Communication Studies, Ph.D.

Specialization Areas

The following are specialization areas available for the Ph.D. 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 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.

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, 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, Culture, Engagement

This area of specialization is built on foundation courses in classical and 20th-century rhetorical theory and 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, rhetoric, and journalism—complements rhetorical studies course offerings.

More information is available on the Department of Communication Studies website.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in communication studies requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit, including at least 39 s.h. earned at the University of Iowa and in courses numbered above 3000. The degree program includes specializations in interpersonal communication and relationships; media history and culture; and rhetoric, culture, engagement. For further information, see the Doctor of Philosophy introductory section.

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 Doctor of Philosophy degree. A terminal master’s degree may be an option for some students already admitted to the doctoral program.

The Ph.D. with a major in communication studies requires the following.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMM:5200</td>
<td>Introduction to Research and Teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(taken the first semester)</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMM:5205</td>
<td>Proseminar in Communication Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(taken twice for 1 s.h. each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>One of these in student’s primary area of interest:</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMM:5230</td>
<td>Introduction to Rhetorical Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM:5241</td>
<td>Theories of Mass Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM:6371</td>
<td>Communication Theory</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of these:</td>
<td>Department of Communication Studies courses (prefix COMM)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM:6399</td>
<td>Ph.D. Dissertation</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>

Students also must complete their plan of study, the Ph.D. comprehensive examination, the dissertation prospectus, and successfully defend their dissertation.

More information is available on the Department of Communication Studies website.

Admission

Admission decisions are based on undergraduate achievement for a B.A. applicant and graduate achievement for an M.A. applicant; letters of reference, 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 on the Graduate College website. 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.