

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Department Chair: Kelly Berg

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The field of Strategic Communication Studies examines how people communicate and how that communication constructs shared beliefs and shapes human community. Scholars of communication promote analysis of, and reflection on, the practical and ethical effects of communication in diverse situations, e.g. between individuals, in the public sphere, and in a variety of mediated contexts.

Our mission is to ensure our students thrive while learning in dynamic classes where they build professional and supportive relationships with professors, other students and with a strong alumni/alumnae network. We empower our students and prepare them for success for careers of today while being adaptable for the careers and world of tomorrow.

Strategic Communication Studies courses are designed to provide students with the theory and skill necessary for college work and for personal and professional development after graduation. The department emphasizes written and oral communication skills, message analysis, and communal responsibility.

Assessment

The Strategic Communication Studies Department conducts regular assessment of specific department learning goals and objectives. Assessment is embedded throughout the curriculum and includes analysis of student work samples. Outcomes are evaluated to assess student learning and inform pedagogical changes.

Students are required to complete 40 credits for the Strategic Communication Studies major with or without a concentration and 44 credits to complete the major if they complete both concentrations. Students can choose one of three paths through the major:

- Strategic Communication Studies Major with no concentration
- Strategic Communication Studies Major with a concentration:
 - Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing (PRAM)
 - Public Advocacy Leadership (PALD)
- Strategic Communication Studies Major with both concentrations:
 - Requires completion of an additional 4 credits of Communication Studies courses

Majors

- Strategic Communication Studies Major (<https://catalog.csbsju.edu/catalog/academic-departments/communication/communication-major/>)
- Strategic Communication Studies Major with a PR, Advertising, and Marketing Concentration (<https://catalog.csbsju.edu/catalog/academic-departments/communication/strategic-communication-studies-major-pram-concentration/>)
- Strategic Communication Studies Major with a Public Advocacy and Leadership Concentration (<https://catalog.csbsju.edu/catalog/>)

[academic-departments/communication/strategic-communication-studies-major-pald-concentration/](https://catalog.csbsju.edu/catalog/academic-departments/communication/strategic-communication-studies-major-pald-concentration/))

Minors

- Strategic Communication Studies Minor (<https://catalog.csbsju.edu/catalog/academic-departments/communication/communication-minor/>)

COMM 102 Public Speaking and the Public Sphere (4 Credits)

This course introduces students to the basic skills needed to present information to an audience clearly, effectively, and eloquently. The class will study, analyze, and construct public speeches from a rhetorical perspective. Students will ground their study of speechmaking in fundamental questions about the habits and skills of civic participation and the ethics of speech.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2-Justice

COMM 103 Media and Society (4 Credits)

Our digital world—like water to fish—is generally invisible to us because it surrounds all aspects of our daily lives. In this class we look at the ‘truths’ media creates, maintains, and distorts by examining the factors that drive the media and us. We also will work to develop critical thinking around our relationship to media by analyzing media messages and their impacts on us as individuals, on our relationships, and on the choices we make.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

COMM 105 Introduction to Human Communication (4 Credits)

This course provides students with a general overview of communication theory and research, particularly as it relates to their everyday interactions. The course covers theories related to interpersonal, gender, group, organizational, and intercultural contexts.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HONR 220B

Attributes: Social World (SW), Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

COMM 110 Voices Unheard: Gender, Race, and Power in America (4 Credits)

This course challenges students to critically examine how intersectional identities shape access to power, influence cultural expectations, and impact our lives. Students will gain insights into the structural barriers that have historically excluded marginalized communities. In the course, students will study key terms associated with intersectional notions of gender and race, investigate significant social movements and influential voices for change, and analyze the dynamic systems of power that dictate access to public spaces.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: CSD: Identity (CI)

COMM 112 Adulthood and Identity (4 Credits)

College is a transformative time when students navigate academic and social pressures while defining themselves apart from childhood expectations. In many ways, this is driven by the pressures and patterns of communication. This course addresses key challenges students face, such as managing societal expectations, difficult conversations, self-advocacy, and civic engagement, with a focus on how gender, race and ethnicity, and other intersectional identities shape these experiences. It explores how students' identities and actions are influenced by their community and how they, in turn, impact that community. By examining personal and collective experiences both on campus and nationally, the course provides a space for meaningful discussions on the everyday issues students encounter. The specific topics and examples discussed in the course will likely change from semester to semester due to relevance and changing times, but will always focus on issues related to identity formation and perception, culture/cultural appropriation, intersecting identities, ability/difference/belonging, mental health, misinformation and information/media literacy, communication and conflict management, stereotyping, social media, cultural and societal expectations, and more.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HONR 120I

Attributes: CSD: Identity (CI)

COMM 205 Interpersonal Communication (4 Credits)

Gives students a practical and theoretical understanding of one-on-one communication. Topics may include relationship development, perception, self-image, language, nonverbal communication, listening, conflict, gender roles, family communication, culture, communication competence, and the impact of technology on communication. In addition, this class uses the lens of the Truth theme to explore many of these topics.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COMM 205AC

Attributes: Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

COMM 220 Debate & Democracy (4 Credits)

Public debate is essential in a democratic society. In this course, students will participate in debates on public issues to empower them to be skillful, informed, and ethical advocates. Students will work collaboratively to research and evaluate sources and evidence, assess the truthfulness and quality of claims by applying analytical and reasoning skills to public issues, listen thoughtfully to opposing viewpoints and learn to formulate creative counterarguments, develop presentation skills by constructing, questioning, and refuting arguments delivered to audiences, and explore the role of debate in promoting democratic political and social change. Students will participate in interactive classroom debates on contemporary issues, but no previous debate training is required.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations(LF), Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI). CI course may be taken prior to or concurrently with Focus Course.

Attributes: Benedictine Raven (BN), Thematic Focus - Truth

COMM 225 Argumentation and Advocacy (4 Credits)

This course equips students with the skills and theory necessary to interpret, analyze, research, and construct arguments about matters of public concern. By learning about, practicing, and participating in argument, students understand, evaluate, and appreciate the communicative practices that constitute shared civic life.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

COMM 240 Digital Video Communication (4 Credits)

Point, shoot, edit, post does not guarantee effective digital video communication any more than scribbling thoughts or talking "off the cuff" means you've created effective written or spoken messages. In this class, students will learn the principles of effective digital video communication so they might be able to identify important aesthetic concepts and analyze the effectiveness of messages. Students will construct their own digital video messages by learning to conceptualize, script/storyboard, and pitch messages to a client.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 245 Introduction to Media Writing (4 Credits)

Students will learn to collect and analyze information to be used in message design; to construct clear and accurate messages that are appropriate to the purpose, audience, context, and media platform, under deadline pressure, and will be introduced to different types of media writing, including journalistic storytelling, blogging, brand communication, and public relations.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Writing Requirement (WR)

COMM 248 Media & Youth (4 Credits)

Analyze the relationship between mediated communication and youth culture by examining issues such as privacy, gender bias, cultural stereotypes, sexuality, civic engagement, and violence. Explore cognitive development, as well as social, emotional, and psychological effects of media on youths' everyday lives, knowledge, and relationships. Develop media literacy by applying these theories and concepts to your own experiences with popular media, including social media, television, music, film, and print. Finally, analyze how mediated messages have influenced the human experience by communicating movement of beliefs, norms, and expectations over time. The knowledge gained in this course will serve you in your personal and professional lives in the years to come. Course includes an optional experiential learning component (EX).

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COMM 348

Attributes: Cmnty Engaged Learning Opt, Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2-Movement, Writing Requirement (WR)

COMM 250 Effective Listening (4 Credits)

Introduces students to basic principles and theories of listening. Approaches listening as a critical component in the communication process. Readings, discussion, and exercises facilitate understanding of effective listening and development of individual listening skills. Topics include intrapersonal (mindfulness) discriminative, comprehensive, empathic/compassionate, critical and appreciative listening.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COMM 277A

Attributes: Human Experience (HE)

COMM 251 Communication and Conflict (4 Credits)

Introduces students to principles and theories of conflict. Examines causes of conflict and a variety of approaches to managing conflict. Emphasizes conflict in various interpersonal contexts.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 253 Nonverbal Communication (2 Credits)

Provides students with a general overview of the theoretical and practical application of primary areas of nonverbal communication research. The course examines theories and empirical studies in selected areas of nonverbal communication such as personal appearance, touch, space, body language, gestures, eye contact, use of time, facial expressions, olfaction, and body adornment/alteration.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 265 Group Communication (4 Credits)

Gives students a practical and theoretical understanding of how groups communicate. Includes such topics as group dynamics, leadership, feedback, decision-making, power, norms and roles, conflict, groupthink and communication theory. This class has a Justice designation, and students will examine the impact that group communication can have on Justice as well as create projects that explore questions of Justice in everyday situations and conflicts.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Thematic Encounter 1/2-Justice

COMM 271 Individual Learning Project (1-4 Credits)

Supervised reading or research at the lower-division level. The proposed project must be grounded in previous relevant coursework in the discipline. ILPs may not substitute for a regularly offered course and must be student-designed. Permission of department chair required. Consult department for applicability toward major or minor requirements. Not available to first-year students.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 277A Listening for Justice (4 Credits)

What role does listening play in Social Justice transformation? We are currently redefining our government, relationships with each other, and our connection to the global community. This course invites students to be brave even when listening becomes uncomfortable. Readings, discussion, and exercises facilitate understanding of effective listening and development of individual listening skills. Students will study and practice an awareness of self-listening and Benedictine perspective to determine how the mission applies to our current culture. Students learn to respond rather than react to social situations with mindfulness, empathy, and cultivated compassion. Compassion is action.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations(LF), Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI). CI course may be taken prior to or concurrently with Focus Course.

Equivalent courses: COMM 250

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Justice

COMM 278A Rhetoric of Social Change (4 Credits)

Social movements and social protest have played a pivotal role in challenging power and shaping culture, society, and politics. This course examines the role of language, music, images, and other symbolic actions in bringing about social change. The course also teaches students the art of rhetorical criticism – the intentional, methodical study of how rhetoric works and impacts communities from the local to the global. The course is writing intensive and students will develop research in the course that can be developed and shared in other venues.

Prerequisites: COMM 278A is a Thematic Focus - Movement course. You must take INTG 100 or 205 prior to taking a Thematic Focus Course. You must take a Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI) course prior to or at the same time as Thematic Focus Courses.

Equivalent courses: COMM 201

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Movement, Writing Requirement (WR)

COMM 282A Public Relations (4 Credits)

Develop practical skills in public relations and understand how it shapes organizational communication and public image. You'll learn key strategies and ethical practices and see how relationships are created, developed, and maintained. By exploring real-world examples, you will look at various types of public relations, which may include public affairs and political communication, crisis communication, media relations and corporate social responsibility. You will analyze how PR pros tackle challenges, build trust, and create strong relationships between organizations and their audiences.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations(LF), Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI). CI course may be taken prior to or concurrently with Focus Course.

Attributes: Thematic Focus - Truth

COMM 283A Public Relations Branding (2 Credits)

Public Relations Branding is a deep dive into public relations content creation and its intersection with brand. This course will introduce students to the overarching objectives of public relations: building and maintaining relationships, including creating awareness, instilling positive perceptions, generating support for organizational goals and overcoming negative perceptions. In addition, it will educate students about brand, brand adjective and key messages and their roles in guiding public relations messaging and content development. Students will gain experience planning and executing core public relations tactics such as generating earned media through press releases and social media, engaging audiences on social media, creating strategic email and developing content for effective web homepages and landing pages. Instruction and editing will focus on helping students develop the key skill of writing clear, concise, active and compelling messages that are appropriate for the organization/client, audience, objective and specific media platforms.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 283B Advertising Branding (2 Credits)

Advertising Branding focuses on advertising strategy and message development in a digital environment. This course will introduce students to the overarching objectives of advertising: to promote products and services, differentiate them from other, similar products and services and convey consistent, benefit-oriented brand messaging, largely through paid communications. It will teach students the basics of advertising content creation such as the creative strategy and brief and then delve into the inner workings of the creative process and the critical skills of copy writing and multimedia content development for advertising across media platforms. Students also will develop an understanding of the importance of a strong, tightly curated brand that defines and differentiates a company and informs every aspect of advertising strategy and tactics, with a focus on the emotion and authentic truth at the heart of the brand.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 303 Social Movements (4 Credits)

This course examines how rhetoric enables groups of people to come together in order to influence public policies. Students will study a variety of historical movements to understand how public arguments can represent social groups and motivate collective action.

Prerequisites: COMM 201

COMM 304 Political Communication (4 Credits)

This class examines how political symbols and discourse mobilize society, stimulate social action and create national identity. The course will explore how political language reinforces, interprets, challenges and manipulates popular beliefs, attitudes and values. Topics may include presidential rhetoric, campaign discourse and legislative appeals.

Prerequisites: COMM 278A

COMM 305 Gender, Voice, and Power (4 Credits)

Students will apply both theory and historical precedent to our current cultural conversations about race and gender as it relates to public voice, law, and social order. Contemporary issues that might be discussed are things like the bias that exists for women and racial/ethnic minorities when seeking political roles, the challenges faced in the workplace, the cultural expectations of gendered relationship, rape culture, inequality in Hollywood, strategies in gender activism, etc. This course centers around conversations of justice, equality, and access.

Prerequisites: Before taking a Cultural and Social Difference: Systems Courses (CS) you first must complete the following Integrations requirements; Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS)

COMM 310 Black Civil Rights Rhetoric (4 Credits)

The course explores how public expressions about race have impacted the history of United States democracy. More specifically, students will study the political issues, moral complexities, and rhetorical strategies of speeches, essays, and public art by people of African descent who have argued about the nature and scope of "America."

Prerequisites: COMM 102 or COMM 278A

COMM 311 Rhetoric and Religion (4 Credits)

This course will examine the complex relationship between religion and politics and the role that discourse and symbols play in that relationship. The course will explore both how the United States uses public discourse to navigate the proper role between church and state, as well as the ways in which public figures and movements draw upon religion for moral authority. The course will cover such topics as the founding discussions about the role of religion in public life and contemporary debates about the church/state relationship.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 312 Rhetorical Dimensions of Sport (4 Credits)

This course will explore the ways in which sports are used as a part of public discourse and debate. The course will use rhetorical theories and concepts to examine how athletes, games, competitions and controversies are incorporated into larger social discussions about gender, race and national identity.

Prerequisites: Before taking a Cultural and Social Difference: Systems Courses (CS) you first must complete the following Integrations requirements; Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Equivalent courses: COMM 381H

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS)

COMM 314 Public Health Marketing (4 Credits)

Interested in a health-related career? Would you like to work in health communication, health promotion, or health education? The primary goal of this course is to help students understand how to apply marketing principles and theories of health promotion to enhance community health. In this course, students will learn the basics of planning, implementing, and evaluating public health marketing programs to improve individual and population health, including the use of social marketing practices, audience analysis research, creative message design, and more. In addition, students will study the fundamentals of marketing and learn what drives consumers' needs and choices. Competencies: conducting focus group interviews, considering how audiences' intersectional understandings of identity impact message framing and message reception, and creating and evaluating effective health campaigns. This course will include an experiential learning project that provides students with hands-on experience working with a client on designing a public health marketing campaign. Some sections of this course will carry an experiential learning (EX) attribute.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Social World (SW)

COMM 330 Apology and Crisis Communication (4 Credits)

This course examines three distinct types of public messages that have proliferated in recent years: Apologia and image repair (public statements defending one's character in response to accusations of wrongdoing); Apologies (statements of contrition and acknowledgment of offense that express regret); and Crisis Communication (statements delivered in response to sudden emergencies or upheavals). Students will study a range of responses to public accusations, including denial, excuses, accounts, explanations, evasion, justifications, and confessions. The course examines the relationship between blame, guilt, humility, remorse, repentance, atonement, and forgiveness, and looks at the ways that public figures and groups express these ideas in response to controversies. Special focus is given to official apologies for historical transgressions and injustices, with an exploration of how these statements seek reconciliation. Some sections of this course carry a Benedictine Raven (BN) attribute.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations(LF), Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI). CI course may be taken prior to or concurrently with Focus Course.

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Justice

COMM 331 Capstone: Rhetoric and Citizenship (4 Credits)

The Communication discipline has been built around educating students on the practice and performance of eloquent, productive, and ethical citizenship. Drawing from a vast array of interdisciplinary scholarship and public argument, this course engages this notion of citizenship and its role in civic life. This Capstone course will examine these ideas through debates about the rights of citizenship itself. We will look at the legality of citizenship rights such as suffrage and marriage. We will also look at citizenship through the lens of belonging and identity, in categories such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity. This will be done through examining both historical and contemporary examples of people enacting their rights as citizens through social movements, social media, public campaigns, etc. Overall, we will try to understand what duties and obligations we might have as citizens and how we can directly engage our community.

Prerequisites: COMM 102 and COMM 103 and COMM 105 and (COMM 201 or COMM 278A)

Restrictions: Enrollment limited to students with a class of Junior or Senior. Enrollment is limited to students with a major in Communication.

COMM 336 Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations Campaign Design (4 Credits)

Learn how effective strategic campaigns in marketing, advertising and public relations are designed. Master the tools necessary to analyze and create effective strategic communication campaigns. The primary purpose of this course is to develop students' analytical skills and to enable students to understand the role of persuasive theory in strategic communication campaign development, implementation, and evaluation. This course provides a framework for students to understand the appropriate use of theory and components of strategic communication campaigns, as relevant to marketing, public relations, public service, health campaigns, sports promotion, and much more. Students will learn to be more discerning creators and consumers of persuasive messages.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Social World (SW), Thematic Encounter3 - Truth

COMM 338 Strategic Social Media Marketing and Communication (4 Credits)

Strategic online branding, engagement, and experiences need more than your personal social media accounts require. In this course, you'll learn strategies for creating an effective, ethical social media campaign or plan through research, analysis, and hands-on experience. Some sections of this course will carry an experiential learning (EX) attribute.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COMM 384A

COMM 341 News and Democracy (4 Credits)

The role of the news industry in a democracy is to inform and socialize the citizenry for participation within the democracy. Today we must ask: How do we uncover "truth" in an era of "Fake News," Artificial Intelligence, and extreme partisanship? What are the consequences for the quality of news coverage when the funding model for news organization has collapsed causing mass layoffs and news deserts across the United States? This course will examine the pressures and constraints on journalists and journalism; teach you to identify quality journalism regardless of political perspective; identify the influence of social media, advertising, and public relations on the content of news; examine the nature of news coverage for local, national, and international issues; and, most importantly, teach you to become well-informed, news literate citizens.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Truth

COMM 342 Communication in an AI Era (4 Credits)

As our communication evolves, so do our identities, our relationships, our cultures and societies. The use of new media and social media in our society, locally and globally, has altered traditional boundaries that once defined communication, identity, and relationships. Artificial intelligence communication is already shifting our expectations and norms. This course examines how new forms of mediated communication affect interpersonal and mass communication, social identities, our understanding of privacy, and reality. Participants will investigate theoretical questions raised by changing communication technologies and analyze movement of ideas, beliefs, and communication over time.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Thematic Encounter3 - Movement

COMM 346 Strategic Communication Campaigns Design Experience (4 Credits)

Ready to apply what you've learned in the classroom to hands-on work for a community client? This course provides an opportunity for majors to apply what they have learned about strategic communication campaigns, persuasive theory, oral and written communication, message analysis, and community, by creating strategic communication campaigns for a client.

Prerequisites: COMM 336 or COMM 314

Restrictions: Students with the 2024-2025 Registration Cohort or 2025-2026 Registration Cohort attributes may not enroll.

Attributes: Experiential Engagement (EX)

COMM 347 Media Effects (4 Credits)

Given the centrality of media in our lives, it is important to understand how it may influence us. This course provides advanced study in the effects of media on young adults by exploring major theories of media effects. Through analyzing quantitative research, we will gain a deeper understanding of media representations and how they impact diverse audiences. A range of topics will be covered including media and mental health, racial and gender stereotypes, violent and sexual content, advertising, and social media and political polarization.

Prerequisites: COMM 102 and COMM 103 and (COMM 105 or HONR 220B)

Attributes: Quantitative Reasoning (QR), Social World (SW)

COMM 350 Intercultural Communication (4 Credits)

Examines the relationship between communication and culture. Communication theory is used to identify and explore barriers and opportunities in communicating with individuals from different cultures and co-cultures. Skills necessary for communication across cultures are identified and developed. Note: Some sections of this course may carry an experiential learning component. Students may take either COMM 350 or COMM 350A, not both, for credit. See registration booklet for details.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: ENVR 350A, HONR 325B

COMM 350A Intercultural Communication (4 Credits)

Examines the relationship between communication and culture. Communication theory is used to identify and explore barriers and opportunities in communicating with individuals from different cultures and co-cultures. Skills necessary for communication across cultures are identified and developed. Special attention is placed on communicating cross culturally within the U.S.A., including across race, socio-economic class, etc. In addition, the course also explores communicating internationally. Students may take either COMM 350A or COMM 350, not both, for credit. Some sections of this course will carry a GL attribute.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Equivalent courses: ENVR 350A, HONR 325B

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS)

COMM 351 Gender and Communication (4 Credits)

Examines the impact of socialization on gender identity and the influence of gender roles on communication. Looks at the connections between communication and gender, racial identity, sexuality and other social identity factors in a variety of relational and social contexts. Introduces students to current theories of gender communication that highlight evolving understandings of gender identity.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HONR 325A

Attributes: Social World (SW), Thematic Encounter3 - Justice

COMM 352 Health Communication (4 Credits)

Provides students with a broad introduction to the study and application of health communication theories, principles, and practices. Examines how narratives, media, interpersonal communication, group communication, intercultural communication, gender communication, organizational communication and promotional campaigns function within health contexts. The relevance of communication to health is examined as a means for improving communication in the health care setting, improving personal health, and influencing public health.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COMM 385B

Attributes: Social World (SW), Thematic Encounter3 - Truth

COMM 353A Intercultural Health Communication (4 Credits)

This course explores the communication about cultural health beliefs and practices, particularly within the U.S. biomedical system. In addition, the course examines health disparities in the U.S. and how communication contributes to, but also may help alleviate, them. Some topics include: traditional health beliefs among Latinx, Asian, African, and Native American cultures; and relationship between health disparities and race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, obesity, and differing abilities. Students will complete a variety of analysis papers related to the course topics.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations(LF), Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI). CI course may be taken prior to or concurrently with Focus Course.

Restrictions: Students with the 2024-2025 Registration Cohort or 2025-2026 Registration Cohort attributes may not enroll.

Equivalent courses: COMM 353

Attributes: Thematic Focus - Justice

COMM 354 Gender, Media, and Political Campaigns (4 Credits)

Students analyze political campaign communication texts, including speeches, advertisements, social media, and other messaging. They engage in historical analysis, contextual analysis, audience analysis, textual analysis, and content analysis. They learn about political communication, advertising strategies and tactics and conduct their own in-depth textual analyses. This will all be understood through the lens of gender and how intersectional understandings of identity impacts not only framing of messaging/campaigns but also perception/reception of messages. Students will learn about the history of women running for political office. Offered every other fall during election years.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Equivalent courses: COMM 384C, GEND 360S

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS)

COMM 358 Family Communication (4 Credits)

This advanced relational communication course is based on the following assumptions: there are many ways to be a family, communication serves to constitute as well as reflect family relationships, and well-functioning families work at managing their communication patterns because developing and maintaining relationships takes effort. The course explores movement in families by using a variety of theoretical perspectives to understand family development and communication processes. Students ultimately learn to apply qualitative and quantitative primary research findings to analyze lived family communication experiences.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COMM 385C

Attributes: Social World (SW), Thematic Encounter3 - Movement

COMM 361 Fat Studies (4 Credits)

This course examines the ways in which fatness has come to be socially constructed as a means for discrimination and oppression in American culture. We will explore fat stigma within a variety of contexts including employment, education, interpersonal relationships, and fashion, as well as how that stigma intersects with gender, race, class, age, ability, and sexual orientation. We will also study fat activism enacted to counter systemic weight bias.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Equivalent courses: COMM 387C, GEND 360R, GEND 361

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS)

COMM 367 Organizational Communication (4 Credits)

Theories and concepts of organizational communication are discussed. Includes such topics as communication approaches to organizational theory, power, corporate culture, conflict, organizational metaphors, organizational processes, management styles and organizational change. Some sections of this course may carry an experiential learning requirement. See registration booklet for details. Prerequisite: 105.

Prerequisites: COMM 105 or HONR 220B

COMM 371 Individual Learning Project (1-4 Credits)

Supervised reading or research at the upper-division level. The proposed project must be grounded in previous relevant coursework in the discipline. ILPs may not substitute for a regularly offered course and must be student-designed. Permission of department chair and completion of 12 credits within the department required. Four credits maximum will count toward the major. ILP credits may not be applied to fulfill the four 300-level courses in Communication for the major. Not available to first-year students.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 378A Environmental Rhetoric (4 Credits)

In recent years, we have witnessed dramatic events caused by human activity on the climate and the environment, including record-breaking global temperatures, air quality alerts caused by wildfires, and rampant plastics pollution. There have also been historic responses, such as state bans on “forever chemicals” and a global youth climate justice movement. This course looks at the way advocates communicate about the environment. Students study environmental appeals in speeches, advertisements, news stories, image events, films, and advocacy campaigns, to determine how these messages shape public understanding and behavior about the natural world. The course examines a range of issues related to the theme of movement: from appeals focusing on the migration of animals, to the movement of people in response to climate change, to how activists engage in performative protests involving body movement or immobility, to the range of emotional appeals used to compel or move audiences to action. Students will critique environmental texts using a variety of theoretical and philosophical approaches, including a Benedictine perspective with a focus on stewardship, stability, and humility.

Prerequisites: COMM 378A is a Thematic Focus - Movement course. You must take INTG 100 or 205 prior to taking a Thematic Focus Course. You must take a Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI) course prior to or at the same time as Thematic Focus Courses.

Restrictions: Students with the 2025-2026 Registration Cohort attribute may not enroll.

Equivalent courses: COMM 309

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Movement

COMM 379A Freedom of Speech (4 Credits)

This course explores the historical development of laws and cultural assumptions that regulate the freedom of expression in the United States. Whether or not a citizen has a right to speak freely is a determining factor in the health of human progress and democracy. Students will study the communicative behaviors that have inspired free speech controversies and analyze the arguments made in favor of and in opposition to laws regulating speech. As a Thematic Focus – Truth course, students are asked to consider how the right of free expression has been integral to the discovery of knowledge and progress. The creation of and dissemination of knowledge is power. We cover topics such as free speech and democracy, the freedom of the press, sedition, protest, obscenity, threatening speech, intellectual property, and the regulation of speech in cyberspace. JN/SR standing recommended but not required.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations(LF), Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI). CI course may be taken prior to or concurrently with Focus Course.

Restrictions: Students with the 2024-2025 Registration Cohort or 2025-2026 Registration Cohort attributes may not enroll.

Equivalent courses: COMM 307

Attributes: Benedictine Raven (BN), Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Truth, Writing Requirement (WR)

COMM 379B Rhetoric of Advertising (4 Credits)

Advertising is everywhere. Our nation spends more money on advertising than on public education, making advertising arguably the most powerful source of information on the planet. Each advertisement is a compact and powerful form of argument designed to motivate a specific audience to take some action. This course analyzes the rhetorical features of advertisements and examines how these messages generate social meaning. Students will use critical theory to render deep readings of advertisements, examining how they shape perceptions of identity and the world around us and create a perspective of what constitutes “truth” or “common sense” in a culture. Focusing on the theme of “truth,” students will examine false and deceptive claims that occur in advertising, including the legal standards that regulate such advertising. Students will also discuss the ethical and social consequences of advertising in society and discuss how these messages shape civic attitudes and perceptions of the “good life.”

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations(LF), Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI). CI course may be taken prior to or concurrently with Focus Course.

Restrictions: Enrollment limited to students with a class of Junior, Sophomore or Senior.

Equivalent courses: COMM 308

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Truth

COMM 379C The Truth Wars: Media and the Limits of the First Amendment (4 Credits)

Malcolm X once said, “The media’s the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that’s power. Because they control the minds of the masses.” New media technologies offer the potential for great civic engagement and social learning. They also, however, provide a space of potential harm to information sharing, public understanding, and privacy. Using media has become an integral part of everyday life, and as such, understanding both its potentials and limitations is imperative. This course seeks to educate students on the regulations, principles, and ethical obligations involved in media use and dissemination. Students will learn about media regulation under the First Amendment around issues such as privacy, defamation, obscenity, hate speech, intellectual property, mis/disinformation, and communication online.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COMM 387D

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Truth

COMM 384B Rhetoric and Popular Music (4 Credits)

This course assumes that we use music as a soundtrack for our lives, to encode memories, to express the way we feel, to annoy or influence others. So we will not study the history of popular music nor will we practice its appreciation; rather, we will study the rhetoric of popular music, or how people use music to do stuff. In particular, we will explore how music helps people shape and maintain their identities.

Prerequisites: Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Equivalent courses: COMM 381L

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS)

COMM 387A Harlem Renaissance (4 Credits)

This course studies the art of the Harlem Renaissance from a rhetorical perspective. This means that we will analyze a diverse body of texts from the 1920s and 20s – literature and poetry, film, the blues, painting and photography – to gain insight into the social truths they establish and contest. Ultimately, our study of this period will help us discuss fundamental questions about the relationship between public expression and public life, art and language, politics and identity.

Prerequisites: COMM 278A

Equivalent courses: HONR 350R

COMM 387D Truth Wars: Media and the Limits of the First Amendment (4 Credits)

Malcolm X once said, “The media’s the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that’s power. Because they control the minds of the masses.” New media technologies offer the potential for great civic engagement and social learning. They also, however, provide a space of potential harm to information sharing, public understanding, and privacy. Using media has become an integral part of everyday life, and as such, understanding both its potentials and limitations is imperative. This course seeks to educate students on the regulations, principles, and ethical obligations involved in media use and dissemination. Students will learn about media regulation under the First Amendment around issues such as privacy, defamation, obscenity, hate speech, intellectual property, mis/disinformation, and communication online.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Truth

COMM 387E Monsters (4 Credits)

What is a Monster? This course uses monsters – real and imaginary – to explore rhetorical issues and ways of thinking. Throughout the semester we will consider three interrelated questions: What is a monster?; Where do monsters come from?; and, How should we confront our monsters? These questions are all inherently rhetorical and as we consider them, we will grapple with the implied ethical questions of representation – what is at stake in how Otherness is represented? In how difference is deployed? In how fear or passivity is martialled?

Prerequisites: None

COMM 387H Media, Culture, and Power (4 Credits)

This course will examine the social, political, and economic motivations and consequences of the “reality” found in media content, such as film, television, and advertising. We will explore the “constructed reality” of media content to uncover the ways in which particular views of reality reflected in that content might help to maintain a status quo understanding of the world that benefits some members of society more than others. In the spirit of social justice and in hopes of creating a just and equitable world, students will learn to unmask existing power dynamics in media content. Through this process, students will develop a hearty resilience to ideologically troubling mediated messages and an appreciation for ones that forge a more inclusive, equitable, and just public discourse. Students will study and practice five different critical approaches to analyzing media texts (rhetorical, cultural, psychoanalytic, feminist, and queer). After reading, discussing, and trying out the five approaches over the course of the semester, students will select one approach for their final analysis project. In an effort to actively make the world a more just and equitable place, students will then publicize the findings of their analysis projects through a mass medium.

Prerequisites: None

Restrictions: Enrollment limited to students with a class of Junior, Sophomore or Senior.

COMM 390 Communicating Ethically (4 Credits)

Every act of communication is, at its core, an ethical enterprise. How we communicate at home, in the workplace, and in our communities raises important ethical questions. Students in this course will use ethical frameworks to understand who is responsible for a message’s creation and impact, its effects in a diverse range of contexts, and to evaluate communication situations. They will learn to balance their self-interest with the interests of others, and by emphasizing moral character and agency, learn how moral thought can translate into ethical action.

Prerequisites: None

Restrictions: Students with the 2024-2025 Registration Cohort or 2025-2026 Registration Cohort attributes may not enroll.

Attributes: Writing Requirement (WR)

COMM 392 Communication Practicum (1 Credit)

Under the supervision of an approved faculty moderator, a student who participates in a practical communication-related activity may receive credit. Evidence of work completed (e.g. portfolio, audio tapes) letters of evaluation by supervisors, regular conferences with the faculty moderator, a structured self-evaluation, and a minimum number of hours (30 per term) and projects completed are required. Students present a proposal to a faculty moderator and obtain approval prior to registering for this credit. Course is repeatable for total of 4 credits. It may not be applied toward completion of the communication major or minor.

Prerequisites: None

COMM 395 Capstone: Research Paper (4 Credits)

Student proposed research project not ordinarily available in standard courses. Additional prerequisite at least one course in each department learning goal area.

Prerequisites: COMM 102 and COMM 103 and COMM 105 and (COMM 201 or COMM 278A)

Restrictions: Enrollment limited to students with a class of Junior or Senior.

COMM 397 Internship (1-16 Credits)

Practical work experience for juniors and seniors. Experience is arranged by the student with the advice and approval of the internship director and the departmental faculty moderator prior to registering for the course. Credit will be earned by demonstrating knowledge gained as a result of the work experience. Additionally, students must demonstrate the ability to apply this knowledge to past communication department concepts and courses. Departmental moderator supervises and evaluates the experience. Internship credits may not be applied toward completion of the minor. Faculty in the department are limited to a maximum of three internship supervisions each term. Consequently it is not guaranteed that all students who desire to complete an internship for credit will be accommodated. Completed Application for Internship Form required; see XPD webpage. Fall, Spring, and Summer.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Experiential Engagement (EX)