Proposed Minor in Media Studies

Department of Communication

University of Utah

The minor in Media Studies is designed to serve students who have interests and/or needs to develop enhanced knowledge related to the contemporary media. The Media Studies Minor is appropriate for students who do not major in Communication but who need a systematic program of study as they face an increasingly mediated world.

The Media Studies minor program includes a minimum of 18 credit hours, six of which must be upper division. At least one introductory course must be taken to ensure that students learn basic background concepts and the remaining credits are to be selected from a set of courses that focus on media studies.

The purpose of this minor is to serve students who are interested in pursuing knowledge of media to compliment their major areas of study. Students in a variety of majors see themselves as needing to operate in a mediated environment. This minor is designed to help students understand media effects on individuals, society and culture. Several courses examine the relationship of media and ethnicity, gender, race, and social identity. Other courses emphasize the role of communication technology, new media, social media, and the relationship of audience, content and aesthetics. The minor will help students understand how individuals and communities use, adapt, appropriate and are impacted by media in their personal, family, work, and community lives.

Admission requirements are designed to be consistent with existing University and Department requirements. Students must be undergraduate students in good standing with the University who are pursuing any major other than speech communication or mass communication.

This minor is needed due to heavy student demand. Just under half (46.7 percent) of students enrolled in Communication courses are not Communication majors. While the Department of Communication is at or beyond capacity for serving majors seeking careers in this area, those career-oriented skills courses are not included in the minor. Rather, the minor focuses on courses not fully enrolled and which can provide students some basic critical understanding of media as they pursue other majors. By allowing students to combine Communication courses they are already taking, or to add one or more additional courses, the minor should serve their need for knowledge as well as their need for a marketable credential.

In addition to these primary reasons, it is important to note that the communication discipline is trending toward increasing the number and variety of minors offered. Two general models for minors are evident in the discipline. The first, evident in a number of institutions, is a general communication, media, and/or journalism minor. The second model, evident in other institutions, is offering several minors in more focused sub-disciplines. The range of minors offered through this second model varies depending on available expertise and student demand in particular institutions. (See Appendix A for some examples of both trends). The Department of Communication at the University of Utah proposes the minor in Media Studies as a general minor in keeping with the first model because many students need to understand the media to enhance their major, but do not intend to become professional journalists or media practitioners.

The proposed minor does not include new courses nor does it require additional library resources. Rather, the proposed minor entails the packaging of existing courses that are regularly taught into coherent programs to better ensure that students have the opportunity to pursue media studies in a structured developmental way.
**Media Studies Minor**

Choose 18 credits; 6 must be upper division.

Introductory courses are designed to establish a foundation for three different directions of study: COMM 1500, a basic history and broad understanding of media; COMM 3020, an exploration of new media developments and innovations; COMM 5540, a study of effects of media on societal issues. Students may choose electives to concentrate their study in these areas, or they may broaden their study and choose among all three areas.

**Introductory Courses – choose at least one.**

**1500 Introduction to Mass Communication** (3) Theory, structure, content, functions, and audiences of mass communication media (print, broadcast, film, and new media) in contemporary life. History and technology of media in providing news, opinion, entertainment, and advertising in a democracy.

**3020 Media & Pop Culture** (3) Fulfills Humanities Exploration. Due to television and new media (Internet, blogging, YouTube), popular culture has become a dominant social force in today’s world. This course will study the media that bring us popular culture, the products of popular culture, and the celebrities—movie stars, singers, and athletics—who function as the gods of popular culture.

**5540 Media and Diversity** (3) Cross listed as ETHNC 5540. Fulfills Diversity. Explores theoretical and critical approaches to understanding relationships between media and ethnicity, gender, race, and social identity. Through an examination of contemporary scholarship, lectures and discussions, video screenings, in-class writing, and group presentations, the course provides an integral approach to understanding how media affect the production and consumption of diverse social and intellectual ideas and perspectives.

**Elective Courses – choose other courses from either Introductory or Elective Courses.**

**3645 Living the eLife** (3) Cross listed as UGS 3645. Fulfills Humanities Exploration. What’s your eLife quotient? Do you Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, Skype, blog, text, YouTube, and play World of Warcraft and believe your life is better for it? Many of us are both enthralled and appalled by the rapidly-expanding universe of the new media, and by the increasing cultural pressures to keep up with the latest gadgets. In this course students investigate how individuals and communities use, adapt, appropriate, and are impacted by new media technologies for work, play, and maintaining social ties.

**3770 Cross Cultural Documentary** (3) Fulfills International Requirement. This course is designed to explore the epistemological dimension of cross-cultural documentaries by examining power relations among viewers, subjects, and filmmakers with theoretical implications from both communication studies and visual anthropology. This course not only will deepen a student's understanding of critical issues of cultural representation, but also prepare the student to be well-versed communicators in an increasingly cross-cultural environment.

**4360 Consuming the Earth** (3) For the first time in history, humans threaten the earth. Any effective response to the environmental crisis requires a serious analysis of communication patterns about nature and humanity's relation to nature. This course will investigate the role of the media in transmitting, popularizing, and distorting environmental information, with special attention to international issues.

**4550 Developments in New Media** (3) Prerequisite: COMM 1500. Fulfills Upper Division Communication/Writing. An examination of issues, uses, and effects related to digital communication technology.

**5200 Persuasion and Political Communication** (3) Theory and practice in modern persuasion situations, with emphasis on teaching students to become critical consumers of persuasive messages.
5310 Telecommunication Policy and Management (3) Government and industry regulations applied to operation of broadcast facilities. Practical application of regulations.

5320 Freedom of Expression (3) Legal, political, and philosophical issues in systems of public communication under the First Amendment.

5330 Visual Rhetoric and Political Argumentation (3) Meets with COMM 6330. The course explores the ways audiences and decision-makers write and talk about visual political argumentation in a host of venues, including television, archives, documentaries, billboards, photography, blogs, political campaigns, and museums. The focus will be on both domestic and international political usage of visual rhetoric.

5360 Environmental Communication (3) Cross listed as ENVST 5360. Social construction of the environment and environmental issues through media and other communication processes. How individual and societal choices are shaped in the process.

5420 Contemporary Social Movements (3) Meets with COMM 6420. One or more contemporary social movements are examined with an eye toward assessing communication strategies used by those movements as well as strategies employed to control them. The purpose of the course is to cultivate critical awareness, appreciation, and creative consideration of the role of communication in organizing, controlling, and negotiating resistance in contexts of constraint.

5500 Emerging Technologies (3) Meets with COMM 6500. This course will explore the development, life cycle, and transformation of an emerging technology and how it has or may change the rules of communication in professional and social settings. Students may critique, design, and/or participate in the emerging community. The featured technology will vary. May be taken twice for credit.

5610 IT & Global Conflict (3) Meets with COMM 6610. This course will examine the impact new information and communication technologies (GPS, Internet, blogging, videogames, and more) are having on various forms of global conflict. This includes state-level warfare, terrorism, peaceful resistance and protest, the emergence of new forms of conflict such as "cyberterror" and "softwar," as well as impact on international relations in the Information Age.

5620 International Communication (3) Fulfills International Requirement. Examines the forces--physical, social, political, psychological, economic--that influence the movement of news, entertainment, and advertising worldwide. Includes such considerations as censorship, propaganda, media diplomacy, media imperialism, foreign correspondence, the use of the Internet, cables, and communication satellites.

5630 Mass Communication History (3) Major historical developments in mass communication; emphasis on people, economics, technology, and societal influences on media environment.

5640 Communication Technology and Culture (3) This course examines the ideological context of evolving communication technologies as they function to structure, maintain, and alter power relations in contemporary society. Special attention is given to a) social construction of gender, race, national identity, and class by and through communication technology; and b) the ideological valences of recent and emerging communication technologies.

5650 Videogames Studies (3) Meets with COMM 6650. In this course students explore and challenge current topics in video and computer game design, reception, and criticism. Topics vary. May be taken twice for credit.
5660 Media Ethics (3) Prerequisite: COMM 1500. Professional ethics in media; emphasis on news work. Philosophical concepts, moral reasoning, and media values and principles. Current issues through case studies. Institutions through which media have addressed moral dilemmas.

5680 Computer Mediated Communication (3) Meets with COMM 6680. Examination of various discursive communities constituted by/through computing technologies (personal computer, mobile phone, PDA, and other electronic devices). Students analyze and critique use and effects in interpersonal, political, economic, work and educational contexts.

5690 Topics in New Media Studies (3) Meets with COMM 6690. Special Topics in new media. May be taken twice for credit.
Appendix A

Sample of Communication Minors Offered at Peer Institutions

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  Writing for the Screen and Stage

Arizona State University:
  Minor in Communication
  Minor in Media Analysis

University of California at Davis:
  Minor in Communication (includes skills and theories)

University of Southern California:
  Minor in Communication and the Entertainment Industry
  Minor in Interactive Media and the Culture of New Technologies
  Minor in Professional and Managerial Communication
  Minor in Communication Law and Media Policy
  Minor in Global Communication

University of New Mexico:
  Minor in Communication
  Minor in Journalism

Ohio State University:
  Minor in Communication
  Visual Design Minor
  Communication Technology Minor
  Minor in Media and Society

Arizona State University:
  Minor in Media Analysis

University of Minnesota:
Minor in Communication

**Washington State University: Minors or sequences in:**

- Advertising
- Agricultural Communication
- Applied Intercultural Communication
- Broadcasting
- Journalism
- Organizational Communication
- Professional Writing
- Public Relations
- Rhetoric and Professional Writing

**University of Iowa:**

- Minor in Communication Studies
- Mass Communication Minor

**University of Missouri:**

- Journalism Minor