

COMMUNICATION CONCENTRATION

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I. Description

Students of Communication gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills in the mass media through an interdisciplinary and multicultural curriculum. The concentration is specifically designed along research and professional tracks so that students are prepared for graduate studies in mass communication or for jobs in the exciting field of media research and print and television writing, reporting, and production. Situated within a cultural and critical studies framework, the concentration will refine students' understanding of the theoretical foundations of mass communication and expose them to contemporary political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of the production and consumption of traditional and new media technologies. Students most successful at internships and jobs have been able to integrate their skills with a broader theoretical understanding of the cultural and social role of the media in contemporary society. The Communication concentration maintains the spirit and mission of UWT, which is to discover, preserve, and transmit knowledge to the citizens of Washington. The concentration is also committed to the mission of the IAS program, which seeks to facilitate learning in traditional academic subjects in the humanities, arts, and sciences within an interdisciplinary framework.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

Students in the Communication Concentration are expected to:

- Be able to conduct thorough and investigative research for both media theory and skills assignments
- Understand the power of the visual image and the written word and their ability to convey and sustain ideologies of gender, class, ethnicity, and orientation
- Understand the ethical, legal, political, and economic contexts of the mass media.
- Understand the cultural issues in international and US media and develop a critical approach to media production and consumption.
- Develop skills to write, edit, and produce print and television products.
- Be prepared for a variety of jobs in mass media such as newspaper and magazine writing, reporting and editing, and television production.

- Be prepared for graduate studies in mass communication, international communication, women's studies, and film studies, to name a few areas.

III. Course of Study

Students in the Communication Concentration take a set of Foundation courses and Core courses on media history, theory, and criticism. They have the option of a Research track or a Professional track. Under the Research Track, students take a series of courses in U.S. and international media theory and complete a capstone (a 5-credit Senior Thesis) before graduation. Under the Professional Track, students take a series of courses in either print or broadcast media and complete a capstone (a 5-credit Senior Project) before graduation. Students of both tracks will take additional hours of electives from other concentrations within IAS or from other undergraduate programs at UWT. Given the Communication Concentration curriculum, transfer students should anticipate needing two years to complete all requirements.

1. The Research Track

The Research Track, through courses on media criticism and methods, media ethics, media law and regulation, media history, political economy of mass media, international and development communication, film studies, and cultural studies, provides a critical overview of the political, economic, historic, social, and cultural contexts of the mass media. In each course, students are encouraged to interrogate the relationship among media, culture, and power, and think critically about the correspondence between processes of media production and consumption. The Research Track prepares students for further graduate studies or for careers in media research; the wealth of theoretical courses in this track is an asset to any student interested in Communication theory or practice. Details of the Research Track are available at http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/ias/academics/ba/communication_research.cfm

2. The Professional Track

The Print and Television options of the Professional Track take an integrated approach to the study of media criticism and media writing and production. They are predicated on the belief that the development of the practical skills needed to produce and write materials for media outlets such as television, newspapers, magazines, and public relations firms is enhanced through a critical examination of cultural products and an understanding of multiple theoretical frameworks. At the same time, the ability to critique cultural products is furthered through the development of practical skills, since this advances an understanding of various factors that influence how media products are developed and distributed. Details of the Professional Track are available at http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/ias/academics/ba/communication_professional.cfm

IV. Directed Readings, Internships, and Independent Studies

Please refer to the IAS website for instructions on Independent Studies and Internships: http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/ias/advising/ug/independent_study_guidelines.cfm

General guidelines will be followed by Communication faculty supervisors and further requirements may be specified based on the goals, topic, and content of the assignments. Please refer also to the tips on planning and advisor selection as listed under the Capstones (Senior Thesis and Project) below.

V. Capstones

1. The Senior Thesis

All Communication Concentration Research Track students are required to complete a 5-credit, 25-35 page Senior Thesis before graduation. Ideally, the student would have completed all core and foundation courses before undertaking the thesis. The thesis may be supervised only by core Communication faculty. This means early planning is crucial and students should have developed a rapport with their supervisor by the time they reach the thesis stage. Forms for Senior Thesis may be obtained at http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/ias/advising/ug/form_497_senior_thesis.doc

2. The Senior Project

All Communication Concentration Professional Track students are required to complete a Senior Project prior to graduation. The Senior Project has two main components: students perform a 5-credit internship in the communication industry and write a 10-15 page academic paper. The Project is designed to allow senior professional track students to gain needed professional experience while placing this professional experience in a broader theoretical framework. Senior Project internships and academic paper topics will vary and must have faculty advisor approval. Senior Project forms may be obtained at http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/ias/advising/ug/form_496_internship.doc

3. Tips for Successful Senior Projects and Theses

i. Plan ahead: Procrastination and lack of planning are probably the biggest obstacles students face when attempting to secure internship positions for their Senior Projects or a supervisor for their Senior Thesis. Early planning will allow you to overcome those obstacles easily. The Senior Project or Thesis must be performed during your senior year. However, planning can begin much earlier.

For the Senior Thesis, you should have developed a research interest in a particular media topic while taking your core and Research Track courses. Examples of substantive research topics are: Representation of Gender in Prime Time Television, Role of Indigenous Communication in Community Development, History of African American Images in Film, Violence in Children's Television, and so on. Work on refining your research topic through library and archival research at least one full quarter before you plan to undertake your thesis.

For the Senior Project, as soon as you have identified the type media outlet you would like to work for, i.e. television, newspapers, public relations, etc., you can begin the process of finding a specific place to work. The time it takes to find an internship, complete the paperwork and register for classes varies student to student, but for most students the process takes at least six weeks to two months. So, if, for example, you want

to do your Senior Project in the Spring Quarter, you should be actively working on finding an acceptable internship during the Fall Quarter.

ii. Pick your advisor: For both Senior Thesis or Project, you have three options for advisors: Dr. Divya McMillin, Dr. Chris Demaske, Dr. Bill Kunz or Dr. David Coon. While each of these faculty members have different areas of expertise in the media field, you may choose from any them regardless of what type of communication medium you choose work in. You should have had at least one class with the faculty member before requesting that person as your advisor. Select and speak to your supervisor at the beginning of the quarter before you plan to undertake your thesis. Please speak to the Concentration Coordinator if you are having difficulty finding a supervisor.

iii. For the Senior Project, choose the internship that is right for you: The Communication Concentration at UWT offers you an opportunity to experience and learn about various types of media jobs. As a result, internships will be chosen on an individual level by you depending on your particular interests. The faculty advisor will work with you on ways to find an internship that meets your needs; however, faculty do not find the internships for you. Part of the process is locating possible internships and then taking the necessary steps to secure that internship. Students in the past have worked at various media outlets including newspapers, magazines, public relations departments and television stations.

iv. Summer internship or thesis: A summer internship or thesis is strongly discouraged. Only in extreme circumstances, when your advisor has been approached well in advance, will this be considered. If you feel that a summer internship or thesis is your only option, please contact you faculty advisor immediately.

v. Other opportunities for practical media experience: In the professional world of print media, experience is key. The more you can show a prospective employer that you have media experience, the more likely you will be to secure the work position you apply for. The Senior Project offers that type of experience, but it is not the only source available to you. You may, in addition to your Senior Project, choose to do an internship from one to five credits. Also, UWT has two student-operated publications: The Ledger, the campus newspaper, and Tahoma West, a student literary art magazine. Both of these student publications are wonderful places to gain experience and writing samples. Please note that while internships at the Ledger and Tahoma West may provide academic credit, they will not qualify for the Senior Project