Communication Studies

The power of communication is inescapable, it affects us everywhere, every day. Therefore, communication is central to every aspect of our lives and social interactions. Communication is immensely powerful because it shapes everything we think, feel, and do—even when we think we aren’t communicating. The words and symbols we choose, the media and advertising we consume, the ways we dress or decorate our rooms, the speeches public figures deliver—all these and more create powerful meanings about who we are, how we think, and what kind of world we live in.

THE PROGRAM
The mission of the Communication Studies Department at Gonzaga University is to cultivate a sophisticated understanding of the process of communication as symbolic action by providing a theoretically-grounded and experiential education that prepares students to analyze and critique human communication in its many forms, and to create and deliver content across multiple modalities.

We are committed to nurturing a diverse, inclusive community of scholars who think critically and engage responsibly with the problems and issues of our communities through exemplary, ethical communication via multiple modes of address.

Blending contemporary rhetorical education with interdisciplinary, liberal arts education, the department prepares students with rhetorical skills (eloquentia perfecta in the Jesuit Rhetorical tradition) and a refined sense of judgment and discernment to work toward justice and the common good.

Every discipline, every field, and every industry need people who can think deeply and critically about the power and consequences of communication. Communication Studies complements a variety of fields within the humanities through our engagement with questions of meaning and interpretation. Moreover, our focus on meaning-making, symbolic action, and persuasion offers a distinctive worldview that enriches and contributes to conversations in every disciplinary field including the sciences and social sciences.

The major not only prepares students for their first job, but also equips students with adaptable skills and problem-solving abilities that prepare them to navigate into their fifth job and beyond—including jobs that don’t exist yet.

CURRICULUM
Communication Studies teaches students to embrace an understanding of communication as the central means of creating, maintaining, and transforming our social world. We interrogate the consequences of our communication processes on our current social realities, and we discover and produce knowledge about communication practices that might transform those realities and create more just, equitable, and inclusive social worlds.

Our curriculum provides students with a strong foundation in essential understandings of communication. Our foundational courses prepare students to carefully analyze the way people co-create meaning and cultures, to understand the way communication is entangled in power relationships, and to think about how communication shapes our individual and collective identities. These courses help students discern how our cultural understandings affect our communities, for better or worse.

Following these foundational courses, we invite students to explore and apply communication principles to a variety of topics based on students’ interests and goals. Our junior and senior level classes provide ample flexibility for students to craft a learning path that will best prepare them for their future goals.

Throughout all our courses, the Communication faculty foster students’ critical awareness of, appreciation for, and engagement with multiple and diverse perspectives. We build on an ethos of social justice to prepare graduates to address contemporary issues and challenges.

Majors and minors gain experience analyzing and proposing solutions to complex problems confronting the human condition. We immerse students in problem-oriented learning environments that extend beyond the classroom and into their roles as leaders in the community, the public arena, and the world.
OUTCOMES
Communication Studies is the major of the future: it bridges multiple fields while preparing students for many different career paths, such as law, business, teaching, government, public service, and non-profit administration. In recent years, students have used the conceptual and practical skills from their Communication Studies degree to secure internships and jobs with a variety of companies and organizations across the country. Recent examples include:

- The Boeing Company
- Make-A-Wish Foundation
- Nike
- Nordstrom
- Special Olympics
- Target
- Teach For America
- United Way
- The Walt Disney Company

Communication Studies courses prime students for a range of graduate studies in communication areas that span media research, critical and cultural studies, journalism, filmmaking, and other creative arts. Recent graduates have also been accepted for graduate study in other disciplines, including law, business, education, medicine, and other humanities and social sciences. Recent graduates have been accepted to a number of graduate programs, including:

- Boston University
- Gonzaga University
- Johns Hopkins University
- University of Utah
- University of Washington
- Washington State University

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