

University of Utah  
Department of Communication  
*GRADUATE PROGRAM AREAS OF EMPHASIS*

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The Department of Communication at the University of Utah enjoys a long tradition of innovation and excellence in graduate education. As one of few fully integrated communication programs, our primary mission is the preparation of scholars, public intellectuals, and practitioners who will contribute distinguished communication scholarship, teaching, and service. Crucial to the Department's agenda is a commitment to communication that facilitates *social justice*. This commitment entails, for example, a guiding interest in relations of power across varied contexts; possibilities for empowerment, agency, and voice; effective and ethical practice; social and political action narratives and movements; democratic communication policy; issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality; and other forms of community engagement. To make more tangible our overarching interest in social justice, we characterize below the Department's research strengths in terms of readily recognizable subfields as well as innovative areas of inquiry that cross traditional boundaries.

## TRADITIONAL AREAS

### Broadcasting

Broadcasting encompasses the full range of scholarly approaches to the investigation of the structure and performance of the broadcasting and telecommunications industries. Recent studies have examined regulatory policies, performance standards, broadcast audiences, and programming practices. Other analyses have highlighted broadcast management, historical treatments, and the impact of industry concentration. Approaches employ qualitative, quantitative, legal, and critical/cultural methodologies. The Salt Lake City market affords rich opportunities for case studies across a range of broadcast media organizations.

**Associated Faculty:**

Robert Avery  
Louise Degn  
Tim Larson

### Communication Education

Communication education is the study of how to teach and learn communication, as well as how communication facilitates or inhibits teaching and learning in a variety of contexts and applications. This broad area of inquiry includes examination guided by a wide range of methodologies that seek to both test and apply theory. In this department, we are especially interested in pedagogy and research about pedagogy from a critical perspective, guided by a strong commitment to issues of social justice.

**Associated Faculty:**

Ann Darling  
Vicky Newman

## Critical/Cultural Studies

Critical/cultural research emphasizes critical inquiry into the broadly defined ways that cultural discourses, practices, and performances contribute to, resist, and transform relations of power in society. Work in this area cuts across traditional interests in communication studies, such as mass and speech (or human) communication. Specific projects include but are not limited to communication-based problems of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, national identity, (dis)ability, environment, and globalization. The common goal of critical/cultural research in communication is to foster a more equitable and democratic public sphere and to promote social justice.

### Associated Faculty:

James Anderson  
Suhi Choi  
Kevin DeLuca  
Danielle Endres  
James Fisher  
Marouf Hasian  
Leonard Hawes  
Joy Pierce  
Helene Shugart  
Mary Strine

## Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is the study of interaction between people who know each other as individuals, most often in close relationships such as marriage or partnership, family, and friendship, but also in close relationships such as coworkers, care providers, and neighbors. The focus of study is on understanding patterns in face-to-face interaction and patterns of relational development, maintenance, and change. Areas of emphasis in our department include the family, close relationships, aging, end of life, emotion, and health communication. Diverse theoretical and methodological approaches are encouraged.

### Associated Faculty:

Mark Bergstrom  
Norm Elliott  
Sally Planalp

## Journalism

Journalism graduate studies approach the broad range of reporting news, issues, trends, and events via any and all mass media. Theoretical perspectives include historical, critical/cultural, cross-cultural, effects, and technological. Research perspectives often intersect with other areas within the department, such as visual reportage and documentary studies, media criticism, ethics, and free speech.

### Associated Faculty:

Louise Degen  
Craig Denton  
Glen Feighery  
James Fisher  
Kimberley Mangun  
David Vergobbi

## Mass/Mediated Communication

Faculty interested in mass communication engage in research, creative scholarship, and teaching involving the production and reception of mediated messages designed to inform, persuade, and entertain; the social, cultural, political, legal, economic, professional, and ethical implications of mediated messages; and the technological and conceptual convergence that is altering age-old paradigms and assumptions about mass communication. Faculty employ a variety of disciplinary and methodological approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, critical, and interpretive.

### **Associated Faculty:**

James Anderson  
Robert Avery  
Suhi Choi  
Julia Corbett  
Glen Feighery  
Nickieann Fleener  
Tim Larson  
Kimberley Mangun  
Joy Pierce  
David Vergobbi

## Media History

Investigating history is an engaging process through which we seek to understand the past and its many meanings. As historians, we are part of a community whose members use diverse, disciplined methods and theoretical perspectives to study the expression and significance of journalism and mass communication across time. In doing so, we respect the integrity of the historical record. But, we also understand that interpretations of it change as historians—through critical dialogue with each other, the wider public, and the record itself—seek answers which deepen our understanding of not only the past per se but also the evolution of today's salient issues. Broad areas we study include the history of broadcasting, the newspaper industry, journalistic ethics, minority media, visual communication, journalism in the west, public relations, and the interface between journalism and the environment.

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Robert Avery  
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## Organizational Communication

Organizational communication entails the study of work and professional practices for a variety of sectors, settings, and situations. A communication-based approach features such aspects of organizational life as symbols, messages, interactions, relationships, networks, and discourses. In this way, organizational communication offers an important complement to psychological, sociological, and management-based understandings of work in contemporary society. Our studies also include informal interactions related to work,

such as how jobs impact relations in so-called private and public spheres; and we consider non-paid-work issues such as volunteerism, non-profit motivation, and social movement leadership. In addition, we consider broader issues related to the role of work in society, including gender and ethnic identities, class structure, the impact of globalization, the roles and uses of technology, ethics at the level of "corporate" or collective action, formal and informal socialization practices, and images of work in popular culture. This means that we examine the historical development of certain trends, such as corporate social responsibility or green marketing, in addition to treating them in the current context. Our inquiries are conducted from diverse epistemological, theoretical, and methodological perspectives, spanning micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis. Organizational communication thus intersects with studies of interpersonal communication, media, integrated communications, environmental communication, health communication, and rhetoric.

**Associated Faculty:**

James Anderson  
Connie Bullis  
George Cheney  
Leonard Hawes

## Rhetoric

Rhetoric involves the study of discursive and non-discursive symbolic influence. Students who study rhetoric can learn to describe and explain how various rhetors, audiences, or critics use these symbols as they try to inform or persuade us that we need to engage in various forms of personal, public, or technical decision-making. Disciplinary examples of areas of focus within subfields of rhetoric include audience reception studies, close textual analysis, contextual criticism, feminist criticism, genre criticism, ideographic analysis, ideological criticism, metaphoric criticism, narrative criticism, memory studies, mythic criticism, postcolonial analysis, public address studies, and rhetorical histories.

**Associated Faculty:**

George Cheney  
Kevin DeLuca  
Danielle Endres  
Marouf Hasian  
Maureen Mathison  
Richard Rieke  
Helene Shugart

## Visual Communication

Visual communication is a cross-disciplinary research area that draws its strength from multiple traditions. Current investigators are finding creative ways of combining perspectives, including aesthetics; media psychology and cognition; rhetoric, representation, and semiotics; narrative; literacy studies; critical-cultural studies; and ethics. Our faculty produce research and creative scholarship in aesthetics and narrative, the nexus of policy and representation, and visual rhetoric.

**Associated Faculty:**

Robert Avery  
Kevin DeLuca  
Craig Denton

James Fisher  
Tim Larson

## INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION

### Community-Based Research/Civic Engagement

The Department of Communication is committed to engaged research, community involvement, and to promoting active, democratic citizenship. Our faculty members are regularly involved in community-based research programs and offer numerous service learning courses in conjunction with the Bennion Center. Our commitment to community-based research and civic engagement are deeply rooted in our commitments to social justice, diversity, and equal opportunity.

#### **Associated Faculty:**

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George Cheney  
Julia Corbett  
Danielle Endres  
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Vicky Newman  
Joy Pierce

### Conflict & Peace Studies

The peace and conflict studies interest group applies communication theories and praxis to the dynamics of peace and conflict to work toward more just and peaceable conditions in the world. The study of peace and conflict includes a variety of communication processes: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), group facilitation, inter-group negotiation, dialogue on multiple levels, nonviolent social movements, rhetorics of war and peace, militarism, nuclearism, and the cultures of war and peace. Peace and conflict studies includes the combination of micro- and macro-level dimensions to illuminate the local and the global, as well as theory and praxis. For example, through studying the theories of nonviolence and the institutional dynamics of militarism, we can find links to local conflicts and struggles for peace and justice. Peace and conflict studies in the department are associated with several other campus programs, such as the Conflict Resolution Certificate Program, the interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in Peace and Conflict Studies, the Barbara L. and Norman C. Tanner Center for Nonviolent Human Rights Advocacy, and the faculty working group on Containing Terrorism and Promoting Human Dignity.

#### **Associated Faculty:**

Mark Bergstrom  
George Cheney  
Danielle Endres  
James Fisher  
Marouf Hasian  
Leonard Hawes  
Sean Lawson  
Richard Rieke

## Documentary and Ethnographic Studies

Documentary and ethnographic studies are both charged with developing narratives of human actualities as they unfold in place. These narratives create material presentations that serve to deepen our understanding of the human condition. Our faculty adopt a variety of perspectives, including creative scholarship, performance, participant-observation, and ethnographies of social justice.

### Associated Faculty:

James Anderson  
Robert Avery  
Suhi Choi  
Louise Degen  
Craig Denton  
Tim Larson  
Joy Pierce  
Mary Strine

## Environmental Communication

Environmental Communication is the study of how individuals, organizations, and cultures communicate about the natural world through thoughts and beliefs, words and pictures, and practice. Interpersonal conversation, news coverage, popular culture, advertising, corporate communication, and consumer behavior are just some of the ways individuals communicate and express their relationships with the environment. Environmental communication scholars attempt to better understand relationships between the symbolic and material consequences of human communication practices. In their study, faculty utilize diverse perspectives: organizational communication, film and photography, mass communication and society, social movements, social control and conflict, journalism history, rhetoric, public participation and democracy, and risk communication.

### Associated Faculty:

Mark Bergstrom  
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Vicky Newman

## Freedom of Expression

Freedom of expression theory involves philosophical and empirical reflection on the nature, purposes, and value of our First Amendment rights of free speech and press. It explores what the rights mean in our society, democracy, and daily lives. Research analyzes the legal, moral, historical, rhetorical, political, sociological, and economic processes that shape free expression rights. It investigates the parameters of free expression, how they arise, why, and where they might extend or recede. It critiques existent theory and seeks to build new theory. Freedom of expression research offers fertile cross-disciplinary opportunity and discussion.

### Associated Faculty:

James Fisher

Glen Feighery  
Marouf Hasian  
Richard Rieke  
David Vergobbi

## **Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity**

Under our broader commitment to social justice, examining discourses and relations of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class constitutes a primary field of inquiry that distinguishes the work of the department. Across the range of more traditional perspectives featured within the department, our faculty explore and critically interrogate practices, performances, representations, and negotiations of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality as they occur over time and in a variety of contexts. Such inquiry includes, for example, investigation of mediated representations of race, environmental justice, how sexuality is performed in organizations, how gender is negotiated in interpersonal contexts, and how whiteness is rhetorically configured. We take particular interest in how intersections of these discourses and relations play out in various sites, forms, and consequences, as well as how cultural trends, new technologies, and globalization engage these intersections.

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## **Health Communication**

Health communication advances the understanding of how communication processes and message effects interact with practices, structures, attitudes, behaviors, knowledge and skills in the promotion of health and well being. Health communication is investigated in a variety of contexts including routine health encounters (e.g., patient-provider communication) and long-term institutionalized health care (e.g., nursing home). It also extends to non-institutionalized settings (e.g., personal support for healthy practices) and to institutions whose primary purpose is not health care per se (e.g., risk communication by government agencies), as well as to the interplay between mass media messages and health campaigns, care providers, and the general public.

### **Associated Faculty:**

Mark Bergstrom  
Julia Corbett  
Sally Planalp

## **New Media/Technology**

New media studies reflects on the relationships between people and new/emerging communication technologies, using approaches including critical-historical, critical-cultural, uses and gratifications, economic, sociological, and psychological. Sites of study include the personal computer, videogames, the internet, mobile devices, ubiquitous computing, virtual reality, and user-producer communities including new forms of creative practice such as hacking, modding, and interface design.

### **Associated Faculty:**

Robert Avery  
James Anderson  
Kevin DeLuca  
Tim Larson  
Sean Lawson  
Joy Pierce

## **Practical Ethics**

Practical (or applied) ethics in communication features an ongoing conversation between ethical cases/situations and ethical theory. This study includes the applications of theories centered on communication (such as dialogic approaches and theories of persuasion and media dissemination); the treatment of issues which are obviously communication-oriented (such as free speech and the press, deception in politics, and confidentiality in professional relationships); and the ways all types of ethical dilemmas and decisions—including those about material issues—are framed and debated (for example, about the meaning of human life, the role of the media in wartime, and environmental protection). The study of practical ethics in communication allows for the modification of existing theory and the development of new approaches. It is also attuned to the way discourse about ethics in general is advanced in our society, for example through the popular media.

### **Associated Faculty:**

James Anderson  
George Cheney  
Glen Feighery  
James Fisher  
David Vergobbi

## **Science Communication**

This area examines a broad spectrum of scholarship related to the communication of science to multiple audiences: the lay public, mass media, policy-makers, and others. Avenues for study include scientific rhetoric and discourse, science journalism, effects of science messages on public understanding, the interplay of science and policy, and scientific literacy. Under the umbrella of science communication are foci on the environment, health, risk communication, and technological applications such as genetic modifications and nano-technology.

### **Associated Faculty:**

Julia Corbett  
Sean Lawson

## Strategic Communication

Strategic communication involves the strategic management of communication and relationships between an organization and its stakeholders in support of the organization's mission. The area has evolved out of the intertwining of previously separate disciplines including marketing communication, public relations, and advertising. Within strategic communication, the concepts generated by the separate areas are woven together to enhance the creation and dissemination of mutually beneficial communication and relationships that help an organization achieve its goals. Areas considered include research and planning, media strategies, internal communication, public affairs, crisis communication, issues management, and media relations.

### **Associated Faculty:**

Nickieann Fleener

Tim Larson

## Writing Studies

In conjunction with the University Writing Program, the department offers a graduate emphasis in Rhetoric and Composition. Areas of inquiry include historical and critical rhetorics, writing and public cultures, multicultural and multilingual rhetorics, disciplinary writing and literacies, theory and practice of writing pedagogies, discourses of professionalization, digital rhetoric, and discourse analyses. A variety of methodologies are employed to examine writing in this scholarship. We are committed to academic and community partnerships, offering students opportunities to engage writers in various venues, both on and off campus. Coursework is also available for students to engage their own writing as they approach a professional career.

### **Associated Faculty:**

James Anderson

Maureen Mathison