Communication Studies

Degrees Offered

• Master of Arts
• Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

The Department of Communication Studies offers the M.A. and the Ph.D. degrees in Communication Studies. Communication scholars seek to discover the mechanisms and rules that govern the wide range of communication activities using a battery of social scientific techniques. We try to develop theories that will account for why we act the way we do. The graduate faculty in the Department of Communication Studies is well-known at the regional, national, and international level for accomplishments in research, teaching, and service.

The Department of Communication Studies offers work leading to the degree of master of arts. Persons who possess a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university may be admitted to the program. Qualified graduate students from a variety of disciplines are admitted to the program. The master of arts degree program is intended to qualify the student to do the following:

• Assume a variety of professional roles in educational, organizational, health, governmental, or media institutions
• Teach the subject matter in high school and/or college
• Undertake advanced training toward a doctorate in the behavioral/social sciences

The M.A. in Communication Studies offers areas of emphasis:

COMMUNICATION THEORY & RESEARCH AREA OF EMPHASIS
All students planning to continue graduate study past the M.A. level are encouraged to enter this program.

CORPORATE & ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AREA OF EMPHASIS
All students planning a professional career in a field other than education are encouraged to enter this program. This is normally a terminal degree program in communication studies. Students may complete this program through off-campus study, on-campus study, or a combination.

FACULTY

CHAIR
• Scott A. Myers - Ph.D. (Kent State University)
  Instructional, Family, Organizational

PROFESSORS
• Alan K. Goodboy - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
  Instructional, Interpersonal, Quantitative Methods
• Matthew M. Martin - Ph.D. (Kent State University)
  Interpersonal, Instructional, Communication Traits
• Scott A. Myers - Ph.D. (Kent State University)
  Instructional, Family, Organizational

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS
• Elizabeth Cohen - Ph.D. (Georgia State University)
  Media Psychology, Entertainment Education, New Media, Health and Risk Communication
• Megan R. Dillow - Ph.D. (Pennsylvania State University)
  Interpersonal, Communication Theory, Relational Communication
• Brian R. Patterson - Ph.D. (University of Oklahoma)
  Developmental Communication, Communication Theory
• Christine E. Rittenour - Ph.D. (University of Nebraska)
  Family, Life-span, Interpersonal

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS
• Katie Kang - Ph.D. (Rutgers University)
  Organizational, Group
• Carrie D. Kennedy-Lightsey - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)  
  Communication Theory, Interpersonal  
• Daniel Totzkay - Ph.D. (Michigan State University)  
  Health Communications; Mass Communication

PROFESSOR EMERITA
• Melanie Booth-Butterfield - Ph.D. (University of Missouri)  
• Joan Gorham - Ph.D. (Northern Illinois University)  
• Virginia P. Richmond - Ph.D. (University of Nebraska)

Admissions

MASTER OF ARTS

M.A. in Communication Studies, Emphasis in Theory & Research Offered On-Campus

In addition to the university requirements for admission, applicants to the master’s program with an emphasis in Theory & Research should supply a statement of interest, current curriculum vitae, and three letters of reference. The statement of interest (statement of purpose) should be 2-3 pages and must identify the applicant’s reasons for pursuing the M.A. in Communication Studies, the reasons for obtaining this degree at West Virginia University and indicate why attaining the M.A. in Communication Studies at WVU is vital to the accomplishment of the applicant's career goals. The curriculum vitae should include all formal education, any professional internship or work experiences, undergraduate activities, and any research projects completed to date. Letters of recommendation should be from individuals who can directly comment on your undergraduate academic record and your potential for pursuing an M.A. degree in Communication Studies (e.g., undergraduate professors, undergraduate academic advisor). There is no separate application process for graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in the M.A. in Communication Studies with an emphasis in Theory & Research program. All applicants who are accepted into the program are provided with an assistantship for their academic year of study.

M.A. in Communication Studies, Emphasis in Corporate & Organizational Communication Offered Online

Information about admission to the online program and admission requirements can be found here.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The Ph.D. program in Communication Studies is intended to qualify students to teach and conduct research in instructional communication, interpersonal communication, mediated communication, health communication, and organizational communication, among other courses, at the university level. More information about the program and the application process is available here. An M.A. in Communication Studies or a closely allied field is required for admission to the Ph.D. program in Communication Studies. Applicants are expected to have attained a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 and a minimum graduate GPA of 3.3. Applicants to the doctoral program should submit a curriculum vitae, personal statement, writing sample, and three letters of recommendation.

The curriculum vitae should include all formal education, any teaching or professional work experience, and any research projects conducted to date. The statement of interest (statement of purpose) must be a 3-4 page document in which applicants identify the applicants reasons for pursuing a Ph.D. in communication studies, the reasons for wanting to attain their Ph.D. degree in communication studies at West Virginia University, their research interests and how these interests correspond with the research conducted by the department faculty, the faculty members whose research interests are most closely aligned with their own educational and career goals, and why attaining the Ph.D. degree in communication studies specifically from West Virginia University is vital to the achievement of their career goals. The letters of recommendation should be from individuals familiar with the applicant's academic progress and potential. These letters of recommendation should address whether the applicant has the ability to succeed in the Ph.D. program as both a Ph.D. student and as a graduate teaching assistant. The writing sample must be a sole-authored sample of scholarly writing completed in the applicant’s M.A. program. This sample can be a course paper, a convention paper, a thesis or major project, or a journal article. Applicants may also include any additional supporting evidence they wish the committee to consider. This evidence can include, but is not limited to, awards received for outstanding research, teaching, or academic endeavors; a convention paper or journal article of which the applicant is a co-author; a newspaper or magazine article; or teaching evaluations.

There is no separate application process for graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs) in the PhD program in Communication Studies. All applicants who are accepted into the program are provided with an assistantship for the first year of study, with the potential for two additional years of assistantship based on a yearly performance review.

List of Admission Requirements for the M.A.:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here.  
• Transcripts from all institutions attended  
• Three letters of recommendation from professional or academic references
• Curriculum Vitae
• Statement of purpose

List of Admission Requirements for the Ph.D.:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/)
• Transcripts from all institutions attended
• Three letters of recommendation from professional or academic references
• Curriculum Vitae
• Statement of purpose
• Writing Sample
• Additional supporting evidence

International Applicants:
• See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/)
• International applications should view additional requirements here (http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#internationaltext) and here (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/apply-for-2020-2021/international-graduate-applicant/)
• Language proficiency is required in order to hold a graduate teaching assistantship. See here (https://elli.wvu.edu/testing-resources/english-proficiency-gtas/).

Application Deadlines:
• The Communication Studies M.A. program in Theory and Research admits students for the fall semester only. The deadline for application for fall is March 15th.
• The Communication Studies Ph.D. program admits students for the fall semester only. The deadline for application is January 15th.
• Exceptional Ph.D. applicants may be nominated by the Communication Studies program for competitive University Fellowships. Qualified applicants will be notified if they are nominated. More information on WVU fellowships can be found here (https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/fellowships/).

Applications completed by the deadline will receive full consideration. Certain application requirements may be waived based on a preliminary review of an application by the program.

Major Code: 1473

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:
• Communication Studies, M.A.

For specific information on the following program, please see the link to the right:
• Communication Studies, Ph.D.

Degree Progress
All Students will have a plan of study and will receive, at minimum, a yearly letter of evaluation.

MASTER OF ARTS
Students in the online program complete two courses a semester (Spring, Summer, and Fall) for a total of 36 credit hours. Typically, students complete the program in two years.

Students completing the Master of Arts on campus typically complete their requirements in one academic year. Full-time students enroll in 15 hours of coursework during the Fall and Spring semesters and complete the remaining 6 hours of coursework during the summer term.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
Upon admission to the program, students are advised by the Ph.D. Coordinator. Working with the Coordinator, students devise their course schedules for their first year.

By the start of the Fall semester of their second year, students should select their dissertation advisor, who must hold Regular Graduate Faculty status.

In addition to making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the degree, students will submit a teaching and research portfolio (i.e., one document) at the end of Year 1 Spring semester and at the end of Year 2 Spring semester. The portfolios will be evaluated by the Ph.D. Graduate Studies Committee.
Upon completion of coursework (typically at the conclusion of Year 2 Spring or Summer term), students take a comprehensive examination. Before the comprehensive examination can be taken, students must have completed 39 hours of coursework with a grade of B- or higher, have a minimum grade point average of 3.25, and have completed any courses for which they received a grade of “Incomplete.” Once the comprehensive examination has been successfully passed, the student writes a dissertation prospectus and submits a typed copy of the prospectus to each member of the student’s dissertation committee.

Additional details can be found in the program’s graduate student handbook (https://communicationstudies.wvu.edu/files/d/a5d0fb25-0144-4b34-8a78-c454f0e0c761/2018-2019-graduate-handbook.pdf).

COURSES

COMM 509. Health Comm Dissemination. 1-3 Hours.
PR: COMM 409. Focus on effective dissemination of health messages. Students communicate outcomes of health communication campaigns conducted in previous classes to diverse external publics; could include presentations to conferences, community groups, schools, workshops.

COMM 511. Research Methods for Non-Profit Organizations. 3 Hours.
Advanced research skills applicable to non-profit organizations including precise, effective use of discipline-specific databases and grant-seeking research.

COMM 591. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

COMM 593. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

COMM 600. Communication in the Classroom. 3 Hours.
PR: Teaching experience or consent. Role of interpersonal communication in classroom environment with particular emphasis on communication between students and teachers. Recommended for elementary, secondary, and college teachers in all fields.

COMM 601. Instructional Communication. 3 Hours.
Survey of the theory and research in instructional communication. Emphasis is placed on the study of instructional communication behaviors and the role instructor-student communication plays in the instructional setting.

COMM 602. Interpersonal Communication: Theory and Research. 3 Hours.
Survey of the theory and research in interpersonal communication. Emphasis upon relational communication and intimate communication in interpersonal relationships.

COMM 603. Communication Training and Development. 3 Hours.
This applied graduate course provides the student, who has a background in human communication theory and research, an introduction to communication training and development issues, procedures, assessment, and presentational skills.

COMM 604. Theory and Research in Persuasion. 3 Hours.
Various theories and principles of persuasion with emphasis on contemporary research literature.

COMM 605. Theory and Research in Mass Communication. 3 Hours.
Mass communication from a consumer’s viewpoint. Use of consumer-oriented mass media research also stressed.

COMM 606. Theory and Research in Organizational Communication. 3 Hours.
Contemporary research linking communication variables and networks to organizational change, effectiveness, leadership, power, and management practices. Analysis of communication problems within a variety of organizations.

COMM 608. Nonverbal Communication. 3 Hours.
Examines the impact of nonverbal communication on the communication process. Attention is given to research on non-language aspects of communication and their application to various contexts.

COMM 609. Communication Apprehension and Avoidance. 3 Hours.
Theory and research related to individuals’ predispositional and situational tendencies to approach or avoid communication. Emphasis on work in the areas of willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, reticence, and shyness.

COMM 610. Family Communication. 3 Hours.
This course addresses the communication that exists within and about families. We address various family structures, and employ various theoretical frameworks to explain, predict, and control family communication and its correlates with socio-cultural, relational and individual wellbeing.

COMM 611. Intergroup Communication. 3 Hours.
This course focuses on intergroup communication and the reciprocal nature between identity and pro/anti-social interaction. Moving beyond the popular individualized communication perspective, intergroup theories and research allow us to explore the prominence of social group memberships (e.g., age, race, religion, gender, value orientations) in our everyday communication and cognitions.

COMM 612. Small Group Theory and Practice. 3 Hours.
Specific research areas in interpersonal communication with emphasis on small groups.
COMM 615. Media in Communication and Education. 3 Hours.
Use of the media in educational and other communication environments with emphasis on communication processes and principles relevant to television and film.

COMM 616. Communication in the Educational Organization. 3 Hours.
Problems of communication within educational organizations with emphasis on elements that impact educational change, conflict management, and interpersonal influence. Recommended for elementary, secondary, and college teachers in all fields.

COMM 617. Communication Problems of Children. 3 Hours.
(Primarily for elementary and secondary school teachers and language arts supervisors.) Normal maturational development of listening and speaking skills, their relationships to language acquisition, and influence upon achievement.

COMM 619. Communication and Affect in Instruction. 3 Hours.
PR: Graduate status. This advanced graduate course examines the influence of teachers’ communicative behaviors on student learning, student communication, and the classroom climate.

COMM 622. Gender and Communication. 3 Hours.
This graduate course will review contemporary and historical communication issues about sex, gender, and communication. Nonverbal communication, friendship, romantic family, educational, organizational, and media impacts will be reviewed.

COMM 623. Leadership. 3 Hours.
Leadership styles, models and theories in classical and contemporary settings are covered. Emphasis is given to leadership in groups and organizations.

COMM 624. Communication Ethics. 3 Hours.
This course focuses on communication ethics with a particular emphasis on communication ethics in the organizational context. Communication issues and situations are explored from various ethical perspectives.

COMM 625. Computer Mediated Communication. 3 Hours.
This course explored the relationships between CMC and various aspects of human activity. This course investigates established and emerging CMC-based social, cultural, organizational, and instructional activities.

COMM 626. Intercultural Communication: Theory and Research. 3 Hours.
Advanced seminar in communication of various cultures. Special emphasis on research in diffusion of innovations.

COMM 627. Teachers in Film. 3 Hours.
This course focuses on how teachers and schools are portrayed in film. Students will use course readings and personal experiences to offer critical analysis of these films.

COMM 629. Health Communication. 3 Hours.
Overview of essential concepts and theories needed to understand and evaluate health-related messages in patient-provider relationships, between workers in health care organizations, and in medial related applications.

COMM 632. Humor and Communication. 3 Hours.
Advanced study of humor research as a communication process, from both source and receiver perspectives. The class investigates humor theories, research on functions, enactment, and applications of humorous communication across various work and social contexts.

COMM 635. Social & Digital Media Management. 3 Hours.
This course will present students with theoretical and applied examples of how social and digital media can be successfully managed, as well as provide examples of the consequences of unsuccessful management. In the end, students will craft a social and digital media management plan for their organization or industry of choice, based on the theories and concepts discussed.

COMM 645. Masspersonal Communication. 3 Hours.
Examines intersections of interpersonal and mass communication research. The role of interpersonal communication in campaigns, computer-mediated communication, avatar effects, and celebrity and character attachments is explored, as well as the effect of media use on interpersonal communication.

COMM 650. Applied Communication Theory. 3 Hours.
Introduction to major communication theories, with emphasis on the applicability of these theories in the organizational context.

COMM 651. Organizational Research and Evaluation. 3 Hours.
Practical application of understanding and interpreting quantitative research and data collected by corporations and other organization. Students will acquire skills to be more critical and knowledgeable consumers of data and research. Students will develop data-analytic skills and propose research-based solutions to make better organizational decisions.

COMM 652. Diversity in the Workplace. 3 Hours.
Examines diversity/difference at work applying an intergroup communication approach intersecting diversity, identity, prejudice, inclusion and exclusion. Explores the prominence of differences of social, moral, religious, racial, and familial group memberships in our everyday lives.

COMM 654. Social Marketing for Behavior Change. 3 Hours.
Social marketing is the practice of applying marketing principles and techniques to promote social objectives that benefit individuals or society, such as improving public health and safety, and protecting the environment. This course will introduce students the basic principles of social marketing and teach them the steps in developing a social marketing communication campaign.
COMM 655. Computer-Mediated Communication and Professional Identity. 3 Hours.
Examines digital media footprints and strategies for effectively communicating professional identities online. Students evaluate current online identity portrayals and develop a theory-based strategy for goal-directed self-presentations.

COMM 656. Organizational Culture. 3 Hours.
This course examines how human communication that occurs within an organization influences how the organization creates, sustains, and changes its workplace culture. Emphasis is placed on how organizational culture is created through artifacts, espoused and enacted values, and underlying assumptions/beliefs.

COMM 659. Case Studies in Communication. 3 Hours.
This course focuses on case studies involving organizational ethics. Communication issues and situations are evaluated from various ethical perspectives. Students create their own case study.

COMM 660. Communication in the Organization. 3 Hours.
This course exposes students to the role of communication in organizational environment with particular emphasis on its social science roots.

COMM 662. Conflict in Professional Life. 3 Hours.
This course is designed to examine research findings and theory about managing and resolving conflict in professional life. This course will examine both the macrodynamics (i.e., general/global conflict processes that occur in any social setting) and microdynamics (i.e., conflict that occurs uniquely in the workplace) of conflict research.

COMM 675. Entertainment-Education. 3 Hours.
Survey of current research on entertainment-education theory and applications, a communication strategy that utilizes entertainment media, usually fictional drama, suspense and humor, in order to educate audiences and improve their health, safety, human rights, or other critical social issues.

COMM 685. Media & Emotion. 3 Hours.
Introduction to fundamental theories of emotion and survey of current theory and research on how emotions affect people's media selections and influence their experience with media content.

COMM 691. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of advanced topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

COMM 692. Directed Study. 1-6 Hours.
Directed study, reading, and/or research.

COMM 693. Grantseeking. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

COMM 694. Seminar. 1-6 Hours.
Special seminars arranged for advanced graduate students.

COMM 695. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

COMM 697. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to a thesis, problem report, research paper, or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. (Grading may be S/U).

COMM 700. Survey of Human Communication Theory. 3 Hours.
Broad overview of contemporary theories in human communication. Should be taken the first semester of graduate study.

COMM 701. Graduate Research Methods. 3 Hours.
Major emphasis on designing and conducting experimental and laboratory research in human communication. Computer applications to social science research also given consideration. Should be taken the first semester of graduate study.

COMM 702. Advanced Interpersonal Communication. 3 Hours.
PR: COMM 602. This course examines how interpersonal communication patterns are linked to relational processes, both as influences and outcomes. Emphasis is on in-depth analysis of social science interpersonal research.

COMM 706. Advanced Organizational Communication. 3 Hours.
PR: COMM 606. This course provides an overview of the history and development of organizational communication. Additionally, current organizational theories and perspectives are investigated.

COMM 711. Advanced Seminar in Research Methods. 3 Hours.
PR: COMM 701. Research techniques necessary to conduct original communication research. Emphasis on advanced statistical techniques.

COMM 712. Communication Measurement. 3 Hours.
PR: COMM 701. This course investigates measures and instruments used in the field of communication studies. Focus is placed on the creation and validation of communication measures.

COMM 713. Qualitative Research Methods. 3 Hours.
Qualitative research methods in human communication and related professional areas with major emphasis on conducting and evaluation qualitative research procedures. Special focus on practical application.
COMM 719. Advanced Instructional Communication. 3 Hours.
Examination of issues surrounding instructional communication. Topics include study of history, paradigms, and programmatic areas of research of instructional communication.

COMM 722. Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication. 3 Hours.
Addresses transgressions and other violations of relational rules and their antecedents and consequences in the context of close personal relationships.

COMM 790. Teaching Practicum. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Supervised practice in college teaching of communication studies. Note: This course is intended to insure that graduate assistants are adequately prepared and supervised when they are given college teaching responsibility. It will also present a mechanism for students on assistantships to gain teaching experience. (Grading will be P/F.).

COMM 791. Advanced Topics. 1-6 Hours.
PR: Consent. Investigation of advanced topics not covered in regularly scheduled courses.

COMM 792. Directed Study. 1-6 Hours.
Directed study, reading, and/or research.

COMM 793. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

COMM 795. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

COMM 796. Graduate Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Each graduate student will present at least one seminar to the assembled faculty and graduate student body of his or her program.

COMM 797. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to thesis, problem report, research paper or equivalent scholarly project, or a dissertation. (Grading may be S/U.).