



Catch Up with Communication Studies

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Monthly E-Newsletter

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What is Communication?



Simply put, communication is the process of meaning-making through verbal or nonverbal messages. Our relationships, identities, and organizations are constituted through communication. In Communication Studies, we study the process of meaning-making and its impacts on various aspects of life. Communication Studies contributes to knowledge in a wide variety of contexts, such as romantic relationships, health and medical fields, corporations and business organizations, and social media.

-Dr. Kelly Weikle



Courses Spotlight

Undergraduate Course

COMS 4392 Seminar in Communication Studies: Dark Side of Communication



The communication behaviors we use in our close relationships can vary in the extent to which they are morally (un)acceptable or functionally productive (or destructive). For example, some messages can be morally acceptable yet relatively destructive, whereas others can be morally unacceptable yet relatively productive. In this course, we will explore the dark (and light) side of communication people use in their close relationships. Specifically, we will explore topics such as hurtful communication, prolific liars, serial arguing, and much, much more.

Interested in this course? Message Dr. Colton Krawietz at cek043@shsu.edu to learn more about it!

Graduate Course

COMS 5334 Pedagogy of Public Speaking for Novice Instructors



Teaching inherently involves communication— presenting information, fostering a positive classroom climate, responding to questions, creating assessments, and delivering feedback (to name a few). The Pedagogy of Public Speaking delves into best practices for effective teaching and communication, supported by decades of empirical research. With a focus on mastering public speaking techniques, this course is ideal for future communication studies professors, team leaders, or business professionals who will guide others in delivering compelling presentations. This class will equip you with methods to enhance your instructional communication and achieve your teaching goals!

Interested in this course? Message Dr. Rebekah Chiasson at rmc080@shsu.edu to learn more about it!

Want to see what else we offer?

[Undergraduate Course Catalog](#)

[Graduate and Professional Course Catalog](#)



Alumni Spotlight

Tiffany Venekamp, Executive Director of Family Promise of Lake Houston



The Communication Studies program at SHSU has equipped me with the skills, strategies, and confidence to work in a business-professional environment. The Communication Studies professors and department chairs did an excellent job engaging non-traditional students like myself, and gave many opportunities to develop relationships with staff, other students, and professionals in the field. Immediately after graduation, I was offered a position as the Executive Director of Family Promise of Lake Houston, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides programs and services to

homeless families with children. The skills I learned are implemented on a daily basis, ranging from volunteer management to networking with advocates and politicians on policies that support the population I serve. I truly cannot express how grateful I am to have had the opportunity to learn from such a dynamic and supportive staff. I am proud to be a SHSU BearKat. Eat 'Em Up Kats!



Faculty Spotlight

Dr. Michael Irvin Arrington, Associate Professor



Teaching communication is a means of empowering people. The courses I teach allow students to learn about the power of communication in relational and mediated contexts to enhance the quality of their lives. Students have opportunities to craft effective messages and to become critical consumers of the messages they receive.

During my time at SHSU, I have taught several courses, including (but not limited to) these: Communication for Business and

Professions, Family Communication, Intercultural Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Introduction to Communication Theory and Research, Persuasion, Public Speaking, Relationship Communication, and Strategic Organizational Communication. In addition, I am excited to teach “Narrative Research on Health and Illness,” a course I created for SHSU’s new minor in Medical Humanities.

My research agenda addresses the intersections of media, illness, relationships, and identity. I investigate these topics through studies of interpersonal and family communication, illness and loss narratives, and social support. I was also recently interviewed for an online article about stigma as a barrier to communication about prostate cancer among African American men, titled “Lloyd Austin’s Private Battle: Prostate Cancer, Stigma and the Impact on Black Men” by Joseph Williams.

Read “Lloyd Austin’s Private Battle: Prostate Cancer, Stigma and the Impact on Black Men” [here](#).

Dena Horne, MA, Lecturer



Teaching Communication Studies is all about helping students master the essential skill of effective interaction. We dive into different types of communication — verbal, nonverbal, and written — and explore how they affect our personal and professional relationships. I love guiding students to think critically about how messages are shaped by cultural and social contexts.

My classes — Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, Community Applied Communication, and Introduction to Communication Theory and Research — each offer a unique perspective on communication, making them engaging in their own special way.

On a personal note, applying these skills has really strengthened my relationships with my siblings, in-laws, and nieces & nephews. Fun fact: I’m the youngest of six kids and have 11 nieces and nephews, plus two-great nieces! One of my nieces is even planning to attend SHSU when she graduates in a few years.



Student Organizations

Lambda Pi Eta



Lambda Pi Eta applications have just closed, and we are excited to announce that we have 12 new members of Lambda Pi Eta that will be inducted in November.

Be on the lookout for future Lambda Pi Eta events, as we invite alumni to speak on what they are doing with their communication degrees and other networking events.

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

All of Us Research Program: Prevalence of Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drug Use in the U.S.: Promethi Das Deep and Dr. Cindy Chen



Promethi Das Deep, a graduate student in the Department of Education, conducted a research project using data from the All of Us Research Program to examine the prevalence of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use in the United States, as well as the impact of demographic factors on these behaviors. The study addresses gaps in understanding substance use patterns and the influence of demographics. It aims to provide insights for tailored interventions to reduce substance abuse and mitigate its consequences in the United States population. He received a \$2000 grant to conduct this product, with Dr. Cindy Chen serving as his faculty advisor.

[View Promethi Das Deep's research poster here.](#)

Let's Talk About That! Public Speaking with Suzi Honeywell, MA, Kendrick J. Felder, and Tyler Vlacich

Recently, students in Suzi Honeywell's class gave informative speeches over topics they have an interest in or experience with. Here's a glance at some of the topics you might learn about from your public speaking classmates:

Drumline for the Bearkat Marching Band: Kendrick J. Felder



I am a 3rd Year nursing student at Sam Houston State University. I am also a proud Drumline Member / Leader for the Bearkat Marching Band (BMB), and I had the opportunity to perform and speak about the Marching Snare Drum for my informative speech for my Public Speaking class! I want to give a huge thanks to Ms. Honeywell and my classmates for being a wonderful audience!

Bonnie and Clyde: Tyler Vlacich



I chose to give a speech about Bonnie and Clyde because it's something I enjoyed learning about from my Texas Government Class. I was surprised to learn about the harsh conditions they had to face while on the run as I always believed they were living the "life" like the movies depicted. They had quite an impact on our history, and I thought it would be interesting to share some facts I learned to my classmates.

Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) Course in Effective Teaching Practices: Dr. Anya Lu and Dr. Anne-Bennett Smithson



Dr. Anya Lu and Dr. Anne-Bennett Smithson from the Department of Communication Studies recently completed the ACUE Course in Effective Teaching Practices. The course is designed for faculty who have completed the Engaging Exploration program and are interested in learning more about active learning practices designed to increase student success. Participants learn the information necessary to implement teaching practices that promote student engagement, persistence, and academic success.

Pictured, left-to-right: Dean Chien-pin Li; Dr. Anya Lu, Communication Studies; Dr. Lei Duan, History; Dr. Shyam Pandey, English

College of Humanities and Social Sciences' Annual Awards 2024: Dr. Frances Brandau

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences' Annual Awards recognizes the outstanding achievements of its faculty and staff in areas critical to the mission of the college. Dr. Frances Brandau, Chair of the Department of Communication Studies, received the Excellence in Service award for her dedication to service.



Pictured, left-to-right:

Back Row: Dean Chien-pin Li; Dr. Benjamin Park, History; Dr. Brian Jordan, History
Front Row: Dr. Frances Brandau, Communication Studies; Sarie Fuller, Former Assistant to the Chair of English; Dr. Jennifer Child, English; Dr. Jadwiga Biskupska, History



Research Spotlights

Communication and Pop Culture: Dr. Caleb G. Hubbard



Dr. Caleb George Hubbard recently published two works focused on popular culture. The first, titled “One-above-all: Stratifying Communication within Marvel Fandom,” appeared in the academic journal *Transformative Works and Cultures*. In this study, Hubbard and colleagues analyze how Marvel fans engage in “fan shaming,” a practice used to assert elite status within the fandom hierarchy. The research delves into the dynamics of communication among fans, revealing how knowledge and expertise are weaponized to establish social stratification within the fan community.

Further details on “One-above-all: Stratifying Communication within Marvel Fandom” can be found [here](#).

The second study, “How Manly is the Mouse? A Historical Perspective on Masculinity in Disney,” forms the second chapter of *Gender and the Male Character in 21st Century Fairy Tale Narratives*. This research examines Disney’s portrayal of male characters — heroes, villains, and sidekicks alike — analyzing how these depictions reflect or challenge hegemonic ideals of masculinity. The study investigates the traits used to convey dominant masculine norms of their subversion across Disney’s animated works.

Further details on “How Manly is the Mouse? A Historical Perspective on Masculinity in Disney” can be found [here](#).

If this type of research interests you, we offer a course that covers popular culture and the impact it has (COMS 3350 Communication and Pop Culture), which is being taught by Dr. Hubbard in the Spring.

Immediacy and Delivering Negative Messages: Dr. Rick Bello



Dr. Rick Bello, one of our esteemed Professor Emeriti, has recently published several research studies within his area of expertise. The first article, co-authored with a colleague, explores the use of verbal techniques, particularly written communication, to enhance immediacy between instructors and students. This research highlights the importance of fostering a sense of closeness and engagement in educational settings. Additionally, Dr. Bello collaborated with another colleague to investigate the most effective ways to deliver negative messages to individuals in close personal relationships.

This study examines communication strategies aimed at minimizing harm while maintaining the strength of interpersonal bonds.

To explore these and other publications by Dr. Rick Bello, check out his [Scholar Profile](#).



Pet Spotlight

Dr. Frances Brandau’s Pawesome Pets!



Little Boy Blue
Major in Meowthematics,
Specialization in Geomewtry
Minor in Quantum Leaping



Charlotte Grace
Major in Pawlitical Science
Minor in Snackonomics



Sir Inky von Silver Claws
Major in Purrsonal Relations
Minor in Dreamology



Important Upcoming Dates

October

Wednesday, October 9th

- Speech Invaders: The Gamification of Public Speaking Classes Through Virtual Reality; Dr. Anya Lu**
VR and AI in the Classroom Research Talk Series
CHSS 220, 1:00 - 2:00PM

Learn about research conducted by faculty in the Department of Communication Studies in this semester's Research Talk Series: VR and AI in the Classroom. Open to all!

Saturday, October 12th

- Saturday @ Sam**

Wednesday, October 23rd

- Communication Day: Let's Play!**
CHSS 410, 2:00 - 4:00PM

Come join us as we celebrate Communication Studies and students like you with an afternoon of games, food, and fun! All students are welcome, bring a friend!

Wednesday, October 30th

- Last day to drop with a "Q" for full term courses**

Thursday, October 31st

- Annual Majors Fair**
LSC Orange Ballroom, 9:00AM - 3:00PM

November

Wednesday, November 7th

- Does the Human Professor or Artificial Intelligence Offer Better Explanations to Students?; Dr. Rebekah M. Chiasson**
VR and AI in the Classroom Research Talk Series
CHSS 330, 11:00AM - 12:00PM

Learn about research conducted by faculty in the Department of Communication Studies in this semester's Research Talk Series: VR and AI in the Classroom. Open to all!

Wednesday, November 27th

 **Reading Day; No Classes**

Thursday, November 28th

 **University Holiday; No Classes**

Friday, November 29th

 **University Holiday; No Classes**



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