

Student Name

Communications and Marketing

Self-Determined Major Proposal

Cumulative GPA:

Advisors: Grace Burton & Catherine White Berheide

Description

I propose a self-determined major in communications and marketing. Communication studies drives an academic to learn the methods, processes, and applications of human communication - both verbal and non-verbal, and marketing is a business realm where I can direct and apply my study of communications. As someone who thrives when indulging in different forms of learning, the curricula of my proposed major will fulfill my need for a broad, yet goal-oriented area of study, as well as properly prepare me for a wider range of career opportunities after graduation. My proposed major is designed to be both coherent, tied together by the overarching theme of communications, and also interdisciplinary in the liberal arts tradition. This proposed major will allow me to pursue my interests in various forms of English and Writing, Art, Sociology and Business. Each discipline will cultivate the skills and analysis methods necessary for my understanding of communications, culminating in a widely applicable, well-rounded body of knowledge.

Writing is an essential, classic component of communication in society. My passion for writing combined with my fascination with effective communication techniques led me to design my major with a large writing portion. EN 211: Fiction helped me develop my close-reading techniques and served as an introduction to various forms of fictive writing. EN 228W: Stealing Fictive Ideas will allow me to develop my writing skills in a writing-intensive course by riffing off of, or “stealing” from the writings I analyzed in EN 211. A portion of EN 211 was spent studying the format and message embedded in Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, which connects to my current work in EN 228W where students are working to create an original version of the common fictive metamorphosis trope. EN 280: Introduction to Nonfiction writing will push me

into a new realm of writing, further informing and influencing my personal voice in another intensive workshop format. To finalize the writing portion of my self-determined major, I will take EN 378: Nonfiction Workshop, which, through study and intense practice, will continue to contribute to my ability to write cohesively in a focused area, and push me to integrate new methods with my takeaways from previous writing classes.

Digital Art classes will be a vehicle to develop my skills in visual communication. Art courses offer the means to create art that speaks by using digital tools such as Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. I will take AR 209: Communication Design, which will contribute to my learning of design principles and theory. AR 307: Communication Design II will build on its predecessor by providing further direction on how to thoughtfully create digitally, while placing emphasis on how different symbols and tools in digital art can effectively convey a deeper message.

Sociology courses are crucial for my understanding of communication, as they will inform me on the ways humans absorb information and allow me to channel my communications skills into a focused realm. I have already begun my exploration of Sociology with SO 202C: Individual In Society, and SO 204W: Introduction to Race, Class, and Gender. These courses introduced me to how an individual's life experience is influenced by those around them, specifically through symbolic interactionism, the idea that beliefs and symbols in a social group affect an individual's outlook, and how one's various identities play into the way they see the world, and the way society sees them. BST 205: Black Panther Archive is a course dedicated to learning about the Black Panther Party, a civil rights group formed in the 1960s. My social research skills will be broadened by this course's exposure to primary documents in the form of

archived Black Panther Party material. I'll investigate the artistic, written, and verbal techniques the Black Panther Party used to communicate their message, and allow me to consider how my studies in communications can be applied to contemporary activist efforts. SO 227R: Social Research Methods will provide me with the techniques necessary to do research, especially how to conduct interviews. This knowledge of societal influence and research methods will further allow me to pursue other disciplines with the sociological imagination in mind, balancing my personal experience with others' to make each product of my studies widely consumable.

The final discipline included in my proposed major is Business. Business is a collaborative area that is applicable to many future career paths, where I can put my communications studies to work. After the prerequisite, MB 107: Business and Organization Management I will take a marketing course, which will provide me with a more concentrated study of communication-based business and allow me to consider how writing and art can contribute to the field. Finally, MB 313: Consumer Behavior will push me to apply the knowledge I will have gained in Sociology to understand consumer decision-making. Each of these Business classes, combined with my high school study of statistics which prepared me for business analysis, will push me to integrate the disparate disciplines of my major into one overarching, highly valuable area of study that will strongly benefit my life after college.

Sociology courses will develop my understanding of societal constructs and the way human groups receive information, while Writing and Art courses will inform me on techniques to effectively convey information in both strict and fluid ways. Finally, Business courses will give me an important and highly applicable opportunity to direct the skills in communications I will have obtained. Unconventional, creative, forward thinking is what Skidmore is all about and

is why I feel academically at home here. I want to take advantage of the opportunity Skidmore provides to create a Self-Determined Major because I know that I will have a more fulfilling experience at Skidmore if I am empowered to pave my own creative path rather than following a pre-prescribed major. I would like to take on the challenge of making thoughtful connections between the disciplines described above. These courses will result in a coherent understanding of communications and allow me to pursue the area of study with which I am most intellectually engaged.

Course List

* = already taken

** = currently taking

The courses that make up the Interdisciplinary Communications Studies major are:

Foundation

- *EN 211 - Fiction (3 credits)
- *SO 202C - Individual in Society (4 credits)
- *SO 204W - Introduction to Race, Class, and Gender (4 credits)

Methodology

- **EN 228W - Stealing Fictive Ideas (4 credits)
- **BST 205 - Black Panther Archive (3 credits)
- SO 227R - Social Research Methods (4 credits)
- EN 280 - Intro to Nonfiction Writing (4 credits)
- EN 378 - Nonfiction Workshop (4 credits)

Theory

- AR 209 - Communication Design I (4 credits)

- IB 326 (IES Abroad) - Principles of Marketing Management
- MB 313 - Consumer Behavior (4 credits)
- AR 307 - Communication Design II

Capstone

- SD 374 -Self-Determined Major Final Project Prep (1 credit)
- ID 371 - Interdisciplinary Independent Study (3 or 4 credits)

Total Credit Hours: 45-46 credit hours

Disciplinary Breadth

The disciplinary breadth of this major consists of English, Art, Sociology, Business, Black Studies

English: EN 211 → EN 228W → EN 280 → EN 378

Art: AR 133 → AR 209 → AR 307

Sociology: SO 202C → SO 204W → BST 205 → SO 227R

Business: MB 107 → IES Abroad IB 326 (MB 214 equivalent) → MB 313

Other: SD 374 → ID 371

Semester Outline

(*R* = All-School Requirements, *PR* = Prerequisite Not Included in Core Courses)

Spring 2023	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025
**EN 228W - Stealing Fictive Ideas **BST 205 - Black Panther Archive	AR209- Communication Design I SO 227R - Social Research Methods *PR*MB 107 - Business and Organization Management EN 280- Intro to Nonfiction Writing	(Abroad)	EN 378- Nonfiction workshop *R* GE 101 - Earth Systems SD 374 - Self-Determined Major Final Project Prep	MB 313 - Consumer Behavior ID 371 - Capstone AR 307 - Communication Design II *R* AS 101 - Asian Studies

(*EN 211 - Fiction, *SO 202C - Individual in Society, *SO 204W - Intro to Race, Class, and Gender, & AR 133 - Drawing I are not included in outline, as they've been completed)

Course Sequence

- **EN 211 - Fiction - Foundation** (3 credits)

Designed to enhance the student's capacity to read novels and short stories. Explores fundamental techniques of fiction, such as symbol and myth, irony, parody, and stream-of-consciousness, within both conventional and experimental forms.

This Fiction overview and analysis course primarily serves to improve my close-reading techniques. It provides the student with a variety of examples of what one form of good written communication looks like. This course is a foundation course - it is my introduction to various forms of highly-esteemed fictive writing.

- **SO 202 - Individual in Society - Foundation** (4 credits)

A variety of social psychological approaches to the experiences of individuals as they influence or are influenced by social interactions and structures. The course introduces a sociological orientation known as "symbolic interactionism," which assumes that among the key elements in the social environment are the symbols and understandings possessed by people in the group.

This course serves as a broad exploration of Sociology, an aspect of my major that can be referenced across other disciplines. This class serves to increase my understanding of sociological approaches to social interactions and structures, something that will inform my stance in writing by teaching me how different people interpret and experience the world. This will also broaden my perspective in the business world. This is a foundation course due to its introductory nature, and because its content will help inform many courses after it.

- **SO 204W - Introduction to Race, Class, and Gender - Foundation** (4 credits)

An introduction to sociological analysis of race, class, and gender in contemporary social life. This course explores how race, class, and gender are constructed, reinforced, and maintained in U.S. society. Using readings (historical, theoretical, sociological, and autobiographical), films, class discussion, current issues/events, and exercises, we will critically examine questions such as: What is sociological imagination? How can it help us understand the intersections of race, class, and gender in social life? How do systems of power and inequality affect cultural norms, social interactions, and institutional structures? How can we move from social inequality to social change? By grappling with these questions, students will develop an appreciation for the multidimensional and complex nature of the issues underlying constructions of race, class, and gender in the United States.

This course offers an introduction to understanding intersectionality - the way a person's race, class and/or gender influences their lived experience, and provides an area in which students are driven to consider how to begin to address inequalities that arise in our diverse world. This is a foundation course, as it will inform my communicative perspective and prepare me to fight learned biases.

- **EN 228W - Stealing Fictive Ideas - Methodology** (4 credits)

This creative writing-literature hybrid course moves around in the history of literature, from 8 A.D. to the present, not in chronological order, but through associations between widely disparate texts. Connecting ideas across a long literary history, our readings will serve as the basis for your own creative writing. Content will include prose (short stories, excerpts of longer works, a novella), film, and television. Requirements: short response papers, creative work, and in-class participation.

This course will allow me to make connections between the literature we explore and what I choose to write. It will push me to both mimic the writing in famous folktales and literature as well as begin to develop my personal writing style. This will build on foundations allowing my literature analysis and writing to ascend to the next level. This is a methodology course, as it is the first step in developing my writing skills - something crucial to my major.

- **BST 205 - Black Panther Archive - Methodology** (3 credits)

A critical analysis of the Black Panther Party. Active in the United States from 1966-1982, The Black Panther Party was the most visible manifestation of the Black Power phase of a larger Black human rights struggle. Students will interrogate primary source documents produced by Black Panther Party activists housed in The Tang Teaching Museum. Working closely with these documents, students will present their critical analysis of these works publicly in relation to contemporary examples of human rights activism.

This bridge experience course will offer a view into written and visual activism and propaganda. How did the Black Panther Party communicate its message? How did the party's communication approaches contribute to the push for human and civil rights? The topic's cultural importance will provide me with a deeper understanding of the way oppressed groups can navigate making their voices heard through speech, writing, and art. This is a methodology course, as it provides a specific opportunity in which to analyze communication techniques.

- **AR 209 - Communication Design I - Methodology** (4 credits)

An introduction to visual design and communication theory. Emphasis is on developing a strong foundation in visual perception, design principles, and typography. Students will undertake studio problems aimed at developing visual awareness, analytical thinking, craftsmanship, and use of hands-on media and digital techniques.

This course will introduce me to design principles and theory. Its hands-on approach will allow me to learn and practice methods of visual communication while encouraging visual and analytical thinking. This is a theory course, as it offers principles and techniques to communicate visually based on the communication methods I will learn in other courses.

- **SO 227R - Social Research Methods - Methodology** (4 credits)

Examination of methods employed in the investigation of sociological problems. This course analyzes the research process as an integral whole including political and ethical issues in conducting research. Topics include conceptualization, measurement approaches, design of surveys, and methods of interviewing and observation. Students design studies using various methodological techniques.

This course will instruct me on methods with which to collect information that will benefit all other disciplines of my major. Directed towards sociological problems, this course will build on my previous familiarity with the sociological realm, while teaching techniques on how to collect meaningful data in the discipline. This is a methodology course as it serves to provide me with research skills to use in conjunction with writing, art, and business.

- **EN 280 - Introduction to Nonfiction Writing - Methodology** (4 credits)

An introduction to the writing of nonfiction. Writing and reading assignments are geared to the beginning writer of nonfiction prose. Sections may focus on a range of nonfiction genres or on one specific form, such as the personal essay, travel writing, literary journalism, cultural critique, science writing and the arts review.

This course's focus on nonfiction writing will serve to widen the array of writing styles I aim to be capable of as a communications major. Exposure to strong examples of nonfiction prose will prepare me for my own writing. The course description explains that this class "may focus on a range of nonfiction genres or on one specific form," which will force me to exit my comfort zone and practice my writing capabilities in realistic territories. The nonfiction genre focus places this course in the methodology section of my major, as it contributes to the required skill set.

- **EN 378 - Nonfiction Workshop - Theory (4 credits)**

Intensive practice in writing nonfiction. May be repeated once for credit. As with the Introduction to Nonfiction Writing, sections may focus either on a range of genres or on a specific nonfiction form.

This course is an advancement from EN 280: Intro to Nonfiction Writing. A second, more demanding nonfiction course will give me the chance to refine the general set of nonfiction skills I will have learned by offering me esteemed examples of nonfiction to base my work off of. The workshop style will challenge me to polish my writing techniques and voice. This is a methodology course due to its focus on the methods of the nonfiction writing style, a central aspect of the major.

- **MB 313 - Consumer Behavior - Theory (4 credits)**

An examination of the psychological, sociological, and anthropological theories related to consumer decision-making. With the goal of understanding consumer behavior, motivation, memory, cognition, attitude formation and change, persuasion, learning, and value systems of cultures and subcultures.

This course will tie together the Sociological and Business aspects of my major, while working in conjunction with my previous study in PS 101: Introduction to Psychological Studies. Familiarizing myself with Human behavior will inform my writing, providing me with the skills to cater towards potential future consumers. This is a theory course, as it will teach me how to analyze and influence consumer behavior and relate it to other disciplines in my major.

- **AR 307 - Communication Design II - Theory** (4 credits)

Further development of the concepts and skills introduced in Communication Design I.

Emphasis is placed on integrating the symbolic and communicative aspects of typography with visual elements. Through the application of design principles and typography, studio projects will stress strong visual concepts while exploring hands-on media and digital techniques.

This theory course will deepen my understanding of visual communication methods. I will build on and refine the skills I will have acquired in AR 209 - Communication Design I.

- **SD 374 - Self-Determined Major Final Project Prep** (1 Credit)

Preparation and successful execution of a well-designed self-determined major (SDM) final project proposal. As part of the final project proposal, the student will complete an annotated bibliography that reflects the scholarly or artistic conversation in the relevant areas of study. The final project, which is the culminating capstone experience, must be original work that reflects and integrates the various components of the student's self-determined major. The student must submit the final project proposal to the SDM Committee for approval. In short, this course is designed to guide the student in writing the final project proposal, including the annotated bibliography. This course fulfills the senior coda requirement for self-determined majors.

I will use this course to write the proposal for my final Capstone Project.

- **ID 371 - Interdisciplinary Independent Study** (3 or 4 Credits)

Independent work for juniors and seniors whose academic interests require an interdisciplinary approach beyond the academic structures available through established departmental courses.

The student must have background appropriate to the proposed study, must have completed at least one other 12 interdisciplinary courses at Skidmore, must carefully define a plan of study, and must enlist the guidance of one or more faculty as appropriate. Proposals for ID 371 are reviewed by the chair(s) of the sponsoring faculty member's home department or interdisciplinary program; or in the case of students with an approved self-determined major, by the director of the Self-Determined Majors Program.

In this course, I will craft my self-determined major Capstone Project.

Possible Elective Courses

- *AR 133 - Drawing I
- *EN 213 - Poetry
- **AR 214 - Fiber Arts
- MB 107 - Business Organization Management
- EN 241 - Afrofuturism: Literature and Culture

Potential Courses at Institutions Other than Skidmore (Abroad)

- **IES Italy Today: IB/CM 340 - Digital Marketing, E-Commerce and Communication**

This course will provide an overview of e-commerce and digital marketing tendencies from a communications perspective. Analyzing current Internet, mobile, and multi-media campaigns, we will evaluate evolving marketing techniques and promotional technologies and find ways to integrate them into an effective communications strategy. Emerging media channels and cases will be analyzed to predict future trends. Class projects will emphasize current trends and propose an outlook into the new marketing landscape.

- **IES Italy Today: CM/AR 260 - Strategies for Digital Engagement**

Milan, the Italian capital of contemporary creativity, will be explored as a privileged observatoire for cutting-edge multimedia and interactive communication practices for art and as a unique opportunity for students to be part of this vivid environment. Students will be able to develop a wide knowledge of multimedia tools and to analyze how classic media (such as printed ones) and new media (such as the Internet, social networks, apps for smartphones, augmented reality, etc.) play different roles in communicating art and in building a new relationship between art and viewer.

Students will be challenged to reflect on how this heritage can interact with contemporary perspectives of growing dematerialization imposed by new media. Some of the most interesting and recent proposals in Italy (MACRO – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma and Gallerie

d'Italia in Milan and Vicenza, among others), will be considered as case studies, which will underline the Italian specificity of such contexts and projects. Field studies and guest speakers will provide a deeper understanding and a wider professional perspective of current developments in the field. Multimedia and interactive practices will be analyzed not only in relation to art and design, but also in their connections to other fields such as fashion, music, theater, and cinema. In the second half of the course, students will develop their own individual projects of possible interactive and multimedia experiences for art, and the course will culminate in a public presentation of their works, which will take place in IES at the end of the semester.

- **IES Italy Today: IB 326 - Principles of Marketing Management** - (*Equivalent to MB 214*)

Note: This course's position in my Self-Determined Major is tentative. In the case that I am not able to take IB 326, or study with IES in Italy at all, the IB 326 course will be replaced with MB 214 (the equivalent Skidmore course), which I will take upon my return in Fall 2024.

The marketing function is an essential part of almost every large business enterprise. To be effective, senior business managers and leaders must understand how marketing activities are connected to overall organizational performance, and any professional who works within the marketing function must master that discipline's key concepts, analytical tools, and processes. This course provides students with an introduction to the central elements of marketing management. In particular, we will consider:

1. The basic concepts of marketing
2. The role of the marketing function within the overall business enterprise
3. The various activities necessary for effective marketing planning, including an analysis of cross-cultural and environmental factors that impact international operations
4. Key issues of strategy, implementation, and marketing management relevant to a firm's long-term success

The primary objective of the course is to provide students who are interested in business with the introductory knowledge and skills that they will need to move into professional roles, whether in the marketing function or another discipline. At the same time, the course aims to improve the

overall critical thinking and communication skills that students will need in order to succeed in any organization or field.

Final Project

I am prepared to channel the knowledge and skills I will gain with my Self-Determined Major towards a multimedia exhibition surrounding the artistic and social aspects of my interest in fashion and beauty. The display will combine the array of disciplines I will have studied, providing a showcase of my skills in writing and visual communication and design. My plan to study abroad in Milan - a fashion capital - and my long-lived interest in makeup will provide insight for the final project. The Fashion and Beauty industries are admirable, but also are tainted by societal constructs - racism, fatphobia, etc. My final project will both appreciate and critique today's Fashion and Beauty worlds through writing about the artistic, sociological, and business aspects of the industries - how it functions, how it can be appreciated, and what needs to be changed to properly reflect the world we live in. I will conduct interviews and research to produce and influence portions of the exhibit, and my Digital Art skills will be implemented into the showcase through layout and visual displays.