

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Faculty: Conners, Chair; Allen, Beerman, Haynal, Merrill, Mutua-Mambo, and Roberts.

The communication studies discipline is in rhetoric, a time-honored art central since Classical times to a liberal arts education. Historically built on performed oral rhetoric and the rhetorical criticism of public address, the discipline has turned in more of a social science direction in the latter 20th century and developed a considerable body of theory and research in interpersonal, small-group, intercultural, organizational, and political communication. In addition, the discipline has applied both rhetorical and social science perspectives to the growing number of converging media. Thus, communication studies is a field that today is truly interdisciplinary, sitting at the juncture of the humanities, fine arts, and social sciences.

In addition, communication studies serves as a foundation to the pursuit of many careers ranging from work in media and public relations to that within political, healthcare, or business contexts. Through an internship, cognate coursework, and co-curricular activities, a major may further explore these career opportunities. The major has the following goals:

1. To introduce students to the theoretical underpinnings and extant research in the three major areas of the communication studies discipline (rhetoric, mass communication, human communication).
2. To give students the opportunity—should they desire—to concentrate in one of these three areas.
3. To equip students with the appropriate social science and/or rhetorical research methods and to provide them with opportunities to use them in independent research in the contexts of courses and especially the major's capstone course.
4. To equip students with the basic public, interpersonal, and group oral communication skills and to give them the opportunity to supplement these with either more specialized oral communication skills or written and/or visual communication skills.
5. To equip students with the fundamental background necessary for a wide range of communication careers and provide them with curricular and co-curricular opportunities to build on this background.

These goals are reflected in the following requirements.

- Communication Studies Major (<https://rmc.courseleaf.com/programs/communication-studies/communication-studies-major/>)
- Communication Studies Minor (<https://rmc.courseleaf.com/programs/communication-studies/communication-studies-minor/>)

COMM 201 - Introduction to Communication Studies (3 Hours)

A survey of the topics, themes, theories, and research methods on the core areas of communication studies: mass communication, rhetoric, and human communication. For each area, selected topics are explored as examples of the academic discipline's work. A sense of the discipline's scope and research are woven into this exploration. Offered every semester. C21:CL,SS.

Curriculum: CL,SS

COMM 210 - Public Speaking (3 Hours)

This course provides guidance and practice in the fundamentals of public communication in a variety of contexts. The prime objective is to help the student become a more effective and confident oral communicator. The course requires students to develop clearly expressed, logically organized ideas and to deliver them in an effective manner. While speech theory is included in the course, emphasis is placed on the practical application of essential theory. Offered every semester. C21:OC.

COMM 215 - Interpersonal and Small Group Communication (3 Hours)

This course analyzes various types and styles of communication in interpersonal and small group contexts, focusing on theories of communication as well as practical application. Areas of emphasis will include: the importance of both verbal and nonverbal communication in forming relationships and dealing with others; roles and styles of leadership in small groups; and the dynamics of group interaction. Offered every semester. C21:OC.

COMM 222 - Speechwriting (3 Hours)

Instruction and practice in personal, business, and especially political contexts with special attention to audience, organization, genre, and style. Frequent exercises. Practice writing individually and in teams for the imagined delivery by others.

COMM 225 - Media Writing (3 Hours)

This writing class studies different methods used in writing for mass media including news (print, broadcast, and online), public relations, and advertising. Students will develop practical skill in media writing and an understanding of writing for varying media audiences and for different purposes. Offered alternate years.

COMM 300 - Topics in Communication Studies Research (3 Hours)

Students may select a field research project or a library research topic in a specialized area of communication studies research. Projects are student-designed in consultation with a faculty member. A proposal (including a literature review and plan of research) must be submitted by the end of the second week of the term in which the research is to be conducted. A final research paper will be presented in seminar. Students are encouraged to submit their papers to the Eastern Communication Association or Southern States Communication Association, both of which have long-standing interests in presentations of undergraduate research. Intended for communication studies majors or minors who have already completed considerable coursework. C21:EL.

Prerequisite(s): junior or senior status and approval of the department chair

Curriculum: EL

COMM 301 - Human Comm Theory & Method (3 Hours)

This course introduces students to human communication theories and qualitative communication research. Theories address communication in interpersonal, group, organizational, and intercultural contexts. Students will learn what is involved in conducting, interpreting, and reporting qualitative communication research. The course explores the relationship among communication theory, research methodology, and practical applications. C21:CC,EL.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 185 and one of COMM 201, COMM 210, or COMM 215 or permission of instructor

Curriculum: CC,EL

COMM 303 - Communication Law and Ethics (3 Hours)

Explores issues of communication and mass media from legal as well as ethical perspectives. This class will introduce you to the First Amendment and issues concerning the freedom of expression, including libel, privacy, and regulation of broadcasting and advertising. The class will also examine what different philosophical perspectives would say about ethics in communication and apply them to specific cases. Offered alternate years. C21:OC.

Cross-list: JOUR 303

COMM 305 - Health Communication (3 Hours)

This course examines the theories and scholarship of health communication. An examination of the health-care process, regarding physical, mental, and social health issues, will be explored as it relates to several contexts including interpersonal, family, cultural, mass-mediated, public and organizational perspectives. Using scholarly journals and texts, popular culture, lectures, in-class exercises and discussions, this class will introduce research that explores communication theories regarding health, the dissemination of health information, and practical application. Offered alternate years.

COMM 306 - Presidential Rhetoric (3 Hours)

A survey of presidential communication from Theodore Roosevelt to the present. The emphasis will be on how speeches use rhetorical means to achieve political or policy goals. Attention will be paid to the rhetorical profile of each presidency and to how presidential communication and the presidency have changed since Theodore Roosevelt's days.

COMM 308 - American Campaigns and Elections (3 Hours)

A study of contemporary American political campaigns and elections. The election cycle will be examined from three different perspectives: the political campaign/politician, the mass media, and the voter. State level and federal elections will be analyzed during election years. Offered alternate years.

Cross-list: PSCI 308

COMM 309 - American Public Address (3 Hours)

A rhetorical examination of public address used in an array of major social issues, including historical and contemporary time periods in the United States. Offered alternate years.

COMM 310 - Debate and Forensics (1 Hour)

Participation in the practice, competitive activities, and on-campus events of the college's debate and forensics program. Only six hours of COMM 310 may be counted toward graduation. Does NOT count toward communication studies major or minor. (Must be completed three times to meet the Speaking Attentive designation.) C21:OC.

COMM 311 - Rhetorical Theory & Methods (3 Hours)

This course introduces students to rhetorical theories and rhetorical criticism research. Students will learn the process of rhetorical criticism, including text selection, analysis of text and context, and significance of analysis. The course explores the relationship among communication theory, research methodology, and practical applications. C21:CC,EL.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 185 and one of COMM 201, COMM 210, or COMM 215 or permission of instructor

Curriculum: CC,EL

COMM 312 - Organizational Communication (3 Hours)

This course investigates the communication processes within an organization. Topics include organizational communication theory and research and methods for analysis of communication systems within and between organizations. Multiple models of communication are considered, as well as the varying impacts of communication channel choice and how messages are perceived. Offered alternate years. C21:OC.

Prerequisite(s): BUSN 313 or BUSN 343 or COMM 215

Cross-list: BUSN 312

COMM 313 - Rhetoric of Place and Space (3 Hours)

An examination of the interdisciplinary research on public memory sites such as memorials and museums as well as other public places such as parks, theme parks, shopping malls, stadia, and transportation depots. Special attention to Washington, DC and Richmond sites. Original student group and individual research projects. Offered alternate years.

COMM 314 - Visual Rhetorics (3 Hours)

This course examines visual communication and visual rhetorics, outlining how visual images argue and their functions within public life, by focusing on photography, bodies, memorials, and image events. This course deals with challenging subjects, as well as graphic and potentially disturbing images, such as race, sexuality, gender, violence, dead bodies, and people in moments before their death. And, although there are no prerequisites for this course, students are encouraged to have taken at least one of the following courses before enrollment: COMM 201, COMM 210, COMM 320, ARTH 201, or ARTH 202. Offered alternate years.

COMM 315 - Rhetoric of the Body (3 Hours)

We each have one body, but that same body is treated differently by different people in different situations. How you see your body in the mirror may not be the same way your doctor sees it during a checkup. How you see yourself may not be how society sees you. The discourse surrounding bodies changes our perception of ourselves and the people around us. This course explores how bodies come to matter through rhetoric, by focusing on gender, sex, race, and size. Offered alternate years. C21:OC.

COMM 320 - Argumentation (3 Hours)

An overview of classical and contemporary rhetorical theories on persuasion and argumentation, with applications in advocacy and public policy settings. C21:OC.

COMM 321 - Mass Communication Theory & Methods (3 Hours)

This course introduces students to mass communication theories and quantitative communication research. Theories address media processes, audiences, and effects. Students will learn what is involved in conducting, interpreting, and reporting quantitative communication research. The course explores the relationship among communication theory, research methodology, and practical applications. C21:CC,EL.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 185 and one of COMM 201, COMM 210, or COMM 215 or permission of instructor

Curriculum: CC,EL

COMM 330 - Communicating in our Relationships (3 Hours)

This course examines, analyzes, and applies theories and concepts of interpersonal communication within and about relationships that impact our personal and professional lives. It is organized around three general topic areas: (1) developing relationships, (2) maintaining satisfying relationships, and (3) coping with relational challenges over time. Students will develop their ability to identify and critically analyze the influences on and outcomes of communicative behaviors on personal relationships, groups, and society through self-analysis, case studies, practical application, and critiques of cultural practices. Offered alternate years.

Prerequisite(s): Not open to Freshmen

COMM 331 - Conflict Communication (3 Hours)

This course examines communication theory and scholarship related to conflict, conflict management, and conflict resolution from both a theoretical and skills-based perspective. This course will examine how communication plays a vital role in the development and management of conflict situations in a variety of contexts including interpersonal, intercultural and organizational perspectives. Offered alternate years.

COMM 332 - Intercultural Communication (3 Hours)

This course examines cultures, global cultures and cultures within the United States, requiring students to identify and critically analyze the influences cultures have on communication especially as encountered in personal relationships, education, organizations, politics, health care, and media consumption. Using scholarly journals and texts, popular culture, lectures, in-class exercises and discussions, this class will examine the multiple dimensions of culture. Offered alternate years.

COMM 334 - Leadership Communication (3 Hours)

An examination of the paradigms and strategies of leadership, the course will, first, offer lessons in which concepts, models, and tools are introduced and, second, form students into consulting teams working to solve real problems. Offered yearly. C21:OC.

COMM 361 - Gender Issues in Communication (3 Hours)

After surveying the conceptual foundations of gender, the course surveys research on gender differences in verbal and nonverbal communication. Then, the course considers these differences within contexts such as the family, friendship, intimate relationship, school, politics, and various workplaces. Finally, the course considers how mass media communication (television, movies, music, advertising) affects societal and personal definitions of gender. Throughout the course, the relationships among gender, power, and communication are stressed. Offered alternate years.

Cross-list: GSWS 361

COMM 362 - Media Diversity (3 Hours)

Students will examine issues of diversity and the mass media from a variety of perspectives, including audience, actors/producers, and reporters. We will discuss diversity with respect to the mass media of news, entertainment, and advertising. Diversity will be considered in the context of a variety of categories: race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic class, disability, gender, age, and religious beliefs. The construction of such media representations, as well as their implications, will be explored. Offered alternate years. C21:DI,OC.

Curriculum: DI

COMM 363 - Public Relations (3 Hours)

Students will develop an understanding of the principles, practices, and theories of public relations, as well as the history of public relations and ethical issues related to its work. Students will develop skills essential for written, spoken, and technology-based public relations tactics, and will develop projects addressing strategies appropriate for different publics (nonprofit, government, corporations, international). Offered alternate years.

COMM 364 - Broadcasting (3 Hours)

A comprehensive introduction to the multi-faceted field of broadcasting designed to provide students with a critical understanding of the evolutionary underpinnings of today's broadcast media as well as the ability to foresee and an appreciation of the potential for future development in the 21st century. The historical development of broadcast media and the associated theories that have molded their current form will be explored and provide the basis for understanding the influence broadcast media wield today and the shapes media will assume in the future. Offered alternate years. C21:OC.

COMM 365 - New Media (3 Hours)

Virtually every aspect of our lives—education, healthcare, sports, business, politics, personal relationships, and social movements—has been changed by the influence of digital media. This course offers an historical introduction to the "cyber" world and the technologies and social influences that made it possible. Designed to provide students with both a critical perspective and new media skills. Offered alternate years.

COMM 381 - Special Topics (3 Hours)

A consideration of various topics in communication studies.

COMM 382 - Special Topics (3 Hours)

A consideration of various topics in communication studies.

COMM 450 - Internship in Communication Studies (3 Hours)

Intensive experience as a communication professional in an appropriate business setting. Possible placements will include public relations, government offices, sales, customer relations, fund-raising, personnel, and broadcasting. Application required; see Internship Program. C21:EL.

Prerequisite(s): junior or senior status, GPA of 2.25, and approval of the chair

Curriculum: EL

COMM 451 - Internship in Comm Studies (3 Hours)

Intensive experience as a communication professional in an appropriate business setting. Possible placements will include public relations, government offices, sales, customer relations, fund-raising, personnel, and broadcasting. Application required; see Internship Program.

Prerequisite(s): junior or senior status, GPA of 2.25, and approval of the chair

COMM 455 - Directed Field Study (3 Hours)

A Field Study is an experiential learning course combining elements of workplace experience, observation, and research. Students are expected to work closely with a faculty field study supervisor to develop learning objectives and a plan of study appropriate to the discipline. Assignments may include a reflective journal, activity reports, and one or more directed research papers appropriate to the discipline. Workplace experience requirements should be similar to those of internships. Students should not receive compensation from workplace experience if they are receiving three-hour course credit.

COMM 457 - Internship in Communications (paid) (3 Hours)

COMM 490 - Seminar in Communication Studies (3 Hours)

A capstone seminar focused on a problem or theme transcending the rhetorical, mass communication, and interpersonal areas of the discipline to which the insights of those areas can be profitably applied. Students study the problem/theme and extant communication studies work. Then, they design, execute, and present orally and in writing their own research projects.

Prerequisite(s): COMM 301 and COMM 302 (or PSCI 301, PSYC 201, or SOCI 300) for students matriculating before June 2020; COMM 301, COMM 311 and COMM 321 C21:CS,EL

Curriculum: CS,EL

COMM 495 - Communication Discipline (3 Hours)

A culminating experience in communication studies, this course reviews the history, research concerns, theories, and methods of the discipline. It also reviews extant research findings in areas of the discipline such as interpersonal, intercultural, political, health, and mass communication. C21:CS.

Prerequisite(s): COMM 301 and COMM 302 (or PSCI 301, PSYC 201, or SOCI 300) for students matriculating before June 2020; COMM 301, COMM 311 and COMM 321

Curriculum: CS