Thesis and Non-Thesis Options

The Master’s Program in Communication offers two tracks toward the M.A. degree: Plan I (thesis) and Plan II (nonthesis). Each plan has its unique advantages. The choice of a plan is made by the student, in consultation with an adviser and committee.

Students selecting the thesis option complete 32 units of course work (usually 8 four-unit courses) and prepare a thesis, which is a written report of original scholarship that makes an important contribution to knowledge about human communication. The student will be under the direction of a major professor throughout the thesis preparation period. The project begins with a written proposal, which is defended in a thesis prospectus meeting in front of the thesis committee. Once the proposal has been approved by the thesis committee, the student carries out the project in a manner consistent with the proposal. The completed thesis is then defended successfully before the M.A. thesis Committee and other members of the academic community prior to signing of the thesis.

Students choosing the nonthesis option must complete 40 units of coursework (typically 10 four-unit courses) and pass a comprehensive examination which includes written and oral components. This exam covers coursework that the student has completed, but also focuses upon other substantive areas of the field that any “master” of communication should reasonably be expected to know. Students receive guidance from the examination committee as they prepare for this examination.

Coursework

The course requirements for the MA degree in Communication Art (Plan I as well as Plan II) consist of core and electives as shown in table 1. The details of these courses follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Course requirements for MA degree in Communication Art.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Core Classes</strong> (Course 213, 220A, 220B, 243)</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 units</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Electives From Within Department</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Electives From Within or Outside the Department</strong></td>
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Required Courses (16 Units)

The M.A. program specifies four required courses that all students must complete. Collectively, these courses ensure that our students have a mastery of communication theory and research methodology.

**CMN 213: Theoretical Perspectives on Strategic Communication** (4). This course presents theoretical approaches to goal formulation, strategy development and strategy implementation processes from both individual cognitive and social perspectives. These theories will be drawn from action philosophy, models of natural language processing, developmental theories, individual and group problem solving theories, and communication theory. Alternative approaches to assessing the attainability of goals and to the generation of communication plans will be presented. Limitations of individuals and groups as planners will be considered. Processes associated with plan implementation and plan modification will be examined.

**CMN 220A: Audience Assessment and Analysis** (4). This course compares and contrasts various perspectives on the “audience” concept borrowed from the fields of mass communication, sociology, and marketing; and will consider alternative approaches to audience segmentation, including demographics and geodemographic clustering, psychographics and audience needs and gratifications; and values/lifestyles approaches. The course will also provide an overview of methods for assessing attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors. Areas to be examined include focus groups, sampling, measurement, questionnaire construction, and survey research methods. *Prerequisite: One course in inferential statistics.*

**CMN 220B: Evaluation of Communication Effects** (4). This course examines experimental and quasi-experimental methods for examining the effects of strategic communication, including the outcome of communication interventions. Issues to be examined include experimental design, experimental control, threats to internal and external validity, and basics of variance analysis. *Prerequisite: Course 220A.*

**CMN 243: Message Design** (4). This course examines the optimal matching of media and messages to motivations and markets. First, various models of the effects of messages on cognition, affect, and behavior will be reviewed and hierarchical models of such effects will be examined; factors mediating the strength of the link between message-induced changes in thought-feeling and overt action will be explicated; and functional models of individuals’ responses to messages will be outlined. Second, direct strategies for motivating message processing, changing attitudes, gaining compliance, and communicating about
risks will be analyzed. Indirect strategies of influence will also be considered, including the strategic use of opinion leaders, media advocacy, and infotainment. Third, issues related to channel selection will be examined.

Elective Courses

Students on the Thesis plan will take at least 16 units of elective coursework (typically 4 four-unit classes). Non-thesis plan students will take at least 24 units of elective coursework (typically 6 four-unit courses).

CMN 214: Communication Campaigns (4). This course examines the design, implementation, and evaluation of communication campaigns. Applications include health promotion, environmental advocacy, and political campaigns.

CMN 215: Risk Communication (4). This course examines theories and models of how individuals construe risks and message strategies for motivating behavioral change through heightened risk assessments.

CMN 244: Organizational Communication (4). Theory and research on communication processes in organizations.

CMN 249: Tactics of Interpersonal Influence (4). This course explores the tactics that individuals use to achieve a variety of goals in face-to-face communication situations. In these interpersonal contexts, strategic communication plans must take into account potential counter-strategies that co-interactants might employ to thwart desired influence goals. Among the interpersonal goals considered are attitude change, behavioral compliance, ingratiation, alteration of emotional states, and information seeking.

CMN 250A. Special Topics in Social Interaction (4). Reading, discussion, research, and writing on a selected topic in the specialty of social interaction. Potential topics include relationship initiation, maintenance, and deterioration; communication failure; nonverbal communication; conversational management; semantics and pragmatics of language; and family/marital communication. May be repeated for credit when topic differs.

CMN 250B. Special Topics in Mass Communication (4). Reading, discussion, research, and writing on a selected topic in the specialty of mass communication. Potential topics include agenda-setting, the cultivation of beliefs, television violence, media portrayals of underprivileged groups, mediated political discourse, interactive technologies, and international/global communications. May be repeated for credit when topic differs.

CMN 250C. Special Topics in Health Communication (4). Reading, discussion, research, and writing on a selected topic in health communication. Potential topics include health communication design and evaluation, media advocacy, physician-patient interaction, uses of communication technologies in
health settings, and health-related advertising. May be repeated for credit when topic differs.

**CMN 250D. Special Topics in Organizational Communication (4).** Reading, discussion, research, and writing on a selected topic in the specialty of organizational communication. Potential topics include power and influence, organizational conflict and its resolution, mediation, bargaining and negotiation, superior-subordinate interaction, leadership styles, and inter-organizational communication. May be repeated for credit when topic differs.

**CMN 253: Negotiation (4).** Theory and research on bargaining, mediation, and negotiating in organizational contexts.

**CMN 260: Communication Applications (2-4).** Fieldwork in communication. Organization and implementation of a research project for a specific application of a communication program. May be repeated once for credit. (S/U grading only.)

**CMN 270: Communication, Technology, and Society (4).** This course surveys how communication technologies transform our lives at the individual and society levels. Topics include human-computer interaction; the effects of communication technologies in education, health and business; and social and political implications of technological development.

**CMN 272. Computer-Mediated Communication (4).** This course examines various ways in which the nature of electronic environment creates and/or constrains human communication by surveying theories and empirical research concerning the uses and impacts of computer-mediated communication in interpersonal and group contexts. Topics to be examined include media choice, self-presentation and person perception in the real and virtual worlds, social and psychological predictors of CMC, group dynamics in virtual teams, computer-aided group decision-making, and attributions and trust among group members.

In addition to completing a subset of the above electives, most students will be encouraged to take electives from aligned disciplines, including the Departments of Psychology, Sociology, Linguistics, and Anthropology. Furthermore, most of our students will elect to complete an individual study project during their stay with us (CMN 299). These independent studies allow our students to pursue learning in areas of communication for which we do not currently offer coursework.