Great Ideas For Teaching Speech

Using YouTube to Promote Persuasive Skills and Curricular Awareness  
in the Basic Communication Course

Abstract:
Students create a 1-minute video that promotes a communication course from the current catalog and upload it to YouTube. Students get practice with persuasive speaking techniques without using class time on presentations. They become familiar with communication course offerings beyond public speaking. They pick up a valuable computer skill. The department gains a collection of promotional videos that may be used to appeal to other college-aged students to help with recruiting and scheduling.

Goals
1. To give students an opportunity to create a short persuasive speech without using class time for presentations
2. To familiarize majors and non-majors alike with course offerings in the communication department
3. To embed computer literacy skills into any communication course
4. To create for the department a collection of student testimonials regarding courses that may be easily included on department WebPages.

Rationale
Finding the time to hear student presentations and still have enough lecture time to cover important course concepts can be a challenge in communication classrooms. This assignment allows students to craft a persuasive message and present it to their peers (and a much larger audience of web viewers) without consuming class time. Moreover, the focus on communication course offerings compels students to open the university catalog and read-up on what we teach in our field at our institution. For many students (about 60% in my experience) this is their first time uploading a video segment to YouTube. The assignment helps them to develop a new area of Internet skill. As they move into professional communication positions, they have a new skill they can draw upon and advertise to employers. Finally, it has created a bank of testimonials in students’ voices that has been used to recruit majors and help with advising.

Directions:
Assign students the task of picking a communication course from the course description section of the current catalog that they find interesting. I require them to choose a course they have not taken. Their next step is to find someone who has taken the course, contact a professor who teaches it, get a copy of the syllabus from the main office, or whatever else they can think of to get a feel for what goes on in the class. Next they must take what they find and turn it into a 1 minute video and upload it to YouTube, so we can all go look at what the course has to offer.

To allay some of their fears about this part of the process, I created and uploaded my own YouTube version of the directions for the assignment. I point out that I was able to do that in just over 1 hour having never used YouTube. I also provide them with YouTube’s own simple and clear directions for uploading. Many students are able to use their cell phones to complete the assignment. Others have digital camcorders. The rest check out cameras from the library or media services on campus.
In terms of grading, I offer them the following reminders:

1. This is a promotional video. Don't pick a class to trash. Pick one to sell.

2. Name your video SLU COMM ### LAST NAME (where ### is the course number, and last name is YOUR last name).

3. Email me a link to the video once you upload it if you want it graded.

4. These are due by X date. You may have some technical issues. Don't wait until the last minute to start. Trouble with technology won't be a valid excuse for being late with this one. Start now, so you have time to work out the kinks.

5. Have some fun with it! (But keep it PG!)

Connection to relevant concepts and skills:
This assignment can be tailored a number of ways. It gives students practice with creating a persuasive appeal: audience analysis, information gathering, and interest-building strategies. It encourages peer review; they all comment on each others’ videos online. It provides practice delivering to a camera – a good skill for mass communication majors. It increases students’ knowledge of communication offerings beyond public speaking. It gives students a handy tool come pre-registration time for discovering the expectations and assignments in classes they may take.

Results:
The results have been outstanding. I will bring samples to the GIFTS panel to share (10-15 second segments to illustrate). Past submissions include interviews of faculty, skits, re-enactments, interviews of other students, and even tours of facilities. The best of the videos have been flagged and links to them have been added to the department’s Blackboard site for incoming freshmen. They are used by the advising department to help students with course selection.