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 @ AEJMC, San Francisco
Faculty and graduate student to present research at the annual meeting of AEJMC in August.
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 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.
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.

Terps @ Spring/Summer Conferences


Liang Ma, “I am One of Them: A Social Identity Approach to Crisis Communication.”

Stephanie Madden and Julia Daisy Fraustino, (with Ph.D. alumnae Rowena Briones and Melissa Janoske), “Teaching, tweeting, and telecommuting: Experiential and cross-institutional learning through social media.” (Top Teaching Paper Panel, Public Relations Division)

Tim Penn, “If Anything Can Go Wrong, It Will: Murphy’s Law, and the Unintended Consequences of Deliberate Communication.”

Elizabeth Toth (with Ph.D. alumnae Rowena Briones and Hongmei Shen), “More than just a lack of uniformity: Exploring the evolution of public relations master’s programs.”

Ning Xie, “Same or Different across Countries: Multinational Corporations’ Relationship Cultivation Strategies on Social Network Sites.”

Bermejo & Fraustino Receive AEJMC Awards

Ph.D. student Julio Bermejo is the 2015 recipient of the Inez Kaiser Graduate Student of Color Award.

Ph.D. student Julia Daisy Fraustino is the recipient of the Mass Communication & Society Division’s Most Promising Professor Award.

Other Summer Conferences

The following Terps will participate in the biennial NCA/AFA Conference on Argumentation—the Alta Conference—in Utah, July-August, 2015:

Ph.D. student Jaclyn Bruner, “ Recovering Justice: Performance of Justice Beyond the Legal Form.”

Associate Professor Dale Hample, and Ph.D. students Yiwen Dai and Mengqi Zhan, “Clarifying the Idea of Argument Stakes.”


Ph.D. student Meredith Styer, “Lost Arguments: Recovering the Unique Argumentation of Nineteenth-Century Women’s Extemporaneous Speaking.”

Attending the Annual Conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, San Francisco, August 2015:

Katie Brown, Brooke Fowler, Sylvia Guo, Claire Tills, Sifan Xu, & Erich J. Sommerfeldt, “Public relations as development communication? Conceptual overlaps and prospects for a societal paradigm of public relations.”

Julia Daisy Fraustino and Amanda Kennedy, “Care in Crisis: Proposing the Applied Model of Care Considerations for Public Relations.”
The Department of Communication at the University of Maryland proudly salutes its chair, Dr. Elizabeth Toth, on the completion of her successful presidency of AEJMC.

For over a decade, Elizabeth Toth has been a leader in the Department of Communication and a pivotal figure in the continued development of its nationally acclaimed graduate program in Public Relations.