

Why an MA in Lifespan & Digital Communication?




The purpose of this degree program is to prepare students with an advanced course of study in theory and research to be highly-competent communicators in their personal and professional lives as well as in a rapidly changing work environment where fifty percent of the U.S. Labor force is now engaged in the creation, processing, and distribution of information. Significantly, these students are given the background and expertise to fill jobs that meet the needs of people across the human lifespan using relational skills as well as an ever-growing assortment of digital technologies, such as personal computers, mobile phones, digital cameras, iPods, PDAs (personal digital assistants), among many others, most with ready access to the Internet.

This degree program is unique in that it focuses on human and digital communication as it develops across the lifespan and is based on the assumption that relational communication, information gathering, conflict management, entertainment consumption, and social media use differs among, within, and between people at various stages of life (i.e., childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and elder adulthood). Being able to analyze and make the most out of the inseparable relationship between lifespan and digital communication is the key to success in most 21st century jobs, particularly in the interrelated employment areas of applied research and policy, community networking and outreach, creative industries, education and training, and health and wellness (see descriptions in the “Justification” portion of this proposal).





This program is primarily tailored to all qualified holders of a bachelor’s degree in Communication. Candidates with a B.A. or B.S. in a related discipline in the humanities, social sciences, or business are also encouraged to apply, although these students may be required to take foundational communication courses. This program is designed for full- or part-time students who either plan to use it to enhance their career goals or aspire to earning a doctorate after completing this degree. Students may thus pursue either a 36-hour non-thesis or 33-hour thesis option. Most importantly, this master’s degree will be the only graduate program in Lifespan and Digital Communication within the Commonwealth of Virginia as well as the region covered by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

This proposed Masters of Arts in Lifespan and Digital Communication is necessary because it will (1.) equip the current generation of college students with a forward-looking perspective that fully integrates lifespan and digital communication, preparing them to apply much of this real-world knowledge to specific job options outlined in the “employment demand” section of this proposal; (2.) offer educational opportunities to early- and mid-career professionals in fields that depend on theories and skills in lifespan and digital communication, enabling them to retool and enhance their current employment prospects; (3.) provide advanced students with the background and training necessary to continue their graduate studies in a related doctoral program in communication; and (4.) strengthen ODU’s service and research commitment by contributing to the economy and workforce of the Hampton Roads region and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Program Highlights

-  First MA degree in the U.S. on Lifespan and Digital Communication (combined in a comprehensive communication degree)
-  One of four universities in the U.S. to offer a specialization in Lifespan Communication (along with Pennsylvania State University, Louisiana State University, and the University of California at Santa Barbara)
-  Active and Award-Winning Communication Faculty

TIM ANDERSON	POPULAR MUSIC; SOCIAL NETWORKING
ROBERT ARNETT	SCREENWRITING, FILM HISTORY, FILM CRITICISM
E. JAMES BAESLER	RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL COMMUNICATION; NONVIOLENCE & PEACE
YI FAN CHEN	MOBILE MEDIA
GARY EDGERTON	MEDIA HISTORY, THEORY, AND CRITICISM; CONTEMPORARY MEDIA AND CULTURE; MEDIA LITERACY; AND THE DOCUMENTARY TRADITION
FRAN HASSENCAHL	INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION, GENDER, AND POLITICAL RHETORIC
JEFFREY JONES	POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
KATHERINE HAMMOND	FILM AND THEATRE
JINSUN LEE	DIGITAL JOURNALISM, CITIZEN JOURNALISM, SOCIAL MEDIA, & RACE/GENDER IN COMMUNICATION
KYLE NICHOLAS	MEDIA STUDIES
MARGARET PITTS	INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION, IDENTITY, AGING, LIFESPAN COMMUNICATION
STEVEN PULLEN	SCREENWRITING
BURTON SAINT JOHN	PUBLIC RELATIONS, JOURNALISM, PROPAGANDA
AVI SANTO	INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
THOMAS SOCHA	FAMILY COMMUNICATION, CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION; LIFESPAN COMMUNICATION, POSITIVE COMMUNICATION, GROUP COMMUNICATION

-  Students study full-time or part-time; Non-thesis or Thesis; Evenings and Nights at ODU's Norfolk Campus (future classes may also be offered at the ODU's Virginia Beach Campus)
-  Classes emphasize both quantitative and critical research methods as well as theory
-  Unique curriculum where students study human and digital communication development across the lifespan and within life stages (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and elder adulthood).
-  Students encouraged to develop and present research at professional communication conferences

Program Description




The Master of Arts in Lifespan and Digital Communication focuses on the study of human communication and digital media as they develop across the lifespan and is based on the assumption that relational communication, information gathering, conflict management, entertainment consumption, and social media use differs among, within, and between people at various stages of life (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and elder adulthood). Understanding and analyzing the inseparable relationship between lifespan communication and digital media is a key to success in most 21st century jobs, particularly in the interrelated employment areas of applied research and policy, community networking and outreach, creative industries, education and training, and health and wellness

Admission

In addition to meeting all general University requirements, an applicant must have an undergraduate average of at least 3.25 in Communication or a related field and a 3.00 overall; Two letters of recommendation from faculty members, or those who can evaluate the applicant's academic potential; GRE scores typically at or above 1000 as a composite of the verbal and quantitative scores; and a 500-word essay that outlines the applicant's professional and personal goals in pursuing this degree, while explaining the relationship of these aforementioned goals to the Lifespan and Digital Communication degree program.

We will begin accepting applications for
ODU's Inaugural MA in Lifespan & Digital Communication class on: [Insert Date]

Applications for Fall Admission (only) are accepted throughout the year
Preferred Application Deadline: March 1

-  To Apply—ODU Graduate Admissions: **[URL TBA]**
-  For information about the MA in Lifespan & Digital Communication:
<http://www.odu.edu/~tsocha/Masters/ma-index.shtml>
-  Department of Communication & Theatre Arts: <http://www.odu.edu/al/comm/>

Degree Requirements

The MA in Lifespan and Digital Communication requires 36 credit hours (non-thesis option) or 33 hours (thesis option). No more than 12 hours may be taken on the 500 level. Both non-thesis and thesis option students take five required core courses (15 hours) that include:

COMM 601	Lifespan Communication Theory and Research	3
COMM 602	Digital Communication Theory and Research	3
COMM 603	Social Change and Communication Systems	3
COMM 604	Lifespan Communication Research Methods	3
COMM 605	Critical Methods and Digital Communication	3

In addition, students pursuing the non-thesis option take 18 credit hours of COMM electives and a required 3-credit hour capstone seminar COMM 690. Students pursuing the thesis option take an additional 9 credit hours of COMM electives, COMM 696: Thesis Preparation (3 hours) (in the first semester they register for thesis hours) as well as COMM 698 & 699: Thesis (six hours) in lieu of COMM 690. This thesis is based on original scholarly research and must address a specific and viable topic salient to the student's core and elective coursework in Lifespan and Digital communication.

The thesis option is recommended for those students who have maintained a high GPA, have the support of a faculty advisor from the Communication and Theatre Arts Department, and who are considering further studies at the doctoral level. The thesis committee, consisting of a chair and two other faculty members certified for graduate instruction, direct and evaluate the student's work. Approval of the thesis proposal by the student's committee and GPD is required before the completion of 27 hours of coursework. Upon completion of the thesis, the committee will conduct a two-hour examination and defense of the thesis.



Electives

COMM 600: Intercultural Communication: History, Theory, and Application
COMM 606: Global Media Culture
COMM 607: Framing Theory
COMM 610: Screenwriting Projects
COMM 614: Communication Ethics in the Digital Age**
COMM 615: Construction of the Gendered Body
COMM 622: Religious/Spiritual Communication and Health**
COMM 623: Relational Communication across the Lifespan
COMM 624: Positive Communication across the Lifespan
COMM 628: Mediated Human Communication in the Information Age
COMM 630: The Information Society
COMM 640: Television and Politics
COMM 642: Rhetoric of Propaganda**
COMM 650: Religious Communication
COMM 672: New Communications Media and Social Development
COMM 673: Television Histories as Collective Memory
COMM 675: Television in the Digital Era
COMM 678: Race and Television
COMM 690: Lifespan & Digital Communication Capstone
COMM 696: Thesis Preparation
COMM 697/698: Tutorial Work in Special Topics in Communication
COMM 699: Thesis
COMM 699: Thesis
COMM 795/895: Selected Topics in Communication Studies
COMM 797/897: Independent Research in Communication Studies
[**to be proposed]

Anticipated Electives:

COMM 6XX: New Media Ecosystems (in the age of networked ubiquity)
COMM 6XX: Semantic Webs, Social Graphs and Actor Networks
COMM 6XX: Nonviolent Communication and Peace

