

Faculty Showcase '08

Sponsored by Academic Technology at Simmons College



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Goals

- Develop an understanding of the basic theories of workplace-related motivation and psychology.
- Develop methods to effectively apply these theories to persuasive communication.
- Understand, develop, and integrate key components of a persuasive organizational communication plan.
- Experience the benefits and challenges of project-based work in a computer-mediated milieu.



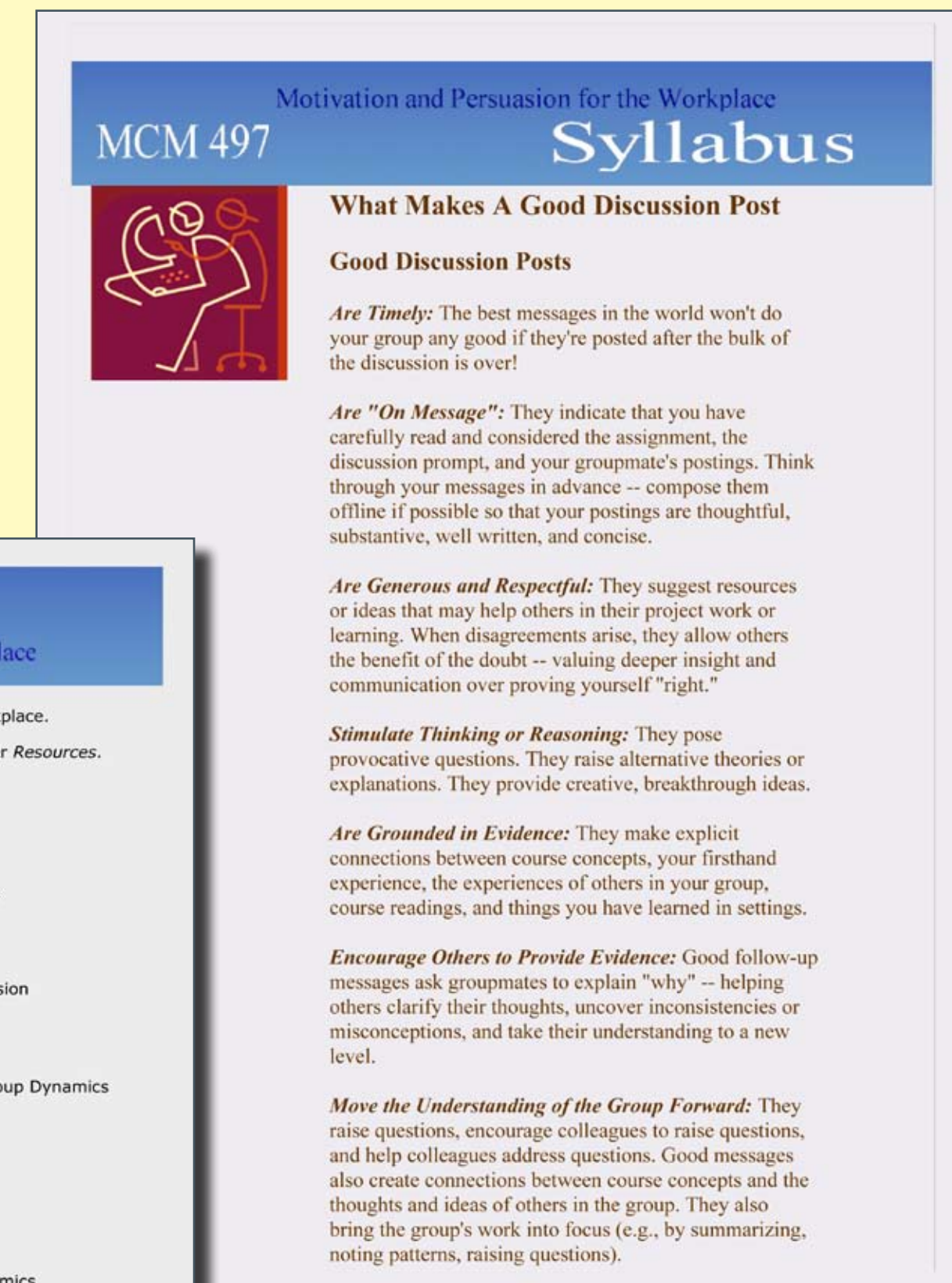
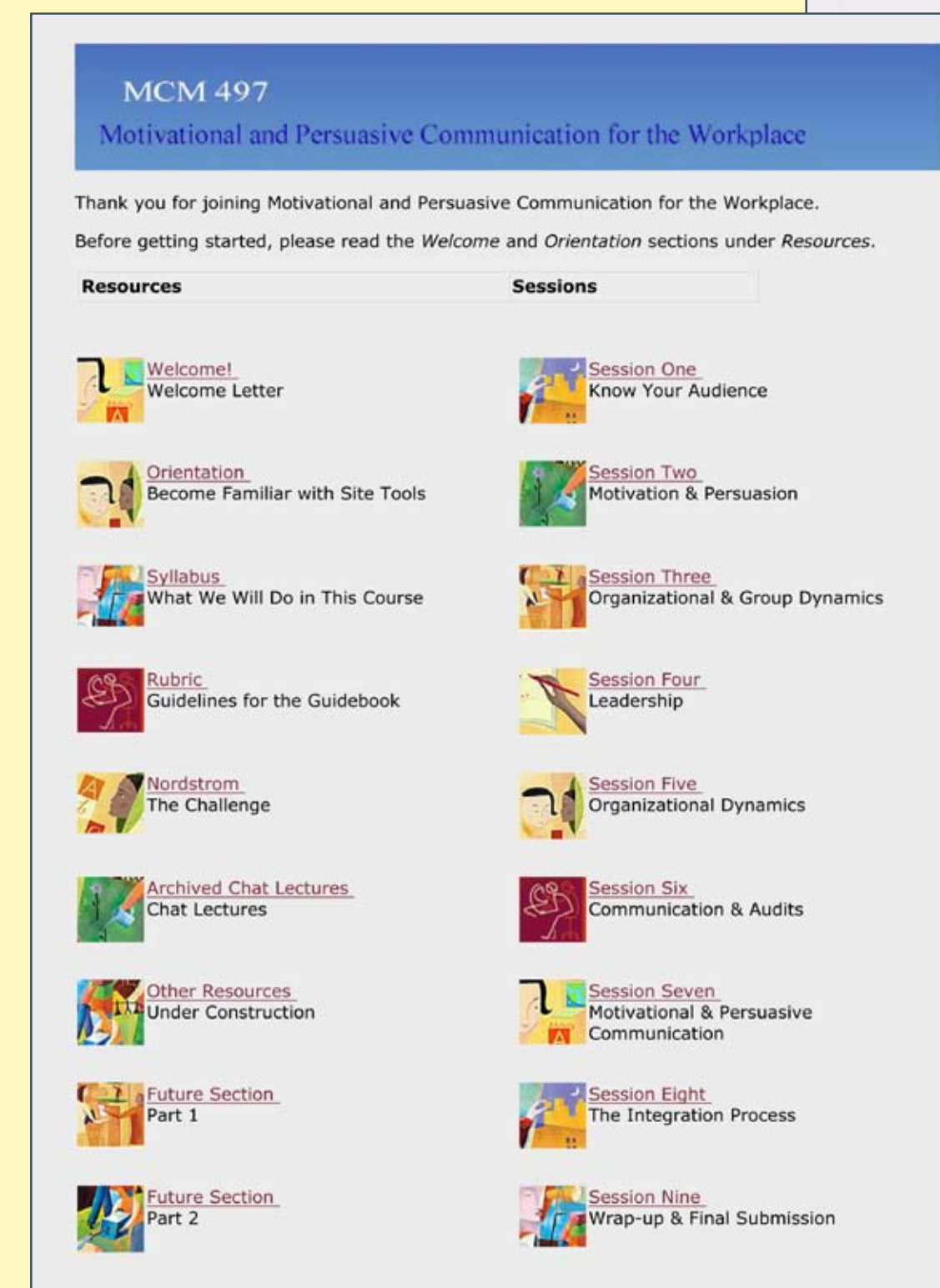
Elearning in the Master of Science in Communications Management Program

Project Overview

MCM 497 is an online graduate course designed for the busy, professional, Communication Management student who needs a flexible alternative to the traditional classroom setting. The course exposes students, as practitioners, to applied theories of motivation and persuasion, which enables them to effectively design programs and frame communications in light of human psychology, human behavior, and organizational dynamics. In creating this course, my underlying concern was to build a virtual learning community with personality. The online format also challenged me to be detailed and integrate my content, as I realized that missing one detail could be problematic for my students within any given learning experience.

In this course, students experience the benefits and challenges associated with communicating, interacting, and collaborating solely in an online environment. They develop a sense of community while working together in teams to attain their common goals and complete a group project.

Each week, the class consists of two one-hour lectures facilitated in live chat and two 30-minute chat sessions. The course runs for nine weeks, with the last week reserved for final revisions to group projects. The elearning environment



includes a textbook, audio lectures, videos, articles, and links to Harvard Business School articles.

As instructor, I facilitate learning through a series of individual and team learning activities that build toward the completion of a persuasive communication guidebook for an organization facing motivational challenges. Recently, teams developed motivational guidebooks for Nordstrom, which has been plagued by low morale and demotivated employees.

Applications Beyond

This online learning environment may serve as a basic template for similar course offerings at Simmons College. By offering more flexible course choices, Simmons may attract students who otherwise could not enroll at all due to personal or professional circumstances. Additionally, such offerings will keep Simmons competitive and convey our commitment to providing cutting-edge education.

I suggest that those considering elearning should not attempt to force a traditional model onto the online format. While the focus of any course should be on the student learning outcomes, both the online and face-to-face models have unique advantages and challenges.

Traditional	Online
Some communication is implicit, direct, and nonverbal.	All communication is mediated and explicit. A focused effort must be employed that avoids miscommunication.
Community building occurs spontaneously and is opportunistic (much is left to circumstances and chance).	Community building must be intentional and formally facilitated.
Introverts are introverted and extroverts are extroverted.	Students I know as introverts were as engaged as the extroverts.
In the classroom setting, students' questions may be answered in the context of the moment asked.	Answering questions in asynchronous time requires placing the response in explicit context.