Communication and Advocacy

School of Communication Studies
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Admission Requirements
In order to be considered for admission to the graduate program in Communication and Advocacy in the School of Communication Studies, applicants must demonstrate:

- Graduation from a regionally accredited college or university.
- Satisfactory grade point average in their undergraduate course work.
- Satisfactory test scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).
- Proficiency in writing, research and analytical skills demonstrated through research methods coursework in communication or a related field, or a writing sample.

The School of Communication Studies requires that all prospective applicants submit the following materials:

- Official transcripts of all colleges and universities attended
- GRE Scores
- A written statement of educational professional goals (500 words)
- A resume or curriculum vitae
- Two letters of recommendation from professors, employers, and other professionals qualified to judge the applicants ability to successfully complete a graduate program. Recommendations for those applying for Graduate Assistantships should also address the applicant’s potential for teaching.

Students may apply online to The Graduate School and apply for assistantships through the process described on the graduate program website at www.jmu.edu/commstudies. Applications are reviewed beginning February 15.

Mission
The School of Communication Studies promotes an academic environment in which students, faculty and staff develop innovative communication practices and facilitate constructive dialogue in the classroom and community to inspire responsible citizenship in a diverse world. We are committed to the teaching of communication theory and criticism, the development of communication and advocacy skills, the research of communication processes and practices, and the application of generated knowledge about human communication toward the betterment of self and community.
Accordingly, members of the School of Communication Studies strive to create a learning environment whereby:

- Individuals are academically well-rounded, diverse in experience and reflective in their methods, research, and skill sets for approaching communication;
- Scholarship is communication focused, but interdisciplinary in approach, and produces meaningful dialogue within our academic disciplines and communities;
- Professional service, outreach to communities, and advocacy for human betterment is valued by and from each individual.

**Curriculum**

The Master of Arts in Communication and Advocacy is a 36-credit hour program that includes:

- 18 hours of core course work in advocacy studies, applied interpersonal and organizational communication and communication research methods.
- Nine hours of concentrated study in advocacy topics salient in both academic and professional contexts, such as health and environmental communication.
- Three hours of elective course work.
- Six hours of thesis or internship credit designed to facilitate specific vocational and academic qualifications in the field.

The core spans applied theory and contexts as well as research methods and tools. It is designed to prepare students to systematically examine, assess, critique and develop communication advocacy practices across a wide range of areas. The depth and practicum requirements allow students to develop competencies in specific areas of advocacy studies.

**Master of Arts in Communication and Advocacy Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Courses</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction to the Program</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 500. Introduction to Advocacy Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theory and Applied Contexts</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Choose one of the following theory courses:</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 540. Seminar in Communication Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 541. Seminar in Rhetorical Theory and Advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 625. Interpersonal Communication as Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 650. Applied Organizational Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Methods and Tools</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 580. Seminar in Communication Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Choose one of the following advanced research methods courses:</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 681. Seminar in Communication Criticism</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 683. Seminar in Quantitative Communication Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 685. Seminar in Qualitative Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Concentrations</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Choose one of the following concentrations:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Communication</td>
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<td>Environmental Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elective Requirement</strong></td>
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Elective

May be a communication studies course or approved course in a program that features advocacy related topics or that assists in the development of students' professional goals in a particular organizational context.

Completion Requirements

Choose one of the following.

- SCOM 700. Communication Studies Thesis
- SCOM 701. Communication Studies Internship

Concentrations

As part of their requirements for an M.A. in Communication and Advocacy, students will select a concentrated area of study: Health Communication or Environmental Communication. In each concentration, research, theory and practical application are combined to help students develop communication strategies and research designs associated with positive health outcomes and successful negotiation of the health care system, as well as the development and promotion of local to global action steps with the potential to positively shape environmental quality of life levels across local, regional, national and international living spaces. Graduate students in health and environmental communication advocacy will develop and refine knowledge and skills essential to becoming more effective health and environmental communication advocates, health and environmental communication research investigators, and health and environmental communication research consumers.

Health Communication

Graduate students interested in specializing in advocacy in the context of Health Communication will complete course work across a wide range of health care situations. Students graduating with a concentration in health communication will be prepared to work in a variety of non-profit, government and corporate settings constructing and evaluating health-related messages and campaigns, educating audiences using culturally appropriate messages designed to reach diverse groups, and advocating for patients and clients in a variety of health care contexts.

Health Communication Concentration Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Courses</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCOM 501. Foundations in Health Communication Advocacy &amp; Research</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 670. Health Campaign Advocacy &amp; Social Influence: Campaign Development and Delivery</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 671. Intercultural Health Communication Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
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Environmental Communication

Graduate students interested in specializing in environmental communication will complete course work focusing on the multifaceted nature of environmental advocacy, key forums through which competing local to international interests are identified, contested, and managed, as well as how various levels of risk are framed, challenged, and negotiated. Students graduating with a concentration in environmental communication will be prepared to work in a variety of nonprofit, government and corporate settings constructing and evaluating environmental campaigns, facilitating organizational and group decision making about issues related to environmental practices, communicating effectively with varied stakeholders with conflicting interests, and educating and motivating diverse audiences regarding environmental interests.
Environmental Communication Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Courses</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 551. Fundamentals in Environmental Communication and Advocacy</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 651. Environmental Decision Making: Conflict Advocacy and Participatory Processes</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOM 654. Environmental Campaign Advocacy and Social Influence</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
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Course Offerings

Communication Studies

SCOM 500. Introduction to Advocacy Studies. 3 credits.
A survey of advocacy inquiry as a practice of communication by a number of professional and academic fields and disciplines. Students will examine and debate important theoretical, ideological, ethical and moral implications of advocacy practiced in politically, socially and culturally diverse societies. Emphasis will be placed on a multi-disciplinary approach to advocacy studies.

This course overviews health and environmental communication. It surveys health/risk communication perspectives, as well as environmental quality and public health issues. Students will develop an in-depth knowledge of these perspectives to grasp how extant theory informs health and environmental communication research and advocacy practices. Students will evaluate this body of research, with far-reaching implications for quality of life levels, especially among disenfranchised individuals.

SCOM 502. Introduction to Teaching Fundamental Communication. 0 credits.
This course introduces students to the issues, methods and materials for teaching communication in the setting of higher education. Students will examine pedagogical and communication theory, analyze research in communication education/instructional communication, study learning theories and styles, and work to develop a competency in teaching communication skills and concepts to others. This course is required each semester only for students holding graduate assistantships.

SCOM 540. Seminar in Communication Theory. 3 credits.
A survey of major communication theories. Historicizes the major theoretical perspectives and debates in Communication Studies. Focuses on application of communication theory toward advocacy.

SCOM 541. Seminar in Rhetorical Theory and Advocacy. 3 credits.
A survey of classical, modern and contemporary theories of rhetoric. The course examines the historical circumstances, situated practices of advocacy, and mediums of delivery that have influenced differing iterations of rhetorical theory; its influence upon historical and contemporary practices of advocacy; and the invention, arrangement and styles of theoretical disputes related to rhetorical theory.

SCOM 551. Fundamentals in Environmental Communication and Advocacy. 3 credits.
This course traces the history of environmental communication. It examines the symbolic and cultural dimensions of conceptions of nature and environment; surveys topics, theories and methods associated with the study of environmental communication; and explores relationships between environmental and health communication. Students will understand and appreciate how extant theory informs health and environmental communication research, community-based interventions, and advocacy practices.

SCOM 558. Communication, Advocacy, and Health Organizations. 3 credits.
This course addresses a variety of communication challenges faced by members and clients of healthcare organizations. Topics examined include various organizational structures within the healthcare industry, provider communication education and competence, and the delivery of healthcare services to clients. Throughout the course, contemporary applications of content are analyzed and evaluated.
SCOM 572. Mutual Advocacy in Doctor-Patient Relationships.
3 credits.
This course explores doctor-patient communication from patient-provider perspectives. Advocacy can play a leading role for providers and patients with implications for decision-making, mutual support, and trust. Students will examine doctor-patient interaction, medical decision-making, key impacts of managed care, salient factors that shape patient outcomes, and selected theoretical frameworks for explaining doctor-patient communication.

3 credits.
Critical overview of the theoretical approaches to communication and aging as applied to advocacy in health care contexts. Explores communication competency in exchanges between health care providers and older adults, changing physiology and quality of communication, stereotypes and ageism in everyday communication practices, challenges of dementia, family communication and social support, and the use of telemedicine for health care delivery.

3 credits.
An examination of undergirding research design philosophies, as well as an introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods used in communication and advocacy studies. Students complete a research prospectus.

SCOM 610. Strategic Communication.
3 credits.
An advanced seminar focusing on persuasion theory and communication methodology relevant to strategic communication in diverse cultural settings. Emphasis upon message analysis in cross-cultural contexts at various communication levels including interpersonal, small group, organizational, and public. Consideration of communication strategies and tactics embedded in adversarial belief systems. This seminar will use lecture-discussion, case studies, guest speakers, and team projects.

SCOM 620. Advocacy Management Communication.
3 credits.
This seminar examines principles, methods, theory, practices, and cases central to the development and strategic management of communication advocacy campaigns. Focus is on designing, planning, implementing, and evaluating ethical persuasive communication programs, with emphasis on behavioral change as well as mutual understanding and support. Best professional practices, including case studies, will be utilized to extract and articulate pragmatic lessons.

SCOM 625. Interpersonal Communication as Advocacy.
3 credits.
This course explores theoretical approaches to interpersonal communication as advocacy. After reviewing theory and research related to interpersonal message strategies and designs, students will examine how interpersonal communication functions as advocacy in environmental, health and relational contexts. Students will also discuss the ethics of advocacy, compliance gaining and compliance-resistance.

SCOM 630. Culture and Conflict Resolution.
3 credits.
The course explores the relations between culture and conflict that emerge when competing worldviews become conflicted regarding power, control, and influence. Emphasis is on communication and conflict resolution theory with application to skill competencies required for facilitation, negotiation, and mediation. Integration of cross-cultural reconstruction teams into distressed communities considered.

SCOM 647. Health Advocacy and Multicultural Communication in Aging Populations.
3 credits.
Examines the cultural bases of effective health related messages. Investigates cultural models of disease, aging, and health and well-being. Critical examination of current approaches to health promotion and intervention in multicultural communities. Uses a case study approach to understanding cultural appropriate health related messages.

SCOM 648. Race, Class and Gender In Communication in Later Life.
3 credits.
A social justice approach to the study of communication and aging examines socio-structural conditions that impact communication and well-being in later life. Includes the feminization of poverty, cultural conditions of environmental health risks/burdens, and communication of racism/classism/sexism in health care contexts with aging populations. Focuses on practices of advocacy in health care delivery and intervention to promote access to education and resources to underserved communities.

SCOM 650. Applied Organizational Communication.
3 credits.
Examines organizational communication theory and research in applied organizational contexts using a case study approach. Attends to analysis of small group and organizational decision making processes, team functioning, and strategic communication among diverse stakeholders. Focus on organizational communication practice in non-profit advocacy groups.
3 credits.  
A “process advocacy” approach to environmental decision making. Examines theories/techniques to develop and evaluate civic engagement and conflict resolution/collaborative approaches related to environmental science, resource management and public planning. Public participation legal requirements will be reviewed, case studies discussed, and opportunities for improving public participatory processes will be assessed.

3 credits.  
Critical overview of the histories and perspectives of environmental justice movements, including discourses of environmental racism, classism, and sexism; environmental in/equity; and just sustainability. Examines the underlying principles guiding advocacy practices of various environmental justice movements, exploring rhetorical strategies used to advocate just access to nature resources and distribution of environmental burdens.

3 credits.  
A survey of critical theory and perspectives related to the study of environmental communication. Critical theories and related topics such as popular and consumer culture, political economy, power and ideology, science and technology will be explored. Environmental campaigns and cultural practices will be explored. Environmental campaigns and cultural practices will be examined from a variety of critical perspectives.

SCOM 654. Environmental Campaign Advocacy and Social Influence.  
3 credits.  
Addresses complex dynamics, strategies and tactics of environmental campaigns by grassroots organizations, interest groups, governmental institutions and international organizations to advocate for particular environmental (and anti-environmental) policies and social change. This course takes a case studies approach to environmental campaigns and analyzes campaigns from a variety of rhetorical and communication theories.

3 credits.  
This course systematically explores and elaborates key concepts, principles, and underlying theories pertinent to public health and environmental communication campaigns and advocacy practices. Students are immersed in all facets of campaign conceptualization, design, delivery, and evaluation.

3 credits.  
This course explores how intra-cultural meaning systems intersect and compete across cultures in health and environmental communication focusing on advocacy practices between health care providers and individuals. Provider and patient intercultural competencies, cultural beliefs, traditions, assimilation levels, and medical care decision making models are examined across cultures to ascertain how those are negotiated and managed; with a particular focus on underserved, disenfranchised groups.

SCOM 672. Catastrophic Illness Advocacy.  
3 credits.  
This course examines communication across catastrophic health conditions – Alzheimer’s, cancer, AIDS/HIV, and diabetes – as well as social support provision and reception. This course is designed to help students better grasp the nature of such catastrophic conditions, develop and assess social support messages, as well as to facilitate family empowerment and sound decision making in end-of-life contexts.

SCOM 681. Seminar in Communication Criticism.  
3 credits.  
A graduate seminar in the theories and practices of communication criticism. Examines and applies classical and contemporary theories and methods for analyzing and evaluating public address and other significant forms of communication. Students will produce an original scholarly essay using one or more types of criticism. Prerequisite: SCOM 580.

3 credits.  
An intensive study of quantitative communication research methods, with emphasis on design and implementation of a research project. Prerequisite: SCOM 580.

SCOM 685. Seminar in Qualitative Research Methods.  
3 credits.  
Survey of qualitative communication research methods. Overviews the paradigms in qualitative research, research planning and conceptualization, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group interviews, and qualitative data analysis. Students will write an original scholarly essay answering a communication question using qualitative research methods. Prerequisite: SCOM 580.
3-6 credits.
Original communication research toward the completion of a master’s thesis. Supervised by the chair of the student’s thesis committee. This course is graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory/Incomplete (S/U/I) basis. Prerequisite: Approval of student’s graduate advisory committee and graduate advisor.

SCOM 701. Communication Studies Internship.
3-6 credits.
Practical field experience in applying health and environmental communication advocacy to problems or issues encountered in professional settings. Internships can include: governmental, non-profit and for profit organizations. This course is graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory/Incomplete (S/U/I) basis. Prerequisite: permission of the instructor and the internship supervisor.