

University of Massachusetts/Amherst

Department of Communication



Overview of the Undergraduate Program

Our Approach to Communication:

Our majors focus on the role of communication in society. They learn new ways of thinking about communication as they explore everything from family communication to new media technologies. Our students develop critical skills for understanding the role of communication in their own lives and in the larger world.

Our goals are analytical: to understand how communication processes work, whether in an argument between friends, in a political speech, in misunderstandings between people from different cultures, or in how a television program may affect children. We emphasize theory, methods of inquiry, and critical thinking on a variety of topics, including the technologies of communication and the nature of social institutions; communication and the constitution of social identities and relationships; intercultural and global communication; film history and theory; mass media effects; and regulations affecting communication technologies, and more.

Unlike the Communication programs at many colleges, our curriculum is not technical or skills-based. We offer only one course in public speaking, and students can take only 2 courses in TV/film production for the major. We offer no courses in applied industry training such as advertising or public relations. Our students are very successful at gaining applied training and skills through internships and extra-curricular campus experiences, e.g. working at the campus TV station, radio station, or newspaper. Our program gives our graduates a strong and flexible foundation for careers in a society in which job requirements and individual career trajectories regularly change. About 30% of our graduates work in media-related industries; about 45% work in other government, non-profit, or business-related occupations; and about 20% go on to graduate study, to professional schools, or into teaching.

Admission to the Major:

About 100 incoming freshmen (from the upper half of the applicant pool) are directly admitted to the major in Communication when they are admitted to the University. Students who are not directly admitted as Communication majors may make a formal, written application to the department after completing three introductory courses:

- COMM 118: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication
- COMM 121: Introduction to Media and Culture
- One analytical reasoning (R2) course

These three courses are requirements both for students who have been directly admitted to the Communication major as freshmen or transfers, as well as for already-enrolled UMass students who wish to become majors through application. Students who maintain an overall UMass GPA of 2.7 or higher AND a GPA in Communication classes of 2.9 or higher should be guaranteed admission at the time of the formal application process.

Major Requirements:

A minimum of 36 Communication credits (typically 12 three-credit courses) is required to graduate as a Communication major. These credits must include at least five upper-level

Major Requirements (continued):

courses, including an upper-level writing course. There are limits on the number of courses from outside of the department that can be counted toward the major. The Communication Department is in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, so Communication majors must also complete a five-course Global Education requirement for the College in order to graduate.

Areas of Curriculum Focus:

Media and Society

Media Institutions, Policy, and Technologies

Courses in this area are designed to give the student an understanding of how and why the mass media operate and function as they do.

Media Effects

How do media affect people, e.g. does violence on television lead to acceptance of violent behavior in society?

Critical Cultural Studies

This area examines popular culture and the establishment and maintenance of social values and power relationships.

Film Studies

The area offers courses in film history, theory, and impact. Many courses in the Department can count toward a separate Film Studies Certificate.

Interpersonal Communication and Rhetoric

Interpersonal Communication

This area focuses on the intersection of language, meanings, and relationships in social interaction.

(Inter)Cultural Communication

Courses in this area focus on the cultural nature of communicative processes, ethnic and racial identities, and intercultural contact.

Rhetoric and Performance

Courses focus on public, strategic discourse and the performative nature of language use.

About our Faculty

The Faculty of the Department of Communication includes acclaimed teachers and scholars who are nationally and internationally recognized as authorities in the field. Two of our faculty have won the Distinguished Teaching Award, given to only three faculty members campus-wide each year, and five of our faculty have won the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Teaching Award. Faculty have been editors of major journals and presidents of professional organizations. The number of books and articles they produce places the department in the top 25 in the United States, based upon studies by the Association for Communication Administration.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
Undergraduate Studies Office – Tel: 413-545-3539
417 Machmer Hall – 240 Hicks Way
University of Massachusetts/Amherst
Amherst, MA 01003-9278
www.umass.edu/communication

Learning Opportunities beyond the Required Curriculum

Commonwealth College (Honors Program)

Students with a 3.2 GPA or higher may take part in Commonwealth College, the UMass Honors Program (504 Goodell, tel. 545-2483). The Honors Track in the Department of Communication is one of three ways in which Communication majors who are also in Commonwealth College can complete their Commonwealth College requirements. Honors students work independently and in small colloquia under faculty supervision to study topics in greater depth than is possible in other courses. Students who plan to go to graduate school can use the research component of the program to develop useful critical and analytical skills required for graduate work.

Internships

About 150 Communication majors do internships each year. Internships offer supervised off-campus training and work experience in numerous career fields. Communication majors intern in governmental, non-profit, education, and business organizations, including traditional media-oriented fields such as advertising, public relations, television, film, newspapers, and magazines. Internships are a way to explore career options, gain work experience, and make contacts that can lead—particularly in the case of full-time, semester-long internships—to jobs after graduation. Internship sites can be selected from among the thousands in the UMass database, or students can find or create their own internships. Many students do internships in New England or the Greater New York area, but they can be done anywhere.

It is possible to do an internship (UMass 298Y: Practicum) during the Fall, Spring, Winter (January), or Summer sessions. The credits you can earn range from as few as 1 to as many as 18, depending on the number of hours per week you put into the internship. (One credit for every 40 hours of work is **only** typical.) These credits are graded as **Pass/Fail** and **do not fulfill any departmental requirements**. They are treated as elective credits only. Up to 18 credits of practica

(courses ending in -98) can be applied toward graduation. To be eligible for an internship, you should have completed at least 45 credits and hold a minimum GPA of 2.0. For more information, contact the Field Experience Office (511 Goodell, tel. 545-6265 or 545-6267).

Study Abroad

Studying abroad for a semester or two teaches students more about themselves, their culture, and their country than they learn in the corresponding amount of time at their own campus. Students carry these experiences and new ways of thinking about themselves and the world with them long after they have forgotten the details of their coursework, whether at UMass or on Study Abroad.

Over 40 Communication majors study abroad each year. In the last two years, Communication majors have studied in Australia, Germany, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, England, France, South Africa, and Ireland, but many other options are possible. Consult the Education Abroad Advising Center (455 Hills South, 545-5247) for information and counseling on study abroad.

Domestic Exchange

Students can spend a semester or year at one of 180 participating colleges and universities across the US. For further information, contact the Domestic Exchange office in 614 Goodell, tel. 545-5351.

Double Majoring

Communication majors may double major in any other major that allows it. Double majors must complete all requirements for both majors. Last year, Communication majors were double majoring in Psychology, Journalism, Spanish, History, Classics, Management, Marketing, Dance, Sports Management, English, Legal Studies, Hospitality, Political Science, Theater, Sociology, BDIC, German, Judaic Studies, and Philosophy, among others.