

Communication Studies, MA

Specialization Areas

The following are specialization areas available for the MA program in communication studies.

Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

This area of specialization 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 relationships 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 for studying and building theoretical explanations of communication.

Advisors and committee members work closely with individual students to select courses from the Department of Communication Studies and other university departments, and to plan teaching and research experiences that prepare students for the employment they seek after graduation.

Media History and Culture

This area of specialization focuses on the interplay of institutions, texts, and audiences in mediated communication systems. Its central aim is to examine modern media—radio, TV, 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 a site 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.

Learning Outcomes

Research

Learn to interpret and contribute to communication research using qualitative, quantitative, and critical-cultural methods.

Theory

Evaluate and apply communication theories broadly conceived to a range of social, cultural, interpersonal, and other contextual and communicative settings.

Scholarship

Demonstrate familiarity with relevant subfields of scholarship in communication studies and related disciplines.

Teaching and Professional Development

Begin relevant professional training (such as teaching technologies; pedagogy; grant writing; diversity, equity, and inclusion; digital scholarship; media production; or community engagement) to contribute to better and more equitable educational and social outcomes, and to develop transferable skills for employment both inside and outside of academic settings.

Communication Skills

Cultivate the skills to communicate in writing and orally to both professional and popular audiences in ways that demonstrate intercultural competence and personal and social responsibility.