The mission of the Department of Communication Arts is to develop life-long learners determined to build productive lives, fruitful careers, and vibrant communities by teaching the theory and practice of oral and written communication, artful performance, and purposeful collaboration. Because practice in the ancient disciplines of rhetoric and theatre, as well as the recent arts of radio and cinema, develop habits of perception and expression that can guide one toward the rewards of ethical human communication, the Department’s advising, courses, and co-curricular offerings, expose W&J students to interrelated experiences that provide historical insights and practical opportunities in the communication arts. Our faculty are empowered to work collegially and collectively to foster intellectual development, and enrich ourselves and our students by sustaining relationships with those on our campus and in the regional, national and international communities.

The Department of Communication Arts offers a major and minor in communication arts. The major can be general, or focused toward one of three specific areas: theatre, public relations, or film studies.

As a general area of study communication arts positions students to do the following: appreciate diverse cultures and communication styles; create informative messages, persuasive arguments, and engaging performances; and carefully analyze communication texts and performances. Study of the similarities and differences between live and mediated communication, as well as a range of often contradictory theoretical perspectives on human interaction, is intended to foster an expansive view of humanity and an ability to adapt to and participate in an array of communities.

The emphasis in theatre is designed to enable students to participate knowledgably in multiple aspects of the creation of works performed before a live audience. Students are encouraged to gain appreciation for and develop skills in the writing, staging, performance, and analysis of theatrical productions, with special attention to relationships among artists, audiences, and communities.

Students will learn to approach public relations (PR) in a manner that links communication with an organization’s values, missions and goals. We need to understand not only how to be successful in PR, but also understand the why behind our actions. Students will be motivated to think about the interplay of the marketplace and other institutions that shape your life. The emphasis is designed to engage you as part of a community of inquirers—people with the potential to think critically and impact the world in a constructive way. Students will prepare professional portfolio pieces to enter industry or graduate school.

The emphasis in film studies aims to prepare students to ask and answer questions about film as artistic expression. How do technical, social, and historical constraints shape cinematic storytelling practices? How does a specific film invite a particular interpretation for a certain audience in a given time and culture? How do the interactions of a filmmaking collaborative (writers, directors, technicians, performers, editors, and others) create meanings for audiences? The theoretical and critical orientation of the emphasis can be complemented by production courses available at Pittsburgh Filmmakers.

The Department of Communication Arts contributes to interdisciplinary programs in conflict and resolution studies, gender and women's studies, and professional writing.

The Department of Communication Arts offers credit and non-credit opportunities for creative expression to all W&J students. 1-credit practicums in theatre (COM 252) and radio (COM 242) are available each semester, and each course may be taken up to four times.

The department stages a theatrical production each semester, with auditions held early in the term. Auditions are open to all W&J students. For more information about getting involved with theatre productions, contact the department chair or join the W&J Student Theatre Company. Participation in the WNJR radio station is also available to all W&J students. After a meeting with the student Station Manager or the Faculty Advisor, followed by completion of brief written and hands-on tests, a student can host a radio show either alone or with a co-host. For more information about WNJR visit wnjr.org.

COMMUNICATION ARTS MAJOR REQUIREMENTS: COM 101; COM 102; COM 111 or COM 112; three courses from COM 198 (Internship), COM 211, COM 221, COM 241, COM 242 (must be taken four times to count as one four-credit course), COM 251, COM 252 (must be taken four times to count as one four-credit course), COM 261, COM 271, and COM 291; COM 301; two courses from COM 311, COM 321, COM 341, COM 351, COM 361 (first offering in spring 2018), and COM 391; COM 401. A general communication arts major requires 10 courses total.
COMMUNICATION ARTS MINOR REQUIREMENTS: One course from COM 101 or COM 102; one course from COM 111 or COM 112; two courses from COM 198 (Internship), COM 211, COM 221, COM 242 (must be taken four times to count as one four-credit course), COM 251, COM 252 (must be taken four times to count as one four-credit course), COM 261, COM 271, COM 281, and COM 291; two courses from COM 311, COM 321, COM 341, COM 351, COM 361 (first offering in spring 2018), COM 381, COM 382, and COM 391. A communication arts minor requires 6 courses total.

THEATRE EMPHASIS REQUIREMENTS: COM 101; COM 102; COM 111; COM 211; COM 251; COM 271; COM 301; COM 341; COM 351; COM 401 (the Senior Project completed in COM 401 must be relevant to theatre). A communication arts major with an emphasis in theatre requires 10 courses total. The practicum COM 252 is recommended and may be taken up to four times.

PUBLIC RELATIONS EMPHASIS REQUIREMENTS: COM 101; COM 102; COM 112; COM 221; COM 281; 200-level COM elective, or one of the following courses: COM 198 (Internship), CIS 245, CIS 271, CIS 275; COM 301; COM 381; COM 382; COM 401 (the Senior Project completed in COM 401 must be relevant to public relations). A communication arts major with an emphasis in public relations requires 10 courses total.

FILM STUDIES EMPHASIS REQUIREMENTS: COM 101; COM 102; COM 112; 200-level COM elective (may include COM 198 (Internship), recommended); COM 211, COM 261; COM 301; COM 351; COM 361 (first offering in spring 2018); COM 401 (the Senior Project completed in COM 401 must be relevant to film studies). A communication arts major with an emphasis in film studies requires 10 courses total.