COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Faculty: Beerman, Chair; Allen, Conners, Friend, Merrill, Mutua-Mambo, and Roberts.

Communication Studies majors at RMC become engaging, ethical, and competent communicators across multiple modalities. They study and practice public speaking, interpersonal and group communication, and gain fluency in visual and digital skills through hands-on experience. Students cultivate their ability to adapt to diverse audiences and develop transferable strengths—critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity—that employers seek. With an interdisciplinary approach, COMM majors explore theory, research, and issues related to human communication, mass communication, and rhetoric, building a strong foundation for communication-related careers or graduate study. Through engaged classroom learning, internships, and a curriculum designed to support double majors, Communication Studies prepares students for meaningful careers and graduate study while building the confidence to lead and innovate in today's evolving communication landscape.

The major has the following student learning objectives:
1. Students will become proficient in basic communication skills.
2. Students will understand extant theory, methods, and research across the human, mass, and rhetorical communication areas.
3. Students will synthesize academic learning and practical experiences to develop a path for their professional identity, demonstrating how communication knowledge equips them to address civic responsibilities and succeed in diverse career paths.

- Communication Studies Major (https://catalog.rmc.edu/programs/communication-studies/communication-studies-major/)
- Communication Studies Minor (https://catalog.rmc.edu/programs/communication-studies/communication-studies-minor/)

COMM 201 - Introduction to Communication Studies (3 Hours)
A survey of the topics, themes, and theories of the core areas of communication studies: human communication, mass communication, and rhetoric. For each area, selected topics serve as examples of the academic discipline's work, showing the discipline's scope and research. Offered every semester.
Curriculum: CL,SS

COMM 210 - Public Speaking (3 Hours)
This course provides guidance and practice in the fundamentals of public speaking in a variety of contexts, with the objective to help each student become a more effective and confident oral communicator. Students develop clearly expressed, organized ideas, and deliver them in an effective manner. While speech theory is included in the course, emphasis is on the practical application of public speaking. Offered every semester.
Curriculum: OC

COMM 215 - Interpersonal and Small Group Communication (3 Hours)
Human beings are wired to seek belonging and connection with others. This course analyzes the various types and styles of communication in interpersonal and small group contexts, focusing on theories of interpersonal and small group communication as well as practical application. Throughout the semester, students will collaborate in small teams and explore such topics as the importance of both verbal and nonverbal communication, team member roles and styles of leadership, how culture affects our interactions in various contexts, and best practices in group decision-making and conflict resolution. Offered every semester.
Curriculum: OC

COMM 225 - Media Writing (3 Hours)
This writing class considers different methods used in news writing and strategic communication writing (public relations and advertising). Students will develop practical skills in media writing and an understanding of writing for different media audiences and purposes. Offered occasionally.

COMM 230 - Podcasting (3 Hours)
This introductory course delves into the world of podcasting. We'll explore the history, various formats, and cultural impact of podcasts while developing critical listening skills. You'll gain handson experience in pre-production, production, and post-production stages of creating a podcast, all culminating in the development of your own pilot episode.
Prerequisite(s): COMM Majors only

COMM 235 - Interviewing (3 Hours)
This course offers comprehensive coverage of interview theory and practice. The course will focus on a wide variety of interview types with the goal of the development of practical interview skills through roleplaying and practice.

COMM 281 - Special Topics (3 Hours)
Varied topics in communication studies related to mass communication.

COMM 300 - Communication Theories (3 Hours)
This course offers an in-depth survey of foundational communication theories that shape the field of Communication Studies. Students will explore major theories in human communication, mass communication, and rhetorical studies, analyzing their application to real-world communication contexts. Students will critically examine the evidence supporting these theories and consider how they influence communication practices and research. The course will help students develop a robust theoretical toolkit for analyzing and engaging with various communication phenomena. Not open to Freshmen.
Prerequisite(s): ENGL 185; and C- or higher in one or more of the following: COMM 201 or COMM 215 or COMM 302 or any COMM 300 level course

Curriculum: CC,EL

COMM 302 - Communication Research Methods (3 Hours)
This course offers comprehensive coverage of the scientific, interpretive, rhetorical, and critical research methods used to study communication problems and processes. The course will focus on the critical analysis, evaluation, and use of quantitative, qualitative and rhetorical communication research methods. The goals of the course are to assist students to acquire the ability to understand communication research methods, critique and analyze the value of communication research studies they read, to practice basic research activities, and apply research methods to answer communication questions and solve communication problems. Not open to Freshmen.
Prerequisite(s): ENGL 185; and C- or higher in one or more of the following: COMM 201 or COMM 215 or COMM 300 or any COMM 300 level course

Curriculum: CC

COMM 303 - Media Law and Ethics (3 Hours)
This class will examine what a journalist/professional communicator has a right to do (or not) in communication law. We will also discuss how we decide what is right for media and communicators to do. A range of First Amendment topics will be discussed as they apply to freedom of speech or freedom of the press. Students will learn to analyze potential ethical issues and learn processes to make the best decisions possible when considering various stakeholders. Offered alternate years. Cross-list: JOUR 303.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: OC

COMM 305 - Health Communication (3 Hours)
This course examines the theories and scholarship of health communication. An examination of the health-care process, regarding physical, mental, and social health issues, will be explored as it relates to several contexts including interpersonal, family, cultural, mass-mediated, public and organizational perspectives. Using scholarly journals and texts, popular culture, lectures, in-class exercises and discussions, this class will introduce research that explores communication theories regarding health, the dissemination of health information, and practical application. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 306 - Presidential Rhetoric (3 Hours)
From the "bully pulpit" to social media, the American presidency a thoroughly rhetorical enterprise. This course introduces students to U.S. presidential rhetoric and examines the American presidency as an institution shaped by public persuasion and communication. Students will explore how presidents use speeches, debates, media appearances, visual imagery, and digital platforms to shape and define national issues, construct political authority, and advance policy agendas. Over the semester, we will survey key genres of presidential rhetoric, including inaugural addresses, State of the Union speeches, and other public performances, while considering how presidential messages circulate through media, popular culture, and other political actors. Through short analytical papers and a semester-long research project developing a rhetorical profile of a presidency, students gain a deeper understanding of how presidential rhetoric shapes public expectation of leadership and influences political life in the United States. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 308 - American Campaigns and Elections (3 Hours)
A study of contemporary American political campaigns and elections. The election cycle will be examined from three different perspectives: the political campaign/politician, the mass media, and the voter. Statewide and federal elections will be analyzed in real-time during election years. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Cross-list: PSCI 308

COMM 309 - American Public Address (3 Hours)
A rhetorical examination of public address used in an array of major social issues, including historical and contemporary time periods in the United States. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 312 - Communication in Organizations (3 Hours)
The average adult will spend 12 years out of a 40-year career span in the workplace. Therefore, understanding how to engage with others in this context is vitally important. This course seeks to interrogate communicative behavior and issues in contemporary organizations. Students will discuss the guiding theories in the organizational communication field, focusing on communication patterns and practices. Topics covered include socialization processes, organizations as culture, power, the dark side of work relationships, emotions at work, and diversity processes in the 21st century organization. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): COMM 215 or BUSN 111

Curriculum: OC

COMM 313 - Rhetoric of Place and Space (3 Hours)
Communication happens in everyday spaces and places. The ways we think about, organize, produce, and participate in space and place matter for nature, culture, and society. With a focus on the MidAtlantic region, this class uses a rhetorical lens to better understand how public memory is mobilized in and by places and spaces. We will study various physical and digital spaces and places, including monuments, memorials, museums, parks, colleges, and more. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 314 - Visual Rhetorics (3 Hours)
Visual images permeate our culture, so much that we say "a picture is worth a thousand words." Often, society takes for granted the power of visuals while also accepting images at face value. Beginning with the position that images do argue and influence public life, this course asks students to be critical consumers of images and enables them to analyze visual messages that stand alone or appear alongside verbal messages. The course explores topics of ideology, ethics, argument, persuasion, and manipulation through common visual forms such as photography, bodies, memorials or monuments, memes, and data displays. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 315 - Rhetoric of the Body (3 Hours)
We each have one body, but that same body is treated differently by different people in different situations. How you see your body in the mirror may not be the same way your doctor sees it during a checkup. How you see yourself may not be how society sees you. The discourse surrounding bodies changes our perception of ourselves and the people around us. This course explores how bodies come to matter through rhetoric, by focusing on gender, sex, race, and size. Counts as application course for the GSWS major or minor. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: OC

COMM 320 - Argumentation (3 Hours)
Argumentation gets a bad rap. In popular culture, an argument is often understood as a fight where the winner is the one who shouts loudest. This course invites students to rethink the uses of argumentation as critical equipment for democratic deliberation that is essential for individuals and communities to cooperatively address shared matters of concern. Students will be introduced to foundational principles of argumentation, practice constructing arguments in multiple modalities, and engage emerging controversies in argumentation studies. The course emphasizes the critical evaluation of evidence, attention to bias, and practical applications of argumentation. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: OC

COMM 330 - Communicating in Relationships (3 Hours)
This course examines, analyzes, and applies theories and concepts of interpersonal communication within and about relationships that impact our personal and professional lives. It is organized around three general topic areas: (1) developing relationships, (2) maintaining satisfying relationships, and (3) coping with relational challenges over time. Students will develop their ability to identify and critically analyze the influences on and outcomes of communicative behaviors on personal relationships, groups, and society through self-analysis, case studies, practical application, and critiques of cultural practices. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: OC

COMM 331 - Communication & Conflict Management (3 Hours)
The inevitability of conflict is indisputable. This course explores how to recognize and handle it. Students will examine theory and scholarship related to the causes of conflict, the various ways we resolve it, and consequences of ineffective management of conflict in interpersonal, intercultural, organizational, and international contexts. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 332 - Intercultural Communication (3 Hours)
Changing demographics, increased migration, frequent travel, the social media explosion, and a globalized world makes understanding how to interact with individuals from other cultures paramount. Throughout the semester, students will examine theory and research in intercultural communication, tracing the history of human interaction and cross-cultural difference. Students will undertake a close and critical examination of the socio-cultural, economic, technological, and political factors locally and globally that have given rise to today's intercultural connections and misconnections. Offered alternate years. Experiential Learning (EL) CAR - Travel, when the course travels.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: NW

COMM 334 - Leadership Communication (3 Hours)
The course begins with a survey of contemporary leadership theories, from both the industrial and post-industrial perspectives. For the duration of the course students are situated into consulting teams and are tasked with solving a local client's real-world challenge. Students and teams receive practical feedback and instruction on employing effective post-industrial leadership strategy. Offered annually.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: OC

COMM 361 - Gender Issues in Communication (3 Hours)
After surveying the conceptual foundations of gender, we explore gender differences in verbal and nonverbal communication. We consider communication differences within contexts such as family, friendship, intimate relationship, and workplace. Finally, we consider how mass media (such as TV, film, and advertising) affects societal and personal definitions of gender. Throughout the course, the relationships among gender, power, and communication are stressed. Counts as an application course for the GSWS major or minor. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Cross-list: GSWS 361

COMM 362 - Media & Diversity (3 Hours)
We will examine issues of diversity and the mass media from a variety of perspectives, including audience, actors/producers, and reporters/content creators. We will discuss diversity with respect to the mass media of news, entertainment, and advertising. Diversity will be considered in the context of a variety of categories: race, sexual orientation, economic class, disability, gender, and age. The construction of such media representations, as well as their implications, will be explored. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: DI, OC

COMM 363 - Public Relations (3 Hours)
Students will develop an understanding of the principles and practices of public relations as applied in corporations, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Students will develop skills essential for written, spoken, and media-based public relations tactics, and will develop projects addressing strategies appropriate for different publics. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 364 - Broadcasting (3 Hours)
A comprehensive introduction to the multi-faceted field of broadcasting designed to provide students with a critical understanding of the evolutionary underpinnings of today's broadcast media as well as the ability to foresee and an appreciation of the potential for future development in the 21st century. The historical development of broadcast media and the associated theories that have molded their current form will be explored and provide the basis for understanding the influence broadcast media wield today and the shapes media will assume in the future. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

Curriculum: OC

COMM 365 - New Media (3 Hours)
Virtually every aspect of our lives—education, healthcare, sports, business, politics, personal relationships, and social movements—has been changed by the influence of digital media. This course offers a historical introduction to the "cyber" world and the technologies and social influences that made it possible. Designed to provide students with both a critical perspective and new media skills. Offered alternate years.
Prerequisite(s): Not open to freshmen

COMM 380 - Special Topics (3 Hours)
A consideration of various topics in communication studies.

COMM 381 - Special Topics (3 Hours)
A consideration of various topics in communication studies.

COMM 382 - Special Topics (3 Hours)
Varied topics in communication studies related to human communication.

COMM 383 - Special Topics (3 Hours)
Varied topics in communication studies related to mass communication.

COMM 384 - Special Topics (3 Hours)
Varied topics in communication studies related to rhetoric.

COMM 450 - Internship in Communication Studies (Unpaid) (3 Hours)
Intensive experience as a communication professional in an appropriate business setting. Possible placements include public relations, marketing, customer relations, fundraising, government offices, and broadcasting. Application required; see Bassett Internship Program. A special fee ($200) is charged for this course.
Prerequisite(s): junior or senior status, GPA of 2.25, and approval of the chair

Curriculum: EL

COMM 451 - Internship in Communication Studies (Unpaid) (3 Hours)
Intensive experience as a communication professional in an appropriate business setting. Possible placements include public relations, marketing, customer relations, fundraising, government offices, and broadcasting. Application required; see Bassett Internship Program. A special fee ($200) is charged for this course.
Prerequisite(s): junior or senior status, GPA of 2.25, and approval of the chair

Curriculum: EL

COMM 457 - Internship in Communications Studies (Paid) (3 Hours)
Intensive experience as a communication professional in an appropriate business setting. Possible placements include public relations, marketing, customer relations, fundraising, government offices, and broadcasting. Application required; see Bassett Internship Program. A special fee ($400) is charged for this course.
Prerequisite(s): junior or senior status, GPA of 2.25, and approval of the chair

Curriculum: EL

COMM 490 - Senior Capstone in Communication Studies (3 Hours)
A capstone course that synthesizes the communication studies discipline and asks students to critically reflect on their own experiences in the major.
Prerequisite(s): COMM 201 and any 2 of the following COMM 300, 301, 302, 311, 321

Curriculum: CS