

School of Arts and Sciences

**COMMUNICATION-
RHETORIC**

www.comm.pitt.edu

The University of Pittsburgh's program in communication and rhetoric is for students interested in exploring questions that deal with communication, society, and persuasion, such as: what factors shape how we see and understand the world; how are personal relationships constructed through communication; can the news ever be "objective"; do we develop our identities through our choices, or are we influenced more by society; and can all forms of communication ultimately be viewed as persuasion?

This major takes a critical and historical approach to the study of the media—from the ancient art of rhetoric to the newest media technologies and their products. To understand communication fully, students learn to consider the aims of the person or institution that produces the message, the expectations of the audience, and the demands of the occasion for which the message is produced. We examine how and why we believe the messages we do, how we form beliefs and opinions based on them, and how discourse brings people together or drives them apart.

Studying rhetoric and communication enables you to become more aware of your communicative repertoire, more critical in evaluating communication, and more thoughtful and skilled when producing it. Understanding the tools and effects of communication and rhetoric also allows you to make informed choices and intelligent decisions on complex matters. It teaches you not only how to argue effectively, but also how to critique an argument for its consistency, validity, and consequences.

Communication majors are attractive candidates for a variety of types of employment and graduate programs because they have developed the ability to think critically and communicate well, both orally and in writing. A recent survey of personnel officers reported in *Communication Education* found these skills more important to prospective employers than vocational skills. Many of our graduates go on to graduate programs in communication, law, and education, and careers in industry, education, the media, and government.

Major Requirements**I. Foundation Courses****COMMRC 0300 Communication Process**

The basic concepts and topics in the study of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, are the focus of this course. We examine communication with another person, in groups, and in mediated situations. We also explore the role of communication in how people acquire and maintain a sense of "self" and create a social reality.

COMMRC 0310 Rhetorical Process

This introductory course demonstrates the vital role that rhetoric plays in our social, political, and cultural worlds. To analyze rhetorical discourse with a variety of traditional and contemporary approaches, we look at the definitions of rhetoric, theories of rhetorical processes, and examples of rhetoric in action. Emphasis is on the roots of rhetoric in classical antiquity.

COMMRC 0320 Mass Communication Process

To understand media as a cultural process and social institution, we look at newspapers, magazines, television, and other methods of mass communication in the context of our consumer society. Students consider the production processes and the nature of media text, genres, audiences, and mass consumption to bring a larger, more informed concept of media into focus.



II. Method Courses (two courses total)

COMMRC 0520 Public Speaking

By learning to research, organize, compose, deliver, and criticize public speeches, students in this required course develop an understanding of rhetoric and increase their skills in public speaking. Informative, deliberative, and ceremonial speeches are considered.

Choose one of the following courses:

COMMRC 0500 Argument

This course is designed to acquaint students with the fundamental principles of argumentation. Students participate in several in-class debates on an issue of policy to learn elementary debating techniques and strategies.

COMMRC 0510 Debate

Students learn and practice techniques for preparing and participating in debates.

COMMRC 0530 Interpersonal Communication

Using the classroom as an interpersonal laboratory, students examine and practice the communication process between individuals. Discussions, exercises, and projects are used to consider interpersonal communication as a form of practical action.

COMMRC 0540 Discussion

In the modern world, many decisions are made by groups instead of individuals. Those who can guide and facilitate the process of group decision making through discussion and critical thinking possess highly marketable skills. Students in this hands-on course learn to use and sharpen these skills through readings; brief lectures; practical exercises; and discussions on contemporary, social, and moral dilemmas.

COMMRC 0550 Speech Composition

This course deals with the theory and practice of preparing speeches. Students learn several principles of speech composition, including the stages of speech development, general analysis of the occasion, maintaining an audience's attention, being persuasive through argument, and having an effective style.

III. Field Courses

You must complete six field courses. All field courses entail a good deal of research and writing.

COMMRC 1020 Nature of Language

COMMRC 1101 Evidence

COMMRC 1102 Organizational Communication

COMMRC 1103 Rhetoric and Culture

COMMRC 1104 Political Communication

COMMRC 1105 Television and Society

COMMRC 1106 Small Group Communication

COMMRC 1109 Nonverbal Communication

COMMRC 1110 Theories of Interpersonal Communication

COMMRC 1111 Theories of Persuasion

COMMRC 1112 Theories of Rhetoric

COMMRC 1113 African Americans and Mass Media

COMMRC 1114 Freedom of Speech and Press

COMMRC 1115 African American Rhetoric

COMMRC 1116 Rhetoric of Cynicism and Counter Culture

COMMRC 1117 20th-Century Public Argument

COMMRC 1118 Presidential Rhetoric 1 (for majors)

COMMRC 1119 Presidential Rhetoric 2 (for majors)

COMMRC 1120 Rhetoric of the Cold War

COMMRC 1121 History of Mass Communication

COMMRC 1122 Media Criticism

COMMRC 1123 Rhetorical Criticism

COMMRC 1125 Media Theory

COMMRC 1126 Media and Consumer Culture

COMMRC 1142 Theories of Modern Rhetoric

COMMRC 1143 Knowledge, Power, and Desire

COMMRC 1145 The History of Rhetoric

COMMRC 1147 The Rhetoric of Science

COMMRC 1148 The Rhetoric of Human Rights

COMMRC 1730 Special Topics in Communication

COMMRC 1731 Special Topics in Rhetoric

COMMRC 1732 Special Topics in Mass Communication

IV. Special Project Courses

These courses allow students to expand their educational experience beyond the classroom. Working as an intern or with a faculty member on an in-depth area of study gives you a firsthand look at a career or graduate program that might interest you. These options also can expose you to new possibilities or narrow your focus for future pursuits in education or employment.

COMMRC 1710 Senior Thesis

During the senior year, students may conduct research on an issue in rhetorical, communication, or media studies, ultimately producing a thesis based on their work. Research is supervised by the course instructor and approved by additional departmental faculty.

COMMRC 1900 Communication Internship

The communication-rhetoric department offers an extensive program of internships that allows students to earn practical work experience in the professional world and explore a particular interest or career path while earning credits toward their degree. In the past, students have conducted internships at local television and radio stations, advertising agencies, arts organizations, corporations, and state and federal government offices, as well as at Disney World, and organizations in New York, N.Y. and Philadelphia, Pa.

COMMRC 1901 Independent Study

Independent study is a program of academic reading and research that you take under the direction of a faculty sponsor. Many students pursue independent study during the summer, and several programs on campus are available to provide grants or fellowships to help you carry out this work.

Related Area: Students must complete 12 credits in a subject outside communication. Although you may fulfill this requirement with courses from any department, communication-rhetoric majors usually choose courses from political science, sociology, business, English writing, psychology, anthropology, or history.

Foreign Language: There is no language requirement beyond that required by the School of Arts and Sciences. However, students who plan to pursue graduate work in rhetoric and communication are advised to take additional foreign language courses.

For advising information:

University of Pittsburgh
Department of Communication
John Gareis
1122 Cathedral of Learning
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-624-1138
E-mail: gareis@pitt.edu

For information on other majors in the School of Arts and Sciences:

University of Pittsburgh
Office of Admissions and Financial Aid
Alumni Hall, 4227 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
412-624-PITT
E-mail: oafa@pitt.edu
Web site: www.oafa.pitt.edu

Special Programs

Undergraduate Communication Club

This club gives undergraduate students the opportunity to get together with communications instructors, professionals, and fellow students for social and informational activities outside the classroom setting. Speakers from the world of communications give talks on career development, internships, and current topics in communications to enhance your knowledge of various professions and your employment potential.

Annual Undergraduate Oratory Competition

In the spring of each year, undergraduate students are invited to compete in a "speak-off" of original oratories they have written for a class within the current academic year. Prizes are awarded for the winning entries in the categories of informational, persuasive, and ceremonial oratories.

William Pitt Debating Union

Pitt has a proud tradition of intercollegiate debate dating back more than 100 years. The William Pitt Debating Union competes in two-person policy debate at the local, regional, and national level and is open to all undergraduate students. Squad members perform in-depth research to debate a single policy resolution for an entire competition year. If students do well at local and regional tournaments and the coaching staff believes it will not adversely affect their studies, they can move on to national competition. The debating union has offices on campus with workspace and computer facilities for use by squad members.

Study Abroad Programs

Studying abroad is an exciting way to add an international perspective to your undergraduate education and strengthen your credentials as a graduate. While earning credits toward your degree, you also broaden your personal experience and gain an appreciation of other cultures. Scholarships are available, and financial aid is applicable.

One program of particular interest to communications majors is the Pitt in London program, where students take courses in history, literature, politics, and art history taught by British faculty and a visiting University of Pittsburgh faculty member. Juniors and seniors can conduct internships for credit at a variety of British organizations, focusing on communications, business, politics, theatre, or museum management. Field trips to places of historic and cultural importance such as Stonehenge and Stratford-Upon-Avon are included. Students live in dorms in Kensington or with a family in the London suburb of Wimbledon.