

COMMUNICATION STUDIES (COMS)

COMS 1361. Public Speaking. 3 Hours. [TCCN: SPCH 1315]

Students develop essential communication skills by researching, organizing, and delivering informative and persuasive speeches for a variety of audiences and occasions. The course emphasizes strategies to manage speaker apprehension, analyze audiences, and use effective verbal and nonverbal techniques. Students build skills in critical thinking, message design, and professional presentation. These skills are valued in business, education, public service, civic life, and beyond.

COMS 2331. Introduction - Communication Theory & Research. 3 Hours.

Students study theories and research in the field of communication with an emphasis on interpersonal and family communication. Students prepare reviews of literature as well as scholarly abstracts.

COMS 2382. Communication for Business & the Professions. 3 Hours. [TCCN: SPCH 1321]

Students explore communication theories and apply research-based strategies in professional settings such as interviewing, group decision-making, and business presentations. The course emphasizes interpersonal communication, leadership, listening, and nonverbal communication. Students develop career-ready skills in workplace communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and professional presentation that support success in team-oriented and client-focused roles across industries. Not for COMS majors or minors. Non-Minors only. Non-Specializations only. Non-Minors only. Non-Specializations only.

Prerequisite: Non-Majors only.

COMS 2386. Interpersonal Communication. 3 Hours. [TCCN: SPCH 1318]

Students investigate theories and research related to one-to-one communication in personal and professional relationships. Key concepts explored listening, conflict management, self-disclosure, relationship development, verbal and nonverbal communication, and communication across various social and cultural settings. Students build transferable skills in emotional intelligence, active listening, relationship building, and conflict resolution that support success in the workplace, community, and daily life.

COMS 3330. Communication in Sport. 3 Hours.

Students examine communication practices and challenges within the context of sports, analyzing research across interpersonal, organizational, media, and cultural contexts. The course emphasizes theory-based and practical approaches to communicating sport-related issues, with attention to topics such as branding, fan engagement, leadership, and ethics. Students also explore the role of sports in society and develop critical thinking and strategic communication skills applicable to careers in athletics, media, and related industries. These communication competencies are highly beneficial for success in a wide range of professional settings. *This course emphasized message design and strategic messaging and is not intended to prepare students for careers in journalism or news reporting.

COMS 3340. Communication, Culture, and Technology. 3 Hours.

Students examine how digital technologies influence human communication across interpersonal, group, and organizational contexts. Emphasis is placed on how technologies shapes message construction, relationship development, identity negotiation, and cultural interaction. Topics may include computer-mediated communication, social networking, digital literacy, online conflict, and the impact of emerging platforms on communication norms. Through theory-driven analysis and practical application, students develop critical thinking and digital communication skills that are essential for effective interaction in technology-rich environments. Course Equivalents: COMS 2393 .

COMS 3341. Digital Communication Literacy. 3 Hours.

Students analyze strategies of self-presentation and impression management and apply theory and research-based approaches to effectively communicate messages through various social media platforms. Students gain practical knowledge in creating communication content for various audiences. Students implement these strategies on their own social media platforms as they learn to become more literate information consumers.

COMS 3350. Communication and Pop Culture. 3 Hours.

Students examine how popular culture shapes communication, individual identity, and social influence. They analyze messages in music, television, film, advertising, and celebrity culture to explore how media reflects, and shapes social norms and cultural values. Popular culture offers meaningful ways to engage with complex topics through familiar characters and storylines, encouraging dialog and reflection. Students apply communication theory to build skills in media literacy, cultural awareness, and interpersonal communication skills across personal and professional contexts.

COMS 3360. Interpreting Visual Images. 3 Hours.

Students explore how visual images function as persuasive messages within interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts. Emphasis is placed on analyzing visual communication through theoretical frameworks drawn from communication studies. Topics may include visual rhetoric, representation, symbolism, and the influence of images in the media, advertising, politics, and everyday life. Students develop critical thinking, visual literacy, and analytical skills applicable across academic, professional and civic settings.

COMS 3365. Humor in Communication. 3 Hours.

Students explore how humor functions as a communication tool across interpersonal, organizational, and public contexts. Emphasis is placed on applying communication theory and research to understand humor's role in building relationships, reducing conflict, influencing others, and shaping social commentary. Students gain practical insight into how humor can be used strategically to enhance communication and foster more effective interactions.

Prerequisite: Junior standing or consent of instructor.

COMS 3370. Intercultural Communication. 3 Hours.

Students explore the theory, research, and practice of communication across cultural contexts, with emphasis on developing awareness of their own intercultural communication. Topics may include cultural similarities and differences, verbal and nonverbal differences, culture shock, prejudice, and racism. This course equips students with the communication skills necessary for effective communication across international and multicultural environments.

COMS 3371. Conflict, Negotiation, and Resolution. 3 Hours.

Students examine the dynamics of conflict and negotiation in interpersonal and professional settings. Emphasis is placed on identifying the underlying causes of conflict, understanding communication patterns that escalate or de-escalate tension, and developing practical strategies for resolution. The course builds skills in active listening, perspective-taking, and collaborative problem-solving essential for managing conflict effectively in personal and workplace relationships.

COMS 3374. Persuasion. 3 Hours.

Students explore the principles and theories of persuasive communication with an emphasis on attitude and behavior change. The course may include theoretical frameworks such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Inoculation Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Topics may include persuasive strategies in interpersonal settings, political campaigns, advertising, and social movements. Students learn to critically analyze persuasive messages and apply techniques to create ethical and effective communication across a range of contexts. Course Equivalents: COMS 3382 .

COMS 3375. Strategic Organizational Communication. 3 Hours.

Students analyze the impact of human communication technology on organizations of all types, including political, social, religious, and educational institutions. In the process, students may examine how communication technologies shape organizations, channel power, manage crisis, establish leadership, and redefine privacy and freedom of expression. Course Equivalents: COMS 3390

Prerequisite: Sophomore Standing.

COMS 3379. Freedom of Speech and Civic Communication. 3 Hours.

Students examine a broad range of free speech issues, including blasphemy, defamation, popular culture, political speech, privacy, public forums, symbolic speech, threats, and restrictions on free speech. The course is structured to expand the knowledge of the student about freedom of speech and to enable them to be more engaged citizens in their communities. To this end, the course not only covers the areas that the right to free speech encompasses, it also explores instances in which freedom of speech protections do not apply.

COMS 3383. Small Group Communication. 3 Hours.

Students examine communication processes in small group settings with emphasis on leadership, collaboration, decision-making, and problem-solving. The course explores group dynamics, roles, and norms while helping students build skills in teamwork, problem-solving, and ethical leadership. These competencies are essential for success in today's collaborative and team-oriented work environments.

COMS 3385. Community Applied Communication. 3 Hours.

Students improve research skills, critical thinking, leadership, individual and group communication skills. This is achieved through lecture and community interaction. Students work together to examine their community for need, investigate how to meet that need through the lens of established organizations, and present their findings. This is a capstone course. Course Equivalents: COMS 2385 .

COMS 3386. Learning to Listen: A Key Communication Competency. 3 Hours.

Students examine significance and complexity of the many different types of listening across various social, professional, and interpersonal contexts. Students use theory and research-based approaches to tackle issues surrounding listening as a cognitive process, a social and relational skill, and professional competency. They also examine emerging areas, such as mediated listening in the digital age.

Prerequisite: COMS 2386.

COMS 3391. Interpersonal Health Communication. 3 Hours.

Students explore communication processes in health-related interactions, with emphasis on patient-provider communication, social support, and identity management in illness. Topics may include survivorship, media influence, e-health, and communication across varied healthcare contexts. The course builds skills in supportive communication, message clarity, and relational sensitivity, all essential for navigating today's complex health environments. Course Equivalents: COMS 3372 .

COMS 3392. Risk Communication. 3 Hours.

Students illustrate the history of risk communication research. Students examine how to effectively communicate risks across various contexts including interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and mass communication. Students apply theory and research-based approaches to effectively communicate risks including health risks, environmental risks, and technological risks.

COMS 3393. Environmental Communication. 3 Hours.

Students learn theory, research and practice with regard to environment and communication from both international and multi-disciplinary perspectives. Students will also learn how to identify environmental issues and use appropriate communication strategies to respond to/solve those issues. The course uses a lecture/discussion format. Course Equivalents: COMS 3373 .

COMS 4091. Independent Study in Communication Studies. 1-3 Hours.

Students pursue particular problems or issues beyond the limits of current course offerings. Students may receive Academic Distinction credit for this course. See Academic Distinction Program in this catalog. May be repeated for credit. Senior standing. Variable Credit (1 to 3). Senior standing. Course Equivalents: coms 4391

Prerequisite: 12 hours COMS completed and approval of the Chair.

COMS 4365. Nonverbal Communication. 3 Hours.

Students examine key systems of nonverbal communication, including body language, vocalics, facial expression, and spatial behavior. The course emphasizes the role of nonverbal cues in shaping meaning, managing impressions, and enhancing relational communication. Students apply current theory and research to improve their own communication effectiveness in both social and organizational settings.

COMS 4366. Deceptive Communication. 3 Hours.

Students explore the nature and function of deception across interpersonal, public, and organizational communication contexts. The course emphasizes empirical research, ethical considerations, and critical analysis of deceptive messages. Students examine both their own communication behaviors and the strategies used by others to better understand the role of deception in shaping trust, credibility, and relational dynamics. These skills are essential for navigating complex communication environments, making informed judgments, and fostering ethical communication practices in both professional and everyday interactions.

COMS 4378. Internship In Communication Studies. 3 Hours.

Students apply communication theories and concepts to real-world experiences through an internship or other approved work-based setting, including current employment or volunteer roles. Students are responsible for identifying and securing their own placement. The course emphasizes critical reflection and the integration of prior coursework, with a focus on applying theory to practice through written analysis. Assignments are designed to deepen understanding of communication in applied contexts by drawing from previously learned models, concepts, and research.

Prerequisite: At least junior standing, 12 COMS hours completed, and approval of the Chair.

COMS 4381. Communication Theory. 3 Hours.

Students analyze and apply major communication theories used to explain and evaluate human interaction in interpersonal, group, organizational and mediated contexts. The course explores both foundational and contemporary theoretical frameworks. Theories covered may include Social Penetration Theory, Expectancy Violations Theory, Social Exchange, and Symbolic Interactionism. Emphasis is placed on understanding theoretical assumptions, assessing their application to real-world communication, and strengthening students' ability to think critically about communication processes.

Prerequisite: COMS 2331 and 6 hours COMS completed.

COMS 4386. Family Communication. 3 Hours.

Students explore interpersonal communication processes within a variety of family structures. Topics may include conflict, relational roles, family storytelling, cultural influences, and communication across the family cycle. The course emphasizes the application of communication theories to understand how messages shape identity, maintain relationships, and manage change within family systems.

Prerequisite: COMS 2386.

COMS 4387. Relationship Communication. 3 Hours.

Students examine communication processes within close personal relationships, with particular focus on romantic partnerships and friendships. Topics may include relationship development, conflict, emotional disclosure, long-distance and digitally mediated relationships, and communication strategies for sustaining connection. The course emphasizes theoretical application and skill building to improve relational quality, satisfaction and resilience.

Prerequisite: Sophomore standing.

COMS 4388. The Dark Side of Relational Communication. 3 Hours.

Students investigate the functionality and morality of relational communication in relationships. Students explore the dark and light side of communication behaviors frequently used in relationships. Students gain an ethical understanding and the ability to evaluate communication in various relationships analytically.

Prerequisite: COMS 2331 and COMS 2386.

COMS 4392. Seminar In Communication Studies. 3 Hours.

Students engage in focused study of emerging or specialized topics in communication, with content varying by semester. Seminar topics reflect current trends, faculty expertise, or student interest areas across interpersonal, organizational, mediated, and cultural communication contexts. This course encourages advanced critical thinking, discussion, and application of communication theory and research.

Prerequisite: Sophomore standing.