COMMUNICATION STUDIES

The Department of Communication Studies offers courses that explore the major media, practices, and problems of a communication-intensive society. Topics include—but are not limited to—bargaining and negotiation, collective decision making, organizational innovation, human-computer interaction, Internet use, popular culture, social movements, and the history of political discourse in the United States. Students work with scholarship from the humanities and the social sciences, and coursework emphasizes the analytical and ethical requirements of responsible persuasion. Both required and elective courses are intended to prepare students for personal success and civic leadership.

Program of Study

- Communication Studies Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/communication-studies/communication-studies-major/)

COMM_ST 102-0 Public Speaking (1 Unit) Theory, composition, delivery, and criticism of public speeches.

COMM_ST 103-0 Argumentation and Debate (1 Unit) Theories of argumentation and debate, with many opportunities for practice. Analysis and evaluation of the discourse related to public controversies.

COMM_ST 159-0 Computing Everywhere (0 Unit) This course teaches computing literacy to non-technical undergraduate students.

COMM_ST 201-0 Research Methods in Comm Studies (1 Unit) Foundations of knowledge in many areas of the field, including the nature of interpersonal interaction and the impact of mass media. How communication researchers do their work; how to judge the quality of research products. Prerequisite for various other courses in the department.

COMM_ST 205-0 Theories of Persuasion (1 Unit) Survey of major theories that explain how to change another person's attitudes and behaviors. Applications to persuasion within a variety of contexts, including relationships, organizations, legal campaigns, and the mass culture.

COMM_ST 215-0 Principles of Rhetorical Criticism (1 Unit) Introduction to techniques of rhetorical analysis for use in describing, evaluating, and participating in discussions of public issues. Historical and contemporary examples of public discourse illuminate how symbolic action affects decision making and power relations in public life.

COMM_ST 220-0 Theories of Argumentation (1 Unit) Fundamental principles and practice of critical reasoning and public argument. For students interested in legal, academic, or political realms of communication and advocacy.

COMM_ST 225-0 Communication and Culture (1 Unit) How the concept of "culture" is constituted and disseminated through practices, processes, and mechanisms of "communication." Theories of myriad forms of mediation-interpersonal, off-and online, popular, and mass-mediated-shaping our relationships with ourselves and the world around us.

COMM_ST 227-0 Communication & Technology (1 Unit) Examines factors informing and shaping the design of everyday objects and our virtual world; psychological aspects of computer-mediated communication and virtual collaboration, including impression formation, group dynamics, and social networks; social and institutional structures in which human communication is situated. Prerequisite for the Digital Media undergraduate curriculum module.

COMM_ST 241-0 Theories of Relational Communication (1 Unit) An overview of communication theories and research dealing with developing, sustaining, and terminating interpersonal relationships. Direct application to friendship, work, and romantic relationships.

COMM_ST 246-0 Intro to Health Communication (1 Unit) Introduction to health communication. Key areas of the field, with focus on providers, patients and their families, hospital networks, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies.

COMM_ST 250-0 Team Leadership and Decision Making (1 Unit) Theories and research relating to communication in small groups and group decision making.

COMM_ST 255-0 Understanding Media Markets: Users, Makers and Metrics (1 Unit) How the preferences and habits of media users, the strategies and constraints of media makers, and the growing prevalence of data and metrics form a dynamic marketplace that shapes public attention.

COMM_ST 261-0 Introduction to Strategic Communication (1 Unit) The affordances of new technologies and changes in the modern business landscape have fundamentally transformed strategic communication. Where previous research and practice has separated public relations from organizational communication, the modern environment makes such a distinction not only meaningless, but dangerous. This course, using case studies and foundational readings, explores the nature of the modern organization and the role of communication in it.

COMM_ST 270-0 Theories of Mediated Communication (1 Unit) An overview of communication in all forms of mediated communication, including the Internet, and computer-mediated communication.

COMM_ST 274-0 Power in Entertainment (1 Unit) How power is created, sustained, and challenged in entertainment media; how and why individuals, groups, and corporations achieve and maintain dominance in art, film, television, gaming, and digital and social media.

COMM_ST 275-0 Persuasive Images: Rhetoric of Popular Culture (1 Unit) Analysis of image-making in all forms of popular culture-in film and television but also shopping malls, supermarkets, car dealers, and doctors’ offices.

COMM_ST 290-0 Forensics (1 Unit) Independent research and analysis in conjunction with participation in intercollegiate forensics. Credit may not be earned for 290 more than once.

COMM_ST 294-0 First-Year Seminar (1 Unit) Study in seminar format of a topic in communication. Assignments emphasize expository writing. SOC First-Year Seminar

COMM_ST 295-0 Topics in Communication Studies (1 Unit) Reading, research, and discussion in areas of significance. Topics vary.

COMM_ST 298-0 Undergraduate Seminar (1 Unit) Student or faculty initiated seminars to consider special topics. Credit for 298 may be earned more than once. No more than 2 units of such credit may be applied toward fulfillment of the major requirements.

COMM_ST 301-0 Current Issues in Privacy (1 Unit) The texture of interactions affecting privacy: government and workplace monitoring and surveillance, invasion of privacy by social media, disclosure to unintended Internet audiences, database aggregation, privacy and the person.

COMM_ST 302-0 Law of the Creative Process (1 Unit)
Principles of copyright, contracts, and entertainment business practices from the perspective of the producer, artist, and creator.

COMM_ST 310-0 Rhetoric, Democracy & Empire in Classical Athens (1 Unit) Students will read Thucydides’ History of the Peloponnesian War along with texts in classical rhetoric to address perennial problems regarding the role of speech in a democratic society.

COMM_ST 314-0 Rhetoric and Public Commemoration (1 Unit) Public commemoration as a rhetorical phenomenon. Through discussion of scholarly literature and production of research papers, students investigate questions such as: How do societies remember the past? What do the strategies for remembering the past teach us about the present? How are ‘collective memories’ produced and challenged?

COMM_ST 315-0 Rhetoric of Social Movements (1 Unit) Study of traditional theories of opposition derived from sociological and rhetorical analyses of mass movements. Examines new social movements such as advocacy groups related to abortion, animal rights, feminism, and other local and national issues.

COMM_ST 317-0 Voice, Violence, and Democracy (1 Unit) Understanding how and why “democracy” has come to be regarded today as the only “legitimate” form of government; explored by examining alternative roads to modernity and democratic polity taken by different countries through the dialectic of voice (rhetoric) and violence in contemporary democracies.

COMM_ST 321-0 Media & Publics Across Cultures (1 Unit) Relationship between culture and media in an increasingly globalized world, examined through analysis of ethnographic case studies and theoretical texts.

COMM_ST 323-0 New Media as Popular Culture (1 Unit) How rituals, practices, and relationships enabled by new-media cultural forms shape and reconstitute everyday life. Emphasis on research implementing qualitative and interpretive methods.

COMM_ST 324-1 Rhetoric of U.S. Women’s Rights, Colonial to 1920 (1 Unit) Students in this course investigate the early U.S. women’s rights movement through the analysis of primary texts and the examination of critical essays. Students should expect to gain a complex and nuanced perspective on the rhetorical history of public advocacy by U.S. women, and also to improve their skills in critical reading and analysis.

COMM_ST 324-2 Rhetoric of U.S. Women’s Rights, 1920-Present (1 Unit) Students in this course investigate the early U.S. women’s rights movement through the analysis of primary texts and the examination of critical essays. Students should expect to gain a complex and nuanced perspective on the rhetorical history of public advocacy by U.S. women, and also to improve their skills in critical reading and analysis.

COMM_ST 326-0 African American Rhetoric (1 Unit) Survey of key texts of 20th century African American public discourse as well as a forum to discuss those texts and engage them analytically and critically.

COMM_ST 333-0 Girlhood in Public Culture (1 Unit) Why girls have figured so centrally in 20th century popular culture; why the concept of girlhood itself has been so widely debated within public culture more generally; how girls themselves have responded to public representations of girlhood.

COMM_ST 334-0 Media and the Making of Social Class (1 Unit) The nature of the relationship between the media, middletow culture, and the rise of the American middle class; the future of middletow culture in the wake of digital production, audience segmentation, and globalization.
Communication Studies

us, and even our romantic partners. While these technologies bring us many benefits – more appealing information, better jobs – an increasing body of research suggests that they may also have critical negative side-effects or externalities. These externalities may be serious: some have attributed recent election outcomes and future massive-scale job loss to computing technologies (at least in part), even suggesting that we need a new “societal business model” [1]. In this course, we will first review and discuss this body of research. We will then shift towards developing potential solutions to these problems. Ultimately, my hope is that students who take this course will be better equipped to build technologies that are more likely to have a net positive effect on society.

COMM_ST 360-0 Theories of Organizational Communication (1 Unit) Theories and research dealing with communication in formal organizations and institutions.


COMM_ST 364-0 Collective Decision Making & Communication in Organizations (1 Unit) Research on how organizations make, communicate, and implement collective decisions. Assessing decision effectiveness, group decision making, leadership in organizations, and organizational design.

COMM_ST 365-0 Organizational Assessment (1 Unit) Advanced concepts and techniques for defining and analyzing organizational problems. Preparation for recognizing and working with problems in business organizations.

COMM_ST 367-0 Nonprofit Communication Management (1 Unit) Nongovernmental organizations and the campaigns they create. Examined through three interrelated modules: differentiating nongovernmental organizations from business and government organizations; issues they face that their government and business counterparts do not; nonprofit campaigns and public communication.

COMM_ST 370-0 Ethnographies of Culture (1 Unit) This course looks at ethnographies of artistic practice to better understand how culture is made, circulated, and received in social life.

COMM_ST 371-0 Cultural Analytics (1 Unit) Big data is currency, to those initiated in the nuts and bolts of data science. This data literacy course introduces research on cultural markets, superstars, social media, and crowdsourcing, and provides you with tools to apply this research. You will learn how to plot and interpret graphs to measure performance in a cultural market; use Internet search data and Twitter conversations to forecast trends; build, visualize, and analyze networks; and to train machine learning algorithms for prediction. Except an open mind, there are no prerequisites for the class. While formal thinking is encouraged, the course focuses on providing conceptual foundations and hands-on tools that apply across a variety of fields in communication, computer science, economics, life sciences, and sociology.

COMM_ST 375-0 The Sociology of Online News (1 Unit) Survey of sociological research on the production and consumption of online news.

COMM_ST 376-0 Contemporary Television (1 Unit) Changes in the art and business of television with the introduction of new media. Production, storytelling, identity, and distribution of TV and web entertainment.

COMM_ST 377-0 Development & Marketing Popular Culture (1 Unit) The invention and packaging of popular culture products, including film, music, television, and celebrities.

Prerequisite: COMM_ST 275-0.

COMM_ST 378-0 Online Communities and Crowds (1 Unit) Examination of the types of collaborations that occur in online communities and crowds. Emphasis on sociological, economic, and political analysis of how and why large-scale online collaborations work.

COMM_ST 380-0 Political Communication (1 Unit) Nature and functions of communication within established political institutions; decision making strategies, deliberative discourse, and electoral campaigns; field study of advocacy and interest groups. Prerequisites: COMM_ST 220-0 and COMM_ST 205-0.

COMM_ST 383-0 Media, Communication, and Environment (1 Unit) Exploring, understanding, and researching questions and issues related to the environment and climate through the study of media and communication.

COMM_ST 386-0 Science, Technology, and Society (1 Unit) Examination of developments in information and communication technology in the larger context of American science and technology since 1900. Prerequisite: previous coursework on the historical or social dimensions of information and communication technology.

COMM_ST 388-0 Internet and Society (1 Unit) The social, cultural, political, and economic implications of information technologies.

COMM_ST 389-0 Practicum in Communication Research (1 Unit) Collaboration with a faculty member on design and execution of a communication research project. Students learn how to complete a research project and write a report.

COMM_ST 390-0 Children's Culture (1 Unit) Examination of children's media from psychological, sociological, historical, and other perspectives. Discussion of the role of media in children's development.

COMM_ST 392-0 Global Culture, Commerce and Communication (1 Unit) Examination of current topics and events to familiarize students with the cultural dimensions of globalization and the critical importance of culture and communication in understanding the globalized world.

COMM_ST 394-0 Communication Studies Research Seminar (1 Unit) Small seminars in research topics led by different members of the department faculty. Students complete a research paper on a topic related to the seminar theme. Prerequisite: COMM_ST 294-0.

COMM_ST 395-0 Topics in Communication Studies (1 Unit) Reading, research, and discussion in areas of significance. Topics vary.

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COMM_ST 397-0 Honors Seminar (1 Unit) Students work on a 2-to-3-quarter project, culminating in a senior thesis, with the guidance of a faculty adviser. Upon successful completion a student is eligible to graduate with departmental honors. Students receive 2 units of 397 Senior Honors Thesis credit for completing the thesis.

COMM_ST 398-0 Undergraduate Seminar (1 Unit) Student or faculty initiated seminars to consider special topics. Credit for 398 may be earned more than once. No more than 2 units of such credit may be applied toward fulfillment of the major requirements.

COMM_ST 399-0 Independent Study (1 Unit) Enrollment only by petition in advance.