

Communication Studies

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Description of the Major. Many have said that symbolic communication is the defining human characteristic. Even with this recognition, its mysteries often elude us. How do messages lead to meaning—or misunderstanding or manipulation? How has public discourse influenced culture? What are the effects of image-based communication? These and other questions are explored in the Communication Studies major. Our symbol-making nature is considered in all its manifestations, with attention given to the verbal and nonverbal aspects of oral, print, and electronic messages.

The mission of Westmont's Communication Studies department is to help students improve in both "wisdom and eloquence," a centuries-old but still contemporary ideal. Students develop facility in communication, gain an understanding of rhetoric as part of the human experience, and bring Christian values to bear on communication as a moral act. Topics include the difficulty of interpersonal faithfulness in a transient culture, the increasing power of the media, and the role of persuasion and propaganda in social movements.

Distinctive Features. Besides completing four foundational courses, students select four more courses from three categories representing various communication contexts and applications, three elective courses, and complete a senior capstone their senior year. In addition, students meet a "Global Communication Requirement," which is one way the department highlights its commitment to enlarging students' thinking and experience. Along these lines, Communication Studies majors are encouraged to spend time abroad. Options include both Westmont-run programs and approved courses in Paris, the Netherlands, and Buenos Aires. The Westmont in San Francisco program also works well with the major, as do journalism and political programs in Washington, D.C., and the film studies semester in Los Angeles. Every other year or so, the department sponsors a conflict and reconciliation program abroad.

As students choose from the major's categories, they can construct an interest-area such as media, rhetorical, or interpersonal studies. Although the curriculum is designed more to aid the student in being transformed intellectually according to the study of communication than to teach technique, many courses emphasize learning to think, speak, and write better.

Students are also encouraged to complete communication-related internships, engage in original research with their professors, and participate in academic conferences in the discipline of communication. The Westmont College chapter of Lambda Pi Eta, the national communication honor society, is an active campus organization and provides opportunities for leadership. Each year the department presents an Outstanding Senior Award to a graduating senior.

Career Choices. The bachelor's degree in communication prepares students well for a wide variety of careers and opportunities. Graduating majors have entered the fields of marketing, journalism, management, teaching, mediation, editing, public relations, international relief and development work, ministry, advertising, sales, event coordination, diplomacy, film production, real estate and youth work. The major also provides the essential foundation for graduate work. Many graduates have gone on to law school, counseling, graduate school in communication, business school, and seminary, to name just a few.

Requirements for a Communication Studies Major: 46-48 units

Required Foundation: 16 units

COM 006 Messages, Meaning and Culture (4)
COM 015 Public Speaking (4)
COM 098 Introduction to Communication Research (4)
COM 101 Theories of Rhetoric and Communication I (4)

Required Options by Category: 28 units

Relationships and Conflict (one of the following): 4 units

COM 110 Interpersonal Communication (4)
COM 127 Group Communication and Leadership (4)
COM 133 Conflict and Reconciliation (4)
COM 134 Conflict and Reconciliation: Case Study (4)

Discourse and Society (one of the following): 4 units

COM 125 Media and Mass Communication (4)
COM 135 Studies in Public Discourse (4)
COM 138 International Rhetoric (4)
COM 145 Organizational Communication (4)

Reasoning and Writing (two of the following): 8 units

COM 103 Communication Criticism (4)
COM 130 Argumentation and Advocacy (4)
COM 140 Studies in Communication Ethics (4)
ENG 104 Modern Grammar and Advanced Composition (4)

Electives (not taken above): 12 units

COM 102 Theories of Rhetoric and Communication II (4)
COM 103 Communication Criticism (4)
COM 107 Focus on Film (1)
COM 110 Interpersonal Communication (4)
COM 115 Advanced Public Speaking (4)
COM 125 Media and Mass Communication (4)
COM 127 Group Communication and Leadership (4)
COM 128 Facilitating Deliberation and Dialogue (2)
COM 129 Persuasion and Propaganda (4)
COM 130 Argumentation and Advocacy (4)
COM 133 Conflict and Reconciliation (4)
COM 134 Conflict and Reconciliation: Case Study (4)
COM 135 Studies in Public Discourse (4)
COM 138 International Rhetoric (4)
COM 140 Studies in Communication Ethics (4)
COM 145 Organizational Communication (4)
COM 148 Postmodern Narratives (4)

COM 190 Internship (2-4)
COM 195 Special Topics (4)
COM 198 Independent Research (1-4)

Senior Capstone Experience: 2-44 units (choose one)

~~COM 191 Senior Capstone Internship (4)~~

COM 196 Senior Seminar (24)

~~COM 197 Senior Capstone Research (4)~~

COM 199 Major Honors (4)

Global Communication (complete at least one)*

Advanced or Intermediate (Level II) Modern Foreign Language (Spanish, German, etc.)
Academic Study Abroad experience of at least one month (Mexico, Europe, etc.)
Westmont in San Francisco
COM 138 International Rhetoric

*This category is a requirement students must complete, but it does not add to the unit total. Students may meet the requirement with a course already taken to fulfill the major (language or International Rhetoric). It may also be met through participation in an off-campus program.

Requirements for a Minor: 24 units

Required Foundation: 8 units

COM 006 Messages, Meaning and Culture (4)
COM 101 Theories of Rhetoric and Communication I (4)

Electives: 16 units

Only one course for the minor may be taken in a department outside of Communication Studies.
COM 190 (Internship) may not be taken to fulfill the minor.

Lower-Division Course Descriptions

COM 006 Messages, Meaning and Culture (4) A theory course that seeks to demonstrate the centrality of communication in our perceptions of reality and interactions with others. The course offers perspectives by which to interpret and critique our message-dense society, and reviews issues of language and meaning.

COM 015 Public Speaking (4) A performance class that presents principles of oral communication with classroom evaluation of speeches. Primary emphasis will be on student performance and understanding of basic speech theory.

COM 098 Introduction to Communication Research (4) Prerequisite: Any communication course. Introduction to social scientific and humanistic approaches to the study of communication, including both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Upper-Division Course Descriptions

COM 101 Theories of Rhetoric and Communication I (4) Prerequisite: COM 006. Examines the philosophy and importance of rhetoric as the art of discourse. Draws from classical and biblical sources. Covers the first two canons of classical rhetoric.

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- COM 102 Theories of Rhetoric and Communication II** (4) Prerequisite: COM 101. Completes the study of rhetoric with the last three canons and reviews non-verbal studies as an extension of “delivery”.
- COM 103 Communication Criticism** (4) Prerequisites: COM 006 and COM 098 or any approved research methods course. A writing class that examines the theoretical knowledge of, and hones practical skill at discovering, interpreting and articulating the meaning, effectiveness, ethics and aesthetics of a broad variety of rhetorical artifacts, including speeches, literature, film and architecture.
- COM 107 Focus on Film** (1) Explores and conceptualizes a select dimension of the craft of filmmaking, including expressive properties and codes of cinema in mainstream and alternative traditions of film. Students are encouraged to learn how films work, what techniques filmmakers use to achieve desired effects, and how to “read” film. May be repeated up to 4 times for 4 units as topics vary.
- COM 110 Interpersonal Communication** (4) Examines theory and practice of communication among friends, couples, and family members. Attention given to how our verbal and nonverbal communication shapes and reflects identity, as well as helps or hinders our relationships. This course also examines ways to improve our interpersonal conflict management.
- COM 115 Advanced Public Speaking** (4) Prerequisite: COM 015. An intensive study of the theory, preparation, delivery, and criticism of public speaking. The course includes public speaking opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.
- COM 125 Media and Mass Communication** (4) Prerequisite: COM 098 or any approved research methods course. Examination of the social and cultural impact of mass media (print, radio, television, film, new technologies), especially upon politics, public discourse, education, and religion.
- COM 127 Group Communication and Leadership** (4) Theory and practice of communication in a variety of small-group contexts. Attention given to roles, conformity, decision-making, leadership, and group climate. Special emphasis given to group and leadership dynamics in the church, as well as diverse community and support groups.
- COM 128 Facilitating Deliberation and Dialogue** (2) This course provides practice, research, and discussion surrounding the nature of group deliberation in community and civic life, as well as the nature and practice of facilitating dialogue in community. May be taken 3 times for up to 6 units of credit.
- COM 129 Persuasion and Propaganda** (4) The study of motivation and influence by various perspectives (rhetorical, philosophical, psychological) and by contexts (interpersonal, group, campaigns, and macrosocietal). Includes examination of historical and contemporary propaganda.
- COM 130 Argumentation and Advocacy** (4) Examines the philosophy, structure, theory and practice of argumentation as a counterpoint to the easy credulity of the modern age. Includes experience in advocacy and debate.
- COM 133 Conflict and Reconciliation** (4) How might human communication enable peacemaking both internationally and interpersonally? Emphasis on dialogic perspectives, role of power, face needs, cultural differences, communication of forgiveness, and symbolic constructions of enemies.
- COM 134 Conflict and Reconciliation** (4) This course is offered as part of the off-campus Mayterm program in conflict and reconciliation. In-depth case studies of particular conflict contexts and exploration of how communication arts and sciences help us understand and transform conflict. Previous cases/locations include Northern Ireland, South Africa, the Middle East, and Germany.

COM 135 Studies in Public Discourse (4) Prerequisite COM 098 or any approved research methods course such as POL 040. History through a communication lens examines the controversies, social movements, and persuasive strategies that have contributed to the American experience. The rhetoric of nation building, women's rights, civil rights, foreign policy, and freedom of speech will be studied.

COM 138 International Rhetoric (4) Examines the philosophy, ethics, and meaning of "wisdom" as articulated in the rhetorical traditions of Africa, Asia, and South America. The class will offer comparative explorations of these intellectual traditions with modern and postmodern understandings of knowledge, the self, and the meaning of life.

COM 140 Studies in Communication Ethics (4) The ethical issues and legal constraints related to communication situations will be studied. Typically, the course will emphasize case studies from the news, advertising, and entertainment industries. Other times the course will focus more broadly on communication dilemmas, including issues related to freedom of speech.

COM 145 Organizational Communication (4) Prerequisite: COM 098 or any approved research methods course. The study of profit and non-profit organizations, including the study of power, leadership, teamwork, gender, identity, and the nature of work in a fast-paced, technological, global work environment. Many theoretical and historical perspectives are explored, including scientific management, systems and networks, interpretive, cultural, critical, and postmodern approaches.

COM 148 Postmodern Narratives (4): Seminar exploration in communication theory and postmodern thought, paying special attention to cultural narratives. Film and other texts are used to further explore and illustrate the theories and perspectives. Students are invited and expected to shape the discussions as well as participate in them.

COM 190 Internship (2-4) Prerequisites: COM 006 and COM 098 or approved research methods course. Practical field experience, in the form of an internship with an organization in the local community. Coursework emphasizes relating learning in the discipline of communication with learning in the organization, as well as historical and contemporary approaches to vocation and calling.

~~**COM 191 Senior Capstone Internship** (4) Prerequisite: Senior standing or consent of instructor. Practical field experience, in the form of an internship with an organization in the local community. This capstone course asks students to look back at their studies in communication at Westmont and to look toward living out ideals and skills after graduation, especially in the workplace. Seniors who have taken COM 190 cannot select COM 191 as their Capstone.~~

COM 195 Special Topics (4) A variety of special topics will be offered periodically, such as Health Communication, Gender and Communication.

COM 196 Senior Seminar (24) Prerequisite: Senior standing or instructor consent. This capstone course asks students to look back at their studies in communication at Westmont and to look toward living out ideals and skills after graduation.

~~**COM 197 Senior Capstone Research**. (4) Prerequisite: Senior standing and instructor consent. Seniors conduct independent research on appropriate issues in communication studies culminating in a major research paper or project.~~

COM 198 Independent Research (2-4) Prerequisites: Junior standing and instructor consent. Guided research on appropriate issues in communication studies culminating in a major paper.

COM 199 Major Honors (4-6) In consultation with their faculty mentor the Major Honors candidate will develop and execute an advanced level independent research project, produce a fully documented research paper, and pass an oral examination on the research before a committee.

