

# COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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## DEPARTMENT OFFICE

Nichols Hall 330  
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## DEPARTMENT CHAIR

Jonah Raskin

## ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR

Cathryn Stuckey

## Faculty

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Melinda Barnard / Theory, Advertising, Public Relations,

Quantitative Analysis, Children and Media

Ed Beebout / Newspaper, Broadcast Journalism

Elizabeth Burch / Criticism, Ethics, Scriptwriting,  
Environmental Communication

Marco Calavita / History, Theory, Criticism

Michael Little / Film, Video, Criticism

David Page / Radio

Jonah Raskin / Journalism, History, Law, Marketing

## Programs Offered

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Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies

Minor in Communication Studies

The communication studies major is an innovative, interdisciplinary program that prepares students for careers in the media or for advanced graduate study and research.

Communication studies coordinates three distinct approaches to the media: practical application, historical study, and critical analysis. Practical application combines basic training in equipment operation, communication skills, production design, organizational skills, and professional internship. Historical study focuses on the evolution of the mass media and the relationship of the mass media to society. Critical analysis explores media ethics, and the analysis and evaluation of specific mediated texts using qualitative and quantitative methods.

Students are encouraged to develop a specific advisory plan with the assistance of a faculty advisor. Advisory plans, based on the student's specific interests, may focus on:

- areas such as journalism, criticism, or public relations;
- media such as radio, television, film;
- career roles such as television producer, sports announcer, or reporter;
- preparation for graduate school.

The department emphasizes internships that provide students with real-world insights into the media. Students are advised to gain the practical experience and skills needed in the media marketplace by participating in a senior-year internship. The department has developed professional media internships with community organizations, radio and television stations, newspapers, magazines, PR firms, and other media groups.

All on-campus media operate in conjunction with communication studies classes. On-campus media offer a variety of opportunities for students. They include the *Star*, the student newspaper; *Detour Sonoma*, a video magazine; KSUN World Wide, an Internet radio station that can be heard at [www.sonoma.edu/ksun](http://www.sonoma.edu/ksun); and SSU-TV, the campus television station that provides news, information, and entertainment.

Facilities available to students include: recording studio, photography darkrooms, computer labs, a state-of-the-art theatre, a videotape/digital editing facility, an equipped studio for multi-camera video production, a newspaper production facility, and a cablecast radio station.

## Careers in Communication Studies

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Graduates from the department find employment in the mass media and in the ever-growing field of communication. Some graduates find work by using their technical skills in radio, video, and computers. Others rely on their training and experience in public relations. Communication studies graduates work in sales, publicity, and marketing. They write for and edit newspapers and newsletters, and design brochures and flyers. They are photographers, and they are employed by candidates running for public office. In addition, graduates design websites, edit films, produce documentaries, videotape weddings, record music, serve as DJs, become lawyers and teachers, run employment agencies, and are hired as fundraisers, private investigators, and in law enforcement. Wherever communication takes place and wherever the media exists, Communication Studies graduates can be found. They are in the entertainment and the information industries and at every level of employment.

## Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies

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Degree Requirements	Units
General Education	51
Major Requirements	46
University Electives	23
Total units needed for graduation	120

Students applying to become communication studies majors must have an overall 3.00 GPA. Enrollment is limited by the number of students who can be served by the faculty and facilities of the program.

- **Major Core:** students complete 22 units of required coursework.

- Skill Sequence:** Students complete a 3-unit beginning skill course and a 3-unit advanced skill course.
- Major Electives:** Students complete 18 units of COMS electives chosen from the department-approved elective list. Majors may not use their COMS electives to meet G.E. requirements.

**Core Courses (all courses are required)**

**22 Units**

COMS 200: Principles of Mass Communication	3
COMS 202: Methods of Media Criticism	3
COMS 301: Communication Theory and Research; Junior Status to register	3
COMS 302: Media Ethics; Junior Status to register	3
COMS 315: Media Law; Senior Status to register	3
COMS 402: Senior Seminar; Senior Status to register	3
COMS 499: Senior Internship; Senior Status to register	4

**Beginning Skill Courses (1 course required)**

**3 Units**

COMS 201: Storytelling Via Video
COMS 210: Writing for the Media
COMS 240: Introduction to Public Relations
COMS 265: Introduction to Radio Broadcasting

**Advanced Skill Courses (1 course required)**

**3 Units**

COMS 325: Video Lab*
COMS 340: Advanced Public Relations Lab
COMS 368A: STAR Editorial Lab*
COMS 368B: STAR Production Lab*
COMS 385: KSUN Radio Lab*

\*May be repeated for up to 12 units. Any units after the first 3 will count as elective units.

**COMS electives (18 units required)**

(See COMS department elective list.)

**Total units in major electives 18 units**

**Total in major 46 units**

**Sample Four-year Plan for Bachelor of Arts in Communications Studies**

Students start the major in fall of their sophomore year. This plan does not identify the communication studies elective courses an individual student might take. A complete list of department-approved electives is available through communication studies. Students who do a minor may count it as communication studies elective units. Students may not use courses taken for General Education as major elective courses.

**FRESHMAN YEAR:: 30 Units**

<i>Fall Semester (15 Units)</i>	<i>Spring Semester (15 Units)</i>
GE Area A2 (3)	GE Area A3 (3)
Mathematics (GE) (3)	GE A1 (3)
GE (3)	University Elective (3)
GE (3)	GE (3)
University Elective (3)	GE (3)

**SOPHOMORE YEAR:: 30 Units**

<i>Fall Semester (15 Units)</i>	<i>Spring Semester (15 Units)</i>
GE (3)	GE (3)
GE (3)	GE (3)
GE (3)	GE (3)
COMS 200 (3)	COMS 202 (3)
COMS Beg. Skill Class (3)	COMS Adv. Skill Class (3)

**JUNIOR YEAR:: 30 Units**

<i>Fall Semester (15 Units)</i>	<i>Spring Semester (15 Units)</i>
Upper-Division GE (3)	Upper-Division GE (3)
Upper-Division GE Area E (3)	University Elective (3)
University Elective (3)	COMS Elective (3)
COMS Elective (3)	COMS Elective (3)
COMS 301/302 (3)	COMS 301/302 (3)

**SENIOR YEAR:: 30 Units**

<i>Fall Semester (15 Units)</i>	<i>Spring Semester (15 Units)</i>
University Elective (3)	University Elective (3)
University Elective (3)	University Elective (2)
COMS Elective (3)	COMS Elective (3)
COMS Elective (3)	COMS 402 (3)
COMS 315 (3)	COMS 499 (4)

**TOTAL UNITS:: 120**

## **Minor in Communication Studies**

The communication studies minor is designed for students who recognize the need to understand the pervasive role the media play in society. Students who minor in communication studies must register with the department to be allowed into courses. Acceptance to the minor is based upon GPA of 3.5 and at least three remaining semesters. There are two minor options: Practical Media Minor and Theoretical Media Minor. See COMS department for details. Students must be pre-approved for admission into COMS department courses on a semester-by-semester basis. Students may not use courses from their major in the COMS minor.

COMS 200 required for all minors	3
Total units required for Option 1 or Option 2	18
Total units in the minor	21

## **Communication Studies Courses (COMS)**

Classes are offered in the semesters indicated. Please see the Schedule of Classes for the most current information and faculty assignments.

### **200 PRINCIPLES OF MASS COMMUNICATION (3) FALL, SPRING**

An introduction to the history of mass communication, the mechanics of the mass communication industries, and theories of mass communication as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon.

### **201 STORYTELLING VIA VIDEO (3) FALL, SPRING**

Designed for beginning video students. Assignments include creating skits and music videos, and conducting interviews using DV camcorders. Students also do a final creative project of their own. COMS 201 must be taken before COMS 325, though exceptions are allowed with approval of instructor.

### **202 METHODS OF MEDIA CRITICISM (3) FALL, SPRING**

A survey of ways to analyze mediated texts, with a focus on film, television, magazines, music, news, and advertising. Methods and concepts include semiotics, structuralism, ideology, psychoanalysis, feminism, and postmodernism.

### **210 WRITING FOR THE MEDIA (3) FALL, SPRING**

Introduction to a wide range of writing styles and formats, from hard news and features to press releases. Students learn to write for newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the Internet, as well as for public relations.

### **240 INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS (3) FALL**

An overview of the history, structure, and organization of public relations. Students also learn the basic public relations tactics of writing, presentation, event organization, and Web communication.

### **265 INTRODUCTION TO RADIO BROADCASTING (3) FALL, SPRING**

History of broadcasting; evolution of broadcast technology; introduction to basic theories and techniques of radio broadcasting. Overview of radio station organization, programming, and operation. Experience in radio program development and production techniques.

### **301 MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY AND RESEARCH (3) FALL, SPRING**

Intermediate-level study of the key research events that contributed to the development of communication theories, government policy, and the emergence of communication as an academic discipline. Cross-listed as SOCI 331. Prerequisites: COMS 200, 202, and junior-level standing.

### **302 MEDIA ETHICS (3) FALL, SPRING**

Students analyze real-life ethical issues that media professionals face on TV, radio, newspapers, the Internet, in public relations, and in the music and entertainment industries. Classroom exercises involve discussion, debate, critical thinking and reasoning, and practical application of ethical principles. Prerequisites: COMS 200, 202, and junior-level standing.

### **315 MEDIA LAW (3) FALL, SPRING**

An intensive exploration of the rules and regulations governing media and communication in the United States. The focus is on the First Amendment. Students take exams, write papers, and participate in moot trials on issues of libel, privacy, copyright, obscenity, and the right to a fair trial. Prerequisites: COMS 200, 202, and senior-level standing.

### **320 SELECTED TOPICS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES (3) FALL, SPRING**

Intensive study of various topics and trends in the mass media, including: advertising; propaganda and persuasion; children and the media; technical and scriptwriting; environmental and international communication; and film. May be repeated for additional credit with new subject matter.

### **321 INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION (3) FALL**

Course develops a basic understanding of current issues related to the field of international communication. Surveys readings and videos on global media (MTV, CNN, ESPN, theme parks, video games, advertising, media campaigns for social change, computer hackers, *Sesame Street*, etc.). Overseas job and volunteer opportunities discussed. Junior-level standing required.

### **322 APPLIED JOURNALISM: SELECTED TOPICS (2)**

Introductory class on the art and craft of journalism—print, video, and radio—by career professionals. Designed to give students a taste of real-world media experience.

### **323 ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION (3) SPRING**

Course will focus on research and reporting skills to produce magazine articles or video/radio documentaries on health, science, and the environment. Other assignments include press releases, profiles, memos. Lecture, videos, and field trips help to critique news, public relations, ads, PSAs, campaigns, film, television, music, and the Internet on related issues. Junior standing required.

### **324 SCRIPTWRITING FOR VIDEO (3)**

Course focuses on fundamentals of writing professional-level scripts for video, television, and film productions. Assignments include lab work and homework producing scripts and storyboards for Public Service Announcements (PSAs), commercials, news packages, documentaries, corporate and educational training programs, and dramatic screenplays. Junior standing required.

### **325 VIDEO WORKSHOP: DOCUMENTARY/FICTION (3) FALL, SPRING**

Intensive production for filmmakers. In fall semester, students work on biography, news, and multi-camera talk shows. In spring, students work on screenplays, scenes with actors, and images for songs. Beginning students use DV camcorders and i-Movie 2. Advanced students use 3-chip cameras and edit on Final Cut or Avid. Prerequisite: COMS 201 or permission of instructor. May be repeated for up to 12 units.

### **326 ADVANCED PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES (3) SPRING**

Course involves intensive self-evaluation of both verbal and nonverbal elements of presentation. Interviews, group communications, and presenting with multimedia are covered. Theories of communication are discussed as they relate to presentation styles. Junior standing required.

### **327 MEDIA AND CHILDREN (3) FALL**

Students learn about the latest research in child development, media design, and marketing. Students then apply these ideas to the creation of a media message for a specific age group. Junior standing required.

**328 AMERICA AT THE MOVIES (3)**

An examination of the sociopolitical meanings and significance of American film from the silent era to the present. To better understand how films can potentially reflect and affect society, students read about American history and analyze dozens of films in their particular historical contexts. Junior standing required.

**329 "REALITY" TV AND FILM (3)**

How is "reality" mediated in film and television? In this course students examine the truthfulness, ethics, and sociopolitical implications of such forms and genres as the documentary, neorealism, Dogme 95, tabloid talk shows, voyeurism/confession shows, crime shows, freak shows, and contest/game shows. Junior standing required.

**332 SCREENING VIOLENCE (3)**

Violence in media and popular culture has been the subject of great concern and voluminous research for many years. In this course students examine the history, meaning, and real-world implications and effects of media violence, with a focus on film, television, literature, news, sports, comics, toys, and video games. Junior standing required.

**333 COMMUNICATION, POWER, AND SOCIAL CHANGE (3)**

How does power operate through communication to delay or to advance social progress? Analyze history, film, documentary, news, corporate PR, government propaganda, and cultural myth. Craft short messages from comic books to posters to radio or video spots. Design and get feedback for messages students create on issues of choice.

**340 ADVANCED PUBLIC RELATIONS (3) SPRING**

A hands-on class for students who are planning to work in the field of public relations. Students work as consultants with clients to develop plans for public relations campaigns. Prerequisite: COMS 240 or an introductory public relations course. Junior standing required. May be repeated once for credit.

**368A NEWSPAPER WRITING AND EDITING (3)**

The faculty advisor offers a comprehensive evaluation—oral and written—of the most recent edition of the campus newspaper, the *Star*. Instruction is provided on a wide variety of journalism topics, from editing and reporting to ethics and law. Students are required to read the *Star* and the written evaluation by the advisor. May be repeated for up to 12 units.

**368B NEWSPAPER PRODUCTION (3)**

Students learn the concepts and the techniques of desktop publishing, including design, layout, and the aesthetics of text and image. Editors and reporters use computer software to create the look, the feel, and the format of each week's edition of the *STAR*. May be repeated for up to 12 units.

**369 PRODUCING AND DESIGNING MEDIA PUBLICATIONS (3)**

This is an essential class for students who will work in print media, especially designing and producing newsletters newspapers, magazines, and flyers. The class introduces students to basic concepts of design, trains students to use software programs, including InDesign and Photoshop, and provides hands-on experience with layout, color, typography, text wrap, and tables.

**385 MEDIA LAB: RADIO (1-4) FALL, SPRING**

A media lab to develop a range of skills in the production of radio programs. Work focuses on the production of live and prerecorded pieces for KSUN, SSU's Internet radio station ([www.sonoma.edu/ksun](http://www.sonoma.edu/ksun)). The lab also serves as the staff meeting of the radio station. May be repeated for up to 12 units. First enrollment must be for 3 units. Consent of instructor needed for 1, 2, and 4 units.

**402 SENIOR SEMINAR (3) FALL, SPRING**

Students will share at least one critical analysis of a specific media message and complete a senior-level project/portfolio/study, which is the culmination of their major experience. Seniors only. Cannot be repeated for credit.

**435 SEMINAR: MASS MEDIA (4) SPRING**

Seminar provides an opportunity to gain new insights into social problems through an intensive analysis of the role and impact of mass communication in contemporary society. Emphasis is on exploring, through a major research project, social issues that should be, but are not, fully covered by the mass media. Prerequisite: COMS 301 or SOCI 300 or SOCI 331 or consent of instructor. Cross-listed as SOCI 435.

**460 TEACHING ASSISTANT IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES (1-4) FALL, SPRING**

Intended to give students experience assisting instructors. Teaching assistants help teach, do research, and tutor students in classes. Consent of instructor and department contract required.

**470 RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES (1-4) FALL, SPRING**

Intended to give selected students experience in the construction and implementation of a professor's research project. Consent of instructor and department contract required.

**495 SPECIAL STUDIES (1-4) FALL, SPRING**

Supervised study of a particular problem or area of interest in the media selected by the student in consultation with a sponsoring faculty member. Meetings will be arranged for discussions and progress evaluations. May be repeated for credit. Consent of instructor and Special Study 495 contract required.

**499 MEDIA INTERNSHIP (1-4) FALL, SPRING, SUMMER**

This class provides students with an opportunity to discover how to make an effective transition from the classroom to the workplace. For a semester, individuals work in a media firm, business, newspaper, radio or TV station. On the job, students learn networking and negotiating skills. Assignments for class include: a resume; workplace lingo; self-evaluation; profile of supervisor; and album with photos and text that describe the experience. There is also an interview for a job. Seniors only. Consent of instructor, internship agreement form, and department contracts required. May be repeated for up to 12 units.