

# SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION

communication.northwestern.edu

Communication is at the root of nearly everything we do, and mastering the art of communication can open doors to a wide range of careers. The School of Communication is committed to elevating and expanding access to the communication arts and sciences. Bridging theory and practice, our immersive curriculum and research opportunities position students for professional success in education, scholarship, media and artistic work, policy analysis, and advocacy. Through these pathways, we are building a collaborative, interdisciplinary community known as much for its achievements as the breadth of voices, perspectives, and traditions that shape them.

Founded by Robert Cumnock in 1878, the School of Communication is now the third largest of Northwestern's six undergraduate divisions. It annually enrolls approximately 1,000 undergraduate majors and 700 graduate students.

Originally, the curriculum and its related activities were concerned with public speaking and interpretative reading as performing arts. As the field grew, the school added instruction in theatre, speech pathology, audiology, radio, television, film, and other specialties in oral communication. Throughout its history the school has often been a pioneer in new fields of study, including film and audiology.

Today the five departments of instruction represent the diverse spectrum of study in the field of communication: communication sciences and disorders; communication studies; performance studies; radio/television/film; and theatre (including dance). All departments offer graduate courses. The School of Communication sponsors debate, film and video, playwriting, and theatre arts divisions of Northwestern's National High School Institute, also known as the "Cherubs."

In 2008 Northwestern opened a branch campus in Qatar, where programs in communication and journalism are offered. (See Campuses and Schools in The University chapter of this catalog.)

## Facilities

The School of Communication provides outstanding facilities in which students and faculty work, perform, pursue research, engage in media ventures, and connect with their community. The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Center for the Musical Arts, one of the campus's latest additions, is the home of the School of Communication Dean's Office and Office of Undergraduate Programs and Advising. The building also houses the administrative and faculty offices of the Departments of Theatre and Performance Studies.

Annie May Swift Hall—a beautifully restored legacy of Northwestern's early days that once housed all of the school's programs—is now home to the Department of Radio/Television/Film as well as the department's film library, the Peggy Dow Helmerich Auditorium, and the Alvina Krause Studio black box theater operated by the Department of Performance Studies. Students in the Department of Radio/Television/Film also have access to the Fisk Digital Media Studio. The nearby John J. Louis Hall is home to the film equipment center, computer animation facilities, a lecture/screening hall, and the Barbara and Garry Marshall Studio Wing, which includes the Hobson/Lucas Soundstage, the studios of WNUR-FM, and film and video production and postproduction facilities.

Louis Hall also houses an arts and technology lab, as well as spaces for performance studies, and for the writing and sound programs.

The Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts, recently renovated to increase student performance and rehearsal space, houses the Josephine Louis Theater, a 288-seat proscenium theater; the Ethel M. Barber Theater, a 439-seat thrust theater; four black box spaces, including the Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis and the Mussetter-Struble Theaters and the Clara, Lu 'n' Em Theater; and production facilities, including scene and costume shops, wet and dry design rooms, computer labs, rehearsal spaces, and more. In addition, the Department of Theatre sponsors occasional productions in Cahn Auditorium, Northwestern's 1,000-seat proscenium space. The Marjorie Ward Marshall Dance Center features two dance studios.

The Frances Searle Building is home to the School of Communication's science and research programs, including the Roxelyn and Richard Pepper Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders and the Department of Communication Studies. Across the street is the state-of-the-art facility for the school's Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning, which serves the greater Evanston community through excellence in clinical care, cutting-edge research, and student development. Additional communication studies offices are located at 1815 Chicago Avenue. Next door, Hardy House provides a home to the Northwestern Debate Society.

On Northwestern's Chicago campus in Abbott Hall are offices for the School of Communication master's program in communication and health and its treatment programs in voice, speech, and swallowing disorders. Additionally, the building houses the administrative headquarters for the Black Arts Consortium. In Spring 2021, the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for Performing and Media Arts in Chicago was completed. The state-of-the-art facility supports the School's MFA programs by providing dynamic spaces for student work while fostering partnerships with city arts institutions and audiences.

## Degree Requirements

The School of Communication grants the degree of bachelor of science in communication (BSCMN) or bachelor of arts in communication (BACMN) upon:

- the satisfactory completion of 42 course units;
- the fulfillment of the distribution requirements of the student's major department; and
- the completion of School requirements and an approved major in communication suited to the student's special interests and needs.

If students interrupt the program of study for an extended period of time and degree requirements are changed during this period, students are normally held to the new requirements.

In addition to, and independent of, the requirements set by the School of Communication, students must satisfy the Undergraduate Registration Requirement.

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders offers only the BSCMN, which does not include a foreign language requirement.

The Department of Communication Studies offers both the BSCMN and BACMN, both of which have a foreign language requirement. The BSCMN additionally requires a course on research methods in communication studies.

The Department of Radio/Television/Film offers only the BACMN, which has a foreign language requirement.

The Departments of Performance Studies and Theatre (including dance) offer both the BSCMN and BACMN. The BACMN has a foreign language requirement but the BSCMN does not.

Students in programs with a foreign language requirement must demonstrate two-year proficiency in a classical or modern foreign language. Proficiency is defined as competence in the work covered through the final quarter of a college-level second-year language course sequence (or equivalent as determined by each foreign language department). Students who enroll for course credit to satisfy the proficiency requirement must earn a grade no lower than C– in the final course of the second-year course sequence. This proficiency is established in precisely the same manner as in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences; see the Weinberg College (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/arts-sciences/#schoolrequirementstext>) section of this catalog.

## General Requirements

Of the 42 units of credit required for all major programs in the School of Communication, 32 must be completed with grades of A, B, or C (grades of C– do not satisfy this requirement). A minimum of 18 units of credit must be taken outside the major department (see distribution requirements below). All distribution courses and all courses applied to a major or a minor must be completed with a grade of C– or higher. See the major requirements for each program for additional grade requirements. Courses offered by the major department may not be taken for a P grade regardless of how they are applied to degree requirements. D and P grades may apply only to the elective requirement.

A transfer student will be required to complete a minimum of 21 credits at Northwestern, and at least 11 of those credits in the School of Communication. An advising meeting is required before the first registration for all transfer students.

## School Requirements

All first-year students in the School of Communication must complete a first-year seminar within the School. These seminars are designed to introduce incoming students to the study of human communication and expression through the interdisciplinary lenses of speech and hearing sciences, social scientific and humanistic studies of media, performance, film production, and storytelling.

All students in the School of Communication must complete the SoC Capstone requirement. The SoC Capstone is a culminating school-wide requirement that empowers students to holistically reflect upon what they have learned and how they have grown through their experiences of coursework, internships, research, independent studies, employment, personal experience, creative and co-curricular activities. This self-reflection helps students understand their strengths and areas for future development.

## Distribution Requirements

All major programs in communication require 18 units of credit outside the major department in the following areas:

- Mathematics, science, and technology
- Individual and social behavior
- Humanities and fine arts

Students should consult an advisor in the relevant major for the range of disciplines within each category and the number of courses required.

## Major Programs in Communication and Related Requirements

All students in the School of Communication must meet the requirements of one of the following major programs: communication studies, dance, human communication sciences, performance studies, radio/television/film, or theatre.

A comprehensive list of policies is available at <https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies-procedures-forms/>.

## Degree Awarded

Students in the School of Communication pursue either a Bachelor of Arts in Communication (BACMN) or a Bachelor of Science in Communication (BSCMN) with a **major** in Communication Studies, Dance, Human Communication Sciences, Performance Studies, Radio/Television/Film, or Theatre. With the exception of students enrolled in the Bienen and McCormick dual degree programs, students will earn only **one degree** even if they have more than one major. For example, if you have a primary major in Theatre and a second major in Political Science, you will earn either a Bachelor of Arts or a Bachelor of Science in Communication with a major in Theatre and a major in Political Science. At graduation, students attend the Convocation for the School of their **primary major**, no matter what other programs or majors they might be completing. Students completing dual degrees are invited to participate in both convocation ceremonies.

## Academic Advising

[advising.soc.northwestern.edu](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu)

Each School of Communication student is assigned an academic advisor who holds a faculty appointment in their department, and is knowledgeable about their particular major. This advisor is available for consultation, especially for the purpose of planning for the next registration. First-year students have a separate advising period before the fall registration and then have a total of three required advising meetings, one each quarter. Sophomores and transfer students are required to have two advising meetings during the academic year. Juniors are required to meet with their academic advisor when they petition to graduate, and seniors are required to consult with their academic advisor regarding their final degree audit. While these meetings satisfy the minimal academic advising requirements, students often find it valuable to consult with their advisors more frequently. Ultimate responsibility for meeting degree requirements rests with the student.

## Academic Standing, Probation, and Dismissal

[advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/academic-standing-probation-and-dismissal/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/academic-standing-probation-and-dismissal/) ([https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/academic-standing-probation-and-dismissal/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/academic-standing-probation-and-dismissal/))

### Academic Standing

The decision concerning the academic standing of a student is the responsibility of the faculty of the school in which the student is registered. Academic probation constitutes notice of unsatisfactory academic performance; it is a warning that minimum standards for graduation are not being met.

Unless a student demonstrates significant scholastic improvement during the period of probation and thereby indicates the ability to fulfill degree requirements within a reasonable period of time, the student may be dismissed from the University. A student will be notified in writing no later than the middle of a term that, because of unsatisfactory work in a previous term or terms, he or she will be excluded in the event of unsatisfactory work during the term for which the notice is issued.

## Academic Probation

The following students are ordinarily placed on academic probation:

- Students who have received final grades below C in two or more courses in any quarter or Summer Session
- Sophomores, juniors, or seniors who have a cumulative academic record below a C average on all work attempted at Northwestern University
- Students who have failed to complete at least three quarter-courses or the equivalent in each of two consecutive quarters
- Students who, on account of dropped courses, failure, or uncompleted courses, have failed to earn credit for an average of three quarter-courses per quarter after six quarters of residence
- Students who have failed to maintain a C average in the major or a professional field of study

The faculty of each school may impose such additional conditions of academic probation as they may deem appropriate.

## Removal from Academic Probation

Students on academic probation are ordinarily removed from probation if the deficiencies that resulted in probation have been remedied during the next succeeding quarter in residence. Students are rarely removed from probation on the basis of a program consisting of less than four courses graded on a basis other than the pass/no credit option. However, in the School of Communication, students enrolled in a course load of 3 credits and receiving a grade of C or higher in all three may be considered for removal from probation. If students on probation who receive grades of X or Y are not dismissed, probation continues until they have completed all courses or until the end of the next quarter in residence, when the students' records are again subject to scrutiny.

In no case are students removed from probation at the end of a quarter in which they have failed any course.

## Academic Dismissal

The following is a partial list of categories of students who may be dismissed for academic deficiencies (in every case the decision is determined in part by the student's cumulative academic record):

- Students on academic probation whose academic records have not improved significantly during the period of probation (which will not normally exceed two consecutive quarters)
- Students not on academic probation who fail in half the work in any quarter or Summer Session
- Students who demonstrate flagrant neglect of academic work at any time
- Students who do not make satisfactory progress toward completion of degree requirements

As a matter of general policy, the probation period for a first-year student may be extended to the third quarter of residence if such extension appears to be in the best interests of the student and the University. Such

consideration is not granted to a first-year student whose record clearly discloses lack of aptitude or flagrant neglect of work.

## Internship Credit

[advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/internships/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/internships/)  
([https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/internships/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/internships/))

Internships allow students to gain valuable organizational experience and apply theoretical knowledge to situations outside of the classroom. A total of 4 units of internship credit is permitted to count toward the undergraduate SoC degree. However, additional restrictions may apply depending on a student's other coursework, such as practica or independent studies, so students should consult with their SoC advisor on how credits may be applied.

Students seeking academic credit through SoC while working at an internship enroll in a weekly seminar (CMN 340) led by an internship coordinator. SoC's Office of External Programs, Internships and Career Services (EPICS) (<https://epics.soc.northwestern.edu/>) maintains a database for SoC students of internships primarily in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City, and opportunities may be available in other cities as well. Students can also find their own internships, and obtain approval to register them for credit through EPICS.

SoC students may also participate in Weinberg's Chicago Field Studies program (<https://internships.northwestern.edu/>); however, credit earned in the program will also be counted toward the limit of 4 internship credits total for the degree.

Regardless of whether internship credit comes from EPICS (taught by SoC faculty under CMN 340) or Chicago Field Studies (CFS in Weinberg), the limit of 4 internship credits to count toward SoC degree requirements supersedes the CFS policy of 6 allowed.

Within the total 4 units of internship allowable for your degree:

- One unit of CMN 340-0 School of Communication EPICS Internship Seminar can apply toward your major. Communication Studies, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Performance Studies, and Radio/TV/Film have additional restrictions on internships, independent studies, research practica and other special course types.
- One unit of CFS internship credit can apply as an additional distribution course. CFS internship credit cannot apply to your major.
- Additional credits of CMN 340-0 School of Communication EPICS Internship Seminar or CFS will count as electives.

Students may earn more than four credits from internship enrollment (this is sometimes advisable for international students or when a particular employer requires credit is received), but no more than four will count among the 42 required for the degree.

## Academic Advising

[advising.soc.northwestern.edu](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu)

Each School of Communication student is assigned an academic advisor who holds a faculty appointment in their department, and is knowledgeable about their particular major. This advisor is available for consultation, especially for the purpose of planning for the next registration. First-year students have a separate advising period before the fall registration and then have a total of three required advising meetings, one each quarter. Sophomores and transfer students are

required to have two advising meetings during the academic year. Juniors are required to meet with their academic advisor when they petition to graduate, and seniors are required to consult with their academic advisor regarding their final degree audit. While these meetings satisfy the minimal academic advising requirements, students often find it valuable to consult with their advisors more frequently. Ultimate responsibility for meeting degree requirements rests with the student.

## Minor Programs

The School of Communication offers seven minor programs: dance, film and media studies, game design + media arts + animation, human communication sciences, performance studies, sound design, and theatre. Students may not earn both a major and a minor in the same area, except that radio/television/film majors may earn a minor in game design + media arts + animation or in sound design. Students wishing to pursue a minor should contact the Office of Undergraduate Programs and Advising (<https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/about/contact/>) to be assigned a minor adviser. No course for the minor may be taken utilizing the P/N option, and all classes must be completed at a grade of C– or higher in order to be counted toward the minor. School of Communication minors are open to all Northwestern undergraduate students. Please see the appropriate departmental sections for descriptions of the minors in performance studies and theatre. The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders administers the minor in human communication sciences. The Department of Radio/Television/Film administers the minor programs in film and media studies, game design + media arts + animation, and sound design. The Department of Theatre administers the minor in dance.

## Dual Bachelor's Degree Programs

Two programs allow undergraduates to combine a bachelor's degree in communication with a bachelor's degree in another Northwestern undergraduate school. One results in a BA or BS from the School of Communication and a BS from the McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science, and the other results in a BA or BS from the School of Communication and a BMus or BAMus from the Bienen School of Music. Both options typically require five years of study.

## Certificate Programs

The Department of Theatre administers the Music Theatre Certificate (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/theatre/music-theatre-certificate/>).

The School of Communication collaborates with the McCormick School of Engineering to offer the Human Computer Interaction (HCI) Certificate (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/engineering-applied-science/human-computer-interaction/>).

## Modules

Modules are highly focused plans of study that include formal coursework, co-curricular activities, and pre-professional experiences, and culminate in the creation of a capstone project. Through extended, structured learning experiences, modules provide a flexible way to build student-faculty cohorts, promote in-depth learning in specific areas, and develop students' abilities to articulate and present what they have learned. For more information about modules, visit the School of Communication's website at [advising.soc.northwestern.edu/undergraduate-programs/soc-academic-modules/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/undergraduate-programs/soc-academic-modules/) (<https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/undergraduate-programs/soc-academic-modules/>).

[advising.soc.northwestern.edu/undergraduate-programs/soc-academic-modules/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/undergraduate-programs/soc-academic-modules/)).

To view module requirements within the catalog, please click on the relevant module below.

- Acting for the Screen (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-acting-for-the-screen/>)
- Comedy Arts (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-comedy-arts/>)
- Creating the Musical (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-creating-the-musical/>)
- Directing for the Screen (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-directing-for-the-screen/>)
- Playwriting (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-playwriting/>)
- Theatre for Young Audiences (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-theatre-for-young-audiences/>)
- Theatre Management (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-theatre-management/>)
- Theatrical Design (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/module-theatrical-design/>)

## Research Practica

Opportunities sometimes arise for a student to assist with research, teaching, and/or a production in collaboration with a faculty member. Sometimes faculty will invite students to participate in a practicum, but students may also approach a professor whose activities or area of expertise particularly interests them. For information on how to register for a practicum, visit [advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/practica/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/practica/) ([https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/practica/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/practica/)). Professor approval is required to register.

## Independent Study

Independent study is available by petition to juniors and seniors who have a minimum 3.0 grade-point average. Sophomores who have a compelling academic rationale to do so are also encouraged to petition to take an independent study. Petitions are available online at [advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/independent-studies/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/independent-studies/) ([https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/independent-studies/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/independent-studies/)). Students must secure a faculty sponsor to guide their independent study. The undergraduate dean must approve all independent study proposals. No more than one independent study will be approved per student per quarter. The School of Communication does not limit the number of independent studies that a student may take, but a maximum of 2 units of 399 may apply to the major degree requirements. Requests for independent study in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences must go through that school's approval procedure. Regardless of the number of independent studies approved in Weinberg, no more than 2 units of 399 may be applied to the distribution requirements. Additional units of 399 are counted as electives. Independent study may not be taken using the P/N option. Some majors have additional rules regarding independent study; see the major requirements for details.

## Internships

Internships (also sometimes referred to as field studies) allow students to gain valuable organizational experience and apply theoretical knowledge to situations outside the classroom. SoC's Office of

External Programs, Internships and Career Services (EPICS) (<https://epics.soc.northwestern.edu/>) maintains a database for SoC students of internships primarily in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City, and opportunities may be available in other cities as well. Students may receive up to four academic credits by enrolling in a weekly seminar led by an internship coordinator as well as working at an internship. One credit may be applied to the major requirements, and the remaining credits are electives. Additional rules may apply. For more information on internships, interested students should visit [advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/internships/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/internships/) ([https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/internships/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/internships/)), and consult with their academic advisor.

## Student-Organized Seminars

A student-organized seminar (SOS) consists of a small group of students (under the sponsorship of one or more faculty members) who organize a course to explore a specific topic not covered in, but deemed appropriate for, the Northwestern University curriculum. Typically, an SOS comprises ten or fewer students. One or more students take responsibility for developing the syllabus, organizing the weekly seminar work, advertising the seminar, and managing the class. Guidelines for proposing an SOS are available online at [advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/student-organized-seminars/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/student-organized-seminars/) ([https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies\\_procedures/student-organized-seminars/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/policies_procedures/student-organized-seminars/)).

## Study Abroad

Students are encouraged to consider studying abroad at some point during their educational career. Most aspects of study abroad are handled by the Global Learning Office: [www.northwestern.edu/abroad/index.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/abroad/index.html) (<https://www.northwestern.edu/abroad/>). For more information see the Undergraduate Education chapter of this catalog.

## Graduate Study

The School of Communication has been a national center for graduate study and research in the fields of communication arts and sciences for many years.

Programs for the master of arts, master of fine arts, and doctor of philosophy degrees with majors in communication are administered by the Graduate School of Northwestern University. All candidates for these degrees must satisfy the Graduate School requirements.

The School of Communication itself offers doctoral degrees in audiology and in speech-language pathology, the master of arts in sound arts and industries, and master of science degrees in communication, leadership for creative enterprises, and speech, language, and learning.

For a list of all of the School of Communication's graduate programs, including links to program websites, visit their webpage for Graduate Programs (<https://communication.northwestern.edu/academics/graduate-programs/>).

## Co-curricular Activities and Programs

A variety of co-curricular opportunities are available to School of Communication students. Each fall quarter, Northwestern's Activities Fair is the place to check out student groups and clubs, and additional resources for connecting with student groups can be found at [advising.soc.northwestern.edu/campus-resources/organizations-and-](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/campus-resources/organizations-and-activities/)

[activities/](https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/campus-resources/organizations-and-activities/) (<https://advising.soc.northwestern.edu/campus-resources/organizations-and-activities/>).

In order to participate in co-curricular and student group activities, students must be simultaneously enrolled in classes at Northwestern. Students who have graduated or who are taking a quarter off from enrollment may not participate in co-curricular or student group activities. This includes all department-sponsored and student-run theatre and film projects and productions.