

## MID-TENURE BRIEF

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**Department of Communication, School of Communication and the Arts**

### INTRODUCTION

I joined the Marist College faculty as a tenure-track assistant professor in August 2015. Prior to joining Marist, I was a tenure-track assistant professor at Concord University in Athens, West Virginia, beginning in August 2010. I completed my doctorate in communication and information studies at the University of Kentucky in 2011.

This brief documents information required for mid-tenure review as described in the *Marist College Faculty Handbook* and addresses the following criteria (click to jump to each):

- 1) **Teaching Effectiveness**; 2) **Professional Activity**; 3) **Service to the Students**;
- 4) **Service to the College**; and 5) **Service to the Community**.

Supporting documentation (click on each for quick access), including my **Candidate Checklist**, **Curriculum Vitae**, and **Annual Self-Evaluations**, is provided in an online portfolio available at [Tenure.CommunicationPhD.com](http://Tenure.CommunicationPhD.com).

### COURSE LOADS

My 4-3 teaching load includes one Fall course release for the “**Power Presenting**” Workshops. In addition, I teach online every Summer and Winter term.

SEMESTER	REQUIRED LOAD	COURSES TAUGHT
Fall '15	3 (1 Release)	COM 333-Applied Research & Analytics COM 211-PR Fundamentals (2 sections)
Spring '16	3	COM 419-PR Cases (2 sections) COM 333-Applied Research & Analytics (2 sections)
Summer '16		COM 102-Introduction to Communication Online
Fall '16	3 (1 Release)	COM 333-Applied Research & Analytics (3 sections)
Winter '17		COM 102-Introduction to Communication Online
Spring '17	3	COM 333-Applied Research & Analytics (2 sections) COM 318- <b>Crisis Communication</b> Special Topic (New course for Marist) COM 102-Introduction to Communication Online
Summer '17		COM 102-Introduction to Communication Online
Fall '17	3 (1 Release)	COM 401-Communication Capping COM 333-Applied Research & Analytics (2 sections)
Winter '18		COM 102-Introduction to Communication Online
Spring '18	3	COM 401-Communication Capping COM 333-Applied Research & Analytics (2 sections)

## I. TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS (Back to [COURSE LOADS](#) or [INTRODUCTION](#))

Course materials (click on each for quick access), including **Syllabi**, **Course Outlines**, **Exam Study Guides**, and **Assignments**, are available online at **Tenure.CommunicationPhD.com**.

I have been teaching college communication courses since 1994 and online classes since 2010. I earned Quality Matters (QM) higher education online learning and peer review certifications in 2013. I continue to work on cultivating clarity and my ability to simplify directions and instruction for students. I am also working on streamlining course workloads for my students and improving communication with both my classroom and online students.

**Communication.** Response speed is one key to facilitating feelings of interactivity that emerged in **my dissertation** research. Keeping all student communication beyond the classroom and my office hours within my iLearn class sites has helped ensure that I respond to students in a more timely manner. It is easy for messages to get lost in the clutter of my email inbox. I have also begun working individual team meetings following submission of important assignments into my classroom schedules. Providing timely face-to-face feedback about the work they produced has proven beneficial.

**Clarity.** I constantly seek feedback from students about my iLearn class sites and review and revise them to improve navigability. When a student asks for clarification about assignments or concepts, I look for ways to modify directions and instruction for all students in the class. I have established Q&A pages in all my class iLearn sites. I encourage students to post their questions on the Q&A pages rather than email them to me and explain that if they are wondering about something, chances are their classmates are too. Answers to frequently asked questions are available to my students 24/7.

Applied research and analytics is the most challenging class for clarity of instruction. The course content is complex and not intuitive for most students. I am always looking for ways to simplify concepts and make them more relatable for students, but if they do not read assigned material before attending class, they will most likely be confused by some terminology.

When experiencing confusion, many students get lost in negative emotions, which reduces their cognitive resources for working their way out of the confusion. The challenge is to help students understand why uncertainty makes them uncomfortable and embrace confusion as a sign that they are about to learn something new. I have read that students can lack the ability to identify their resources for resolving confusion. I am devoting the first full COM 333 class of this semester to meta-learning instruction. In addition to introducing students to applied research, I am going to teach them how to learn about learning.

**Workload.** Adapting course workload to student expectations while ensuring they learn important information and get the experience they need to develop skills vital to their success is a continuing challenge. Our class sizes necessitate a great deal of teamwork, which helps reduce student workload. At the same time, I try to balance team assignments with assignments that will ensure individual students have the opportunity to work on important skills.

Delving into my course structure, class sessions, student classroom experiences, and use of multimedia, technology, iLearn, and online tools may provide further insights into my teaching effectiveness.

**Course Structure.** All my classes include an Orientation and a Debriefing completed in iLearn. Students work through a structured series of steps, including a syllabus quiz, student profile, and a pre-test along with other steps tailored to the needs of each course during the Orientation. During the Debriefing, students complete a post-test along with other course-specific steps like teammate and self-evaluations and a letter to future students.

Students earn participation points, which are awarded based on quality completion of the task, and performance-based points, which are awarded based on meeting criteria and correct answers. Performance-based points are earned for required and bonus assignments, quizzes and post-test. Participation points are earned for activities and class attendance and participation. There is always a bonus assignment in the class to provide an opportunity for students to make up missed points due to absences and missed activities during the semester.

**Class Sessions.** I continually experiment with different pedagogical approaches like the “flipped classroom” approach rather than traditional lecture/discussion style classes. Today’s students are more engaged and responsive when classes include a brief presentation of concepts for the first half of the class then student-centered active learning experiences and hands-on activities applying those concepts during the second half of the class.

**Classroom Experiences.** Collaborating with journalism and Media Center colleagues has proven to be an effective way to provide realistic experiences in the classroom like the crisis press conferences. In applied research and analytics class, I teach students about experiments by involving them in an experiment. I then teach quantitative data analysis based on the results of the experiment in which they participated, which has increased student interest and engagement in data analysis lessons.

**Multimedia.** I use multimedia heavily in the classroom and my online classes to bring concepts and topics to life for my students. I create my own video clips using recent events in the news and popular media to provide timely, relevant and relatable examples. I also invest a great deal of time and effort in creating PowerPoints for my classes to illustrate important concepts and theories. Then, I convert the PowerPoints into pdf files to post on iLearn for my students, and hotlink images to referenced websites.

I video all focus groups in my classes for student data analysis and all presentations, media training, and press conferences for student self-analysis. In the past, I have used the Marist Dropbox to send large video files of focus groups to my COM 333 students. Now, I have begun posting unlisted videos on and emailing the video links to students. I also posted my Fall ‘17 Capping students’ research results presentations on my YouTube channel. Click on each one below to view the videos.

- COM 333 – **Fall ‘17 Student Focus Group Videos**
- COM 401 – **Fall ‘17 Capping Project Presentations**

**Technology.** I rely heavily on my technological skills for pedagogical innovation. For example, I use Adobe Dreamweaver and WordPress to build external sites for showcasing student work like my **crisis communication class website: MaristCrisisPR.com**. Instead of traditional papers, crisis communication students created Blog posts on the external class website. They were encouraged to link to their posts in résumés and cover letters as well as on social media.

This approach turned what could have been solely internal crisis coursework into a more beneficial public project. The idea originated as an experiment with student motivation. I wanted to test whether today's students would be more motivated to produce high quality work if they knew their work would be posted on the Internet rather than viewed only by me.

The site also helped facilitate our collaborative crisis press conferences with journalism students. It served as a one-stop source of information for journalism professors and students to prepare to attend each press conference and ask tough questions. Information about when press conferences were scheduled and background information about the team crisis scenarios were posted on our **MaristCrisisPR.com class website**.

**iLearn.** I maximize use of iLearn to facilitate interactive learning experiences in my online classes and beyond the classroom. I build complete iLearn sites for all my classroom courses. Everything students need to succeed in the class can be accessed on iLearn 24/7, including the syllabus, all assignments, examples, templates, class notes, study guides, and the most up-to-date class schedules. I work with library colleagues to develop Course Pathfinders for every class and link directly to them from class iLearn sites.

**Online Tools.** I incorporate external online sites and tools into my classes and iLearn like Youcanbook.me, which enables students to easily reserve time during **my office hours**. The website is embedded directly into all my class iLearn sites.

I use Qualtrics for teammate evaluations. SurveyMonkey and SPSS are used to teach students about survey development and data collection and analysis in my classes.

I use Padlet for creating Q&A pages, poster galleries, and interactive activities that are embedded directly into my iLearn class sites. Click on each one below to explore the Padlets.

- COM 401 – **Capping Q&A**
- COM 401 – **Fall '17 Capping Poster Gallery**
- COM 333 – **Applied Research Q&A**
- COM 102 – **Intro. to Communication Q&A Den**
- COM 102 Activities: **Perception Page, Nonverbals Wall, Cultures Page, Self-Awareness Wall, Love Wall**

Details about **courses I have taught** and **new courses I have developed** at Marist follow.

#### **A. Courses Taught**

- **COM 102 – Introduction to Communication**  
I developed a new, and now **award-winning**, introduction to communication online class for 11-week, 8-week, and 4-week terms. I employed a wide variety of iLearn tools and features to make the class more dynamic. Activities are designed to engage students with the theories in action and prompt them to explore concepts further through interactive posts and discussions with classmates.

Online students complete tasks and self-assessments in iLearn and on external websites, including the **Baron-Cohen “Reading the Mind in the Eyes” activity** to test ability to read nonverbals, for example. Students complete a **Johari Window activity**, which involves soliciting feedback from family and friends to increase self-awareness of disclosure tendencies. I have received the most positive feedback from students about the **Johari Window activity**. They also complete a **Hofstede “Cultural Dimensions” activity** in which they compare differences between their own culture and another. The required assignment in COM 102 involves researching four theories in a specific area of communication and applying them to a media artifact.

### Marist's Dr. Jennifer Robinette wins an international Apereo Teaching and Learning Award (ATLAS) Honorable Mention!



We are excited to announce that Dr. Jennifer Robinette, Assistant Professor of Communication and Public Relations, has earned Honorable Mention recognition in the 2017 International Apereo Teaching and Learning Awards.

Dr. Robinette is being recognized for her proposal entitled, “Bringing Communication Theory to Life through iLearn Interactive Experiences.” Through her submission, she demonstrated a creative and engaging use of Sakai, the open-source learning management system platform known as “iLearn” at Marist.

*“When developing a new site for the class, iLearn tools enabled me to bring theory to life for students by creating experiences with communication theories in action that would be impossible in a traditional classroom,”* wrote Dr. Robinette.

The intent of the award is to highlight examples of educational applications of Apereo tools which fall into an innovative or transformative category. Each of the winners will be recognized for their use of the Sakai CLE, Xerte, OAE, and/or Opencast, for teaching and learning, at the Open Apereo Conference being held from 4-8 June 2017, in Philadelphia. For information about the conference, go to <http://conference.apereo.org/>

- **COM 211 – Fundamentals of Public Relations Theory**

More than five years of experience teaching introduction to public relations in the classroom and online helped me develop my Marist FUNDamentals of PR course. I taught two sections of COM 211 my first semester at Marist, and they were both night classes.

Marist joined a global celebration of Diwali with our **#MyDiwali #MyMarist campaign** that semester, which was a terrific example for my PR Fundamentals students, who helped brainstorm ideas for promoting the exhibit and events during our classes. We attended the Diwali Exhibit Opening Event then I kicked off our night class with a very fruitful class discussion.

COM 211 Students were introduced to ethical standards in the industry and the PRSA Ethics Code. They used: Their customized class Library Course Pathfinder to conduct research for papers on PR campaigns; the internet to complete activities like identifying and researching their top five target organizations for internship and job opportunities; and the PRSA Silver Anvil Award database to research an award-winning PR campaign for their bonus assignment.

- **COM 333 – Applied Research and Analytics**

My experience teaching an upper level communication research methods class and as a Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) member as well as my experience as a research analyst in an Advertising and PR agency helped me develop my Marist Applied Research and Analytics course. I have taught COM 333 every semester since joining Marist, and I have experimented with a myriad of different approaches to the class. It is a particularly challenging class to teach, due to the complexity of the subject matter and ambitiousness of the learning objectives.

The class is divided into two parts: 1) quantitative research; and 2) qualitative research. There are two types of assignments in the class - individual and team assignments. Students work together on semester-long quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) team projects. Teams deliver research results presentations and submit a research report at the end of the semester.

**Team Formation.** Topics of class research projects have ranged from school spirit to food and diversity on campus. Now, students form teams based on their interest area/concentration. The teams in each class focus on different topics - advertising, journalism, fashion, entertainment (sports communication), or social media. Teams include up to five students each, except when classes are smaller, enabling teams of no more than three students each.

**Team Projects.** The quantitative team project includes designing an online survey questionnaire in the Marist COMArts **SurveyMonkey** account, pilot testing the questionnaire, data collection progress reports, and sample size success rate. Students learn American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) best practices for questionnaire design. Even though we are not able to conduct random sampling, I require students to calculate and work toward achieving a target sample size based on current Office of Institutional Research data about the student population size on campus. After the results are in, students analyze the data using **SurveyMonkey** tools for basic descriptive statistics and SPSS for inferential statistics. Then, they create a press release about their survey results along with an infographic as a visual to accompany it.

The qualitative team project involves developing an informed consent form, a moderator's guide, and a demographics questionnaire then conducting the focus group and analyzing the qualitative data. The final team presentation and research report cover results of both the quantitative (survey) and qualitative (focus group) team projects.

**Constructive Feedback.** Last semester, I started incorporating individual team meetings into the Class Schedule after submission of important assignments like the survey questionnaire, pilot test and data collection results to provide in-depth face-to-face feedback. It seemed to help students better understand areas that needed improvement.

**Textbooks.** There are two textbooks for the class – one focused on advertising and PR research and one specifically about focus group theory and practice. I have organized class sessions and notes by subject rather than by chapter number, because of the odd way the advertising and PR textbook is organized. It also shortchanges focus groups, but the second book more than compensates for that. It contains everything students need to know to conduct effective focus groups.

**Testing.** My COM 333 students used to complete a brief 16-question pre- and post-test plus a 30-question quantitative and 15-question qualitative quiz during the semester. In an effort to reduce the course workload, they now only complete a 45-question pre-test for participation points at the beginning of the semester and a post-test composed of the same 45 questions for performance-based points at the end of the semester.

**Individual Assignments.** Individual assignments in the class have included a surveys field study assignment that involved finding one scholarly article about survey response rates and non-response bias and collecting survey solicitations students received for one week. Then, the class participated in a content analysis of the persuasive appeals in the solicitations. We discussed which were most common, which would be most effective from their perspective, and which have been shown to be most effective in the research. Each student wrote a miniature research paper about their surveys field study, which helped them learn the different parts of a research report and how to find and evaluate a scholarly article.

Students have also written literature reviews and submitted peer reviews of teammate literature reviews in iLearn before choosing a specific team research topic within their interest area/concentration. Each student is required to contribute five scholarly articles to the literature review of their team research report.

After covering ethics, students complete the IRB Responsible Conduct of Research **CITI Training**. Students typically complete the basic IRB Social & Behavioral Research **CITI Training** in COM 200-Communication Research Methods. COM 333 is the applied research class that bridges COM 200 and COM 401-Capping for PR students. As a result, many PR students seem to be better prepared for Capping than students who have not taken COM 333.

My favorite individual assignments thus far have been the quantitative and qualitative research designs. Students build their own pages in iLearn to creatively display their research designs, incorporating multimedia. They are required to review and comment on at least two of each type of their classmate's research designs. One semester, I gave my classes the option to build research designs or take traditional multiple-choice quizzes in iLearn or complete both, and I counted the higher score. Last semester, research designs were bonus assignments.

Other bonus assignments in COM 333 have included papers about the effectiveness of opinion polls versus social media and website analytics, journal impact factors and article submission procedures, and senior Capping Poster Session projects.

- **COM 401 – Communication Capping**

I was excited to finally be teaching Capping in Fall '17, because I have helped with the Capping Poster Session at the end of each semester since joining Marist in Fall '15, plus

many of my former COM 333 students sought me out for help with their capping projects. It was rewarding to work with them again as students enrolled in my Capping class and see the long-term impact of COM 333.

My Capping students could work in teams of up to three students or on their own. First, they completed activities in class to narrow down their focus on the kind of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods research they wanted to conduct. Then, they researched potential topics and delivered an informal topic presentation about their choice.

After settling on a topic, they conducted secondary research and wrote research proposals. I met with each team individually to provide detailed face-to-face feedback about their proposals. Once their proposals were approved, teams were off and running with their research plan. We met as a class periodically for Workshops. I incorporated “Work Days” into the Class Schedule when they were expected to be carrying out their research projects. They could schedule as many appointments with me as they liked on “Work Days.” They submitted progress reports in iLearn at the end of each week during the data collection phase of the class.

Data analysis Workshops and team meetings were held. I discussed their research results with each team individually. Teams delivered **research results presentations** in class and then designed their posters. They posted their poster designs in a **Poster Gallery** on iLearn. I provided feedback for revisions. All students could learn from the feedback others received on their poster designs. Final posters were due in class the day before the Capping Poster Session.

Teams developed and practiced two-minute poster presentations during a class Workshop the day before the Poster Session. After participating in the Capping Poster Session, students worked on finishing their final research papers. Workshops and “Work Days” were devoted to completing and polishing their APA Style papers.

- **COM 419 – Cases in Public Relations Management**

Five years of experience teaching PR cases was useful when developing my Marist PR Cases course. The greatest challenge was scaling up for the large size of our PR cases classes and having enough time in the Class Schedule for all the Case Presentations. I used two editions of our textbook to have enough cases for all students to deliver two Case Assignments each. The first edition was required for the students to purchase, and I was able to work with the Library to get a digital subscription to the second edition of the textbook.

Students analyzed and presented cases using the Harvard Case Study Method. They each completed two Case Assignment forms and delivered two case study presentations. They also completed quizzes and a pre- and post-test.

Students assigned to Case Reaction teams entered responses to items on Case Reaction forms in iLearn before each class and were responsible for participating in the class discussion about that case. The teams prevented every student in the class from having to complete case reactions for every case presented on days they were not scheduled to deliver a case study. I built Case Reaction forms that students could complete directly in iLearn. I was able to integrate images of important diagrams and information from class notes to help them apply concepts on the spot when completing their Case Reactions.

Students learned the PRSA Ethics Code in-depth and applied the Core Values and Code Provisions to all 60 cases discussed during the semester, whether in their Case Reactions or while completing their individual Case Assignment presentations. These were incorporated directly into their Case Assignment and Case Reaction forms.

At the end of the semester, students presented original case studies they had researched and written with a classmate. They also had the opportunity to research and write a reaction paper about a PRSA Silver Anvil Award-winning case as a bonus assignment.

## **B. New Courses Developed** (Back to COURSES TAUGHT)

- **COM 318 – Crisis Communication Special Topics Course**

A crisis communication class had never been offered at Marist, thus there was an opportunity for me to bring a special topic I had successfully taught before to the Marist PR program. Crisis communication has always been an important area of specialization in PR. In our current highly interconnected social media and news media environment, it has become a vital skill for all PR professionals.

I taught this class during the Spring '17 semester. In Fall '17, both PR and journalism students were asking me when I would be teaching it again, because they want to take it. Both PR and journalism students benefit tremendously from learning the inside scoop about how organizations prepare for and manage crises.

Students worked in teams based on their interest areas/concentrations. They each individually completed a case study of an organizational crisis then completed peer reviews of teammate case studies in iLearn. After that, they are in a good position to choose an organization and crisis scenario as the focus for their press conference. They researched the organization and wrote a Crisis Management Plan for it.

They learned how to build a crisis management team and conduct crisis situation simulations with team members. They functioned in the various roles of a crisis management team, and worked as a team to learn how to conduct spokesperson training using crisis media training techniques.

They learned to communicate as a spokesperson delivering strategic messages to the media during a crisis, including presenting statements (a test of their public speaking skills) and fielding questions from journalists at crisis press conferences (a test of interpersonal conflict management and media relations skills).

Finally, they planned implementation of successful reputation repair and post-crisis strategies, including measurement and evaluation of program effectiveness. Instead of a traditional paper, students built **Critical Insights Blog posts** for the **MaristCrisisPR.com** website.

- **Power Presenting First Year Seminar Student Workshops**

Public presentation is one of three core skills emphasized by the Common Core Committee. Upon arriving at Marist, I was charged with the task of building 75-minute workshops for all Marist freshmen that would provide them with a solid foundation of knowledge about public presentation skills. I developed the Workshop from scratch

with the goal of bringing substantive focus on both speech organization and delivery to the First Year Seminar courses.

Skill development takes time. My goal was to provide resources and tools to both students and faculty for helping students continually build public speaking skills beyond their Workshop experience. I started with resources developed from teaching semester-long public speaking classes since 1994 then set out to distill a semester's-worth of information into 75 minutes of the most potent elements. drilled the content down to focusing on the most important skills for enabling freshmen to develop and deliver presentations.

My solution for the limited time available to work with the students was to build an iLearn site and stock it with helpful resources. The Power Presenting Workshop iLearn site won a **2016 Marist Teaching with iLearn Innovation Award**.



Dr. Jennifer Robinette - School of Communication and the Arts  
2016 Honorable Mention - **Power Presenting Workshop**

Dr. Jennifer Robinette was awarded a 2016 Honorable Mention for her creative use of iLearn to create a highly engaging, self-paced "Power Presenting Workshop" for faculty, staff and students, to assist in the development of public presentation skills. Dr. Robinette presented her work to faculty and staff through a Faculty Showcase entitled, "Crafting Digital Learning Quests", based on her unique workshop design, her expertise in creating high quality learning experiences, and her utilization of a wide array of iLearn tools and features.