Chapter 1
Communication Perspectives
Critical Thinking Activities

Case Assignment: What Would You Do?
Use the following case assignment to get your students to consider how different nonverbal behaviors convey different messages. You might use this as a handout, for which students can provide short answers, or you might use this to create an opportunity for class discussion.

A QUESTION OF ETHICS
Molly has just been accepted at Stanford University and calls her friend Terri to tell her the good news.

MOLLY: Hi Terri! Guess what? I just got accepted to Stanford Law School!

TERRI [Surprised and disappointed]: Oh, cool.

MOLLY: Thanks—you sound so enthusiastic!

TERRI: Oh, I am. Listen, I have to go—I’m late for class.

MOLLY: Oh, OK. See you.

The women hang up, and Terri immediately calls her friend Monica.

TERRI: Monica, it’s Terri.

MONICA: Hey, Terri. What’s up?

TERRI: I just got some terrible news—Molly got into Stanford!

MONICA: So, what’s wrong with that? I think it’s great. Aren’t you happy for her?

TERRI: No, not at all. I didn’t get in, and I have better grades and a higher LSAT score.

MONICA: Maybe Molly had a better application.

TERRI: Or maybe it was what was on her application.

MONICA: What do you mean?

TERRI: You know what I mean. Molly’s black.

MONICA: Yes, and . . . ?

TERRI: Don’t you see? It’s called affirmative action.

MONICA: Terri, give it a rest!

TERRI: Oh, please. You know it, and I know it. She only got in because of her race and because she’s poor. Her GPA is really low and so is her LSAT.

MONICA: Did you ever stop to think that maybe she wrote an outstanding essay? Or that they thought the time she spent volunteering in that free legal clinic in her neighborhood was good background?

TERRI: Yes, but we’ve both read some of her papers, and we know she can’t write. Listen, Monica, if you’re black, Asian, Native American, Latino, or any other minority and poor, you’ve got it made. You can be as stupid as Forrest Gump and get into any law school you want. It’s just not fair at all.

MONICA [Angrily]: No, you know what isn’t fair? I’m sitting here listening to my so-called friend insult my intelligence and my ethnic background. How dare you tell me that the only reason I’ll ever get into a good medical school is because I’m Latino. Listen, honey, I’ll get into medical school just the same way that Molly got into law school—because of my brains, my accomplishments, and my ethical standards. And based on this conversation, it’s clear that Molly and I are way ahead of you.

Describe how well each of these women followed the ethical standards for communication discussed in this chapter.
Journal Assignments

A. Interpersonal Process Analysis
Select an important interpersonal conversation that you have experienced recently. Analyze how the context, the noise, the people involved, and the relationship between those people affected the communication. Be specific and provide examples from the conversation.

B. Feedback in Interpersonal Communication
Keep a one-day log of all the feedback (verbal and nonverbal) you receive from others while you are communicating. Ask someone who knows you well to indicate the types of feedback you typically give them while they communicate with you. Analyze the similarities and differences in the feedback you give and receive.

C. Competent Communication
Identify an area of your life in which you feel, and others would agree, that you demonstrate communication competence. How are you personally motivated, personally knowledgeable, and what skills do you demonstrate in this area? Now identify an area in your life in which you feel you do not demonstrate communication competence. Are any of your skills, knowledge, and motivation from the first area transferable to this second area? What can you learn from your positive experience in the first area that could help you set goals for improvement in the second area?

D. Communication Functions
Using the Communication Functions Log, record the various communications you have today. Tonight, categorize each episode by one of the six functions it served. Each episode may serve more than one function. Were you surprised by the variety of communication you engaged in such a relatively short period?
See Chapter 1 Handouts for the accompanying Communication Functions Log.

E. Communication over the Internet
The Internet has thoroughly revolutionized communication over the last 20 years. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of communicating via the following Internet-based mediums: e-mail, newsgroups, Internet chat, and weblogs (blogs). Spend some time evaluating these mediums if you are not already familiar with them. Enter your thoughts into a two-column table, with advantages in the first column and disadvantages in the second. Did your analysis produce any discoveries that surprised you?
See Chapter 1 Handouts for the accompanying Internet-based Mediums Worksheet.

Experiential Assignments

1.1 Identifying Elements of the Communication Process
Consider the following interaction and identify the participants, messages, context, channels, noise, and feedback.

Paula and Mike, who have been married for three years, rushed into the grocery store after work in order to buy a few things for dinner. Paula wanted to do drive-through for dinner, but Mike insisted on a prepared meal. They both had a rough day at work and were on edge. Once in the crowded store, Paula suggested, “Let’s split up to buy what we need and then meet up front at the cashier.” Mike thought that would take too long so he said, “let’s just stick together.” Paula retorted angrily, “Mike, just go get the roasted chicken and some
Romaine lettuce and meet me up front.” Mike walked away in a huff, and he did as his wife demanded. After the couple meets back up at the cashier, Paula notices that Mike brought iceberg lettuce. She grabbed the lettuce from his hands and said, “You brought the wrong thing. AGAIN!”

See Chapter 1 Handouts for a list of features from the interaction that you can identify.

1.2 Topical Research
Cultural issues play an important role in global business. For example, in the airline industry gate agents, flight attendants and other service providers must be able to communicate effectively with people who come from different cultures and speak different languages. Using the internet or your campus library, locate the article “Plane Talk,” by John Freivalds published in Communication World. Read what the airline industry is doing to make language learning a priority among flight attendants and pilots. How is this training working to achieve industry goals?

1.3 Topical Research
The ability to communicate in complex ways is often seen as a key difference between humans and lower animals. Using the internet or your campus library, locate articles that contrast human and animal communication. Then list what you perceive to be three key differences between animal and human communication.

1.4 Analyzing Feedback
Keep a one-day log of all the feedback (verbal and nonverbal) you receive from others while communicating. Ask someone who knows you well to indicate the kinds of feedback you typically give him or her while they communicate with you. Analyze the similarities and differences in the feedback you give and receive.

1.5 Diagram a Communication Event
Using the model of communication presented on page 7 in your textbook, diagram a recent conversation you had. Who were the participants? What messages were sent? Using what channels? What feedback was given? Was there any noise present? In what context did the communication take place? Draw a diagram of the model and insert each answer in the correct location.

1.6 Communication Settings
After reviewing the four communication settings discussed on pages 8-9, identify the setting you feel you are most effective in and why you feel that way. Which setting are you least effective in? Why? Using the example found in Figure 1.2 on page 14 of the textbook as a guide, develop a Communication Improvement Plan to help you increase your competence in the communication setting you feel least effective in.

Online Resources
Here are several links to online resources that relate to the topics covered in this chapter. Students will have access to this list as well, through the student Critical Thinking Activities online.

http://www.natcom.org - National Communication Association (NCA)
NCA is the largest organization of communication students, researchers and teachers. This site previews some of the activities communication scholars engage in and offers a variety of links to other sources.
http://www.cios.org - **Communication Institute for Online Scholarship (CIOS)**
CIOS provides discussion in a variety of current issues in the field of communication, links to extensive resources and links designed especially for students.

http://www.mapnp.org/library/grp_skll/grp_skll.htm - **Group Skills**
A selection of web resources assembled by Carter McNamara of the Management Assistance Program for Non-Profits, this site lists numerous resources for group dynamics and problem-solving.

http://www.toastmasters.org/pdfs/top10.pdf - **Ten Tips for Effective Public Speaking**
This guide created by Toastmaster’s International shows the importance of understanding the setting when making oral presentations. Part of the Toastmaster’s website
http://www.toastmasters.org

Search this site for words and other jargon that is associated with computer mediated communication (CMC). Explore the site to see how many of the words and their meanings you are familiar with and/or use in your everyday interactions.

http://www.jamesmccleroskey.com/measures/communication_competence.htm - **Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale**
This site contains a test designed to measure how people perceived their communication competence for a variety of communication contexts and types of receivers.

http://www.natcom.org/Instruction/assessment/Assessment/CriteriaAssessment.htm
Criteria for assessment of oral communication

http://www.natcom.org/Instruction/Competencies/college_competencies.htm
Speaking and listening competencies for college students