

APEL Portfolio Essay
 Communication Studies Faculty Expectations
 Last updated by Dr. Benjamin Mann on September 20, 2021

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1. General philosophies

Faculty evaluators are responsible for reviewing completed APEL portfolios and recommending them for credit. By contrast, APEL portfolio advisers will actively work with you to develop your portfolio and should be your primary point of contact. As a faculty evaluator, my goal is to present expectations for your project as clearly as possible to help you succeed. I encourage you to refer to this document early and often.

Three major questions guide my faculty evaluation:

A. Does the project show a grasp of relevant communication theories and their associated concepts?

As a starting point, I highly recommend reading *Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application* by Lynn Turner and Richard West. These authors clearly define theory within the communication discipline and provide dozens of communication theory examples that cover many different areas.

Theory explains and predicts how communication occurs in the world. For instance, communication accommodation theory, developed by Howard Giles, argues that we modify our own speech to mimic the people around us. Concepts are distinct terms and ideas that serve as building blocks for a theory. For example, the concept of “accommodation” suggests that we change our behavior to support someone else.

You must draw from published communication theory when developing your APEL portfolio. Theory provides you with “tools for living” that empower you to describe and explain your life experiences in the context of communication studies.

Communication is a broad discipline, covering many sub-disciplines including, but not limited to: organizational communication, strategic communication, rhetoric, health communication, science communication, interpersonal communication, conflict management, risk communication, and small group communication. I welcome portfolios covering a wide range of topics, but I ask that you carefully incorporate theories that match the credits and life experiences that you intend to speak to.

B. Does the project specifically apply these theories and concepts to their life experiences?

Once you’ve gained a good understanding of different communication theories and concepts, you should incorporate these theories to explain your lived experiences. Rather than saying: “I encountered groupthink in my board meeting”, use stories, specific examples, and vignettes. Here’s a longer example of what I’m looking for:

“One case of groupthink at my work occurred during a board meeting. We were discussing who to hire for a new position. Most of my coworkers supported Candidate A, but I thought that Candidate B had better qualifications. Because my coworkers supported Candidate A, I chose not to speak up and instead joined the group in recommending Candidate A. Giles’ work in groupthink helps me to understand why I’m often reluctant to share opposing views. Because I was more worried with maintaining harmony rather than sharing my true opinion, my reservations weren’t brought up in the board meeting. In the future, I’ll consider using the ‘silent ballot’ approach suggested by Giles, which people express their preferences before we start sharing them publicly.”

In this example, a detailed scenario is presented and theory is used to help understand what happened. It shows a grasp of the theory and the ways that it directly benefits the student's experience.

C. Is the project written in a professional and university-appropriate manner?

A professionally-written APEL portfolio should be free of major spelling and/or grammar errors. It should avoid overly informal language or slang. Most importantly, your portfolio should be written with full APA, MLA, or Chicago-style citations, which include in-text citations (or footnotes/endnotes) along with a complete works cited list that includes credible sources within the communication discipline. Cite sources whether you're directly quoting or paraphrasing the ideas of an outside source. In addition to your APEL advisers, I encourage you to check the Purdue OWL for citation style guides: <https://owl.purdue.edu/index.html> You can also reach out to the EOU Writing Center (<https://www.eou.edu/writing-center/>) for additional support.

While your portfolio should be professional, it can also be creative! Feel free to incorporate writing that's dynamic, interesting, and engaging. I welcome a variety of expressions, such as poetry, art, and multimedia.

2. Dialogue and communication with evaluator.

Most communication for this portfolio should be between you and your APEL portfolio advisers. However, before you begin writing, please schedule a time to meet with me (face-to-face or via Zoom) so that we can discuss your project and ensure that you're on the right track. To set up this meeting, please email me at bwmann@eou.edu with times that you're available to meet. To prepare for this meeting, be prepared to share your general plans for the project and the relevant communication material that you'll be using.

3. Content requirements of the portfolio.

You may be seeking upper or lower division credit through your APEL portfolio. Here, I cover requirements for both kinds of credit along with specific things that I need in lower and upper division credit.

For both upper and lower division:

- A. Your essays must incorporate scholarly communication theories that relate to the credits that you are hoping to receive.
- B. Your essays must apply these theories into lived experiences.
- C. Your essays must be presented in APA, MLA, or Chicago citational style with full in-text citations and a works cited list.
- D. The majority of your portfolio should be spent *analyzing* your lived experiences. Avoid spending too long describing the theory or the experiences without application.

- E. Your portfolio must be complete and professional, free of major spelling/grammar errors.
- F. Your essay should avoid “pop science” or articles who are not published by experts in the Communication field.
- G. A few major contexts of Communication are, but not limited to:
 - a. Interpersonal Communication
 - b. Conflict Management
 - c. Strategic Communication
 - d. Organizational Communication
 - e. Public Speaking
 - f. Mass Media
 - g. Journalism
 - h. Health Communication
 - i. Rhetorical Criticism
 - j. Public Relations
 - k. Communication Law
 - l. Communication Ethics

For upper division credit:

- A. You should be pursuing at least three credits. Please contact me if this is not the case.
- B. You must select a major subfield within Communication for each set of three credits. For example:
 - a. Small Group Communication (3 credits)
 - b. Interpersonal Communication (3 credits)
 - c. Conflict Management (3 credits)
- C. You must incorporate an extensive annotated bibliography for each subfield. The annotated bibliography must include at least one major textbook related to the subfield, such as those available through NCA syllabi (linked later in the document) or courses offered at EOU. The annotated bibliography should also incorporate articles within major peer-reviewed journals published in the discipline. Later in the document, I provide both an example of an annotated bibliography and examples of communication journals.
- D. Work with your APEL advisor to decide which subfields you’ll be focusing on for each set of credits. You can use the existing EOU course catalog as a starting point.

For lower division credit:

- A. Lower division credit may cover multiple subfields of communication studies. In other words, it can focus on breadth over depth.
- B. However, for each three credits that you are pursuing, I ask that you focus on three major communication theories. I recommend that you read Turner and West’s *Communication Theory: Analysis and Application* to help with this.
- C. While an annotated bibliography is not required for lower division, you are expected to demonstrate expertise of communication theory through the content of your essay.

4. Evaluation and return time

You should expect your portfolio to be returned within 1-2 weeks during the regular academic term. Review may take longer if the portfolio is sent between quarters, during the summer, or on holidays. This review window will begin once I've received a working link to an online portfolio or a physical version of your portfolio. Please submit your portfolios as soon as possible to ensure that you can receive credit on time, especially if you're close to graduation.

5. Resources and additional information

Library resources:

First, I highly recommend that students work with their APEL advisers and with EOU's library resources to find credible sources to support their essay. In addition to the EOU library (<https://library.eou.edu/>), I encourage you to reach out to librarians in order to understand how to search for credible content, or by using this tutorial: <https://library.eou.edu/help/databases/>. While many books and articles may be locked behind paywalls, library resources such as the interlibrary loan (<https://library.eou.edu/services/ill/>) can help you check out material that you may need.

Example annotated bibliography:

Below, I've included an example of an annotated bibliography that I expect to see in upper division credit. Annotated bibliographies must include a full citation of the source and roughly a paragraph describing the source. Rather than paraphrase the entire source, the annotated bibliography should summarize the key arguments and insights about the source in the context of the broader project:

DeLuca, K. M., & Peeples, J. (2002). From public sphere to public screen: democracy, activism, and the "violence" of Seattle. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19(2), 125-151. doi:10.1080/07393180216559

"Habermas' public sphere, which suggests a forum of deliberation and advancement of political issues, must now be analyzed in the context of the emerging public screen, according to DeLuca and Peeples. The public screen comprises the use of television and Internet media, digital forms of expression, as a new way through which public deliberation and discussion occur. In the public screen, fragmentation and dissent is common and its increasing focus on the use of "image events" and visual spectacle renders it an important space for discussion. It is important to note that the authors do suggest that despite the emergence of the public screen, it is not necessarily a replacement for the public sphere. The WTO protests in Seattle function as an example of digital media and television comprising an important part of this discourse. A public screen focus, and the role of image events, therefore contributes to new research that can chart new forms of political expression."

Source credibility:

It is *crucial* that your citations come from credible, qualified sources. Just about any content can be published on the internet, such as blog posts, and many of it is factually incorrect. This makes critical thinking skills necessary to sift through and find good sources. Communication scholar James Gunn sums it up well in the public speaking textbook *Speech Craft*, in which he lays out the three “hecks” of sources: “Who the heck wrote it?”, “Who the heck paid for it?”, and “When the heck was it published?”

Who the heck wrote it? Your sources should be from communication professors, educators, and reputable journalists. Avoid pop scientists who write about communication, but generally do not understand the field.

Who the heck paid for it? Sponsored content has become significantly more common over the years. A pet food company sponsoring a BuzzFeed listicle about how to keep your pet healthy will probably advertise its food. Additionally, pay attention to media bias. I recommend searching for multiple media bias charts online to understand how the funding for your source may impact its message.

When the heck was it written? Generally speaking, you should prefer newer sources to older sources. Newer sources will contain more current terminology and ideas. Communication theories constantly change and develop, so newer sources will help your project. That being said, communication often draws from “the canons” dating back to Aristotle. Older sources can help if they provide a necessary foundation to your work.

Lastly, it never hurts to refresh on logical fallacies, or as I like to call them, “arguments gone wrong.” Many critical thinking and public speaking textbooks cover logical fallacies, such as Rieke & Sillars’ *Argumentation and Critical Decision Making*.

Syllabi:

You should carefully check syllabi related to the communication sub-fields that you’re interested in exploring. EOU has several syllabi available here: <https://www.eou.edu/cahss/com-syllabus-page/>. The National Communication Association (NCA) also has an extensive set of example syllabi for many different courses, available here: <https://www.natcom.org/academic-professional-resources/teaching-and-learning/classroom/undergraduate-course-syllabi>. In particular, focus on the major readings and topics covered in these courses.

Journals:

In addition to books, there are a significant number of academic journals dedicated to communication as a discipline. Articles from many of these journals will be available online at EOU. NCA and the International Communication (ICA) publish many of the top-ranked journals in communication, making their websites a great additional resource. Here are a few of the many journals to consider:

Communication, Culture, and Critique
Health Communication
Journal of Mass Media Ethics
Media, Culture, and Society
Quarterly Journal of Speech
Rhetoric Society Quarterly
Text and Performance Quarterly
Visual Communication
Western Journal of Communication

Contact:

Your APEL advisers are trained to provide you with the skills to develop a successful portfolio. Should you like to get in touch with me, whether through email, a Zoom meeting, or face-to-face, please contact me at bwmann@eou.edu. While my primary expertise is in rhetoric, health communication, and critical/cultural studies, I'm happy to help direct you toward additional resources that can help you make a great portfolio, regardless of your area of interest.

Conclusion

In short, communication provides tools for living. I look forward to reading your profile and encourage you to challenge yourself in applying Communication theory into your life.