Studying COMM at Maryland

The Department of Communication takes as its intellectual focus the strategic use of discourse in the public sphere.

Departmental research focuses on a wide array of topics within the Communication arts and sciences, with a programmatic focus on three broad areas: Communication Science; Public Relations; and Rhetoric & Political Culture.

Our Ph.D. Program
The Department encourages applications for graduate study from students wishing to pursue interests identified with one or more of these foci. The graduate program in Communication is designed for students whose educational objective is the Ph.D. degree (the program does not admit students whose degree objective is the M.A.).

The Ph.D. degree is research-oriented rather than applied. The graduate curriculum treats disciplinary methods of inquiry, communication concepts and theories, and specialized research problems, and all graduate students engage in independent research projects, including the Ph.D. dissertation. Currently, nearly all of the students admitted into the Ph.D. program aspire to academic careers as scholars and teachers, with a few pursuing professional careers in government, non-profit organizations, or the private sector.

Studying COMM in DC
Communication faculty and graduate students at Maryland enjoy unique research opportunities.

The Washington D.C. metropolitan area provides rich resources including Congress, the Supreme Court, the White House, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the Smithsonian, the national monuments, Embassies, media outlets, and the headquarters of major foundations and public granting agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation.

With rare exceptions, the program currently admits only full-time students who are funded by teaching assistantships, administrative assistantships, and/or university fellowships.

New Research from Maryland
The latest research publications from Maryland faculty members and graduate students, appearing in the leading journals in the communication discipline.

Spring/Summer Conferences
Terps will travel across the nation and around the world to present research at spring and summer conferences.
New Research from Maryland

Lecturer Deepa Anagondahalli and Associate Professor Sahar Khamis, “Mubarak Framed! Humor and Political Activism before and during the Egyptian Revolution,” Arab Media & Society.


Ph.D. Candidate Amanda Kennedy and Assistant Professor Erich Sommerfeldt, “A Postmodern Turn for Social Media Research: Theory and Research Directions for Public Relations Scholarship,” Atlantic Journal of Communication.

Associate Professor Brooke Fisher Liu and Ph.D. Candidate Julia Daisy Fraustino, “How Disaster Information Form, Source, Type and Prior Disaster Exposure Affect Public Outcomes: Jumping on the Social Media Bandwagon?” Journal of Applied Communication Research.

Associate Professor Xiaoli Nan and Ph.D. students Irina Iles and Bo Yang, “Temporal framing and consideration of future consequences: Effects on smokers' and at-risk nonsmokers' responses to cigarette health warnings,” Health Communication.


Assistant Professor Anita Atwell Seate, “The Effect of Media Exposure on Perceptions of Group Entitativity: A Preliminary Investigation,” Communication Research Reports.

Assistant Professor Erich Sommerfeldt, “Disasters and Information Source Repertoires: Information Seeking and Information Sufficiency in Postearthquake Haiti,” Journal of Applied Communication Research.

Assistant Professor Amber Westcott-Baker, “Neural predictors of message effectiveness during counterarguing in antidrug campaigns,” Communication Monographs.
Terps @ Spring/Summer Conferences

Faculty and graduate students from the Department of Communication will present research, participate in programs, receive awards, and assist in governance at several Communication conferences in 2015.

Attending the 65th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 2015:

Assistant Professor Lindsey Anderson, “Managing the tensions of age-based role reversals in the intergenerational workplace: Exploring young adults’ experience supervising older employees” and “Eating their young: Understanding nurses’ intergenerational communicative experiences in the workplace.”

Ph.D. student Julio Bermejo, Lecturer Elizabeth Petrun, Ph.D. students Stephanie Madden and Claire Tills and Associate Professor Brooke Fisher Liu, “‘We are all that stands between them and what they want’: Far-right extremist online discussions of government actions.”

Professor Edward L. Fink, “A prophet not in his (or her) own land: The effect of distance traversed on social influence.”

Ph.D. student Julia Daisy Fraustino, “Toward a more robust conceptualization of crisis communication ethics in public relations: Life span critiques.”

Ph.D. student Julia Daisy Fraustino and Associate Professor Brooke Fisher Liu, “The scared, the outraged, and the anxious: How crisis emotions, involvement, and demographics predict publics’ conative coping.”

Ph.D. student Irina Iles and Associate Professor Xiaoli Nan, “It’s No Laughing Matter: The Use of Ironic vs. Sarcastic Humor in Health Messages.”

Ph.D. student Zexin Ma and Associate Professor Xiaoli Nan, “Role of Narrative Persuasion in Reducing Stigma and Promoting Acceptance of Mental Illness.”

Ph.D. student Stephanie Madden, “Integrating gender and emotions into issue management: The case of campus sexual assault” and “Who loves consent? An analysis of responses to the culture jamming of Victoria’s Secret.”

Ph.D. students Stephanie Madden, Claire Tills, “Overlapping spheres: Identity creation in a women-only nonprofit organization.”

Ph.D. student Timothy Penn, “The Most Beautiful Suicide: Memory, Myth, and Violence in an Iconic Photograph” and “Stakeholder Management in a Military Organization: An Exploration.”

Assistant Professor Anita Atwell Seate, “Sports fans and sci-fi fanatics: Social impressions of different types of fans.”

Assistant Professor Erich Sommerfeldt, “Social network analysis and public relations: Tertius lumens as a path to organizational trust and relationship building,” and “Toward the conceptualization of the engagement process in public relations: Evidence from six nations.”

Assistant Professor Amber Westcott-Baker and Ph.D. student Josie Moore, “Dynamics of Persuasion in Response to Organ Donation Messages.”

UM #8—Best Publics

According to a new ranking by The Business Journals, the University of Maryland is the eighth best public university in America. Only the University of Michigan is ranked higher than Maryland among Big Ten universities.

Panels at the 2015 Eastern Communication Association featuring one or more Terps!
Attending the 106th Annual Conference of the Eastern Communication Association, Philadelphia, PA, April 2015:

Assistant Professor Lindsey Anderson, “Understanding Gray Feelings: An Exploration of Age-Based Differences in Nurses’ Descriptions of Workplace Emotions” and “Utilizing Learning Analytics to Improve the Basic Course: A Qualitative Analysis of the Instructor Feedback Captured in Revealer” (with Elizabeth Gardner, Andrew Wolvin, Rowie Kirby-Straker, Adil Yalcin, and Benjamin Bederson).


Ph.D. student Ywien Dai, “Finishing the Unfinished Goal: Theorizing the Influence of Previous Relationship on Romantic Partner Preference.”


UG student Kevin Fomengia and Assistant Professor Anita Atwell Seate, “The Relationship between Academic Social Support, Retention Attitudes, and Self-Esteem: A Preliminary Investigation.”

Ph.D. student Michelle Futerfas, “Exploring the Decision to Disclose an Unintended Pregnancy: A Theoretical Consideration.”

Ph.D. student Kimberley Hannah, “Reimagining The Situation Room: Memes of an Ambiguous Political Image.”

Ph.D. student Lauren Harris, “Kristi Noem and Joni Ernst for Congress: The ‘Common (Wo)Man’ Rhetorical Appeal.”


Research Professor Kathleen Kendall, “The D.C. Mayor’s Race, 2014: Running Against the Specter of Corruption” and “Obama’s Lame Duck Mid-Terms: Shaping Perceptions.”

Professor James Klumpp, featured honoree “On Deliberation and Democracy: Honoring the Work of James L. Klumpp.” Panelists include Professors Trevor Parry-Giles and Andrew Wolvin. Also, panelist, “Kenneth Burke and Deliberative Rhetoric: Where is Burke When We Need Him?”

Ph.D. student Jessica Lu, “Racial Determinism and the Black Family: The Negro Family, ‘Moynihan Revisited,’ and Negotiations of Race, Class, And Gender In the 21st Century.”

Ph.D. student Melissa Lucas, “The Virtuous, Peaceful Citizen: Courting the ‘Woman Vote’ in the 1920 Presidential Election.”

Ph.D. students Sean Luechtefeld and Thomas McCloskey, debate participants: “Is it Better to be Articulate or Intelligent in American Politics? A Public Debate.”

Ph.D. student Rong Ma, “Too Nervous to Talk: The Life Space of Intercultural Communication Apprehension.”

Ph.D. student Stephanie Madden, participant, “It’s On Us: A Roundtable Deliberation on Sexual Assault Prevention Programs on College Campuses.”

Ph.D. students Stephanie Madden and Katie Brown, “Empowering the Future Practitioner: Postmodernism in the Public Relations Classroom.”

Ph.D. student Thomas McCloskey, “Lightning’s About to Strike!” Cypress Bay High School and the External Coaching Model for Forensics Social Capital.”
ECA Cont.

Professor Trevor Parry-Giles, participant: “The Convention Panel: A Public or Private Affair?”


Assistant Professor Anita Atwell Seate, “Would You Have Seen the Sad Post Anyway?: Understanding the Ethical Implications of the Facebook Mood Study in Terms of Field Experiment Research”


Professor Robert Gaines will present “Sophists in Space: Locations of Sophistic Professional Activity in the Hellenistic and Early Imperial World” at the the biennial congress of International Society for the History of Rhetoric, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany, July 2015.

The following doctoral students will attend the bi-annual Institutes and Workshops, sponsored by the Rhetoric Society of America, Madison, WI, July 2015.

- Rebecca Alt
- Elizabeth Gardner
- Thomas McCloskey
- Annie-Laurie Nichols
- Jade Olson
- Devin Scott
- Meridith Styer

The following doctoral students and faculty will attend the 2015 DC Health Communication Conference in Northern Virginia, April 2015.

Ph.D. student Michelle Futerfas, “The Impact of Perceived Reality in Entertainment Programming on Safe-Sex Intentions.”

Ph.D. student Irina Iles, Assistant Professor Anita Atwell Seate, & Senior Lecturer Leah Waks, “Stigmatizing the Other: An exploratory study of unintended consequences of eating disorder public service announcements.”

Ph.D. student Zexin Ma, “Mental Illness and the Media: A Review of the Literature.”

Ph.D. student Josie Moore, “Lewin’s Field Theory as a Framework for Parasocial Interaction.”

Ph.D. student Josie Moore and Assistant Professor Amber Westcott-Baker, “Give Away Your Heart: Creating Effective Organ Donation Campaigns.”


Assistant Professor Lindsey Anderson is a featured panelist on two panels at the Central States Communication Association’s 82nd Annual Convention, Madison, WI, April 2015.

“Converging Academic Voices: Learning the Languages of Our Peers” and “Understanding the Mentoring Experiences of Early Career Women Academics: A Convergence of Traditional and Non-Traditional Forms of Advice.”

Attending the George W. Bush Presidential Conference at Hofstra University, March 2015, are:


Assistant Professor Michelle Murray Yang, “Tracing Rhetorical Shifts in U.S.-Sino Relations: George W. Bush’s Discourse Regarding Taiwan and the PRC.”