Communication Studies, Ph.D.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in communication studies requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit, including dissertation credit. All students take COMM:5200 Introduction to Research and Teaching and earn up to 6 s.h. of dissertation credit in COMM:6399 Ph.D. Dissertation.

The Doctor of Philosophy program in communication studies includes specializations in interpersonal communication and relationships, media studies, and rhetoric and public advocacy. Graduate education in communication studies focuses on the Ph.D., but doctoral students may choose to earn a Master of Arts on their way toward the Ph.D. A terminal master’s degree may be an option for some students already admitted to the doctoral program.

Ph.D. students also must take a 3 s.h. course in their area of specialization, COMM:5205 Proseminar in Communication Studies (2 s.h.), an additional 12 s.h. of graduate course work in communication studies; pass a comprehensive (pредissertation) examination in their major research area during their fifth or sixth semester; and write a substantial scholarly dissertation. Students must maintain a cumulative g.p.a. of at least 3.00 throughout the graduate program.

Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

The communication and relationships program is centered on theory complemented by strength in quantitative and qualitative research methods. It focuses on scholarly issues that arise from face-to-face, everyday communication practices. It emphasizes personal relationship and family processes, identity construction, persuasion, and culture.

The goal of the program is to produce scholars who possess sophisticated knowledge of theory and methodology, who are careful consumers of theories and methods, and who can develop their own approaches to communication phenomena. The program emphasizes systematic analysis of the forms, functions, and meanings of messages within various contexts. Its broad social-scientific orientation springs from the belief that many methodological approaches are appropriate to studying and building theoretical explanations of communication.

Graduate students typically enter the program to earn a Ph.D. Advisors and committee members work closely with individual students to select courses from communication studies and other University departments and plan teaching and research experiences that will prepare students well for the employment they seek after graduation.

Media Studies

The graduate program in media studies focuses on the interplay of institutions, texts, and audiences in mediated communication systems. Its central aim is to examine modern media—radio, television, advertising, music, new media, and a wide range of other popular cultural expressions—within their historical, social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. It also uses the mass media as sites for asking basic questions about culture, society, politics, and modernity.

Like the department’s other graduate programs, media studies has a strong interdisciplinary flavor. Students draw not only on allied areas in the Department of Communication Studies but on fields across the University.

Rhetoric and Public Advocacy

The program in rhetoric and public advocacy is built on foundation courses in classical and 20th-century rhetorical theory and in an overview of 20th-century rhetorical criticism. Courses from a rhetorical perspective include rhetorical theory, rhetorical criticism, visual rhetoric and politics, public address and public culture, studies in argumentation and freedom of speech, work in science and technology as well as academic inquiry, and historical methods. Cognate work of interest to rhetoricians also can be found in interpersonal communication and relationship studies as well as media studies.

The Ph.D. in rhetoric and public advocacy is designed to give students a mature grasp of the specialties and perspectives embraced by the field and to develop research competence essential to a life of productive scholarship.

Work in related disciplines—political science, history, sociology, English, cinematic arts, anthropology, American studies, and journalism—complements rhetorical studies course offerings. Faculty from the Departments of American Studies, Political Science, and Rhetoric cross-list their courses on rhetorical topics in this program.

Admission

Admission decisions are based on undergraduate achievement for a B.A. applicant and graduate achievement for an M.A. applicant; letters of reference, Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test scores, the statement of purpose, and samples of scholarly work.

Applicants to graduate programs in communication studies must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College. For information about applying to the doctoral program in communication studies, visit Prospective Graduate Students on the Department of Communication Studies website.

Admission is for fall semester entry. Applicants whose materials are received by the application deadline of January 1 will be considered for admission and financial support.

Career Advancement

Communication studies Ph.D. graduates pursue academic and alternate academic careers. Nearly three-fourths of recent graduates teach in tenure-track academic positions. Others pursue careers in the private sector, at nonprofit organizations, and as instructional faculty at postsecondary institutions.

The department is deeply engaged in university- and discipline-wide efforts to train students in both traditional and nontraditional career paths.