Communication Studies - Frequently Asked Questions

What is communication studies?
The communication studies major examines human communication in a variety of contexts—relational, organizational, and public. We teach majors how to understand messages and the effects that they have on others. There are two main areas of communication: a social scientific approach to the study of human communication (quantitative and qualitative studies) and a humanistic/rhetorical approach (study of public persuasive messages).

What courses do you teach?
*Social scientific*: interpersonal, persuasion, organizational, crisis, health, conflict, nonverbal, intercultural, lying and deception, humor
*Rhetorical*: oral communication, rhetoric and society, argumentation and debate, rhetorical criticism, gender, political, public advocacy

What do our majors do after they graduate?
Because communication studies is a generalist degree, students go into a variety of positions/programs upon graduation. They have become sales representatives, management trainees, ministers, lawyers, and entrepreneurs. Our alumni also have graduated from master’s and doctoral programs at Duke University, Florida State University, University of Kentucky, Purdue University, Rutgers University, University of Georgia, University of Texas ... They have been hired by the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society; by Cintas, Sysco, Pfizer, Sanderson Farms, and Enterprise Car Rental. Our alumni have become vice president of Bank of America and Louis Vuitton; Senior Protocol Office for the U. S. State Department; and Communications Director for the Governor of Mississippi.

What is unique about the department?
Currently we offer a BA and BS to undergraduates and the MA, MS, and Ph.D. to graduate students. We sponsor a nationally competitive speech and debate team. We direct the university’s Speaking Center, a program that helps students prepare for speaking assignments and helps faculty integrate speaking assignments into their courses. The Speaking Center frequently employs our majors to tutor students and conduct research. We teach a capstone course for seniors that offers a community-based internship experience.

How do I find out more?
Visit our web site for technical info like degree requirements (usm.edu/communication-studies); visit our Facebook page for news and updates (Southern Miss Department of Communication Studies). To talk or visit with faculty or students, contact Dr. Charles H. Tardy (Charles.Tardy@usm.edu; 601-266-4278).