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 in a wide range of careers, from law and medicine to acting, directing, writing, and producing.

The School of Communication’s mission is based on a philosophy of performance. We seek to improve the practice of communication, whether on the stage or screen, at the podium, in the clinic, or in everyday life.

The school is committed to building the basic and applied sciences of communication; developing theoretical and critical perspectives on communicative performances; creating new technologies for communication and new modes of artistic expression; and helping students to be more effective in their work, at home, and in civic life by applying principles of communication. Undergraduates work in partnerships with world-class faculty to create new understandings and develop new approaches to human communication. The curriculum provides students with a solid liberal-arts education that broadens and enriches their studies of human expression and interaction.

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 1,200 undergraduate majors and 400 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 dance, debate, media arts, and theatre arts divisions of Northwestern’s National High School Institute.

This wide range of educational activities takes place in buildings across the Evanston campus. The fifth floor of the Ryan Center for the Musical Arts houses the school’s administrative offices and two departmental offices. The Frances Searle Building houses administrative offices, two departmental offices, and laboratory and research spaces. Other facilities include the school’s original building, Annie May Swift Hall; two former residences on Chicago Avenue; the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts; John J. Louis Hall, a state-of-the-art studio production facility; and the Northwestern University Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning. In addition, Northwestern’s Chicago campus is home to the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing and Media Arts Chicago.

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 Undergraduate Student Resource Center. The building also houses the departmental 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 and the Peggy Dow Helmerich Auditorium. Students in this department also have access to the Fisk Digital Media Studio, the Kresge Digital Media Lab, and John J. Louis Hall—home to production and postproduction facilities, the film equipment center, the studios of WNUR-FM, and the Barbara and Garry Marshall Studio wing, a film soundstage.

The Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing Arts, recently renovated to increase student performance and rehearsal space, houses the Josephine Louis Theater, a 369-seat proscenium theatre; the Ethel M. Barber Theater, a 439-seat thrust theatre; two black box spaces, the Hal and Martha Hyer Wallis and the Mussetter-Stubble Theater; and production facilities, including scene and costume shops. In addition, the Department of Theatre sponsors occasional productions in Cahn Auditorium, a 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 are offices for the School of Communication master’s program in communication and health and for its treatment programs in voice, speech, and swallowing disorders. In Fall 2020, the Virginia Wadsworth Wirtz Center for the Performing and Media Arts 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 upon:

1. the satisfactory completion of 42 course units;
2. the fulfillment of the distribution requirement of the student’s major department; and
3. the completion of 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, they 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 Departments of Communication Studies, Performance Studies, Radio/Television/Film, and Theatre (including dance) offer the bachelor of arts in communication. The requirements for this degree are identical to the requirements for the bachelor of science in communication with the addition of a foreign language requirement. (Regardless of whether the BA or BS is sought, the required programs of study for majors in the Departments of Communication Studies and Radio/Television/Film include specific foreign language requirements; for details, see the major requirements for each of those programs.) To earn the bachelor of arts in communication, students—in addition to completing the degree requirements for the bachelor of science—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. 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.

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 the department concerned 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: human communication sciences, communication studies, performance studies, radio/television/film, theatre, or dance.

Student Conduct in Communication Courses

All undergraduate students enrolled in School of Communication courses are held accountable to the University’s standards of academic integrity. They also are responsible for compliance with the following standards:

- Attendance is required in all courses, and excessive absence is cause for failure.
- All assigned work must be completed to receive course credit.
- Assignments must be turned in on time, and examinations must be taken as scheduled; assignments cannot be made up or grades of incomplete given without prior approval from the instructor.

Participation in Co-curricular 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.

Academic Advising

advising.soc.northwestern.edu

Each student is assigned an advisor within the School of Communication. 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 are required to have two advising meetings during the academic year. Ultimate responsibility for meeting degree requirements rests with the student.

Minor Programs

The School of Communication offers six minor programs: dance, film and media studies, 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 sound design. Students wishing to pursue a minor should contact the appropriate department 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 human communication sciences, theatre, and dance. The Department of Radio/Television/Film (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/radio-television-film/) administers the minor programs in film and media studies and sound design.

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 Program

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

Honors Program in Medical Education

The Honors Program in Medical Education is designed for well-prepared high school students who seek a career in medicine or medical science. It provides a plan whereby students entering Northwestern are admitted simultaneously to the School of Communication, Weinberg College, or the McCormick School, and to the Feinberg School of Medicine. HPME students then spend the first three or four years in undergraduate study and the last four years in the Feinberg School, potentially reducing the period of formal training by one year. The Human Communication Sciences major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/communication/communicationiences-disorders/human-communication-sciences-major/) in the School of Communication is a particularly attractive option for HPME students.

For information on applying to HPME, see Special Admission Programs (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/admission/#specialadmissionprograms). For a description of the program, see Honors Program in Medical Education (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/dual-graduate-undergraduate-degrees/honors-program-medical-education/).

Modules

Modules are extended, structured learning experiences that take a student from an entry point to mastery of a specific learning objective. Modules are built around 4 to 6 courses that provide formal instruction related to the learning goal. Formal coursework is paired with co-curricular experiences that provide appropriate opportunities for application and practice. Modules provide a flexible way to build student-faculty cohorts, promote in-depth learning in areas of special significance, and guarantee that students can articulate what they have learned and demonstrate it through performance. For more information about modules, visit the School of Communication Learning Communities website at society.northwestern.edu.

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 in the Undergraduate Resource Center on the fifth floor of the Ryan Center for the Musical Arts, in department offices, and online at advising.soc.northwestern.edu/forms. 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 only 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

epics.soc.northwestern.edu/undergraduates/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. 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. Full-time internships are available in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City and may be coordinated in other cities on a case-by-case basis. Internships are coordinated through the Office of External Programs, Internships, and Career Services (EPICS). Interested students should visit the website and contact their advisers.

Junior Tutorials

Junior tutorials are small seminars, open to juniors only, taught by School of Communication professors on unique topics. The tutorials may count as School of Communication courses and as major courses if taught by a professor in the student’s major department. They are listed in CAESAR under CMN-related courses and are listed in Spotlight when offered. Students may take one junior tutorial in the course of their undergraduate career.

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 nine 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 in the Student Resource Center on the fifth floor of the Ryan Center for the Musical Arts and online at advising.soc.northwestern.edu/forms.

Research Practica

Opportunities sometimes arise for a student to work on a faculty member’s research or project team. Sometimes faculty will invite students to participate in a practicum, but students may also approach a professor whose research or project particularly interests them.

Students are registered for research practica through the Student Resource Office on the fifth floor of the Ryan Center for the Musical Arts or via permission number from the professor or department. Professor approval is required to register.

Study Abroad

northwestern.edu/abroad

Students are encouraged to study abroad because it is an important educational experience. Most aspects of study abroad are handled by the Global Learning Office, 1800 Sherman Ave, Suite 4-400. 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, master of science, 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 the doctor of audiology, the master of arts in sound arts and industries, and the master of science degrees in communication, health communication, leadership for creative enterprises, and speech, language, and learning.

Requirements for the departmental and thesis master’s degrees, the master of fine arts, and the doctor of philosophy degrees in any division of the School of Communication are available from the Graduate School. Requirements for the doctor of audiology degree, the master of arts degree in sound arts and industries, and the master of science degrees in communication, health communication, leadership for creative enterprises, and speech, language, and learning are available from the School of Communication.

Co-curricular Activities and Programs

A variety of co-curricular opportunities are available to School of Communication students. Each fall Northwestern’s Activities Fair offers information on options in addition to those listed here.

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.

Arts in the City

Arts in the City is a program offered exclusively to students of the School of Communication. It gives them the opportunity to experience the best arts in Chicago for a nominal fee that includes ticket and transportation. These events particularly showcase the talents of those connected with Northwestern and allow students to socialize with faculty and peers.

Block Cinema

Dedicated to providing the campus, the North Shore, and Chicago with a high-quality venue for repertory cinema, Block Cinema screens classic and contemporary films three nights a week in the Block Museum’s state-of-the-art projection facility.

Dean’s Advisory Council

The Dean’s Advisory Council (DAC) consists of School of Communication undergraduate students representing the three divisions of the school: division I (theatre, performance studies, and dance), division II (communication studies and radio/television/film), and division III (communication sciences and disorders). The DAC consults with the Dean of the School of Communication to discuss issues of importance to undergraduates.

Debate Society

The Northwestern debate program was founded in 1855, making it the oldest in the country. Debaters develop valuable analytical and communication skills by participating in more than 600 rounds of intercollegiate competition each season, in addition to hosting debate tournaments on campus and debating teams from other countries. Headquartered in Hardy House, the debate program has achieved unequaled success in competition, winning the National Debate Tournament a record 15 times. For more information, see debate.northwestern.edu.

Film and Media Production Groups

Students can participate in a number of student-organized film and media production groups. For a listing, see northwestern.campuslabs.com/engage/organizations.

Lambda Pi Eta

Lambda Pi Eta is the official communication studies honor society of the National Communication Association. Its purpose is to recognize, foster, and reward outstanding scholastic achievement in communication studies; stimulate interest in the field of communication; promote and encourage professional development among communication majors; provide an opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas in the field of communication; establish and maintain closer relationships between faculty and students; and explore options for graduate education in communication studies.

Media Arts Grants

Each year the Department of Radio/TV/Film invites applications from undergraduate students for grants to support individual media arts projects. The grants support work in any medium involving the creation of original, new projects. Students apply for grants individually, or with a student group as the producing partner, and the funding is for a project in the academic year in which it is awarded.

National Student Speech Language Hearing Association

The National Student Speech Language Hearing Association, founded in 1972, is a preprofessional association for graduate and undergraduate students interested in the study of communication sciences and disorders. NSSLHA has member representation on the policy-making board and selected committees and boards of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. The Northwestern chapter is dedicated to providing opportunities for members to have access to educational, social, and philanthropic experiences during their tenure at the University. For more information, see communication.northwestern.edu/departments/csd/student_activities.php.

Speech Team

Sponsored by the School of Communication, Northwestern’s speech team serves to develop what is arguably the most important skill of any profession—the art of communication. Through the forum of public speaking, students learn to communicate effectively in a competitive environment that stresses logic, quick thinking, breadth of knowledge, and, ultimately, persuasion. Eligibility is open to any Northwestern undergraduate, regardless of major, who wishes to explore or cultivate public speaking skills. No prior experience is necessary. For more information, see communication.northwestern.edu/learn/student_activities/speech.

Student Academy of Audiology

The Student Academy of Audiology is a national student organization dedicated to advancing the interests of students pursuing careers in audiology. Northwestern’s SAA chapter takes part in this collective mission in a number of ways: holding triquarterly meetings to discuss current topics in audiology and ways to advance the group; organizing and participating in community outreach programs;
sponsoring relevant speakers; maintaining contact with Northwestern alumni; and engaging in a variety of social events. For more information, see communication.northwestern.edu/departments/csd/student_activities.php.

**Student Theatre and Performance Groups**
Northwestern offers many performance-oriented student theatre groups. For a listing, see northwestern.campuslabs.com/engage/organizations.

**Theatre, Performance Studies, and Dance Productions**
All students are eligible to audition for theatre, performance studies, and dance productions. Audition notices are posted on the Wirtz Center's first-floor bulletin board. For more information on the school's mainstage productions, see communication.northwestern.edu/wirtz.

**Wirtz Student Theatre Projects**
Students are invited to apply for funding to support their theatre projects. For guidelines and the application, see sites.northwestern.edu/wirtzstudenttheatreprojects.

**WNUR**
WNUR 89.3 FM is a noncommercial radio station operated and managed by students. Staff membership is open to all Northwestern students. WNUR's studios are located in John J. Louis Hall. For more information see wnur.org.