’t know.” This is normal and a healthy part of the career and college process. It’s also a golden opportunity for you to make them feel comfortable by telling them just that. As you know from your own experience and study of interpersonal communications, an accepting attitude and a kind smile go a long way in making students comfortable with this process.

5. As homework: send them on a “webquest” in which they are required to find five potential jobs that interest them in the field. They should write a paragraph synopsis of each and a line or two as to why these particular careers sound interesting to them.

Additional resources for instructors for this assignment:
Career Services: MCC has a fully staffed career services department and is ready and willing to help students explore career options. They are also very happy to do classroom visits to discuss options in general and for specific industries, as requested. You are advised to contact them a bit ahead of time to
discuss your students’ needs, and to insure adequate time for scheduling. Contact information is available on their website at:  https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/careerservices/
Webquests: more information about webquest activities can be found all over the web. You may want to start with this link, and then go from there, as needed:

Assessment:
There are many ways to assess learning of this kind. Here are two:

- Ask them to bring in their findings during the next class, and be prepared to discuss them with the group. Assess informally, or follow up with more detailed writing, if needed (see number 2).

- If you do not feel it would best benefit students to further discuss this in class, then lengthen the previous writing assignment to require more detailed explanations of “why” they are attracted to the careers they chose. This would give them an opportunity to further refine their thinking on the subject.
Lesson Plan: Now for a Word from Our Sponsor

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Identify persuasion and propaganda techniques commonly used in commercial advertising
- Apply this knowledge to analyze the techniques used in television commercials
- Work in small groups to create an advertisement which demonstrates their critical thinking skills

Core Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Organization

Context in the Course:
This lesson was developed as an attempt to change an old direct-instruction type lesson on critical thinking to a more inquiry-based learning activity. This Webquest poses the scenario of seeking a job for an advertising agency. The task requires the students to research propaganda techniques used by advertisers, analyze current advertisements and create their own ad for a fictional product. The students use a variety of pre-selected web sites in their research and use Microsoft PowerPoint to create their ad presentation. This lesson is featured as part of the In Time project by the U. of Northern Iowa. You can view a video of author Cindy Matzat and her students doing this Webquest at their site: http://www.intime.uni.edu/.

Materials Needed:
- Access to computers with Internet access and printing capabilities (I do this in a lab setting where each student has their own computer, but it could be adapted for use in a one-computer classroom)
- Microsoft PowerPoint (or other presentation software)

Instructions:
Cindy Matzat says: “When I use this lesson in my class, I assign each student a partner. It will be helpful if you, as the teacher, are familiar with the web resources ahead of time. You also need to feel comfortable with PowerPoint.”

Step 1: Research propaganda techniques used in advertising. In this step, students will go to preselected web sites to learn about advertising propaganda. When they are finished researching they will take a short, online quiz to make sure they acquired the necessary knowledge to continue the project.

Step 2: Analyze advertisements. Students will go to web sites that contain television commercials and will analyze them using the provided Ad Analysis Chart. These sites do play videos with sound. Make sure your computers have the proper plug-ins for the videos...
Step 3: Create original ad for fictional product. Using the planning guide, students will create an advertisement for a fictional product. The author has her students do this with PowerPoint and present their presentations to the class. You can alter this to fit your situation.

Assessment: The ad will serve as the assessment artifact. Use the rubric below to assess it.

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<th>1 Blissful</th>
<th>3 Developing</th>
<th>5 Strong</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advertisement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertisements</td>
<td>The ad may have some sounds, graphics and text, but they take away from the ad. The audience would not want to purchase the product. There are more than three errors in spelling and/or grammar.</td>
<td>Ad contains graphics, sound, text and animation. Many of these elements contribute positively to making the ad effective. Some of these elements distract the audience. There are only two or three errors in spelling and/or grammar.</td>
<td>Ad contains graphics, sound, text and animation. Each of these elements contributes positively to making the ad effective. The ad makes the audience want to buy the product. There are no spelling or grammar errors.</td>
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<td><strong>Product Profile</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Profile</td>
<td>The profile vaguely describes the product and the target audience. The propaganda techniques are listed but have not provided examples/examples are incorrect. Few things are correctly identified. There are more than three errors in spelling and/or grammar.</td>
<td>The profile somewhat describes the product and the target audience. The propaganda techniques are listed but may not have provided complete examples. Some things are correctly identified. There are only two or three errors in spelling and/or grammar.</td>
<td>The profile thoroughly describes the product and the target audience. The propaganda techniques are listed and examples from the ad are provided to illustrate the techniques. Everything is correctly identified. There are no spelling or grammar errors.</td>
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**Handout: And Now a Word from Our Sponsor--A WebQuest on Propaganda**

http://www.thematzats.com/propaganda/intro.htm

Written by Cynthia Matzat
Site created & maintained by Cynthia Matzat

© 2000 by Cynthia Matzat

Based on a template from The WebQuest Page

Graphics © 1999-2000 by ArtToday

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**Introduction**

Every day most people in the United States are being brainwashed, including you. That's a pretty harsh statement, but it is one that is pretty accurate. Do you have doubts? Take the following quiz to find out if you are one of these brainwashed citizens. Your secret word is Room 107. After taking the quiz, return to this page and click on the right hand.

Brainwashed Quiz
Task

The Sell-2-U Advertising Agency is hiring a new advertising team. You and your partner have decided to apply for the job. The company president has asked that all prospective employees analyze some current advertisements to demonstrate their knowledge of advertising techniques. He has also requested that each team create an ad for a fictional product. The team that presents the best ad will get the job.
Process 1

Step 1
Research propaganda techniques used in advertising.

*How to be a Smart TV Watcher*
- You Gotta Have a Gimmick

*White Snow - Influence*
- Watching for Weasel Words

*Common Advertising Strategies*
- Propaganda

*Food Advertising Strategies*
- Buyer Beware Slide Show

*Rules for Advertising to Kids*

Name _________________________________ Date ______________

Ad Analysis

Fill out each section of the chart. Be sure to provide specific details in your descriptions.

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<th>Product</th>
<th>Audience Targeted</th>
<th>Propaganda Techniques Used</th>
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Handout: Planning Guide

Name __________________________________________ Date ______________

1. What is the name of your product?

2. Describe the product.

3. Who is the target audience of the product?

4. What advertising strategies/propaganda techniques will you use in your advertisement?

5. How will you attract attention, arouse interest, create desire and cause action with your ad?
Handout: PowerPoint Planning Sheet

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**Additional Lesson Plan Resources**

*Massachusetts Teachers' Domain* [http://www.teachersdomain.org/](http://www.teachersdomain.org/) is a free digital media service for educational use by WGBH, WGBY, the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and their partners in public broadcasting. It contains thousands of media resources, support materials and tools for classroom lessons, individualized learning programs and teacher professional learning communities.

Since the materials cover lessons appropriate for K-16 students, instructors must be selective in choosing community college levels and adapting the material for older learners. You must register to use the service, but there are no fees.

Among the lessons are two involving social media and media literacy that may be useful for the Explorations in Communications course.

**Life Online**

In this media-rich lesson, students examine how digital technologies have changed the way people communicate and decide where they stand on a range of online behaviors. The self-paced lesson includes video segments, information on several aspects of social media uses and issues, a teachers’ guide and student handouts and assignments.

**Can You Live Without Texting?**

The lesson focuses on texting’s widespread popularity with a special focus on teenagers and young adults. It includes video segments, instructional summaries, a teachers’ guide and student handouts. The issues it raises include:

- the value of texting
- whether people can become “textaholics”
- how parents and teenagers view texting differently
- whether parents should read their teenagers’ texts or monitor their cellphone use

The lesson concludes with an organized student debate on texting that also develop the students’ critical thinking, organizational and presentational skills.
Sample Syllabi

Middlesex Community College
COM 100-01: Explorations in Communications

Days and Times:

Location:

Instructor Name:

Office Hours: Arranged by appointment

Email:

Office Phone:

Required Text:


(Access to the Internet also necessary for online texts)

Suggested texts/resources:

- A Collegiate Dictionary (Merriam Webster’s is a great choice)
- A lined, spiral bound one subject notebook
- A flash drive or reliable cloud storage of 1G or greater

Course Description: This dynamic course will introduce the activities in communications: Broadcasting, Journalism, Media and Cultural Literacy, Social Media and Public Speaking. The course is hands-on, stresses learning by doing and will integrate learning strategies, study skills and information on college resources to help sharpen learning skills that contribute to college success.

As this course was redesigned under the Title III grant, Strategies for Success, students will be given a chance to demonstrate improvement in the following core student success skills:

- critical thinking
- collaboration (community in class, student development, service learning, etc)
- communication (oral, written, quantitative, technological, information literacy)
- organization: (time management, note taking, test taking, study skills)
- self-assessment (academic goal setting, career goal setting, self-advocacy)

A further discussion of the Title III Student Success Skills will be held in class.
General Course Goals:

1. Foster the critical skills and discourses that are the foundation of a liberal arts education.
2. Assist each student in developing their identity as a college student and member of the college community.
3. Familiarize students with interdisciplinary research methods, and the academic resources available to them (the Writing Center, the Library, online databases, etc.)
4. Understand how and why a liberal arts education requires critical thinking and effective oral and written communication.

General Course Objectives:

1. Using an interdisciplinary approach, this course will introduce students to the many facets of the study of communications, both in mass media and interpersonal communications.
2. Students will read, examine, analyze, and respond to texts and hands-on experiences in weekly written Reading Response entries.
3. Students will work collaboratively on in-class projects.
4. Students will experience writing as a process by composing two essays using prewriting techniques, outlining, organizing, drafting, editing, and revising their papers into polished Final Drafts.
5. Students will create a capstone research project.

Teaching/Learning Methods:

Because explorations courses are meant to be “hands on” as much as possible, we will embrace the learning studio format in this course. Class lecture and discussion, multi-media presentations, small and large group work, individual research and reflective writing, writing workshop sessions, and virtual worlds, will all be used to help create integrative learning experiences for you to try.

Submission of Work:

All essays, projects, power point presentations, and writing assignments (other than your handwritten journal) must be submitted by Safe Assign Link within the Blackboard course shell.

Instructions on how to do this will be explained in class, and posted within the course shell.

Grading:

Attendance/Class Participation 30%
Essay #1: Exploring Careers in Communications 25%
Essay #2: Communications in the 21st Century 25%
Quizzes 20%
Total: 100%

Class Participation and Attendance: Class participation is essential in the college classroom experience and to the learning process. Each class we will have a “question of the day” in which we explore one aspect of communications. These group discussions and the in-class writing that comes from them will be a large part of how we go about this course. Therefore, class participation is worth 30% of your final grade.

I reserve the right to drop your name from the roster if you have more than three unexcused absences.

Cell phone calls and text messaging during class are wonderful communications tools, but doing so during class time is disruptive to our work together. Therefore, please turn your phone to silent or vibrate during class. If your cell phone goes off regularly during class, or if you are texting, Facebooking, etc, instead of participating in class, I will mark you absent for that day.

Please note: In this as in all things, I will not accept anything less than your very best work.

Essays: For this class, you are required to write two shorter essays of approximately (2-4 pgs.) with either MLA or APA documentation and formatting (depending upon which format used by your major. If you are unsure, ask me.)

The first essay will focus on one career from the field of communications, which you will research and then write about. The second will be a forecast piece in which you will give your best guess about how virtual communications will change with the next wave of the internet (Web 3.0 or the 3D web). Research on current and future technologies and practices will be a part of that guessing. Whenever possible, assignments will feature options so as to incorporate your personal interests in communications.

These two papers will be composed through a process of pre-writing, outlining, organizing, drafting, editing, and revising. We will go over that process in class.

Quizzes: There will be a series of short quizzes which will total up to a possible 20 points for the semester. Missed quizzes will not be given. The dates of the quizzes are listed in this syllabus.

The Writing Center: For one of the two essays, students are required to meet with a tutor at the Writing Center (in the back of the Houlihan Library in Bedford). Writing Center appointments can be made by phone at (781)280-3727 or you can make an appointment in person. Writing Center tutors are trained to assist writers in all stages of the writing process (from prewriting to revision) and it is essential to your grade and your development as a college-level writer that you use this free service.

There is also an on-line tutoring service available to MCC students. A link to this service is available in the Blackboard course shell, and further information will be provided in class. If you attend in person, be sure to collect the appropriate form and have it stapled to your submitted paper. Any additional visits to
the Writing Center will add extra points to your essays. If you submit your paper to the online tutoring service, then forward a copy of the tutor's feedback to my e-mail at (Insert Email here)

Tentative Schedule: (I reserve the right to amend this schedule as time requires/allows, or based upon the learning needs of the group as they become more apparent throughout the course of the semester):

**Week 1:**

9/07 – Welcome, Syllabus Review; Discussion of class expectations. Introduction to the study of Communications; First Day Survey will be handed out.

9/09 - First Day Survey due, Blackboard tools for learning: How to use Blackboard’s communication tools.

**Week 2:**

9/14 – Interpersonal Communications. Icebreaker: Speed-Networking!

9/16 – Interpersonal Communications (continued) - “Who do you know?” Think/pair/share exercise

**Week 3:**

9/21 – Media and Culture – What is my place in all of this?

9/23 – Into the Matrix: Media, Culture and the Internet. Social Media and the One Person Media Company.

**Week 4:**

09/26 – Exploring Careers in Communications. In class exercise and resources. Essay Number #1 assigned and discussed

09/28 – Discovering the Writing Process: Writing a “decent” email, and other everyday writing.

**Week 5:**

10/05 - The Writing Process in Practice: Content Generation – pre-writing and drafting.

10/07 – The Writing Process in Practice: Revision and Editing – revising, editing for content and copy.

**Week 6:**

10/12 - Research and Citation for Academic Writing (Meet in the library, tentative.)

10/14 - Introduction to Film. Selections in class. Question: What makes a “good” film?

**Week 7:**

10/21 – Books, Screenplays and Movie-Adaptation: tying it all together – Case Study: w/ Steven King’s Movies.

**Week 8:**

10/26 - A very brief introduction to Journalism: Reporting in the age of the internet. • ESSAY NUMBER #1 is DUE – Uploaded to Blackboard- before the start of class.

10/28 – A very brief introduction to Journalism: The news in Broadcast, Podcast, Blogging and Print.

**Week 9:**


11/04 – Music and Society – Napster, The record industry, big money and the rebirth of a major media industry.

**Week 10:** (Please note: November 10 is the last day to withdraw from a class.)


11/09 – The Rise and Fall of the Big Mouths: Radio from 1991 – Today (and beyond?)

**Week 11:**

11/16 – “Good Night, and Good Luck”: Television from the 1950’s to 1981

11/18 – “Video Killed the Radio Star: Television from 1982 to today (and beyond?)

**Week 12:**

11/23 – Workshop – Voice-overs for Radio, TV, Internet and Film

11/25 – No Class  – Happy Thanksgiving.

(From the official academic schedule for the 2012-2013 school year: Classes end at 5 p.m. for Thanksgiving Break - 11/24-11/26- Accelerated Classes will be held November 26).

**Week 13:**

11/30 - Advertising and Public Relations Part One: The Principles and The Past

12/01 – Advertising and Public Relations Part Two: SEO, Ad words and Social Media

**Week 14:**

12/07 – “Is Paul McCartney dead?: Media literacy exercises including more about evaluating sources and information.
12/09 - Public Speaking (Just when you thought you were safe...)

**Week 15:**

12/14 – Public Speaking: Reading a poem in class

12/16 – Final Thoughts: Reflections on the nature and future of communications. Where can we go from here? Majoring in communications and further explorations. Day classes end.

**Week 16:**

Finals Week: check the schedule for your course meeting times in all of your courses.