

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Faculty

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Mission Statement

Communication is a discipline concerned with the study of messages within the context of human relationships, communities and institutions. Courses in communication examine the nature, use, role and interpretation of messages produced by, and for, individuals, communities and cultures. Students majoring in communication will learn to understand, interpret, produce and critique messages within the contexts of interpersonal, media and public culture.

The Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies

Since antiquity, scholars and practitioners have explored and grappled with the power of human communication—as a tool for persuasion, as a means of establishing and building relationships, and as a fundamental way to create meaning. Faculty in the department of communication focus on how human beings create and employ messages to accomplish these important purposes. Courses in communication focus on how those messages affect people, how they shape the thinking that individuals and communities do, and how they shape and reinforce the cultures and social structures in which we live. Students majoring in communication learn broadly about the nature and function of messages in relational, public, and mediated contexts. They learn how to understand and insightfully critique the function and power of messages. They also learn how to be more skilled and ethical producers of messages—as professionals and as citizens in a democratic society.

In addition to requiring successful completion of the liberal learning curriculum, the major in communication studies requires the following courses:

1. COMM 201, 211, 222, 249, 352, 452W;
2. Select one: COMM 316, 318, 333W, 350W;
3. Select one: COMM 411, 433, 450, 455;
4. Select fifteen additional credits in COMM courses, at least twelve hours must be at the 300-400 level.
5. Majors are required to submit a *Communication Portfolio* by the beginning of the exam period of the semester they intend to graduate.

Students who have declared communication studies as their major and have earned at least 45 credit hours must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA and a major GPA of 2.00. Students may have no more than two grades below C- in the major.

In addition to this coursework, students are encouraged to take a body of courses in a secondary area of interest related to professional goals. Recommended areas are mediation, psychology, management and marketing, government and public affairs.

The Minor in Communication Studies (18 credits)

The minor program in communication studies requires successful completion of the following:

1. COMM 201;
2. Select two: COMM 211, 222, 249;
3. Select nine additional credits in 300-400 level communication courses in consultation with a departmental academic adviser;
4. Students may have no more than two grades below C- in the minor, and must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.00.

THE CURRICULUM IN COMMUNICATION

COMM 195. Special Topics (3-3-0)

Topics vary, determined by the special interests and needs of students and the expertise of faculty.

COMM 201. Public Speaking (3-3-0)

This course introduces the student to effective speech preparation and delivery with emphasis on the extemporaneous mode of natural and direct communication.

COMM 211. Interpersonal Communication (3-3-0)

Restricted to freshman and sophomore standing.

This course introduces the student to a theoretical and practical study of face-to-face, two-way communication. The course stresses methods of creating effective and efficient communication in family systems, friendships, love, and work relationships.

COMM 221. Media History (3-3-0)

Restricted to freshman and sophomore standing.

This course examines the integral characteristics of mass communication technological innovations and their social

significance. The course will focus on the early pioneers, their competitive drive, and pursuit of ingenious developments. Topics include print, telegraphic/telephonic, broadcast, and digital transmissions. The manner in which technology channels have altered the message, and their influence on our culture, will also be incorporated.

COMM 222. Media, Culture and Technology (3-3-0)

Restricted to freshman and sophomore standing.

Media institutions, practices, and products are important venues for the examination of culture, ideology and the production of identity. This course will take everyday media and ask serious questions of its social impact. Specifically, this course examines the role of media in a person's everyday life. Culture studies and media theories will enable students to be better critical consumers of the media.

COMM 232. Communicating through Digital Technology (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: ENGL 123

This course prepares students for writing in digital media environments and interpreting communication in media research for the public. Students will learn to use multimedia to tell stories and convey information, and to have interactive conversations and build relationships with global audiences. Students will learn to translate information from academic and social-scientific communities and publications into easily digestible formats (print, audio and video) for digital publics. We will also study the history, theory and practice of digital media as communication.

COMM 239. Argumentation (3-3-0) LLFR

This course challenges students to think critically and analytically with respect to a particular topic. Students will explore chosen topics and examine them critically. Students will draw upon their education and argue persuasively; will be able to analyze complex public controversies, distinguish sound from the unsound arguments, and evaluate evidence. Satisfies the logical reasoning foundation requirement.

COMM 249. Introduction to Rhetoric (3-3-0) AIWT

Restricted to freshman, sophomore and junior standing.

This course is an introduction to the art and history of rhetoric, or the cultivated ability to produce persuasive discourse appropriate for particular occasions and audiences. The rise of rhetoric is uniquely linked to the rise of democratic practices, notions of citizenship, and civic participation. However, the history of rhetoric is rife with disputes over its purpose, its role, and its scope. This course surveys the origins of rhetoric in Ancient Greece to its current iterations, examining how debates over rhetoric shape persuasion and the construction of meaning.

COMM 295. Special Topics (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201.

Topics vary, determined by the special interests and needs of students and the expertise of faculty.

COMM 301. Nonverbal Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201, 211.

Restricted to sophomore and junior standing.

This course emphasizes the study of body movement, facial expressions, space, vocalization, time, objects, dress, and touch as forms of nonverbal communication, which in conjunction with language convey ideas, intentions, emotional states, and attitudes. Course topics are related to current perspectives in American society.

COMM 305. The First Amendment, Culture and Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 249, sophomore and junior standing.

This course introduces students to the relationship between communication, law, and culture. The course is concerned with how the First Amendment and our culture influence one another, how our culture influences Supreme Court decisions, and how those decisions in turn influence our culture. By the end of the semester students will have a firm sense of the place the First Amendment has in their everyday lives as well as understand how everyday occurrences can bring about major changes in our legal system.

COMM 311. Family Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201, 211 and junior standing.

This course will investigate basic theories and concepts of effective communication as they apply to family communication. Specifically, the course will assess ways in which relationships, family types, family systems, and family roles impact communication patterns within the family.

COMM 312. Media Aesthetics (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 222 or 250.

This course will introduce students to the principles of media aesthetics. Students will explore screen media, such as television, film, blogs, and online news sites, in the interest of developing visual media literacy skills. Media literacy, in the visual, aesthetic realm, is concerned with examining, critiquing and sometimes, producing screen media. Students will learn genre form and function toward developing visual media.

COMM 316. Principles of Interviewing (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201, 211.

This course introduces students to interviewing as one of the principle qualitative methodologies used in the field of communication through theory and application. Students will learn how to design, implement, and conduct interviews, with the focus being on using interviews as a research tool. All students are required to research, prepare,

and deliver well-organized interviewing presentations that successfully apply theories and concepts from the course in various interviewing contexts.

COMM 318. Quantitative Research Methods in Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: MATH 125

Pre or corequisite: COMM 352.

This course introduces students to quantitative research methods in communication research. Students will develop a conceptual and practical understanding of the foundations of scientific inquiry and quantitative reasoning, survey and experimental design, and descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. By the end of this course, students will possess the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively consume, evaluate, and contribute to empirical communication research.

COMM 320. Media and Society (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201 and 222 or 250.

This course emphasizes the study of the characteristics of American mass media and their social significance. Special attention is given to persuasive strategies used to shape the way people think and the decisions people make.

COMM 321. WI: Communication and Film (3-3-2)

Prerequisite: ENGL 223.

One of the most powerful influences on the conduct of our everyday social lives is popular culture, particularly the feature film. It serves as reflectors of our society and social prescriptions for what is “normal” in various contexts. This course will utilize feature film, scholarly readings, discussion, and writing to allow us to better understand how film both reflects and affects how we think about communication in various contexts. Course materials will vary based on the interests and expertise of the instructor, may focus on family dynamics, friendship, science, health, science fiction, and religious rhetoric. *May be repeated once for credit with written permission.* Partially satisfies the writing intensive requirement.

COMM 322. Communication and Social Media (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 222 or 250.

The ubiquitous incorporation of social media and digital technologies (Twitter, Facebook, blogs, mobile apps) into our everyday lives has transformed how we communicate, engage with the world, move through space, present ourselves and relate to one another as social beings. This course looks at the social, cultural and political economic impact of social media in contemporary life: topics for discussion include social media’s relationship to participatory cultures, social behavior, relationships, labor, entertainment, community, identity, privacy, space and place. This course both theorizes social media in a contemporary context and incorporates their use into the classroom.

COMM 325. Persuasion (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201, 249 and junior standing.

This course focuses on persuasion theory, research, and ethics. Attention is given to language use and symbols, nonverbal communication, and cultural and psychological approaches to persuasion. Tools and strategies are explored so that students can become responsible persuaders and effective evaluators of persuasion messages.

COMM 326. Media Audiences(3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 222 or 250.

This course examines the study of popular culture and communication, with a specific focus on the social, cultural and technological dimensions of media and media environments. The course examines media-audience relations with regard to critical issues and controversies in media and popular culture. This course will proceed historically, theoretically, and methodologically, always questioning the construction of audiences and media users, constructions that are shaped by commercial, academic, political and cultural contexts. In addition to course readings, we will also look closely at various television shows, films, popular music, internet content and other forms of popular culture.

COMM 330. Gender Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201 and sophomore standing.

This course focuses on the study of gender in the United States, and includes both theory and practice. Subjects include images and self-perceptions of men and women, self-disclosure, language uses of the sexes, interpersonal attraction, nonverbal codes, and intimate and public contexts.

COMM 333. WI: Rhetorical Criticism (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: ENGL 223, COMM 249.

In a culture that is bombarded daily with a variety of persuasive discourses via speeches, advertisements, films, pictures, or social movements, an informed and critically aware citizenry is important to our deliberative democracy. Rhetorical criticism is the intellectual practice of critically investigating the production and deliverance of such persuasive acts, improving one’s ability to operate as effective consumers of public discourses. In this course, we will become familiar with a range of critical approaches used to examine a variety of rhetorical texts. Each student will complete two papers that are critical examinations of a specific rhetorical act. Partially satisfies the writing intensive requirement.

COMM 335. Rhetoric and Politics (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 249.

This course examines the discourse of politics and considers the theoretical and social implications of the symbols and images used within the American political process. Drawing from rhetorical and media studies, students analyze the contemporary political arena; a dynamic environment

in which communication, particularly mediated communication (e.g., news, journalism, blogs, websites, etc.) substantially influences, and is influenced by both elites and regular citizens.

COMM 340. Intercultural Communication (3-3-0)
AIGM

Prerequisite: COMM 201 and sophomore standing.

This course is an exploration into human communication in cross-cultural settings. Students examine the basic human communication process and determine how it is shaped by cultural values. Additionally, they learn how to confront and manage culture shock effectively in cross-cultural encounters.

COMM 341. Rhetoric and Social Movements (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 249.

This course explores social movements that have transformed or are in the process of transforming American society. The primary focus of the class will be the rhetoric of change. We will primarily consider peaceful change, that is, the capacity of ordinary people to persuade others through speech; to voice their grievances and to articulate their challenge to a broader society.

COMM 350. WI: Media Criticism (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: ENGL 223 and COMM 201 and 222 or 250 and junior standing.

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to methods of media criticism that will increase media literacy by allowing students to analyze and critically process mediated experiences in everyday life. Students will engage contemporary examples of film, television, and other media through a critical lens. The course emphasizes the influence of social, economic, political, and technological forces on content, strategies/marketing, and critical analysis employed by scholars and media practitioners. Partially satisfies the writing intensive requirement.

COMM 352. Philosophy and Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: ENGL 223, COMM 201, 211, 222 and 249.

This course explains the theoretical and practical questions involved in defining communication. Topics addressed include: some of the major and recurring theoretical and practical questions with which the field has grappled since the beginning of the twentieth century, the major features of the history of communication study since the beginning of the twentieth century, and a conceptual model of the field of communication. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to articulate how different philosophical perspectives and traditions of communication study are reflected in the three emphasis areas in the communication major: rhetoric, interpersonal communication, and media or cultural studies.

COMM 360. Health Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: ENGL 223 and junior standing.

The field of health communication is an area of interest to interpersonal, persuasion, small group, organizational, media, political, marketing and advertising, and public policy scholars. Health communication research seeks to understand ways that communication affects (and is affected by) health, how communication can be used to make us healthy, how communication can affect health decision making and how communication in health settings can affect the goals of health care professions. This class will cover a history of health and an overview of the field of health communication, and pay particular attention to the importance of health communication research in today's society.

COMM 365. The Science and Biology of Human Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: ENGL 223.

The biopsychosocial approach to investigating health communication requires rigorous scientific examination of the biological, psychological and social antecedents and consequents of human communication. In order to understand how social behavior correlates with health, we must understand how biology functions to help us produce, contextualize and interpret communication, and how communication can in turn, affect physiology. This course explores the basic anatomy and physiology of the human body including: the brain, nervous system, immune system, endocrine system, cardiovascular system and facial musculature. The remainder of the semester applies this information in context by looking at topics such as: human attraction and sexual behavior, etc.

COMM 395. Special Topics (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201.

Topics vary, determined by the special interests and needs of students and the expertise of faculty.

COMM 410. Communicating Identity (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201 and 222 or 250 and junior standing.

This course examines the construction and production of identity in a postmodern society. Students will interrogate issues of age, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation as categories of interpersonal identity politics, and further will discuss the implications of the electronic age on the creation of discursive categories for identity. As a seminar, all students are required to conduct research related to the overall theme of the course.

COMM 411. Relational Theory (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 325 or 352 and junior standing.

Relational interactions, such as communication with friends, family members, significant others, and mentors, help define our identities and construct our worldviews. This course focuses on theories used to ground the study

of relational communication. While the course draws on a variety of theories—embracing an interdisciplinary approach to relational communication—the course is taught from a communication perspective. This course explores the components, characteristics, attributes, processes, functions and outcomes associated with relational communication theories. By the conclusion of the course students should gain considerable theoretical and applied insight into personal and professional relationships.

COMM 414. Advanced Relational Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 211, ENGL 223.

The field of personal relationships is broad, with scholars from areas such as communication, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and even biology all contributing to knowledge about relational communication. Therefore, this course will take an interdisciplinary approach to studying close relationships, such as those between friends, romantic partners, and family members. We will start by talking about what relationships are and then trace how they function across various relational stages. We will examine relevant research related to relational initiation, escalation, and, maintenance, and then conclude the course by looking at relational challenges such as conflict, privacy management, infidelity, and termination.

COMM 415. Rhetoric and Religion (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 249.

This course explores how religious faith is generally expressed in and is shaped by words, language, and symbols. Particular attention will be paid to the relationships between religious discourse and conceptions of religious truth and religious knowledge, mass media forms, and contemporary American public and political life.

COMM 425. Public Dialogue in America (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 249

Throughout our history, our nation has confronted numerous public controversies sparked by competing values, perspectives and priorities. While some controversies achieve resolution and other just fade away, all public controversies exhibit numerous rhetorical dimensions. Developing an appreciation for the rhetorical texture of any controversy equips us to better address future controversies and further develop healthy deliberative habits. In this course, we will investigate a series of 20th and 21st century American public controversies from a communication perspective. Through these explorations, students will develop an appreciation for the political, economic and cultural contexts that influence and constrain the rhetorical features of each controversy.

COMM 430. WI: Sex, Sexuality and Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: ENGL 223, COMM 201 and junior standing.

This course is an intensive seminar for the interdisciplinary study of sex, sexuality, and gender. By exploring sex, sexuality, and gender from several different vantage points students will gain a broader view of the relationship between sex, sexuality, and gender as it is produced, in and around, individuals in the social world. Students will examine the contradictions between understanding sexuality as a discrete category of analysis and sexuality as a category predicated on other forms of power relations, and the importance of culture and society in creating the very personal sense of gender and sexuality on individuals. Partially satisfies the writing intensive requirement.

COMM 433. Rhetorical Theory (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 325 or 352 and junior standing.

Plato's dismissal of rhetoric as an unwelcome distraction to philosophy relegated persuasion to a position of secondary importance as an intellectual pursuit. Many intellectual heavyweights throughout history developed a variety of theoretical approaches to reconcile the tensions between philosophy and rhetoric. This course surveys some of the most significant and influential theoretical approaches to rhetoric, from ancient Greece to the modern-day. We will focus on reading primary texts from such influential thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Bacon, Nietzsche, and Foucault and others to develop a general overview on the evolution of rhetorical theory.

COMM 450. Communication Theory (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 325 or 352 and senior standing.

Survey of theories related to the study of human communication including processes of inquiry, development of theories, and evaluation.

COMM 452. WI: Senior Research in Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisites: ENGL 223; senior standing; and one of the following: COMM 411, 433, 450 or 455.

Spring.

In this course students will be asked to construct a proposal and do preliminary research on an approved project. They will be required to write a problem statement justifying the need for their research, conduct a literature review of existing research on their topic, design a methodological procedure appropriate for examination of their research, conduct a preliminary study utilizing their proposed methodology, and write a discussion/conclusion section in which they outline preliminary findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research. Partially satisfies the writing intensive requirement.

COMM 455. Critical Cultural Theory (3-3-0)

Prerequisites: COMM 325 or 352 and junior standing.

This course introduces the interdisciplinary field, cultural studies. Cultural studies is a theory-based examination of how culture and ideology influence our thinking about the world. In this class we will cover some of the classic readings in the field, and apply cultural studies to an examination of human bodies. We will look at how our culture produces an understanding of the body through the media and through activities such as body building. Our culture influences how we understand our bodies. This affects how we experience our bodies, and the bodies of others, as appropriate, inappropriate, beautiful, or monstrous.

COMM 490. Study Abroad in Communication (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: Sophomore, junior or senior standing and one of the following: COMM 211, 222 or 249.

This communication elective provides the opportunity for majors to take a course at an accredited institution abroad and use it as a program elective. The courses require prior approval by the department to ensure the international course meets our program standards.

COMM 491. Practicum in Communication (credits vary 1-3)

Prerequisite: COMM 201 and junior standing and consent of Internship Program Director.

Internships are a vehicle to maximize your communication background and your understanding of concepts, theories, models, and frameworks of the discipline in a non-academic setting. The practicum in communication consists of 120 hours of work as well as written essays and employer evaluation. The internship may be paid or unpaid, however only one internship may be applied to the major. Students must have their internship approved by the internship director prior to being enrolled in the class.

COMM 495. Special Topics (3-3-0)

Prerequisite: COMM 201 and senior standing.

Topics vary, determined by the special interests and needs of students and the expertise of faculty.

COMM 499. Independent Study (credits vary 1-3)

Prerequisites: COMM 201 and senior standing and consent of instructor and Department Chair.

Independent research done in consultation with a member of the faculty.