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Group Activities For A Better Understanding Of Materials

Subject: Public Speaking

Intended Goal: Allow students to become more comfortable with speaking in front of the class and gain a deeper knowledge of their classmates

Activity:

- Split students off into pairs
 - Inform students that they are presenting their partners' information in front of the class.
 - Have students ask each other these questions for five minutes:
 - Name
 - Major / Minor
 - Class Standing
 - Hobby outside of class
 - Fun fact about them
 - Have the student come up in front of the class minimal notes, and introduce their partners.
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Subject: Verbal Communication

Intended Goal: Present that wording and framing impact perception in verbal communication

Activity: Framing the Message

- Students are split up into three equal groups
 - On the board, write a new policy topic for the students.
 - "Students must write all notes in notebooks—laptops aren't allowed in class."
 - Each group is given a different tone
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Neutral
 - Students are informed that they are playing the role of a professor informing the class.
 - Give students 10 minutes to write a 30-60 second announcement.
 - Afterwards, ask each group why they chose to highlight and downplay certain aspects and what emotional tone they used.
 - Allow discussion on why their speech worked.
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Subject: Non-Verbal Communication

Intended Goal: Highlight the students' understanding of kinesics

Activity: Charades of Scenes

- Students are paired up
- Each pair is given a scene to enact in front of the classroom without speaking
 - Argument, interview, first date, job rejections, job acceptance, cleaning together, breaking up with someone, reuniting with a friend, ordering food, etc.
- Give each student two minutes to perform

- While students enact the scenes in front of the class allow students to shout out interpretations of the scene
 - After each scene, have the student who guessed correctly explain why they interpreted that way [nonverbal cues]
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Subject: Listening Communication

Intended Goal: To convey to students that listening must be intentional and how noise pollution can distract from the act of listening.

Activity:

- Students are randomly put together with each other to form groups of two.
- Students sit back-to-back, both with pen and paper.
- Student A must describe a common object to student B without viewing the paper.
- Through description, student B must listen intently to the words and draw what they “hear.”
- At the end of 2-5 minutes of the exercise, student B shows student A the image and guesses what it is.
- Students then exchange roles.

Result:

[I participated with a student due to an uneven number]

- Students and the professor claimed the struggle in succeeding was dependent on how well the describer was at the role, rather than on listening.
- The activity showcased the lack of intentional listening and just listening for a goal.
- Students appeared engaged and laughing throughout the activity.

Future Modifications:

- Run through the activity again, after discussion of what the students learned.
 - On the second run through, the educator plays music in the background to showcase noise pollution when it comes to listening communication.
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Subject: Rhetorical Appeals in Communication

Intended Goal: Students to obtain a better understanding of the three main rhetorical appeals of Ethos, Logos, and Pathos. Then, be able to identify where students need more support.

Activity:

- Students are split into three groups with equal numbers.
- All three groups are given the same claim: “College tuition should be free.”
- Each group is given a different rhetorical appeal. [grp 1 ethos, grp 2 logos, grp 3 pathos]
- Allow students to discuss and come up with a plan to appeal using their indicated method.
- When student groups finish discussing, have each group present their method and reasoning. Then allow other groups to ask questions and comment.

Result:

- Students presenting ETHOS struggled to present findings and conceptualize learning material.
 - Students leaned heavily into Logos rather than ethos—more clarification needed.

- Students chose to use their student and faculty experience to create an argument for the greater good of society and raise awareness of the “struggle” people go through.
- Students presenting LOGOS succeeded with flying colors. Logos were clearly conceptualized, but did not indicate the target audience.
 - Students leaned into the logical reasoning of enhancing the workforce, cutting down labour costs, improving the economy, net gain, and researching external facts [was not required].
 - They addressed negative factors in the argument, such as higher taxes, and gave a logical remedy that “more educated individuals could then pay the taxes for others to obtain that for the above reasoning.”
- Students presenting PATHOS presented material with a base of understanding, but were confused and leaned into LOGOS.
 - Did not indicate the audience
 - Students revealed a minimal understanding
 - Based on the argument of balancing and standards, students must meet the academic setting–scholarship standards, and must be able to prove they should attend for free.

Future Modifications:

- Give all groups a clear audience that they are targeting to use their appeal towards.
- Provide a slide with the statements to reinforce the students' group's goal, “PATHOS = Emotional, LOGOS = Logical, ETHOS = Credibility.”
- Set a timer for 5 minutes for students to discuss instead of asking when they are done — more structured.

Subject: Intercultural Communications with Interpersonal

Intended Goal: Students explore the different aspects of identity and reflect on how they influence their communication.

Activity/Worksheet: Identity Wheel / Identity Plumbob.

- Students are given the worksheet and ten minutes to work on it.
- Begin discussion based on the four questions on the sheet.
 - “What identity do you wish people understood better?”
 - “What identities are most visible?”
 - “What identity do you feel most related to?”
 - “What identities shape your communication?”
- Ask students deeper questions, not on the sheet.
 - “What identity did you write first and why?”
 - “What section is the most massive that you sectioned off?”
- Allow for discussion to follow any way with identity and communication.

IDENTITY PLUMBOB

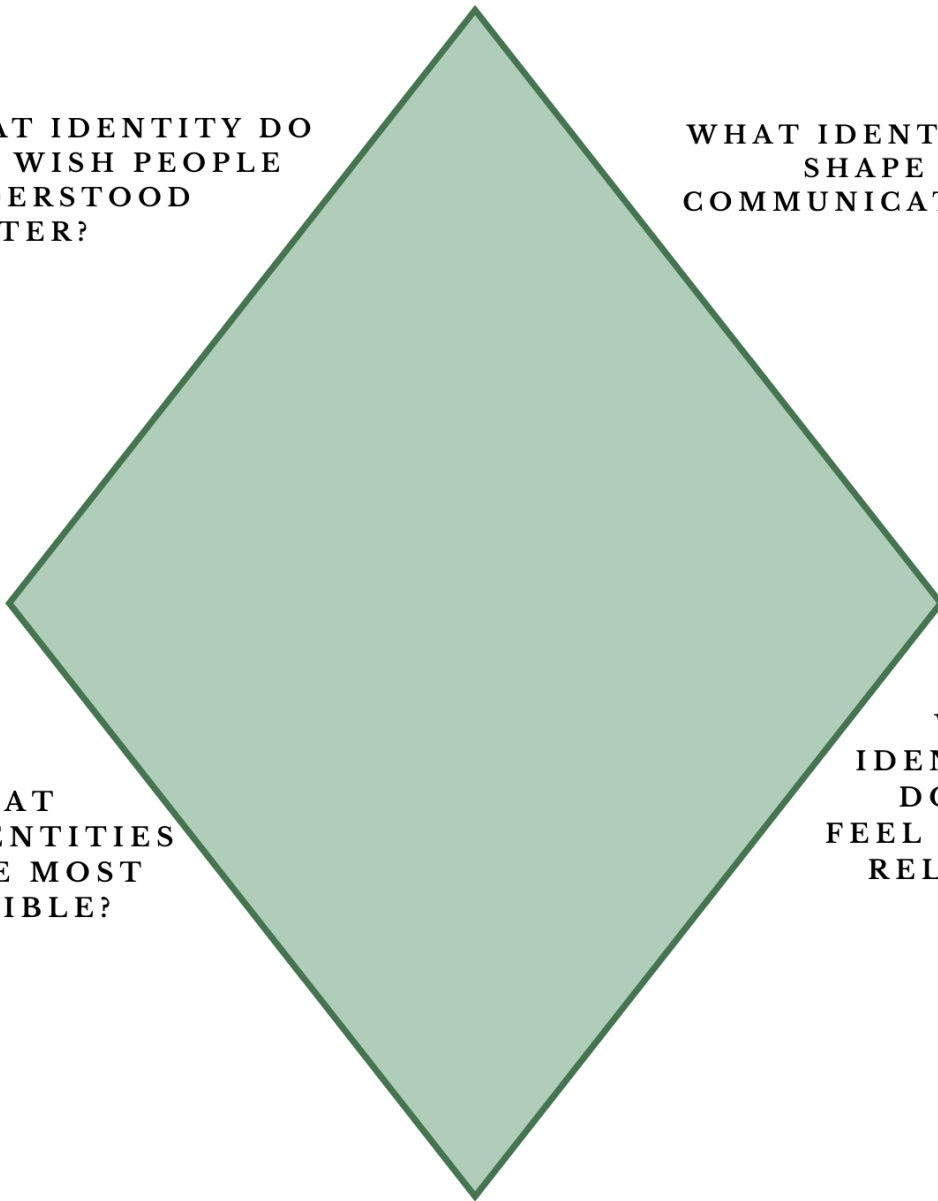
Instructions: Use the blank “plumbob” of life below to write identity categories that describe who you are (e.g., nationality, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, major, family roles, groups you belong to, etc.). Fill each section with an identity that shapes you.

WHAT IDENTITY DO
YOU WISH PEOPLE
UNDERSTOOD
BETTER?

WHAT IDENTITIES
SHAPE YOUR
COMMUNICATION?

WHAT
IDENTITIES
ARE MOST
VISIBLE?

WHAT
IDENTITY
DO YOU
FEEL MOST
RELATED
TO?



Subject: Gender Communication

Intended Goal: Critically analyze representation and messaging

Activity: Media Analysis

- Videos to show:
 - [Springfield Elementary splits into two](#)
 - [Always 'Like a Girl' Super Bowl Commercial](#)
 - [Audi - Daughter Super Bowl Commercial](#)
 - [Snickers Australian Ad](#)
 - [Barbie Met the Corporate Movie Scene](#)
 - [Goodyear Polyglass Tires 1960s Ad](#)
 - [Allstate Teenage Girl 2011 Ad](#)
- Tell students for each video to write down:
 - Who is speaking? (gender, role, authority)
 - Who has power?
 - What stereotypes are present?
 - What message is being reinforced or challenged?
 - Who is the target audience?
- Discuss questions:
 - What were the gendered communication patterns you saw?
 - How do these messages shape real-world expectations?
 - Are stereotypes obvious or subtle?

How might different audiences interpret this?

Subject: Organizational Communication

Intended Goal: Show how messages change across organizational levels

Activity: Chain of Command

- Breaking the class into groups so there are three groups.
 - Managers
 - HR Representatives
 - Employees
 - Give each group a slightly different version of the same message.
 - Manager Version: "Due to budget constraints, some positions may be restructured. Focus on maintaining productivity and avoiding panic."
 - HR Version: "The organization is exploring restructuring options. Our priority is compliance and minimizing legal risk while supporting staff."
 - Employee Version: "There may be layoffs or reduced hours. We are unsure what this means for job security."
 - Each group gets ten minutes to put together a short message to appeal to the next group. They need to decide: what to emphasize, what to leave out, and the tone.
 - Begin rounds of interactions, five minutes each round
- *NO NOTE TAKING ALLOWED*

- Round 1: Managers meet with employees and deliver the message
 - Round 2: Employees reinterpret and pass the message to HR
 - Round 3: HR presents the final version to the class.
 - Come back together as a class and compare the original messages
 - Debrief and discuss:
 - What information was lost, added, or distorted?
 - How did role and power affect communication?
 - Which version felt most accurate?
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Subject: Conflict in Communication

Intended Goal: For students to understand how different roles play in conflict communication

Activity: Group Meltdown

- Students split into five groups of five
 - Each member of each group will receive a roll card that only they are allowed to look at. They will then enact these roles in discussion.
 - Overachiever
 - Passive member
 - Dominant leader
 - Distracted member
 - Conflict mediator
 - Give students the prompt that they have to plan an on-campus event [no other information]
 - Let's go for 7 minutes.
 - After the seven-minute mark, introduce constraint [deadline of event moved up to next week]
 - Afterward, have each group debrief their event
 - Ask about:
 - Was the conflict task-based or personal?
 - What communication choices helped or hurt?
 - How could this have been managed better as a good?
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Subject: Conflict Communication

Intended Goal: To obtain knowledge of how to de-escalate and escalate situations.

Activity/Worksheet:

- Pair students up together
- Give each group a minor disagreement [two total, alternating with groups]
 - Roommates who one keeps turning up the heat to 80 degrees when the other wants 70 degrees
 - Roommates who always clean vs. a roommate who never cleans
- Round One: Escalation
 - Students intentionally use "You-language."
 - Students use absolutes: "You always, You never."
 - Interrupt each other
 - Chaos

- Round Two: De-Escalation
 - I - statements
 - Active listening
 - Clarifying questions
 - Validating
 - Compromise
 - Reflection and debrief time, ask these questions:
 - How did the tone change the interactions
 - What phrases lowered defensiveness?
 - Notice avoidance patterns
 - Healthy vs toxic behaviors
 - Conflict norms
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