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.

Terps @ ICA, Puerto Rico
Faculty and graduate student to present research at the 65th annual meeting of ICA in May.
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

Immediacy and Instructor Credibility as Mediators” and "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Expectations in Romantic Relationships."

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.”

Ph.D. student Kathleen Brown, “Enacting Gender in Public Relations Undergraduate Education.”

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” (Best Faculty Papers in Public Relations).

Associate Professor Dale Hample and Ph.D. student Amanda Iles, "Arguing to Display Identity.”

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 Amanda Kennedy, “An Affective Turn for Public Relations” (Best Student Papers in Public Relations).

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

Associate Professor Xiaoli Nan, and Ph.D. students Michelle Futerfas and Zexin Ma, “Role of Narrative Perspective and Modality in the Persuasiveness of Public Service Advertisements Promoting HPV Vaccination.”

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.”

Associate Professor Xiaoli Nan, “Temporal Framing Effects Differ for Narrative vs. Nonnarrative Messages: The Case of Promoting HPV Vaccination.”

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.”

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.

Research presentations at the 2015 International Communication Association featuring one or more Terps!

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

Lecturer Deepa Anagondahalli, “Academic Entitlement in Student Course Evaluation: Nonverbal
Assistant Professor Erich Sommerfeldt, “Social network analysis and public relations: Tertius jungens as a path to organizational trust and relationship building,” and “Toward the conceptualization of the engagement process in public relations: Evidence from six nations.”

Lecturer Rowie Kirby-Straker and Associate Professor Dale Hample, “Effects of Similarity and Framing on Narrative Environmental Risk Communication.”

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

Ph.D. student Sifan Xu, “Risk Amplification from an Intercultural Perspective” and “Strategy of Outlaw Discourse in Building Civil Society."

Ph.D. student Bo Yang and Associate Professor Xiaoli Nan, “The Influence of Social Norms on College Drinking: Considering the Role of Regulatory Mode.”


Ph.D. student Mengqi Zhan and Associate Professor Dale Hample, “Predicting Employee Dissent Expression in Organizations: A Cost and Benefit Approach.”

Other Summer/Spring Conferences

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.

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.”

The following doctoral students 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.”

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.”