

Critical/Cultural Studies Track
Department of Communication
Communication Studies

Description

You have likely heard political analysts dissecting advertisements and speeches on CNN during election years or after the President's State of the Union address. The analysts will deconstruct the political message, talking about the tactics employed and the social and political forces at work in the message. These analysts are critically evaluating those messages. This is what students of critical/cultural communication studies learn to do.

The National Communication Association defines the study of rhetoric as "the study of principles that account for the impact of human communication between speaker and audience" and the study of public discourse as "the study of speakers and speeches, including the historical and social context of platforms, campaigns, and movements" (www.natcom.org). These two complimentary definitions encompass the critical/cultural studies track.

Students may examine the source's use of images, sounds, phrases or specific language to construct meaning. Students examine advertisements, speeches, websites, news stories, and even movies and television shows to consider how the structure of the visual or verbal message elicits a particular reaction. Communications are examined within their historical and cultural contexts to determine how social climates influence communication choices and to assess the long-term implications of particular message choices.

By critically examining a variety of texts, students of critical/cultural studies are prepared to create effective public messages and evaluate the effectiveness of public messages. Students in this track, then, are well prepared for careers in all forms of public communication. Students may also benefit from pursuing graduate degrees in politics, law, or writing to focus their public communication skills within a particular field.

Careers

The following is a brief list of careers relating to this specific track which can be found in *Pathways to Communication Careers in the 21st Century*, provided by the National Communication Association:

Speech Writer	Commentator	Motivational Speaker
Political Consultant	Focus Group Interviewer	Account Manager
Political Debate Coach	Consumer Advocate	Communication Consultant
Political Analyst	Press Secretary	Forensics Coach
Editing	Book Publicist	Fundraiser
Fact Checker	Media Analyst	Spokesperson
Public Relations	Campaign Manager	Lawyer
Advertising	Community Relations	Information Manager
Columnist	Ministry	Business to Business Sales
Lobbyist	Legislator	

Complimentary Minors

In addition to your major, consider the following minors (or double majors!):

- A minor in **political science** will prepare you for careers in political communication or the pursuit of a law degree. A background in the development and critique of arguments, as offered in this track, would help both politicians and lawyers be more effective persuaders.
- A minor in **journalism** will prepare you for careers in public relations. In journalism students will extend their communication skills to include effective and appropriate PR writing.
- A minor in **business or marketing** will prepare you for a career in sales or consulting. The major in critical / cultural studies will provide you with a background in developing an effective appeal, and the minor in business or marketing will assist you in developing the technical skills necessary in these fields.
- A minor in **history** will prepare you for M.A. and Ph.D. programs in critical/cultural studies. A component of critical/cultural studies is the ability to examine the historical and cultural context of the messages, so a minor in history would be helpful in future research endeavors.
- A minor in **philosophy** to prepare for M.A. and Ph.D. programs in critical/cultural studies would be useful if you are interested in the logic of the philosophy of rhetoric. Coursework in hermeneutics or Aristotelian philosophy will assist you in understanding the critical theories you would study in graduate programs.
- To continue your education, consider: Law School, an M.A. and Ph.D. in Rhetoric, an M.F.A. in writing, or an M.A. in history.