

Communication

Salt Lake Community College | General Education

Communication (CM) at SLCC Includes:

- Business Communication
- Public Speaking
- Critical Thinking in Argumentation
- Media and Society
- Radio Performance
- Interpersonal Communication
- Intercultural Communication
- Digital Media
- Mapping our World
- Reasoning and Rational Decision Making

Why a CM Requirement?

Organizations such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities and large employers in the United States have long called for college graduates to possess a wide variety of communication skills. Typically, the ability to communicate effectively is what allows new hires to progress in their careers.



Detail from Norman Rockwell's *Golden Rule in the United Nations Building*. Photo by David Hubert.

Communication

One of the principal ways humans distinguish themselves from other animals is our ability to communicate—to convey simple or complex messages and reasoned arguments through voice and text and gesture, often mediated by technologies we've developed such as pencil and paper, radio, television, and computers. We communicate in teams, small groups, and mass settings over short and long distances.

It is difficult to generalize about the range of communication courses a student could take, but we can safely say that they all help students understand the subject by breaking it down into its constituent parts. Communication requires that a message be produced, delivered via a particular modality, and received by at least one person in a given context. Think about these elements — **production, channels of communication, reception, and context**—as a set of variables that determine the success or failure of any communicative act. They also illustrate why communication is often so difficult and fraught with misunderstanding—why, in fact, we have to work at it.

What Do You Think?

1. Find examples of poor and excellent communication and bring them to class. Discuss with a classmate: What makes each example strong or weak?
2. How would learning more about communication, reasoning, and rational decision-making help you in your daily life?
3. How would learning more about communication, reasoning, and rational decision-making help you advance in your career?
4. Can people draw different conclusions from one communicative act? Why or why not? Can you provide an example of a communication attempt that can or cannot be subject to multiple interpretations?
5. Find an example of a logical fallacy in argumentation and bring it to class. Discuss with a classmate: Why are people likely to fall for this error in reasoning? How would you counter it?
6. Why is Mapping a Communication class? How do we communicate with maps?

When we speak of the **production** of a communicative act, we focus on the sender, the communicator, or the source. The sender has in mind a message she wants to convey, and crafts the message in ways designed to make it effective or compelling. The original sender may even choose another person who is better at communication to convey their message so they can improve their chances of being successful. If the sender is making an argument, it should be a well-reasoned one.

Almost any message can be sent through one or more **communication channels**, which is a fancy way of saying that the message is conveyed through a particular means. In their simplest forms, messages can be spoken from one person to another or written in a note. Over the millennia, humans have invented ever more elaborate and powerful ways to deliver messages: smoke signals, printed books, broadcast and cable television, radio waves, digital maps, and texting.

Messages are directed toward a **receiver** who has to understand them and who typically interprets them more or less accurately. The receiver may apply his own biases or history when interpreting the message he receives.

Every communicative act takes place in a **context** that is critical to the production, communication channel, and the reception of the message. Consider how you would tell a story about your spring break trip to your grandmother in a personal conversation versus to your friends across the country. That contextual shift would impact the delivery modality and the very words you would use to tell that story. In addition, the differing histories of your grandmother and your friends would affect how they would interpret your message.

