



# OER Adoption for ENGL 203: Fundamentals of Contemporary Speech

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

- ENGL 203: Fundamentals of Contemporary Speech transitioned from a traditional textbook to OER during Fall 2018.
- ENGL 203 is a general education requirement at University of Maryland Easter Shore. This course is taught in the Department of English and Modern Languages.
- The OER adoption facilitated a revision of the course goals and a transition from an exclusive focus on platform speeches to three sets of goals: interpersonal and new media communication, group communication for academic and professional contexts, and public communication for academic and professional contexts.
- The OER adoption also facilitated the structuring of the course curriculum around an overarching theme – building community through communication.

## IMPLEMENTATION

- ENGL 203 adopted two OER: *Stand up, Speak out: The Practice and Ethics of Public Speaking* and *Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies*.
- These texts are available in different electronic formats as part of the Open Textbook Library at the University of Minnesota (<https://www.lib.umn.edu/publishing/works/textbooks>).
- The OER are linked to a shell Blackboard course, and the links are accompanied by instructions for different reading options. (Students can read the texts online, download PDF files, or view the the texts on their preferred e-reader.)
- Specific chapters are also linked to the course assignments.
- At the beginning of each semester, the Center for Instructional Technology and Online Learning copies the shell into the course Blackboard for the current ENGL 203 sections.

## IMPACT

- The traditional textbook used in ENGL 203 in previous semesters cost \$114.05 (new copy) or \$85.55 (used copy). The transition to OER eliminated all textbook costs.
- During the AY 2018-19, this transition impacted all sections of ENGL 203: ten sections during Fall 2019, one section during Winter 2019, nine sections during Spring 2019, and two sections during Summer 2019.
- Five faculty members (four full-time faculty members and one adjunct faculty member) were involved in the OER implementation during the AY 2018-19.
- The OER transition will impact the same estimated number of sections during the AY 2019-20.

## IMPACT (CON'T.)

- The OER facilitated a smooth start of the semester. Students had access to the textbooks on the first day of class and were not delayed by financial concerns, as was often the case in the past.
- The OER also supported the development of flipped classroom strategies such as online reflections or in-class case scenario discussions. The online reflections invited students to contribute to Blackboard discussion forums by exploring connections between theoretical notions and personal communication experiences. The case scenario discussions invited students to coordinate small group discussions and to illustrate specific theoretical notions with concrete communication situations.
- Overall, the OER allows for multiple forms of engagement with the reading material.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- The most successful aspect of the OER adoption was the opportunity to introduce an overarching course theme and to create a sense of continuity among the various assignments. The current theme of building community through communication does not have to remain fixed. The OER are sufficiently rich to support other future themes, as well.
- Limitations of the OER pertain to the absence of certain types of instructor resources. Publishers of traditional textbooks, for example, often provide test banks or Power Point presentations. These instructor resources are not available in the OER currently used in ENGL 203.
- Nevertheless, the absence of these resources creates a greater need for flipping the classroom and for exploring new student-centered approaches to instruction.

## FUTURE PLANS

- Future plans for ensuring the sustainable implementation of the current OER include the collaborative development of instructor resources and ongoing curriculum revisions.
- Starting this fall, a Blackboard organization for ENGL 203 instructors will allow instructors to identify important instructional needs and to share successful course materials and activities.
- Inside this organization, instructors will also be able to view and norm recorded student presentations. (A repository of recorded student speeches was created during Spring 2019. This repository will be expanded during the current and upcoming semesters.)
- The Blackboard organization will function in conjunction with the Blackboard shell course, which is updated by the course coordinator prior to the start of each semester.