Chris Salvatore

Comm. 403 MW-1:30

Throughout my undergraduate career as a communication studies major there are three courses that I found more valuable than others. The three courses are Comm. 303: Business and Professional Communication, Comm. 316: Intercultural Communication, and Comm. 408: Advanced Study in Nonverbal Communication. I believe that each of these courses provided beneficial information for life after being a college student. Also, there are a few other courses outside of the Communication Studies Dept. that I believe provided very beneficial information for life after college. These courses are Computer Science 101 and Geology 110: Environmental Geoscience. The two internships I have held during my college career have provided me with great experience of what it is like to work full time after my graduation. This coursework paper will describe in detail why each of these courses and work experiences were beneficial and how they will help in the future.

The course that I feel to be the most valuable within my communication studies degree is Comm. 303: Business and Professional Communication. This course was designed for students to apply some of the theories learned in organization communication outside of the classroom. Oral presentations and simulated projects were also used to improve general communication skills that are necessary for entry level positions in a business industry. This course did not contain any exams, the grading was based upon attendance and how your group performed overall towards specific goals. The class was split up into three groups on the first day of class. Each group was to come up with a business name and business cards so the groups sounded professional. Each of the groups had the same pre-determined projects to work on for non-profit organizations in the Morgantown area. The organizations that the projects were done for were HealthRite, a free clinic downtown; Friends of Deckers Creek, an organization established to help maintain and improve the quality of Deckers Creek which runs through Morgantown; and the Mountaineer Boys and Girls Club, a daycare provided for families who cannot afford daycare while parents are at work. The HealthRite project required us to make display boards for the most common diseases patients would visit the clinic for. For the Friends of Deckers Creek project, the groups had to contact local businesses in hope that they would be a sponsor for Deckers Creek. This required us to sell sponsorships of different levels or take donations for the Friends of Deckers Creek. The Mountaineer Boys and Girls Club project was the most difficult because the groups simply had to raise money by any means possible for the club. This course taught students how to dress and act professionally. Also, this course made students work in small groups which can be difficult for a lot of students. Knowing how to act, dress, and work as part of group are things that all graduates should be aware of because when you obtain an entry level full time job they will be expected from your employer.

Another course that provided beneficial information for obtaining and keeping a job is Comm. 316: Intercultural Communication. This course examined the similarities and differences between cultures regarding norms, values, and practices in both verbal and nonverbal communication. Cultures that were emphasized the most were Latin America, Asian, African, and Middle Eastern. Some goals that were to be achieved from this course were for students to develop an overall increased awareness of other cultures and how they communicate different both verbally and nonverbally. Also, within each culture how listening, perception, family life, education, economics, and technology differ across cultures.

This course made students understand how culture is defined and how there is different types of cultures that should be examined in order to increase acceptance and competence. Also obtained from this course was how education varies widely across cultures and how American education has both positive and negative attributes. For example, an American classroom relies on a more individualistic approach compared to other cultures who value more of a collectivistic approach. Throughout the course students became more competent of how certain dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity vs. femininity are important when trying to understand how different cultures communicate in different contexts. I feel this course to be quite beneficial because when you enter the workforce there is a strong chance that some of your coworkers will be of a different culture than yours. It is important to be competent of these other cultures so that there will be less uncertainty which will lead to more overall productivity and stronger relationships with coworkers. Also, if you have to travel outside of the country for your job it is very important to be aware of the culture you are entering so you are welcomed and not seen as disrespectful, which would not contribute to success of the travel or for your employer.

Communication 408: Advanced Nonverbal Communication provided a great amount of material that made students a better researcher and writer. This is a writing intensive course that made students perform various writing exercises, most of which were new to the students. The course examines the different roles of nonverbal communication in human interaction across a large number of contexts. Also, in this course it greatly increases student’s competence in writing, researching, analyzing materials, and presenting ideas.

In this course there were numerous papers and assignments due throughout the semester. The assignments ranged from impromptu writings, research papers on nonverbal scholars, how nonverbal communication is found in the media, and an informal study. Also, this course made the student master APA formatting, which takes a great deal of effort and concentration to execute correctly. The informal study required several different assignments throughout the semester that had to be done in order for the informal study to be executed correctly. These various assignments required a great deal of research and critical thinking. It was required to do an annotated bibliography, a research question or hypothesis, and a survey in order to assure the accuracy of your finalized informal study. One thing I did enjoy during this process was making a survey and passing it out to students to collect data. Students were required to measure two nonverbal variables that had been previously examined by reputable scholars, along with various demographics from the participants in the study. The participants consisted of students in a low level communication class. It was very interesting to perform the study and realize how communication scholars at the master’s and doctorate levels perform research that benefits higher education and future research. Something else I valued about this course was the importance of presenting your work. Student’s had to present the majority of their assignments and was graded on several components regarding the effectiveness of what was being presented. This relates to information obtained from the Comm. 303 class, which taught student’s how to dress and act in a professional manner, which was expected for all presentations. Overall, this course greatly increased writing and research skills which are important to employers when assessing or recruiting employees.

There are a few courses outside of the Communication Studies Dept. that I believe to be valuable and beneficial. One of the courses is Computer Science 101: Introduction to Computer Applications. This course introduces you to spreadsheets and databases for problem solving in a wide variety of disciplines including math, science, engineering, business, social sciences, behavioral science, and environment. In this course you use computer applications to create technical reports and presentations. This course makes you become very familiar with programs in Microsoft Office. The programs that are used are Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Microsoft Access. For this course it requires students to perform various homework assignments and quizzes within each of the programs throughout the semester.

This course is so beneficial because of the routine use of Microsoft Office by companies around the world. After completing the course you should have enough knowledge to consider yourself proficient in Microsoft Office, which is something employers in most fields have come to expect. Microsoft Word is generally the most familiar program with college students because typically you must write papers for just about every class you sign up for. However, the other programs such as Excel, PowerPoint, and Access are not generally used by the average student. This is why this class is so great, because it makes you familiar with these programs so you’re not lost if a job or project requires you to use them.

Another course outside of the Communication Studies Dept. that is beneficial to me is Geology 110: Environmental Geoscience. This course examines the physical aspects of the earth with importance on natural resources, environmental degradation, and hazards. Also, this course provided current news regarding environmental concerns and issues. I greatly valued this course because it makes you more aware and competent of what is going in the environment around you.

This course makes you aware of the earth’s makeup. It examines all different types of rocks, minerals, land terrains, natural disasters, and government acts that deal with environmental issues. While in this class it really made me look at my natural surroundings differently. For example, how mining in West Virginia is relevant to our area. This course provides a great deal of history towards volcanoes that are still active today in the United States and in other parts of the world. Also, this course makes you realize how the Army Corps of Engineers has protected and maintained the coast lines over the years with the use of structures like seawalls and jetty’s. The most interesting thing I enjoyed from this course was the daily news given by the instructor and how it related directly to the material covered in the course.

I have had two jobs throughout my college career, both of which I currently benefit from and will continue to benefit from in the future. My first job was an internship with the federal government. I worked for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) over the summer of 2010. I worked in a finance department as a Financial Support Clerk. There were several duties to my internship position, which I was very productive at because of my Computer Science 101 class. I was on Microsoft Excel every single day at work, usually all day long. One duty I had was to locate vendors in a database with over three thousand of them, and verify addresses or change them if needed. Also, I often had to create spreadsheets with data I was provided and then type up reports of them using Microsoft Word. Other things that I benefited from this internship were learning what it is like to work a forty hour week, how to manage several tasks at one time while still meeting deadlines, and learning how to blend in with an organization even though I wasn’t guaranteed future employment with them.

Another job, which I am still currently employed with, is here at West Virginia University in the Office of Student Employment. I started this job the first week of fall semester 2010 through the work study program. My duties were similar to those of a common receptionist. I am expected to greet students and others as they enter the office, enter data in Microsoft Excel, counsel students with finding a job that suits them personally, and other various duties that arise on a daily basis. My supervisor was very impressed with my work ethic and dedication to the office, so she accepted me as an intern for this Spring semester 2011. I take this job very seriously because it could possibly lead to future employment within the Division of Human Resources here at WVU. My college career up to this point has made me the hard devoted worker that I currently am. The communication courses I have taken have made me a very strong and effective communicator which is noticed and appreciated greatly by my coworkers. The experiences I have gained from my past internship have taught me to be serious, on time, on task, and professional while at work. Also, the skills I obtained from Computer Science 101 are still being put to use in this job because I am constantly entering data in Excel and typing up reports in Word. I believe that the skills, experience, and knowledge I have gained through my summer internship and my current one have been sufficient for me to feel confident once I graduate and am looking for a full time entry level position.

Throughout my undergraduate career here at West Virginia University I have progressed significantly towards my future entering the workforce. The communication studies courses I have taken have made me more competent towards achieving lifelong goals especially Comm. 303, Comm. 316, and Comm. 408. Other courses such as Computer Science 101 have made me more of a productive worker today than I would be if I had not taken that course. Also, Environmental Geoscience has made me more knowledgeable about the earth’s makeup and how different areas of the country and world have different resources to offer. The harder I work at applying the huge amount of beneficial information and experience, the more successful I will become in the early years after graduation.