Developing Agency and Promoting Equity and Integrative Learning across the Core Curriculum

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Gonzaga University
College of Arts and Sciences

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Session Overview
1. Contextualizing Gonzaga's Core Curriculum
2. First Year Seminars and Communication & Speech at Gonzaga
   • Overview
   • Developing Agency
   • Promoting Equity
3. Discussion
Gonzaga University facts and figures

- Private Liberal Arts – Jesuit, Catholic, Humanistic
- Carnegie Classification: Master’s I University
- Established: 1887
- Location: Spokane, Washington
- Pronunciation: Gone - ZAG (as in "bag") – uh

**Gonzaga University Enrollment 2018-19**
- Total Enrollment: 7,566
- Undergraduate Students: 5,320
- New Freshmen: 1,202

**Academics**
- 15 undergraduate degrees through 53 majors, 54 minors and 37 concentrations
- 22 master's programs and five doctorate degrees
- **College of Arts and Sciences** and six schools:
  - School of Business
  - School of Education
  - School of Engineering & Applied Science
  - School of Nursing and Human Physiology
  - School of Leadership Studies
  - School of Law

Gonzaga University Mission Statement

Gonzaga University is an exemplary learning community that educates students for lives of leadership and service for the common good. In keeping with its Catholic, Jesuit, and humanistic heritage and identity, Gonzaga models and expects excellence in academic and professional pursuits and intentionally develops the whole person—intellectually, spiritually, culturally, physically, and emotionally.

Through engagement with knowledge, wisdom, and questions informed by classical and contemporary perspectives, Gonzaga cultivates in its students the capacities and dispositions for reflective and critical thought, lifelong learning, spiritual growth, ethical discernment, creativity, and innovation.

The Gonzaga experience fosters a mature commitment to dignity of the human person, social justice, diversity, intercultural competence, global engagement, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and care for the planet. Grateful to God, the Gonzaga community carries out this mission with responsible stewardship of our physical, financial, and human resources.
Gonzaga University Baccalaureate Learning Goals

Gonzaga University cultivates reflective, responsible individuals rooted in Jesuit, Catholic, humanist traditions. We develop students whose knowledge, skills, habits of mind and spirituality enable them to grow in the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

- Knowledge developed through the practices of liberal humanistic learning
- Intellectual and practical skills
- Habits of mind and heart
- A thoughtful, evolving spirituality

Gonzaga University Core Curriculum: Themes and Guiding Questions

Gonzaga University Core Curriculum

As students of a Catholic, Jesuit, and Humanistic University, how do we educate ourselves to become women and men for a more just and humane global community?

YEAR 1
UNDERSTANDING AND CREATING
How do we pursue knowledge and cultivate understanding?
First-Year Seminar
Writing Reasoning
Math
Scientific Inquiry
Communication & Speech

YEAR 2
BEING AND BECOMING
Who are we and what does it mean to be human?
Philosophy of Human Nature
Christianity & Catholic Traditions

YEAR 3
CARING AND DOING
What principles characterize a well-lived life?
Ethics
World or Comparative Religion

YEAR 4
IMAGINING THE POSSIBLE
What is our role in the world?
Core Integration Seminar

BROADENING COURSES
Fine Arts & Design, History, Literature, Social & Behavioral Science

DESIGNATIONS
Writing Enriched, Global Studies, Social Justice
First-Year Seminar: Course Description & Learning Outcomes

Course Description: The primary purpose of the First-Year Seminar (FYS) is to promote a cultural shift in students as they make the transition to college by emphasizing that learning and knowing are active, constructive processes. Organized around a unique topic, each small seminar will encourage intellectual engagement and curiosity through personal contact and dialogue with other students and faculty. The FYS introduces students to the first-year core question, “How do we pursue knowledge and cultivate understanding?” by examining the fundamental and central questions in different disciplines and the methods used to explore those questions. The FYS also emphasizes an appreciation for Gonzaga University’s Jesuit heritage and the core curriculum, and their overall importance in providing a meaningful and unifying educational experience.

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Differentiate the ways in which knowledge is constructed across multiple disciplines.
2. Articulate how their own personal and cultural perspectives affect their discovery and generation of knowledge and understanding.
3. Integrate the principles of Gonzaga’s mission with their academic, personal, and spiritual aspirations.
Communication Studies Department
Mission Statement

The mission of the Communication Studies Department at Gonzaga University is to cultivate a sophisticated understanding of the process of communication as symbolic action by providing a theoretically-grounded and experiential education that prepares students to analyze and critique human communication in its many forms, and to create and deliver content across multiple modalities.

We are committed to nurturing a diverse, inclusive community of scholars who think critically and engage responsibly with the problems and issues of our communities through exemplary, ethical communication via multiple modes of address.

Blending contemporary rhetorical education with interdisciplinary, liberal arts education, the department prepares students with rhetorical skills (eloquentia perfecta in the Jesuit Rhetorical tradition) and a refined sense of judgment and discernment to work toward justice and the common good.

COMM 100: Communication and Speech
Course Description & Learning Outcomes

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of rhetoric—or how we use symbol systems to create meaning and understanding between people—with the goal of helping you continue to grow into skilled, responsible, and thoughtful communicators. Students will learn how symbolic communication and rhetorical strategies shape our daily, lived experiences in the world including our identities, ideas, policies, and society. The course develops the skills and ways of thinking about communication needed to analyze, construct, and deliver messages that advance civic and cultural interests. Three central concepts—rhetoric & symbolic action, civic engagement, and audience—provide a common thread throughout the class as we explore the Core Curriculum Year 1 question: “How do we pursue knowledge and cultivate understanding?”

The course also supports the University mission through alignment with eloquentia perfecta, a Jesuit tradition that references stylistic excellence through speaking and writing for the common good to create a more just world. Communicating ethically for, with, and among others is vital to becoming the leaders Gonzaga hopes you will become.

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Discuss communication as a process of symbolic action that constructs social realities.
2. Identify self as constructed by and as a participant in communication processes that address a range of audiences in a variety of contexts.
3. [Civic engagement] Create and deliver discerning and ethical presentations that promote the common good in response to rhetorical situations.
COMM 100: Communication and Speech
Rhetorical Situations—Civic Engagement Presentation & Case Study

Goal

Apply concepts and theories about symbolic action to analyze a hypothetical, complex case with no definitive answer. Then respond to the rhetorical situation by making an argument that recommends a position or course of action.

Overview

This presentation invites you to apply all the symbolic tools and critical analysis skills you’ve been developing this semester to respond and make an argument related to a hypothetical rhetorical situation.

Chapter 8 in Rhetoric and Civic Life introduced the concept of a rhetorical situation—a complex moment in which we are called to respond to an exigence or pressing problem. Remember there is not a perfect or right way to respond—yet there are better and more suitable responses. And in every moment, a “synergistic relationship emerges between rhetoric and situation, one in which situations guide rhetorical responses and rhetoric constructs situations.” In other words, “events happen, but their relative importance is given to them through interpretations, which are rhetorically constructed.” (Palcewski, Ice, & Fritch, p. 240)

We also learned in Chapter 4 that “argumentation is a skill central to democracy” (p. 101). Thus, these final presentations ask you to formulate an interactive, contingent, and cooperative argument in response to a situation that has no clear answer.

Case Study: What are we commemorating?

[The following case is hypothetical and is not currently occurring at Gonzaga. It is based on actual, related national events.]

Background

One of Gonzaga University’s largest alumni donors has commissioned a sculptor to create a new bronze statue for the campus. (GU already has a building on campus named after this donor’s family.) Gonzaga requested that the statue should recognize and commemorate both the University’s identity and the local history. The artist discussed designs with the donor who was responsible for selecting the final design. In the months leading up to the statue unveiling, the Gonzaga community only knew that the statue was titled “New Horizons.”

When the statue is revealed near the center of campus, many students and professors are shocked. It depicts a nearly naked Native American man covered only by a blanket. He is kneeling at the feet of a Jesuit priest. The priest is holding out a stack of three books in one hand, including the Bible, and reaching out to the man with his other hand—presumably to help him up.

Almost immediately a group of students and professors demanded that the statue be removed. The first night after the statue was unveiled, some students pelted the statue with eggs. Several
students are rumored to be plotting to knock down the statue themselves if the University doesn’t act. Now the statue is under 24/7 surveillance.

The donor and the artist claim that sculpture is supposed to represent the tension between the fact that the Jesuits were not always correct about what was best for Native people, but that they still lived among Native people and committed their lives to working with and serving them. For the donor, the statue symbolizes, on one hand, the role that Jesuit missions played in the colonial movement that invaded and displaced Native peoples. On the other hand, she says, the statue represents the Jesuit mission of education and the Jesuits’ sensitivity to Native customs and social systems.

Some students seem satisfied with this explanation and claim that it’s important to showcase both the good and the bad portions of our history. Nevertheless, some students are publicly attacking the donor and the artist. They claim that the statue glorifies a long history of colonization and oppression of indigenous people. They point out cultural errors in the sculpture: the man supposedly represents the Spokane Tribe, but the blanket features symbols that are not at all related to any regional tribes. In addition, they take issue with the fact that the Native American man is positioned in an inferior posture, and is rendered even more helpless because he’s mostly naked.

The donor is furious that people have implied she is racist. She demands that the University defend her motives and issue an apology to her for allowing her name to be attacked. She also threatens that if the statue is removed she will withdraw a major gift that would have provided significant scholarships for roughly 25 students every year.

A student who is a member of the Spokane Tribe wrote a letter saying it was difficult to even walk to class with a statue looming over him that disrespects his personhood and his ancestors. A group of students have reached out to several local activist organizations as well as leaders of several regional tribes and they are working together to conduct a large-scale demonstration at Commencement ceremonies.

The Division of Student Development and the Academic Vice President’s offices want to quell this attention, particularly since it’s threatening to disrupt finals week and disrupt graduation. Some students and parents have contacted both the President’s office and the Academic Vice President’s office demanding that the university stop this demonstration. One parent wrote, “We’ve paid a lot of money for our daughter to get her Gonzaga degree. If a bunch of whiny students disrupt our celebration of her accomplishment, we’ll be sure to tell the guidance counselors at the schools in our hometown never to recommend Gonzaga again. If they don’t like the sculpture, they don’t have to look at it!”

Other alumni, parents, and faculty have expressed support for the demonstration and have started an online pledge to join in the demonstration at graduation.

**Your role & task**

The President, the Academic Vice President, and the Vice President of Student Development have called a meeting that includes several Board members, fundraising officials, and the core group of student leaders who have been planning the demonstration.

You serve on a student advisory board that is part of GSBA, and you have been asked to represent the student voice. Because of your knowledge regarding symbolic action, civic
engagement, and responding to rhetorical situations, they have asked you to attend this meeting and make a recommendation on how the University should proceed.

They have asked you to consider some of the following questions:

✓ What are the options for other forms of symbolic action and civic engagement? Should the planned demonstration continue? *(Think about the different types of responses on pp 252–256.)*
✓ What should the University do about the statue? Does it remain standing and continue to fuel unrest? Does it come down and jeopardize the University’s relationship with major donors? Does it move to a less prominent place on campus?
✓ How do you recommend they proceed?
✓ What are the benefits and consequences of your recommendation?

**Your presentation must take a stand on what to do.** Thus, in addition to helping to define the situation and recommending a specific action, you must also justify your recommendation to President, Vice Presidents, students, and faculty in attendance.

In sum, this presentation ultimately will **make an argument** that a) defines the situation, b) defends your recommendation considering the stakes and consequences, and c) considers and responds to counter-arguments against your recommendation.

**Important:** Your responses should be about social collaboration and should account for the complexity of the situation. You should also reflect on the values of the Gonzaga University Mission. You’re not trying to *win* an argument or attack anyone else; instead, you’re trying to come up with a reasonable, collaborative, socially aware, and inclusive response that promotes a just society.

**Other cases to consider**

✓ Removal of statue of President McKinley - Arcata, CA
✓ Removal of statues of Columbus - Baltimore, MD, and San Jose, CA
✓ Removal of statue – Kalamazoo, MI
COMM 100: Communication and Speech
Social Identities / Social Reality Presentation

Goal
Practice applying communication concepts and theories to our social identities to learn something more about yourself, share that learning with our ensemble, and develop your presentation and communication processes.

Overview

Chapter 1 of *Rhetoric in Civic Life* (RCL) revealed that rhetoric is the process by which we “attach meaning to the world” and “make sense of what the world means” (*RCL*, 30). Through rhetoric we create “understanding of [our]selves, [our] relations to each other, and the world.” (*RCL*, 8).

Chapter 6 extended this conversation to explore how we construct and perform our persona and identities through symbolic action: “Rhetoric involves not only what people communicate (the words and images), but also as whom they communicate—they identities they foreground.” (*RCL*, 170)

This presentation invites you to apply a rhetorical perspective to your social identities and how you perform them and it invites you to analyze cultural messages about your identities including how they constrain you, provide opportunities for you, and influence your agency.

Procedures

1. This presentation draws on concepts and theories explored in Chapters 1, 2, and 6. However, you might also benefit from reviewing the following supplemental activities and readings (posted in the Chapter 6 Module on Blackboard):
   - Social Identity Grid
   - Identity Timeline Exercise
   - Beverly Tatum—“Complexity of Identity”
   - Bobbi Harro—“Cycle of Socialization”

2. Consider the following prompts as you review the chapters and supplemental materials.
   **Write a Reflective Journal** that discusses these questions:
   - Who are you? What three social identities stand out as most salient? What did you learn as a child or young adult about how to perform those identities? Where did you learn it (home, church, school, society)?
   - What identity ingredients are available to you as you perform a persona? In what ways do you have the privilege (or opportunity) to choose between multiple personae? In what ways do the identities that others assign to you present an obstacle to your communication acts?
   - Which cultural expectations for your various social identities do you accept? Which do you push back against? How?
3. Drawing on your responses to the reflective journal prompts create a 3- to 4-minute presentation that shares part of your identity story with the class.

Only share a story of your identity that you are comfortable having the class know about. Some identities are oppressed in society, meaning there are real consequences for sharing your placement within them or feelings about that placement. I hope you feel that our classroom community is a safe environment for being your full self; however, you are not obligated to “out” any part of yourself that you are uncomfortable sharing.

These additional questions might help you focus your presentation:
- How have you experienced the world through a particular social identity (or intersecting/interlocking identities)?
- What does a particular social identity allow you to do (or help you to do)?
- Which of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions to this identity do you want us to know about?
- In what ways do you have the privilege (or opportunity) to choose between multiple personae?
- In what ways do the identities that others assign to you present an obstacle to your communication acts?

4. Complete the pre-assessment activity (instructions on Blackboard).

5. Submit a) your reflective journal, b) your pre-assessment, and c) your visual aids on Blackboard.

6. Deliver your presentation in class.
   - 3-4 minutes
   - Organizational structure (Additional guidelines for each element available on Blackboard)
     - Brief, distinct introduction
     - Focused and clear structure: You can’t tell us everything. Choose a narrow focus for this speech and make smart choices about what you include.
     - Brief, distinct conclusion
   - Visual aids: complement your spoken words with at least 3 images that add meaning to your story
   - Confident, conversational, performance

See Blackboard for specific guidelines on each step and for evaluation information.
After studying risk and resilience together for most of a semester and forming a trusting learning community, we read and discuss *The Other Wes Moore* (TOWM), a book that chronicles the lives of two Wes Moores who grew up on the same streets at about the same time; one becomes a decorated veteran and Rhodes Scholar and the other ends up serving a life sentence for his part in the killing of a police officer. According to the author (the decorated veteran and Rhodes Scholar), “The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his” (p. xi). Our class discussions focus on turning points in the lives of each boy – risk and protective factors that make a difference in their development. Because both boys are African American, we could ignore race but that would be a missed opportunity. In order to move into some difficult conversations about race, identity, power, and privilege, we do a series of exercises (one on each of the three days we discuss the book).

These activities were inspired by my participation in a workshop led by Erin Jones, Director of Equity and Achievement, Federal Way School District, who was honored by the Obama White House as a “Champion of Change.”

**Group Exercise #1 (Day 1 of TOWM discussion)**

**Large Group Circle:** Raise your hand if the statement I read applies to you:

1. I am from Washington State.
2. I have traveled/lived outside of the state I was born in.
3. I was born, raised, or spent a significant amount of my childhood outside the United States.
4. I have traveled outside the U.S.
5. I grew up in a relatively safe neighborhood.
6. I felt safe at school.
7. I had neighbors who cared about me.
8. I had large amounts of unsupervised time (e.g., summers, after school).
9. I speak more than one language.
10. I play a musical instrument (including voice), create art, or am involved in dance/theater.
11. I am/was a competitive athlete.
12. I went to a diverse school and/or lived in a diverse neighborhood.
13. My holiday (incl. Christmas break) plans include some vacation.
14. My holiday (incl. Christmas break) plans include some service.

**Pair-share:** What is this exercise about? Did you learn anything about yourself? In what ways do you see yourself as privileged or not? (Share only what is comfortable).
**Group Exercise #2: Four Corners (Day 2 of TOWM discussion)**

**Corners:** Yes – exactly applies; It depends; I don’t know; No – it does not apply.

1. I have felt “othered” -- discriminated against, marginalized, or even exploited at least once in my life.
2. I have “othered” -- discriminated against, exploited another in the past – either in thought or deed.

**Group Exercise #3: Four Corners (Day 3 of TOWM discussion)**

**Corners:** Yes; It depends; I don’t know; No.

The best way to deal with racism (or other “isms”) is to be “color blind” – that is, to treat everyone as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity.  

These discussions are followed by time for personal reflection (journaling); for example: How does your racial identity affect you? What has your experience of the campus climate been and what commitment(s) can you make to improving the climate for those who feel marginalized?

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**The final course assignment is a personal Call to Action, inspired by reading The Other Wes Moore.** At our final class meeting, I ask each student to read two paragraphs of their Call to Action aloud.

**The Other Wes Moore Integrative Assignment: Personal Call to Action**

On pp. 185-186 of *The Other Wes Moore*, Tavis Smiley reflects on a call to action; in his words: “My call to action, our call to action, is this: read these words but, more important, absorb their meanings and create your own plan to act and leave a legacy” (p. 186). In a 2-3 page paper, reflect on how this book has inspired you and describe your own call to action – your own plan to act.

**Note:** Although the focus for this assignment is the Wes Moore book, making connections with other course readings will provide more richness and substance to your call to action, so I will be looking for connections with other class readings from throughout the semester. Out of class readings or sources are not required; however, you can certainly feel free to bring in outside information if it is helpful to further substantiate points you wish to make (please provide a reference list for any outside sources).
References & Resources


