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Course Benefit Paper

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**Capstone**

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I have taken several communications courses while at Rogers State University and I believe all of them have been of benefit to me in preparing me for my chosen career in communications. These classes demonstrated theories of importance to the field of communications and I have made an attempt to identify and describe how they will assist me in my post graduate career choice of working in the radio broadcast field.

In my second semester at RSU I enjoyed the Interpersonal Communication class. This was interesting because it broke down different theories that people usually take for granted. One concept was the non-verbal communications theory. Most people think that non-verbal’s were motions or faces, and even sounds and grunts, etc. But in reality, even sounds and grunts count as verbal communications. Nonverbal communication it is understood as the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless (mostly visual) cues between people. Messages can be communicated through gestures and touch, by body language or posture, by facial expression and eye contact, which are all considered types of nonverbal communication. Understanding non-verbal communications has a widespread advantage to anyone, because it has a practical application to anyone, at all stages of life. Whether it is to communicate to someone who doesn’t understand your language, or even to communicating quietly across the room.

One of the most widely used understandings of NVC is the facial expressions. In class we learned what some of the other classmates thought different expressions meant. From scrunching your nose, to raising your brows, many reasons were discussed. This understanding of NVC is important in any sense. You need it to communicate it with friends, bosses, co-workers, lovers, family, etc. The list is endless with the important reasons for needing to know and understand the importance of non-verbal communications.

In Communication Theory we learned about many different types of theories relating to everyday life and to the assumptions that people have understood and accepted. Of those theories studied in Communication Theory, I was very partial to the social penetration theory. This theory ties in closely with the non-verbal communication theory learned in my time while taking Interpersonal. This class goes more in depth to the different theories learned in Interpersonal. The social penetration theory is a process of bonding that moves a relationship from superficial to more intimate. This theory becomes very important when trying to establish a relationship with a new person or understanding your relationship with someone you already know. This theory is also known as “the stage theory”, generally stating that relationships progress from non-intimate to intimate, relational development is generally systematic and predictable, includes de-penetration and dissolution, along with the self-disclosure being at the core of the relationship development.

There are four stages to the SPT orientation, where the revealing bits and pieces of us happen. Next is the exploratory Affective Exchange, where you get an emergence of the individual’s personality. Then the Affective Exchange happens, this is where the spontaneous communication happens, this is where the use of personal idioms is used too. Then the final stage is the stable exchange, efficient communications and the establishments of a personal system of communications happen. These are very important stages to know and understand for any level of human interaction you might have. This applies to someone just receiving a new job and knowing the boundaries of the new boss or new co-workers. It is also very viable for people who are already in a common relationship status; this allows people to know which level they are on or whether or not to move up in ranks or to go down in ranks with a relationship; whether it is friendship or a more personal/intimate relationship.

In Communications Research Methods we learned a lot about researching, but more importantly, we learned about how to research and why to research something/someone. One of the themes I took to the most was the study of basic assumptions in human communication. This assumption goes back to qualitative versus quantitative. Qualitative has to do with the interest in subjects individually, whereas, quantitative has to do with the importance of numbers. With that being said, the question raises to-can we generalize about communication or is all communication situational? The basic assumptions about human behavior can be combined into two broad world views. Does human communication have boundaries? Boundaries such as personal, social life, and work life, are each of these separate or do they all merge together? What makes them influence each other, if they even do at all? These are all important items too address when trying to study or research any particular human subjects. This is important in your work life with trying to establish what can and cannot work for a company when trying to do a new study for a new logo, or a hot new item they will start advertising soon… being able to understand how to study humans is very important. By understanding human assumptions in your everyday life, it will help you to understand what people want in life and where they are coming from.

In Cinema we learned a lot about the ins and outs of film and how to properly interpret films. One of the most memorable aspects of that class, which could be a curse or a blessing, because it makes you look at television and film in a whole new light is the aspect of Mise-en-scène or “placing the stage”, is a theory in Cinema that I connected to the most to. The Mise-en-scene is an expression used to describe the design aspects of a film production. The key aspects includes set design, lighting, space, composition, costume, make-up and hair styles, film stock, and aspect ratio. Set design, which is setting the scene and the props visible in the scene. Set design can be used to amplify character emotion or the dominant mood, which has physical, social, psychological, emotional, economic and cultural significance in film.

The lighting of a scene can influence an audiences understanding of characters, actions, themes, and mood. Light (and shade) can emphasize texture, shape, distance, mood, time of day or night, season, glamour; it affects the way colors are rendered, both in terms of hue and depth, and can focus attention on particular elements of the composition. Highlights, for example, call attention to shapes and textures, while shadows often conceal things, creating a sense of mystery or fear.

 The representation of space affects the reading of a film. Depth, proximity, size and proportions of the places and objects in a film can be manipulated through camera placement and lenses; Composition is the organization of objects, actors and space within the frame. Lighting, set design, effectively determining mood or relationships between elements in the story world. One of the most important concepts with the regard to the composition of a film is maintaining a balance of symmetry. Unbalanced composition can be used to emphasize certain elements of a film that the director wishes to be given particular attention to. This tool works because audiences are more inclined to pay attention to something off balance, as it may seem abnormal.

Costume simply refers to the clothes that characters wear. Using certain colors or designs, costumes in narrative cinema are used to signify characters or to make clear distinctions between characters. Makeup and hair styles help establish time period, reveal character traits and signal changes in character. Film stock refers to the choice of black & white or color, fine-grain or grainy. And finally aspect ratio is the relation of the width of the rectangular image to its height. Each aspect ratio yields a different way of looking at the world and is basic to the expressive meaning of the film.

By knowing these applications of the mis-en scene I have become a more observant person in my social and professional life. I notice that when I enter a new location, I quickly scan the area looking for things that make the location different from where I was. In a classroom I scan to see who is sitting where and whether I want to sit near them or away from them, in a restaurant I look for exits in case of the need for a fast escape and when entering an office setting I quickly observe where the boss is and can usually quickly assess their leadership style. There are limitless applications for mis-en-scene in daily life and if not for taking the Cinema class I would not have known about them.

In Theatre Appreciation I learned many things about theatre that I never thought were important or thought that I would need in my career as a Radio/TV major. As it turned out, I was wrong. I learned so much in this course, much like the Cinema course. I learned the different aspects of properly analyzing a play. This too, in some light, can be compared to analyzing a movie. There are generally six areas within a play that should be considered when analyzing a play. The plot , the characters, the nature of the world created by the playwright, the language or diction used in the play, the music chosen regarding rhythm, time, sound and sound effects, and the spectacle of the play; how the setting, mood, and atmosphere assist in communicating an idea.

The practical application I learned from this theory is to be a better observer. Before this class I watched plays for their entertainment value, but since taking this class I am now more aware of what the playwright or film maker was trying to communicate to the audience. I am more aware of the use of lighting to communicate a mood, the placement of characters on the stage to create a scene and especially the use of music to create an anticipation of what is about to come. I feel that being this situational aware will help in my everyday life in school and in work, by allowing me to use these tricks and tools to help in advertising for something or in presenting information.

In conclusion, I have enjoyed my communication classes at Rogers State University and feel the concepts of non-verbal communications, social penetrating theory, the study of basic assumptions in human communication, Mise-en-scene and analyzing a play will benefit me in my post education career by helping me to better interact with my peers, be a better observer, and to make me an employee with the proper background education to meet the demands of my career.