



Catch Up with Communication Studies

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Monthly E-Newsletter

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What is Communication?



Communication is the process by which we share verbal and nonverbal messages with another person for the purpose of creating shared meaning. This process is nuanced by our relationship history with that person, the context in which we are communicating, and our skill level for sending and interpreting appropriate messages.

-Dr. Lisa Dahlgren



Courses Spotlight

Undergraduate Course

COMS 3360 Interpreting Visual Messages



In this course, students dive into the power of visual communication, exploring how images, film, and media shape our understanding of the world. Through analysis of visual data and persuasive techniques, we examine the impact of visual storytelling in TV, film, advertising, and more. Students will develop skills in interpreting and deconstructing visual messages while also learning how to use visual notetaking to enhance comprehension and engagement. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze the role of visuals in communication and apply these insights across various fields.

Interested in this course? Message Dr. Caleb G. Hubbard at cgh034@shsu.edu to learn more about it!

Graduate Course

COMS 5395 Social Support and Well-Being



This graduate seminar explores the extensive literature on social support and well-being, helping students master key concepts and conduct empirical research. Social support, which includes emotional and instrumental assistance from others, significantly impacts physical health, psychological coping, and relationship satisfaction. The course is structured into three units: an introduction to social support and its health effects, an examination of sociological, psychological, and communication perspectives, and an applied analysis of support in various contexts, including illness, risky behaviors, and technology. No matter what your career goal is, this course will benefit you in many aspects of your personal and professional life.

Interested in this course? Message Dr. Yixin “Cindy” Chen at cindychen@shsu.edu to learn more about it!

Want to see what else we offer?

[Undergraduate Course Catalog](#)

[Graduate and Professional Course Catalog](#)



Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Frances Brandau, Professor, Department Chair



I love teaching Communication Studies because *we swim in a sea of communication!* It’s everywhere, from our personal relationships to our professional success. Strong communication skills build confidence, foster belonging, strengthen leadership, and sharpen critical thinking.

I especially enjoy teaching theory courses because they give students the tools to understand, explain, and even predict behavior. With this knowledge, they can be proactive in any situation, hopefully leading to better outcomes in their personal lives and careers.

Fun fact: I’m from *L.A.* — *Lower Alabama!* I grew up in Mobile, where I was lucky to be just a

short drive from the white sugar sand beaches of Gulf Shores. Maybe that's why I love the idea of navigating the waves of communication — after all, understanding how to communicate effectively helps us stay afloat in any situation.

Dr. Anya Lu, Assistant Professor



For me, teaching Communication Studies is all about helping people connect, build relationships, and bring communities together. Right now, I'm teaching Key to Listening and Deceptive Communication, but I often teach Intercultural Communication and Health Communication — and I absolutely love working with undergraduate students in these courses.

On the graduate level, I currently teach Statistics (yes, stats can be fun!), along with courses like Advanced Intercultural Communication, Intergenerational Communication, and Nonverbal Communication in Close Relationships. I'd love to teach more methods courses in the future — because, let's be honest, I love digging into the "how" behind communication research.

My research focuses on solving real-world problems — things that actually makes a difference in how people connect across contexts. Currently, I'm working on reducing public speaking anxiety using VR and AI, improving patient-centered care for high-risk pregnancies, and enhancing financial communication in couples.

Fun fact about me: I'm into falconry! Lately, I've started taking my kids with me, turning it into a family adventure — because what's better than bonding over birds of prey? Here's a picture of me and my Harris's Hawk, Brownie.



Anne-Bennett Smithson, PhD, JD, Lecturer



A few weeks ago, my middle schooler asked me, “Mom, what is your dream job”? I immediately replied, “I already have it!”

I have been teaching in the Communication Studies field since 2011, and I absolutely love it. Communication Studies allows me to combine my experience as an attorney, my background in political communication, and my interest in interpersonal communication. I also enjoy interacting with students and learning what is important to them so I can tailor my classes accordingly! I have taught many

different classes including Public Speaking, Organizational Communication, Freedom of Speech and Civic Communication, Media Literacy, Political Communication, Communication Theory, Research Methods in Communication, Digital Communication Literacy, Communication, Culture, & Technology, and Conflict, Negotiation, & Resolution.

Before coming to Sam Houston State University, I lived on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, and taught at the University of Maryland. I currently live in the Woodlands with my husband and three sons. A fun fact about me is that I grew up on a cattle farm in rural Kentucky where my parents still raise black angus beef cattle.



Student Spotlight

Justin Amaro, Graduate Student



I am currently a Creative Services and Marketing Coordinator for the Dallas Independent School District’s Communication Services department. I am also a Graduate Assistant for Sam Houston State University’s Communication Studies department. I intend on implementing this degree towards my professional career endeavors and one day becoming a Chief Communications Officer within Education. I would also like to teach at the university level and potentially continue my education to become a professor.

I love being a Communication Studies major because I’m able to focus on the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of communication that people experience. This field allows me to better understand why people communicate in the ways that they do, whilst learning and practicing new methods to better reach them. I also just enjoy a good conversation, especially when it revolves around personal facets like subjective tastes in music and relationships.

Zoey Giles, Undergraduate Student



I like being a Communication Studies major because I find it extremely interesting how people communicate. I like learning about communication theories and how they apply to everyday life. I think my favorite concept I have learned so far is Face Saving: how people tend to edit the messages they send out through facework in order to “Face Save” and protect their image of themselves. I want to use my degree in Communication Studies to go into corporate communication when I enter the workforce.



Student Organizations

Lambda Pi Eta



Lambda Pi Eta will be hosting “Beyond the Classroom: Expert Insight into Careers with a Communication Degree” this month! This event will give the audience the opportunity to hear from and speak with industry professionals as they share their experiences, offer expert insights, and explore the career paths available to Communication Studies majors. Check out the Important Dates section for more information!

CommuniKats



Do you want to improve your communication skills or connect with like-minded students interested in communication? Connect with CommuniKats!

CommuniKats is open to new members, all students welcome.

Contact current CommuniKats president Kylee Patterson at kmp118@shsu.edu or follow on Instagram at [@CommuniKats](https://www.instagram.com/CommuniKats) for more information and updates!



Celebrations and Success

Communication Day: COMM to the Carnival! Department of Communication Studies

Last month, we celebrated Communication Studies and students like you with this semester's Communication Day! It was PAWsome to see everyone and get to know you. We hope you had a great time and can't wait to see you again!



Pictured, left-to-right:

Back Row: Dr. Colton Krawietz; Dr. Lisa Dahlgren; Dr. Anya Lu; Dena Horne, MA
Middle Row: Joy Mallory, Administrative Assistant; Dr. Caleb G. Hubbard; Dr. Frances Brandau;
Kristen Hester, MA; Suzi Honeywell, MA
Front Row: Michelle Plitt, Assistant to the Chair; Allyzah Allene D. Cabugao, MA; Dr. Yixin
"Cindy" Chen



Research Spotlights

Maintenance Behaviors in Romantic Relationships: Dr. Colton Krawietz

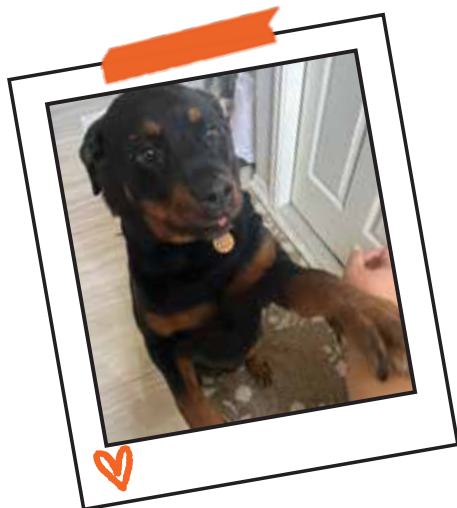


Growing evidence suggests that people engage in various communication behaviors, with differing levels of frequency, to maintain romantic relationships. Through two studies, Dr. Krawietz and his colleague, Dr. Pett, found that romantic partners can be classified into groups based on how often they use each relational maintenance behaviors. In sum, this research uncovers that the conjoint use of these behaviors can effectively maintain the quality of a relationship.

The article “A Latent Profile Analysis of Relational Maintenance Behaviors in Romantic Relationships” can be found [here](#).



Pet Spotlight



Instructor Allyzah Allene D. Cabugao's Pawesome Pet!

Kara
Major in Comedic Timing
Minor in Trying to Reach You
About Your Car's Extended Warranty



Important Upcoming Dates

March

Monday, March 10th - Friday, March 14th

Spring Break

Wednesday, March 26th

Full Term: Last day to drop courses with a “Q”

Thursday, March 27th

Beyond the Classroom:

Expert Insight into Careers with a Communication Degree;

Lambda Pi Eta

CHSS 110, 6:30 PM

Email commstudies@shsu.edu for Streaming Link

Hear from industry professionals as they share their experiences and explore the many career paths available to Communication Studies majors. Learn how to turn your degree into a successful career and gain valuable advice from those who have done it!

Speaker list includes:

Lisa Pinto, VP of Public Relations & Corporate Communicationis; SWBC (Financial Service Company); SHSU Alumni

Tyler Schievelbein, Marketing & Communications Major; Habitat for Humanity - Montgomery County

Rachel Drody, Chief Executive Officer (CEO); Harper Grayson Communications

April

Friday, April 18th

University Holiday / Reading Day - No Classes



Want to be Featured?

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**Newsletter
Submission Form**



Contact Us

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

1901 Avenue I

Suite 410

Huntsville, Texas 77340

commstudies@shsu.edu

936.294.1497



Sam Houston State University
Communication Studies
College of Humanities & Social Sciences

