

COMMUNICATION ARTS (COM)

All acts of communication and self-expression are performative. The media through which humanity communicates and expresses itself is constantly evolving. Effectively engaging that media becomes a key skill in remaining versatile, marketable, and relevant within the larger cultural, social, and economic landscape. An individual with a comprehensive background in Strategic Communication, Film Studies, or Theatre can more easily interpret, analyze, and participate in the collaborative arenas of organizational and interpersonal communication, emergent media, and theatrical performance; remaining a step ahead of trends instead of struggling to keep up with them.

The Communication Arts major provides the fundamental analytical and practical skills necessary to facilitate life-long learning, allowing students to adapt to changes in their fields as their careers evolve. To help support this versatility, students majoring in Communication Arts may select a standard emphasis, or one of the three comprehensive emphases. A 9-credit Communication Arts nucleus provides students a liberal arts foundation supplemented by the more specific courses within each emphasis.

The Strategic Communication Emphasis provides the study of complex organizations and their use of applied communication in connecting with their audiences. Students in Strategic Communication explore interpersonal and media-based communication, and our courses often require creative work tied to real-world situations. Graduates in the Strategic Communication Emphasis have moved on to careers in public relations and advertising, government relations, issues management and events management.

The Film Studies Emphasis focuses on the study of theory, aesthetics, and history through practical, hands-on creative work in the areas of scriptwriting, visual and aural storytelling, and production management. This provides our students with a keen understanding of the role of current and emerging media in society. Our objective is for students to exit our program well prepared for careers, which may not even exist yet, in various settings related to communication. Our graduates in the Film Studies Emphasis have achieved careers in broadcasting, the motion picture industry, and major corporate media outlets as well as success in graduate programs in film at the highest international level.

The Theatre Emphasis provides students with an in-depth, multi-disciplinary, and hands-on approach to the role of creating theatre. Theatre mirrors the nature of life in all its rich variety. To work effectively within the theatre arts requires a broad knowledge upon which to draw. To that end, the Theatre emphasis believes in giving students a full range of instruction and experience in the theatre arts-practice, history, and theory-along with the full benefits of a liberal arts education. Graduates in the Theatre Emphasis have gone on to successful careers in theatre, film, television, graduate school, education, and other related fields.

The standard Communication Emphasis allows for the greatest flexibility and efficiency for transfer students, double majors, and those students seeking the broadest possible experience across all of the Communication Arts emphases, while still providing a balance between theory and practice.

Program Goals

- Students will demonstrate an understanding for the complexity of communication from both a practical and theoretical perspective.

- Students will become adaptable producers and users of communication acts.
- Students will be well prepared for further studies or professional training in the field of communication or will utilize their skills in a communication-related field of employment.
- Communication Arts Comprehensive Major: Film Studies Emphasis (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/communication-arts-comprehensive-film-studies/>)
- Communication Arts Comprehensive Major: Strategic Communication Emphasis (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/communication-arts-comprehensive-strategic-communication/>)
- Communication Arts Comprehensive Major: Theatre Emphasis (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/communication-arts-comprehensive-theatre-performance-studies/>)
- Communication Arts Comprehensive Major: Theatre Secondary Licensure Emphasis (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/communication-arts-comprehensive-theatre-secondary-licensure/>)
- Communication Arts Comprehensive Major: Theatre Secondary Licensure Emphasis (with a 3+2 Master of Arts) (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/communication-arts-comprehensive-theatre-secondary-licensure-3-2/>)
- Communication Arts Major: Standard Program Communication Emphasis (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/communication-arts-standard-program-communication/>)
- Communication Arts Minor (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/communication-arts-minor/>)
- Film Minor (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/film-minor/>)
- Public Relations Minor (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/public-relations-minor/>)
- Theatre Minor (<https://catalog.western.edu/undergraduate/programs/communication-arts/theatre-minor/>)

Capstone Course Requirement

The following course fulfills the capstone course requirement for the Communication Arts Major: COM 405 Communication Arts Seminar.

Communication Arts Courses

COM 119. Introduction to Film. (3 Credits)

Students are introduced to the aesthetics of narrative and documentary motion pictures through the study of the basic elements of cinema. Topics may include story structure, cinematography, editing, sound, and lighting.

COM 121. Introduction to Theatre (GT-AH1). (3 Credits)

This course will include a general survey of Western theatre from Classical Greece to contemporary America. Students will learn the diverse practice of the art of theatre by studying theatre history, dramatic literature, and the practical components of acting, directing, design and production. GT-AH1

COM 144. Multi-format Journalism and Storytelling. (3 Credits)

A focus on the fundamentals of journalistic storytelling for the digital age, including American journalism standards and ethics and using text, audio, and photos to tell powerful stories. Stories will be published on the Top O' The World website, print edition, and other platforms.

COM 150. Public Speaking. (3 Credits)

Combines the basic theories of communication with public speech performance skills. Emphasis is on speech preparation, organization, support, audience analysis, and delivery.

COM 151. Introduction to Mass Media (GT-AH2). (3 Credits)

An examination of media-related industries (broadcasting, journalism, advertising, public relations and online communications), and the issues related to those industries that affect contemporary public discourse. GT-AH2

COM 197. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)**COM 205. Communication Arts I. (3 Credits)**

This course is a study of the theory and associated terminology of visual communication including the application of concepts to film, theatre, and convergent media. Topics include aesthetics, design elements, mimesis, performance, semiotics and introduction to the primary techniques of the various communication arts. Prerequisite: ENG 102 with a minimum grade of C- or instructor permission.

COM 216. Dramatic Literature and Script Analysis. (3 Credits)

This course introduces students to the diverse genre of dramatic literature in Western and Eastern theatre. Students study the origins of tragedy, comedy, melodrama, the rise of Realism and Anti-Realism, as well as the sub-genres within those general categories. Eastern traditions of text such as Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku are also studied. Students learn how to read a play on a deeper level for content, themes, historical and sociopolitical influences, as well as the emerging and changing aesthetics of each genre. Prerequisite: ENG 102 or instructor permission.

COM 231. Stagecraft I. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the theories, practices and procedures required to create, operate, and maintain scenery and properties for the entertainment industry. Topics may include history of scenery, performance spaces, entertainment rigging, scenic studios and tools, construction drawings, scenic materials, scenery construction, and basic scenic painting. The course may also cover roles, responsibilities, and organizational structure of entertainment production departments.

COM 234. Aesthetics, Lighting and Film Theory. (3 Credits)

A theory and practice course wherein hands-on projects and literary study of media aesthetics, cinematic lighting, and visual design are explored. Students will also study prevailing film theories and discuss and analyze design elements as applied to the media production process for film, new medias, and television. An understanding of aesthetics and production design terminology and application is achieved through various written and practical assignments.

COM 235. Introduction to Acting. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the principles, processes, and techniques of acting. The study is designed to balance theory and performance, and to develop a significant sense of self-discipline on the part of the actor. Topics include warm-up and awareness skills, basic body and voice integration techniques, the theories of Stanislavski and Meisner and Practical Aesthetics, script analysis, and performance process.

COM 241. Media Writing. (3 Credits)

An analysis and practice of the major forms of media writing, including print, broadcast and web-based publication, with an introduction to the ways that production varies the writing of each. Prerequisite: ENG 102 with a minimum grade of C- or instructor permission.

COM 261. Introduction To Audio Communication. (3 Credits)

This course introduces the basic concepts, functions and technology of audio production as they relate to the elements of narrative and storytelling. Prerequisite COM 119, COM 121, or COM 151; or instructor permission.

COM 264. Introduction to Media Production I. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the practice of media production, including the Adobe Creative Suite. Topics may include scriptwriting, producing, directing, cinematography, sound recording, editing, and standards of operation for the production facilities and equipment. This course is the prerequisite for COM 335 Intermediate Media Production and COM 346 Multimedia Communication.

COM 274. Public Relations Communication. (3 Credits)

A study of the use of communication to establish credibility, trust, and confidence between and among communities, employees, public agencies, civic organizations and business institutions.

COM 292. Independent Study. (1-6 Credits)**COM 297. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)**

Special Topics

COM 298. Practicum. (1-4 Credits)

Entry-level supervised experiences in theatre, organizational communication and journalism/mass media. Prerequisite: instructor permission.

COM 305. Communication Arts II. (3 Credits)

An exploration of the philosophical and theoretical foundations of human communication, concentrating specifically on textual analysis and interpretation. Using a wide range of media, students will investigate how the particular method of communication informs, alters, and shapes the messages being consumed, and how those messages both constitute and affect self-expressive acts. PREREQUISITES: COM 205 and admission to the Communication Arts Program; or instructor permission.

COM 306. Scriptwriting. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the fundamental tools and skills required to craft a script for performance on stage or in film/video. Students are expected to produce play scripts and screenplays of varying lengths; they are also expected to read and respond to one another's writing. Some history of playwriting and study of prevailing models of scriptwriting are also included. Prerequisites: COM 205 or ENG 161, with a minimum grade of C, or instructor permission.

COM 317. Studies in Theatre. (3 Credits)

Students are introduced to a variety of special topics in Theatre including, Low-flying Trapeze, Mask work, Theatre and Politics, Theatre History, Improv, and Theatre for Young Audiences. Repeatable for a maximum of six credits among different topic areas. Prerequisite: Instructor permission.

COM 323. Media/ Arts Management. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the basic principles and structure of management as it applies to Communication Arts. Particular focus is given to management of small and mid-size nonprofit media and arts organizations, and to the interrelationship between those two areas. Prerequisite: junior standing or permission of the instructor.

COM 324. Acting II: Shakespeare. (3 Credits)

An advanced-level acting class where students will focus on reading, interpreting and acting the works of William Shakespeare. The principles of acting Shakespeare's verse will be taught: scansion, breath control, operative word, and antithesis. Students will perform monologues and scenes. Prerequisite: COM 235 or Instructor permission.

COM 330. Stagecraft II. (3 Credits)

An in-depth study of stagecraft which may include drafting skills required to draft ground plans, construction drawings and elevations used to plan and build scenery. Students will also receive an introduction to lighting, sound design, and related technologies for stage and screen. Topics may include the proper rigging of light and sound equipment, use of control consoles and software, optics, basic electrical theory, the nature of light, and acoustics. Prerequisite: COM 231 or instructor permission.

COM 331. Scenography in Film and Theatre. (3 Credits)

A study of designing visually for the stage and screen, with an emphasis on a unified look and a single intense effect. A strong emphasis on script analysis as a basis for design. Additional information on visual research for theatre and film including location scouting and contextual research into the background of the story. Hands-on development of skills in generating graphic communication of design ideas is included. Prerequisite: COM 231 or instructor permission.

COM 335. Intermediate Media Production II. (3 Credits)

Advanced-level practices, tools, and techniques of the media producer, cinematographer, and editor are studied and practiced. Prerequisite COM 264; or instructor permission.

COM 340. Stage Management. (3 Credits)

This course provides instruction in theatre stage management; developing skills needed to work as a professional stage manager including software programs, organization, and collaboration for working with directors, designers, actors and technicians through the process of a theatre production from rehearsals and performance to closing. Prerequisite: COM 121; or instructor permission.

COM 346. Multimedia Communication. (3 Credits)

An exploration of the theory and application of multimedia communication principles through projects that use common interactive multimedia, animation, non-linear editing, web authoring, and desktop-publishing programs. Prerequisites: COM 205, or instructor permission.

COM 351. Media Theory and Research. (3 Credits)

An examination of media from a theoretical, organizational perspective. Topics covered include departmental functions and duties, programming, formats, regulations and finances. Also, in the context of media theory, empirical data is explored. Prerequisite: COM 241 and COM 274, or instructor permission.

COM 352. Advanced Cinema Studies. (3 Credits)

An in-depth study of the aesthetics and theory of cinema through the examination and critical analysis of the technical and creative elements of selected iconic Hollywood and international motion pictures. Prerequisite: Junior standing or instructor permission.

COM 361. Multi-Camera Studio Production. (3 Credits)

Through the instruction in the theories and practices of studio-based media production, students receive training in the operation of studio equipment and technology. Students will practice the various job duties required in a studio production environment. Topics may include media writing, directing, floor directing, technical directing, camera operating, lighting, and audio. Prerequisite: COM 335 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

COM 362. Advanced Audio Production. (3 Credits)

An in-depth study of audio design and production for film, radio, television and live theatre. Prerequisite COM 261 or instructor permission.

COM 371. Small Group and Conflict Management. (3 Credits)

An exploration of various concepts and types of conflict and the role of argumentation in managing and/or resolving conflict. The study examines the theory and practice of communication within small groups, as well as problem solving and decision making as common contexts in which argument occurs and conflict arises, and a continuum from formal to informal modes of conflict management/resolution is discussed and practiced by the students. Examples of specific areas covered include formal debate, negotiation, and arbitration. Prerequisite: ENG 103; or instructor permission.

COM 375. Social Media Skills. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the tools, techniques and concepts of social media resulting in the creation of online and mobile content. Particular emphasis on analyzing and employing user data and analytics to meet strategic objectives. Prerequisites: COM 274 or instructor permission.

COM 377. Intercultural Communication in the Digital Age. (3 Credits)

A theoretical and practical survey of intercultural communication. Topics may include: the interpersonal dimensions of intercultural communication online and offline, the distinctive cultural orientations, behaviors, expectations, and values that affect intercultural communication situations, including strategic and computer-mediated communication. Prerequisite: Junior standing or instructor permission.

COM 385. Experimental Media Production. (3 Credits)

The essential theory and practice of experimental filmmaking, scanning all modes of making that defy traditional cinema techniques and focus on our individual creative voices. Topics may include: lyrical and structural films, in-camera editing, and the long take. Prerequisite: COM 335 with a minimum grade of "C;" or instructor permission.

COM 389. Media Production: Narrative. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the theory and practice of the field-based production of narrative films. Topics emphasized may include fictional story, cinematography, lighting, sound, editing, and production management. Prerequisite: COM 335 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

COM 390. Media Production: Documentary. (3 Credits)

An introduction to the theory and practice of producing nonfiction works, including conventional documentary forms and autobiographical or experimental works. Topics may include actual story, cinematography, lighting, sound, editing, and production management. Prerequisite: COM 335 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

COM 392. Independent Study in Communication Arts. (1-6 Credits)

A detailed study in a specific area of communication and theatre, emphasizing individualized approaches toward development of creativity and scholarship. Prerequisites: junior or senior status and 10 credits in Communication and Theatre; or instructor permission.

COM 397. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)

Special Topics

COM 398. Practicum. (1-4 Credits)

Supervised applications and experiences in communication and theatre. Students assist, analyze, manage, and participate in various aspects of practical situations or job training. Prerequisites: instructor permission and completion of one of the following: COM 241, COM 261, or COM 298.

COM 405. Communication Arts Seminar. (3 Credits)

A capstone course in which students complete their individual Communication Arts portfolios, based upon their cumulative work through the COM program and guided by their specific career or graduate school goals. The seminar provides an opportunity for the students to work individually, in small groups, and with the instructor to evaluate the overall effectiveness of their finished portfolios, and revise accordingly, using the critical techniques, cultural awareness and technical skills students have developed throughout the COM program. Prerequisite: COM 305 or instructor permission.

COM 406. Scriptwriting II. (3 Credits)

An advanced-level course where students will spend the entire semester writing either a full-length play, feature-length screenplay or pilot episode of a television program. Students will read and respond to one another's writing. Some history and theory of scriptwriting are also included. Prerequisite: COM 306 with a minimum grade of C or instructor permission.

COM 423. Directing. (3 Credits)

A comprehensive introduction to the theory and practice of directing for the stage. Includes an exploration of play selection, character and script analysis, conceptualization of production, actor coaching approaches, staging techniques; as well as the actual direction and presentation of scenes and plays. Prerequisites: COM 231, COM 235, and junior standing; or instructor permission.

COM 430. Entertainment Scenic Design. (3 Credits)

This course combines theory and practice in a hands-on, design project-driven approach to provide an in-depth study of entertainment performance design. Topics may include script analysis and principals of design as applied to scenery, color theory, drafting, sketching, and modeling. Students will also analyze the work of significant scenic and production designers from stage and screen. Prerequisites: COM 330 or COM 331, or instructor permission.

COM 474. Campaign Planning in Advertising and Public Information. (3 Credits)

An analysis of the many facets of information campaign planning. It explores concepts like persuasion and audience behavior, researching attitudes and effectiveness, campaign objectives and strategies, media choices, and relevant social and ethical issues. In addition, students are expected to build their own information campaigns. Prerequisite: COM 274 or instructor permission.

COM 490. Advanced Media Production. (3 Credits)

Students are immersed in advanced project work. Topics may include cinematography, lighting, grip, electrical, special effects, visual effects, sound effects recording, sound design, and animation. Prerequisite: COM 361, COM 385, COM 389 or COM 390 with a minimum grade of C; or instructor permission.

COM 492. Independent Study. (1-6 Credits)

A detailed study in a specific area of communication and theatre, emphasizing individualized approaches toward development of creativity and scholarship. Prerequisites: junior or senior status and 10 credits in Communication and Theatre; or instructor permission.

COM 497. Special Topics. (1-6 Credits)

Special topics in Communication Arts.

COM 499. Internship in Communication Arts. (1-12 Credits)