

Hello Comm 105P Students,

The *Lessons Learned in Comm 105P* Discussion assignment is now open. It is due Wednesday, May 6 at 5:30pm.

My Lessons learned

I taught my first interpersonal communication course at a Community College in southern California 35 years ago. I still remember the details. I have a clear picture in my mind of me sitting in a circle of chairs with the 15 or so students who took the course, teaching out of the same textbook I read when I took interpersonal communication as a student. It's one of my most memorable teaching experiences. I have a feeling Comm 105P this semester is going to be equally memorable.

Who could have anticipated at our first class meeting on January 29 that we would end the semester here, on Canvas, learning from home, sheltered in place, living with the uncertainty and anxiety of a global health crisis? But here we are.

This kind of extraordinary situation should motivate us all to step back and reflect on our priorities, needs and aspirations. Thankfully, we have learned theories and acquired skills and tools in Comm 105P that can help us make sense of our experiences, and point us in the direction of a productive path forward.

Here are a few lessons I've learned this semester:

- I have deepened my commitment to social construction. Faced with uncertainty and forced to engage in unscripted episodes, I am amazed at the powerful impulses people have to make meaning, to make sense of their social worlds (especially when they are chaotic and disjointed as they are now). Social construction gives me a framework to understand how this meaning-making process happens.
- I have a newfound appreciation for the hopefulness that is embedded in social construction. People all over the world are dealing with horrible health, economic and social impacts from the pandemic. It would be understandable if we all just gave up and surrendered to the despair. So I am grateful to be reminded that I have agency to help shape my social worlds. No matter how bad circumstances might be, social construction tells me I have the ability to re-construct my social worlds, to make them better.
- I am using dialogic communication to help me develop and change my identity. I have always been a private person, a little guarded in showing my feelings, not always willing to be vulnerable. I consistently avoid holding my ground in this way. It's a pattern. This is starting to change. I now find myself wanting (maybe even needing) to express more of my private thoughts and feelings. I'm not exactly sure where this is coming from, but it's definitely tied to what's happened over the past month and a half. I can't fully explain it, but it feels right. Fortunately, dialogue provides me with a road map for how to

negotiate this change in my identity. What I'm writing right now is an example of me trying out this new identity. So thanks for listening, for being one of my audiences as I work on becoming a different and hopefully better person.

I will never forget the first interpersonal communication class I taught. And I will never forget this class, Comm 105P, spring semester 2020. I learned some new lessons that will stay with me long after the semester is over.

But that's my story, not yours. What lessons did you learn this semester?

See you online next week.

--Prof Spano