

Communication Studies

Degrees Offered

- Master of Arts
- Doctor of Philosophy

Nature of the Program

The Department of Communication Studies offers M.A. and 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 observe patterns of human behavior to develop theories that will account for why we act the way we do and apply these across diverse contexts. 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.

Individuals with a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university may be admitted to the M.A. or Ph.D. program. Students who already have a M.A. degree can be admitted to the Ph.D. program with advanced standing. Qualified graduate students from a variety of disciplines are admitted to the program.

The M.A. program is intended to qualify the student to:

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

The Ph.D. in Communication Studies is intended to qualify the student to:

- Conduct independent research
- Teach the subject matter at the undergraduate and graduate level
- Lead in educational, organizational, health, governmental, or media institutions

FACULTY

CHAIR

- Lindsay Morris-Neuberger - Ph.D. (Michigan State University)
Health and Risk Communication, Campaigns

DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE STUDIES

- Daniel Totzkay - Ph.D. (Michigan State University)
Health Communication, Mass Communication

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
- Alan K. Goodboy - Ph.D. (West Virginia University)
Instructional, Interpersonal, Quantitative Methods
- Christine Kunkle - Ph.D. (University of Nebraska)
Family, Life-span, Interpersonal
- Matthew M. Martin - Ph.D. (Kent State University)
Instructional, Interpersonal, Communication Traits
- Lindsay Morris-Neuberger - Ph.D. (Michigan State University)
Health and Risk Communication, Campaigns
- Scott A. Myers - Ph.D. (Kent State University)
Instructional, Family, Organizational

ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS

- Daniel Totzkay - Ph.D. (Michigan State University)
Health Communication, Mass Communication

ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- Megan Vendemia - Ph.D. (Ohio State University)
Communication Technology

TEACHING ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

- John G. Cole - M.A. (West Virginia University)
Instructional, Organizational, Computer Technology

PROFESSORS EMERITI

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

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR EMERITA

- John Shibley - Ph.D. (Ohio State University)

Admissions for 2026-2027

M.A. IN STRATEGIC ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

The Department of Communication Studies at WVU offers its M.A. program fully online. The M.A. program prepares students to communicate strategically across contexts and navigate a range of workplace and organizational dynamics. Students must meet the university requirements for admission (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationtext>) and must submit the items below and must have an undergraduate degree in Communication Studies or a closely allied field, with an undergraduate GPA of 3.0. The GRE is not required for admission to this program.

PH.D. IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

The Ph.D. program in Communication Studies is intended to qualify students to teach and conduct research, within communication-related industries or in higher education, in instructional communication, interpersonal communication, mediated communication, health communication, and organizational communication, among other topics. More information about the program and the application process is available here (<https://communicationstudies.wvu.edu/students/graduate-students/ph-d-in-communication-studies/>).

The Communication Studies program admits students directly to the doctoral degree. Students who fail to maintain satisfactory progress during two successive semesters may be transitioned to the M.A. in Communication Studies track. Students must meet the university requirements for admission (<http://catalog.wvu.edu/graduate/graduateeducationatwestvirginiauniversity/#classificationtext>) and must submit the items below. An undergraduate or graduate (master's) degree in Communication Studies or a closely related 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, if a graduate degree is held, of 3.25. The GRE is not required for admission to this program.

List of Admission Requirements for the M.A.:

- See the steps to apply for admissions and access the application here (<https://online.wvu.edu/degrees-certificates/graduate-degrees/communication-studies-m-a/>).
- Two letters of recommendation from individuals who can directly comment on the applicant's academic and/or professional record and potential for pursuing an M.A. degree in Communication Studies (e.g., undergraduate professors, undergraduate academic advisor, managers, human resources or relations).
- A resume or curriculum vitae which should include all formal education, any professional internship or work experiences, undergraduate activities, and any research projects completed to date.
- A statement of interest/purpose (2-3 pages) must identify the applicant's reasons for pursuing the M.A. in Strategic Organizational Communication, the reasons for obtaining this degree at West Virginia University and indicate why attaining the M.A. in Strategic Organizational Communication at WVU is vital to the accomplishment of the applicant's career goals.

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/>).
- Three letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with the applicant's academic progress and potential, which address the applicant's ability to succeed in the Ph.D. program as both a Ph.D. student and as a graduate teaching assistant.

- A curriculum vitae or resume that addresses all formal education, any teaching or professional work experience, and any research projects conducted to date.
- A personal statement (3-4 pages) that identifies the reasons for pursuing a Ph.D. in Communication Studies; the reasons for wanting to attain a Ph.D. in Communication Studies at West Virginia University specifically and why doing so is vital to the achievement of the applicant's career goals; research interests and how these interests correspond with the research conducted by the department faculty; and, the faculty members whose research interests are most closely aligned with the applicant's educational and career goals.
- A sole-authored, scholarly writing sample completed, which 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.

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/information-for/international-students/>).
- 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 M.A. in Communication Studies program in Strategic Organizational Communication admits students for the fall and spring semesters, with rolling admission.
- The Ph.D. program admits students for the fall semester only. The priority review deadline for the Ph.D. program 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/finances/fellowships/>).

Applications completed by the deadline will receive full consideration.

Assistantships

All applicants will be considered for financial support in the form of graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs). 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.

Certain application requirements may be waived based on a preliminary review of an application by the program.

MA Major Code: 1474

PhD 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 graduate students enrolled in at least one credit hour during the academic year must be provided with a written evaluation from their program following the end of each spring term. This requirement may be waived for students in good standing who are expected to graduate in spring or summer. Specific processes and timelines for each program's evaluation can be found in the graduate handbook. Annual evaluation may result in probation for students either not making adequate degree progress or failing to uphold professional standards.

MASTER OF ARTS

- Students in the MA program typically complete the degree in 1-2 years depending on enrollment (full time or part time). This degree is coursework based and has no additional benchmarks.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

- By the end of year 1, students should have identified a doctoral advisor
- By the end of year 2, students should have completed all coursework
- By the end of year 3, students should have successfully defended their comprehensive exams
- By the end of year 4, students should have successfully defended their dissertation.

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>).