Communication Studies

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Academic Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program name</th>
<th>Program type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Studies</td>
<td>BA, Minor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding the process of communication is no less important in today's Information Age than it was during the Golden Age of Athens, when skill in oral communication determined one's success in life. The study of the human capacity for speech as a means of influence, entertainment, and information was at the foundation of Western Civilization. A course of study in communication, always one that required knowledge of many cognate fields such as psychology and logic, remains interdisciplinary in nature. Faculty in Communication Studies teach aesthetic, historical, critical, and empirical methods for understanding communication.

The aims of the discipline are both conceptual and practical. The study of communication embodies the concerns of rhetoric, one of the three original liberal arts. In broad terms, students who enroll in a liberal arts curriculum do so to develop the ability to analyze and reason critically, write and speak effectively, and appreciate the influences of culture upon their lives. The first goal of the department is to advance these objectives.

Courses in the modern discipline of communication studies focus on the history, theory and practice of human communication. The field embraces communication in all contexts: political, organizational, debate, small group, intercultural, instructional, mass media, and performance of literature. The emphasis on developing theoretical insights unites these various fields.

The department offers fully articulated major and minor programs. Through the use of approved electives, the major can be shaped to assist students in preparing for their educational and career objectives. Students use a communication studies major to prepare for careers in business, advertising and public relations, theatre, law, education, the mass media, and the clergy. In addition to providing students with an option to select from a broad range of internships and the opportunity to participate in the Teaching Credential Program, the department houses an extensive program in competitive debate. It also offers individual and sequenced courses to develop practical skills in oral composition, critical thinking, and effective human communication.

Mission Statement

The general mission of the Communication Studies program is to facilitate students in developing their ability to reason critically, to speak and write effectively, and to understand and appreciate the influences of culture upon their lives. The discipline specific mission of the Communication Studies curriculum is to enhance understanding of the nature, processes and effects of human communication. Multi-dimensional in its approach, the discipline uses the rich resources of both the humanities and the social sciences in exploring the human capacity for speech – when, where, why, how, and with what effect people interact through language and extra-linguistic symbols – and focuses on the theory and practice of human communication in a variety of contexts: interpersonal, intercultural, instructional, organizational, political, in dyads, in small groups, and in the mass media.

Undergraduate Programs

BA Communication Studies

The Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies degree prepares students for careers in the various communication professions, as well as a wide variety of occupations that place a premium on excellent communication skills. In addition, many Communication Studies graduates go on to earn advanced degrees in disciplines such as communication, psychology, sociology, and law. The Communication Studies curriculum draws from the traditions of both the humanities and the social sciences, and includes a wide array of courses investigating the nature, processes and effects of human communication.

Communication Studies Minor

A 28-unit minor is available for students who desire documented competency in Communication Studies. After completing the core courses listed below, students may select the remainder of their courses from an approved list. Copies of the list and further information and application forms are available in the Communication Studies Department office.