

# COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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<https://coms.calpoly.edu>

Department Chair: Bernard K. Duffy

## Academic Programs

Program name	Program type
Communication Studies	BA, Minor

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. Further information and application forms are available in the Communication Studies Department office.

## COMS Courses

### COMS 101. Public Speaking. 4 units

GE Area A2

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

Introduction to the principles of public speaking. Practical experience in the development, presentation, and critical analysis of speeches to inform, to persuade, and to actuate. Not open to students with credit in COMS 102. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as COMS/HNRS 101. Fulfills GE A2; for students admitted Fall 2016 or later a grade of C- or better is required to fulfill GE Area A2.

### COMS 102. Principles of Oral Communication. 4 units

GE Area A2

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Introduction to the fundamentals and principles which underlie effective oral communication. Practical experience in various types of speaking situations: informative speaking, persuasive speaking, and panel discussion. Not open to students with credit in COMS 101. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as COMS/HNRS 102. Fulfills GE A2; for students admitted Fall 2016 or later a grade of C- or better is required to fulfill GE Area A2.

### COMS 126. Argument and Advocacy. 4 units

GE Area A3

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A1 with a C- or better, or consent of instructor. Recommended: Completion of GE Area A2.

The nature of critical thinking as applied in written and oral argument. Analysis of inductive and deductive reasoning. Analysis of reasoning, argument, forms of support and fallacies of argument and language. Instruction in and practical experience in writing sound persuasive arguments and engaging in oral argumentation assignments. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE A3; for students admitted Fall 2016 or later a grade of C- or better is required to fulfill GE Area A3.

**COMS 145. Reasoning, Argumentation, and Writing. 4 units**

GE Area A3

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A1 with a C- or better, or consent of instructor. Recommended: Completion of GE Area A2.

The principles of reasoning in argumentation. Examination of rhetorical principles and responsible rhetorical behavior. Application of these principles to written and oral communications. Effective use of research methods and sources. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as COMS/ENGL/HNRS 145. Fulfills GE A3; for students admitted Fall 2016 or later a grade of C- or better is required to fulfill GE Area A3.

**COMS 201. Advanced Public Speaking. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W

Prerequisite: COMS 101 or COMS 102.

Further consideration of the principles of public address. Advanced practice in manuscript, extemporaneous, and impromptu speaking. 4 lectures.

**COMS 208. Performance of Literature. 4 units**

GE Area C3

Term Typically Offered: F, W

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Areas A and C1.

Poetry, prose, nonfiction and dramatic literature performed to communicate the levels of meaning within each work to the audience. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE C3.

**COMS 212. Interpersonal Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: COMS/HNRS 101 or COMS/HNRS 102.

Introduction to the interaction process in two-person (dyadic) communication settings. Emphasis on the functions of varying messages in the initiation, development, maintenance and termination of personal and professional relationships. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as COMS/PSY 212.

**COMS 213. Organizational Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 101 or COMS 102.

Introduction to communication within the organization and between the organization and its environment. Effects of networks, superior/subordinate message patterns, team building, climate, message flow patterns and distortion on organizational effectiveness. 4 lectures.

**COMS 217. Small Group Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 101 or COMS 102.

Basic principles and techniques of small group communication. Survey of the importance of discussion in contemporary society, including study of and practice in informal group discussion, panel discussion, symposium, and forum. 4 lectures.

**COMS 218. Media, Self and Society. 4 units**

GE Area D4

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Overview of the interaction between mass media and individuals in American society. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from mass communication and psychology to explore how individuals develop a coherent understanding of self within a highly mediated world. The power and influence of media messages and practices. Individual responsibility in an information society. 4 lectures. Crosslisted as COMS/JOUR 218. Fulfills GE D4.

**COMS 226. Applied Argumentation. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A.

Intermediate level course in the theory and practice of everyday argument. Select theories of argumentation, and practical experience arguing in a wide variety of contexts. 4 lectures.

**COMS 250. Forensic Activity. 2 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 101 or COMS 102.

Introduction to competitive debate activities. Research, analysis, and debating about contemporary issues. Any student who wishes to receive academic credit for participation in such activities during the quarter should enroll. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 laboratories.

**COMS 270. Selected Topics. 1-4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Consent of instructor.

Directed group study of selected topics. The Schedule of Classes will list title selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1 to 4 lectures.

**COMS 301. Business and Professional Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 101 or COMS 102.

Communication skills and functions for all levels of organizational employees. Interviewing, oral briefings, motivational and conference speaking. 4 lectures.

**COMS 308. Group Performance of Literature. 4 units**

GE Area C4

Term Typically Offered: F, SP

Prerequisite: Junior standing and completion of GE Area A and C3.

Examination and experience in the various modes of group performance of literature: Readers Theatre, Chamber Theatre, Story Theatre. Scripting; directing; performing and critiquing of group performance of literature. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE C4 except for Communication Studies majors.

**COMS 311. Communication Theory. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A.

Survey of human communication theories including interpersonal, small group, organizational, persuasion, nonverbal, intercultural, and media. Philosophical foundations for understanding communication from a social science perspective. 4 lectures.

**COMS 312. Communication Research Methods. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 311 and STAT 217, junior standing; for COMS majors only.

Exploration of communication research strategies and methodologies. Basic methods of designing research in empirical communication studies. 4 lectures.

**COMS 315. Intergroup Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A.

Survey of theory and research concerning language and communication between various social groups (e.g., age, sex, race, sexual orientation), with an emphasis on understanding the role verbal, nonverbal, and mass communication plays in identity formation and differentiating group members. 4 lectures.

**COMS 316. Intercultural Communication. 4 units**

GE Area D5; USCP

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A; completion of one lower division Area D course.

Cultural aspects of communication within and among diverse groups. Particular focus on U.S. culture and history and the diversity of ethnic, subcultural, and co-cultural groups. Development of nuanced understanding of the role of culture and communication in human thought, behavior, and interaction. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures. Not open to students with credit in COMS 416. Fulfills USCP. Fulfills GE D5 except for Communication Studies majors.

**COMS 317. Technology and Human Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A.

Impact of technological change upon human communication. Past, present, and future technological developments that have affected how humans communicate. Emphasis on new communication technologies. 4 lectures.

**COMS 319. Critical Cultural Studies and Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: SP

Prerequisite: GE Area A completed and Junior standing.

Analysis and integration of theories and methods of Cultural Studies as an interdisciplinary mode of critical qualitative inquiry. Emphasis on the role of communication in differential power relations, particularly on issues of identity, struggle, and representation in a diverse culture. 4 lectures.

**COMS 322. Persuasion. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A.

Theory of persuasion with particular emphasis upon social psychological principles of influence. Analysis of various forms of persuasion, social influence and propaganda. 4 lectures.

**COMS 330. Classical Rhetorical Theory. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A.

Early development of rhetorical theory in Greco-Roman civilization. Analysis of the canons of rhetoric. Rhetorical thought of Sophists, Isocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. 4 lectures.

**COMS 331. Contemporary Rhetorical Theory. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A and junior standing.

Rhetoric's role in contemporary culture. Issues: political advocacy; science, technology and mass persuasion; ethics and rhetoric. Representative theorists: Burke, Weaver, Richards, Toulmin and McLuhan. 4 lectures.

**COMS 332. Rhetorical Criticism. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: Junior standing, COMS 330.

Theory and method used in the analysis and evaluation of rhetorical discourse. Study of critical essays. Practice in interpreting and evaluating persuasive discourse. 4 lectures.

**COMS 350. Advanced Forensic Activity. 2 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 250.

Advanced participation in intercollegiate speech activities. Intercollegiate tournament competition, judging speech competition and other communication-related public service on campus and in the community. Total credit limited to 6 units. 2 laboratories.

**COMS 385. Media Criticism. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A, and junior standing.

Theory and method used in analyzing media from critical, rhetorical, and cultural perspectives. Practice in interpreting and evaluating news, advertising, prime-time television, the Internet, and other mass-mediated texts, with special attention to relationships among media, identity, and political action. 4 lectures.

**COMS 386. Communication, Media, and Politics. 4 units**

GE Area D5

Term Typically Offered: F

Prerequisite: Junior standing; completion of GE Area A; completion of one lower division Area D course. Recommended: COMS 218 or POLS 112.

Political communication and the U.S. mass media system, including role of the media in democratic society; news norms, government regulation of media, and media ownership; the changing media landscape and implications for news construction, polarization, and selective exposure; and incivility and bias. Course may be offered in classroom-based or online format. 4 lectures. Fulfills GE D5 except for Communication Studies majors.

**COMS 390. Environmental Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A and junior standing.

Recommended: Completion of GE Area B2 or B3.

Recent developments in the field of environmental communication, including how and with what effect environmental messages are transmitted among scientists, policymakers, and the public. Critical/rhetorical and mediated perspectives that inform contemporary understandings of the human-nature relationship are addressed. 4 lectures.

**COMS 395. Science Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W

Prerequisite: completion of GE area A and completion of one GE area B course.

Examination of science communication in a variety of contexts. Issues covered may include: scientific journal articles, boundary-work, information deficit models, public understanding/awareness of science, accommodated science, mediated science, popular science. 4 lectures.

**COMS 400. Special Problems for Advanced Undergraduates. 1-2 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Consent of instructor and junior standing.

Individual investigation, research, studies, or surveys of selected problems. Total credit limited to 4 units.

**COMS 413. Advanced Organizational Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W

Prerequisite: COMS 213 or COMS 301; junior standing.

Describing and measuring the organization's human message system. Planning and implementing communication training and development for the organization. New functions, careers and opportunities for the communication professional. 4 lectures.

**COMS 418. Health Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A and junior standing.

Communication in health contexts. Topics include interpersonal communication (e.g., health professional/patient), group and organizational communication (e.g., health-related groups), and mass communication (e.g., persuasive health campaigns). Open to all majors and valuable to laypersons who are consumers of health care, and pre-health professionals. 4 lectures.

**COMS 419. Media Effects. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A and junior standing.

Effects of media on the individual. Influence of mediated message producers, production technologies, and message content. Empirical approaches to data collection using experimental and survey techniques. 4 lectures.

**COMS 420. Nonverbal Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A.

Influence of kinesic, proxemic, artifactual, olfactory, paralinguistic and environmental factors in human communication. Theory, research and practice in nonverbal communication. 4 lectures.

**COMS 421. Gender and Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A and junior standing.

Explores the theory and practice of how gender is created, maintained, and transformed through communication; examines how gender roles are enacted and interpreted in various public and private contexts. 4 lectures.

**COMS 422. Rhetorics of Science, Technology, and Medicine. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: SP

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A and junior standing.

Examination of rhetorical strategies and persuasive techniques used within scientific, technical, and medical discourses. Topics include genre features of scientific articles, rhetorical topoi in scientific discourse, pop-culture depictions of science, the scientific ethos, and risk communication. 4 lectures.

**COMS 428. Family Communication. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A; and COMS/PSY 212.

Communication theory and practice within family structures. Examination of relationship communication in marital/partnership, parent/child, intergenerational, and sibling relationships. Topics include family communication regarding identity, attachment, conflict, relational dialectics, storytelling/narratives, family transitions, cultural influences, and family support. 4 lectures.

**COMS 435. American Political Rhetoric. 4 units**

Term Typically Offered: W, SP

Prerequisite: Junior standing.

Role of oratory in American political and social history since Lincoln. Historical and rhetorical analyses of important political speeches delivered by presidents, activists, demagogues, and leaders of social movements. 4 lectures.

**COMS 450. Internship: Communication Studies. 2-4 units**

CR/NC

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

Prerequisite: Junior standing, 2.5 GPA, and consent of instructor.

Supervised practicum and application of principles and theories of communication in organizational settings. Total credit limited to 8 units. Credit/No Credit grading only.

**COMS 460. Undergraduate Seminar. 1 unit**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: Completion of COMS 311, COMS 312, COMS 330 and COMS 332, and junior standing; for COMS majors only.

Discussion and design of individual projects, oral reports on material in current professional writings. 1 seminar.

**COMS 461. Senior Project. 3 units**

Term Typically Offered: F, W, SP

Prerequisite: COMS 460; for COMS majors only.

Completion of approved project under faculty supervision. Project results are presented in a formal written report. Minimum 90 hours total time.

**COMS 470. Selected Advanced Topics. 1-4 units**

Term Typically Offered: TBD

Prerequisite: Completion of GE Area A and junior standing.

Directed group study of selected topics for advanced students. Open to undergraduate and graduate students. The Schedule of Classes will list title selected. Total credit limited to 8 units. 1-4 lectures.

**COMS 485. Cooperative Education Experience. 6 units**

CR/NC

Term Typically Offered: F,W,SP,SU

Prerequisite: 2.5 GPA and consent of instructor.

Part-time work experience in business, industry, government, and other areas of student career interest. Positions are paid and usually require relocation and registration in course for two consecutive quarters. Formal report and evaluation by work supervisor required. Major credit limited to 4 units; total credit limited to 12 units. Credit/No Credit grading only.