The Basic Communication Course at U.S. Colleges and Universities: VI ...................................................... 1
Sherwyn P. Morreale, Michael S. Hanna, Roy M. Berko, and James W. Gibson

This is the sixth in a series of investigations of the basic communication course, begun in 1968 by members of the Undergraduate Speech Instruction Interest Group of the Speech Association of America. This study was replicated in 1974, 1980, 1985, and 1990. Each of these studies gathered and reported information on instructional practices and administrative issues in the basic course at two- and four-year colleges and universities. In this study, the survey instrument from 1990 was revised to reflect contemporary concerns and mailed to the National Communication Association mailing list of 1500 schools. Data were analyzed and presented from 292 responding schools covering institutional demographics and (1) general approach and orientation to the basic course, (2) pedagogy (which subsumes seven sub-categories), (3) enrollment description and dynamics, and (4) administrative concerns. Comparisons to past studies indicate the basic communication course is thriving and growing, but some of the same problems continue today that beset the course in the past.

How Basic Course Directors Evaluate Teaching Assistants: Social Constructionism in BasicCourseLand ................................................................. 37
Nancy L. Buerkel-Rothfuss

This essay examines the ways basic course directors assess their teaching staff. In particular, the study describes ways course directors from a variety of disciplines use language to
evaluate teaching competence and to differentiate among staff members with regard to job performance. As would be expected, most course directors in this sample used evaluation terms such as good/bad or effective/ineffective. Only a few used other types of differentiation schemes, such as those based on maturity of the teaching assistant or attitudes toward teaching.

Get Your Modem Runnin', Get Out on the I-Way: Encouraging Internet Investigations in the Basic Course

Glen Williams and Joni M. Johnson-Jones

The Internet can be a valuable resource for instructors and students alike. Students need to develop Internet savvy to take advantage of its holdings and to use it responsibly. Instructors can help students develop such savvy by providing pointers for its use as well as by taking them through a few exercises. Once students have learned to proceed efficiently and judiciously, the Internet can be a powerful vehicle for assisting their investigations.

Will the Dazzling Promise Blind Us?: Using Technology in the Beginning Public Speaking Course

Mary Mino

Because proponents of technology promise that by using electronic media, such as computer and video technologies, students' communication skills will improve, many public speaking instructors are using or considering using various types of technology. However, the effectiveness of various technologies as vehicles for delivering communication skill instruction have yet to be examined extensively. Therefore, communication educators need to assess the value of technology as compared to conventional delivery systems and consider the challenges before incorporating technology into the beginning public speaking course. This essay presents an overview of some of the uses
of technology in the public speaking course, describes the instructional challenges, and outlines one process instructors may consider when deciding whether to implement technology into the beginning public speaking course.

Communication Apprehension, Self-Efficacy, and Grades in the Basic Course: Correlations and Implications .................................................. 108
Karen Kangas Dwyer and Dennis A. Fus

This article presents a study examining the relationship among communication apprehension (CA), self-efficacy (S-E), and grades in the basic communication course. Data were gathered from 208 undergraduate students enrolled in a public speaking course that fulfills a university-wide core curriculum requirement. Respondents completed McCroskey's (1982) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), the Self-Efficacy in the Class scale (SECL) adapted from Pintrich and DeGroot's (1990) Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, and two researcher-designed questions regarding S-E for college (SECOL). Results indicated that although trait and context CA are significantly correlated with final grades. In fact, multiple-regression showed that S-E contributed significant unique variance to grade. Implications for teaching the basic course are discussed.

Branching Out to Meet the Needs of Our Students: A Model for Oral Communication Assessment and Curriculum Programs .................................. 133
Patricia A. Cutspec, Kevin McPherson, and Julie H. Spiro

Two of the multiple primary tasks facing post-secondary institutions across the country are revisiting and revitalizing general education or core programs and developing appropriate techniques for assessing the value of these programs. Following years of development and refinement, Western Carolina University has created an oral communication general education
program that not only meets the needs of individual students, but also encouraged consistency across the curriculum emphasizing and assessing the skills learned in the basic course. We have answered the call for revisitation and reform regarding the best pedagogical and epistemological strategies for developing competent communicators, and our results have been positive. This article presents the development and implementation of this program.

Analyzing C-SPAN in the Basic Communication Course
Jim Schnell

Use of C-SPAN in the basic communication course as data for analysis is described. Specific focus is on Persian Gulf War presentations made August 2, 1990 - January 16, 1991 by President George Bush. Analysis of these presentations exemplifies how similar analysis can be done of other public speakers. An explanation of how to procure C-SPAN videotapes is provided.

COMMENTARY: An Idea for Restructuring the Basic Communication Course:
A “Time When Needed” Modular Approach
Donald D. Yoder

This commentary suggests a different way of structuring the basic communication course. Instead of trying to teach a variety of communication course, this commentary develops a modular approach to the basic course to be taught in smaller units and at times in a student's studies when the communication skills in the specific units are more relevant. A tentative schedule for the units is suggested.

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