

Student Name

Media Communications

Self- Determined Major Proposal

Cumulative GPA:

Faculty Advisors: Andrew Lindner & Paul Benzon

Rationale

As our world becomes more technologically advanced, the media landscape is rapidly adapting to fit new ideas about how we are meant to engage. Media, such as TV and film, have long been a part of our day-to-day lives, but with the wide adoption of new technology including handheld devices, streaming, social media, etc., media is with us all day long. Now we are never *not* engaged, whether it's with social media, our phones, a tablet, our televisions, watching movies, reading the news, etc. This rise of a media-focused age calls for an ability to work within this context and find ways to make various media meaningful and worth our time. Media Communications is the culmination of this need, as it balances a knowledge of media itself, an understanding of how our current society functions, and a grasp of the business concepts that make the industry run. Professionals in this field have a proficiency in all of these subjects and more, which may allow them to take on roles in a variety of different forms of media simultaneously. For instance, someone in media communications possesses the ability to storytell and entertain, understanding how to market a medium in an effective way. They also can run a production from behind the scenes, knowing the inner workings of a media business and how to manage and master the many moving parts that go into creating something engaging that people will see. To work in this field, a media communications major must be creative, adaptive, organized, and thoughtful so they may engage with media in purposeful ways and be able to take charge of tasks ahead of them. My approach to this field will give me a broad and useful education in the many ways I can engage with the media. Studying Media Communications will allow me opportunities to create, organize, view, and interpret media. I will acquire skills in writing, perceiving ideologies, media/storytelling ethics, business concepts, and societal views. With these skills, I will be able to think critically about the media that surround us every day, challenge assumptions and find new perspectives, and understand the ethics operating in media businesses.

By pursuing a major in Media Communications, I will be able to take an interdisciplinary approach to a broad but complex topic, with the goal of attaining the knowledge and skills to be an adaptive and distinctive force in this field. Through my studies in the Media and Film department, I will gain a background in the importance of many forms of media, how they are used, and what makes them significant in our society now. I will learn to write stories, create digital media, and tackle tough topics through a creative and critical lens including the male gaze, racial video art, and how different forms of media stand the test of time. This will make me a dynamic creator and thinker, able to make a difference in many fields.

Having a background in sociology will also be beneficial as it will diversify my way of thinking and allow me to see the world and society in our current time through the lens of those who are different from me. Media provides an opportunity to innovate and challenge norms in our society, breaking boundaries and opening doors for new conversations. Obtaining a framework for these important conversations is necessary to tell stories that contribute to meaningful works of media. After learning about the basic sociological concepts in the foundational class, I will continue on to focus sociology around media, tailoring my learning to center my major. In the fall of my senior year, Professor Andrew Lindner will be sponsoring a media sociology focused independent study for me. Together we will assess what I have learned thus far within media sociology and choose an appropriate topic that encompasses what I am most interested in and what I have yet to explore in the discipline. I will be able to use sociology to conduct research and create something worthwhile that is the sum of all the classes I've taken in the major until then.

The final department I will focus my studies in is Management and Business. Courses such as MB107 push my comfort level and place me into the corporate landscape at a fast pace, building up my skills in collaboration and professionalism in an applicable manner. Taking other courses including marketing and entertainment law will give me the business background I

need to have an understanding of what makes a media corporation run and how to promote media in an effective way.

Taken in conjunction, these courses will give me proficiency in every aforementioned skill I will need. These classes open opportunities to work at many different jobs within the field of Media Communications. These include, but are not limited to, production manager, screenwriter, journalist, promotion and advertising professional, production assistant, social media manager, digital communications strategist, public relation professional, media content coordinator, producer, and trend forecaster. My dynamic skill set will enable me to take on many roles and have development in many possible careers.

My Media Communications major is inspired by the program at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut. I applied to and was accepted to their Communications/Media Studies program, which closely models the ideals and courses that comprise this self-directed major I've created. Some classes they offer mirror ones I have proposed to take here. For example, they require a Storytelling course which is much like Skidmore's Screenwriting course. I will also be taking Law and Ethics for Storytelling in Media which is similar to their Communications Law and Policy course. I would replace their Communications/Media Research course with Social Research Methods as well as Statistics for the Social Sciences and I'd do an independent study that will cover a topic equivalent to their Media and Culture courses. These similarities give validity to the interdisciplinary mix I have created here at Skidmore and incorporate relevant and interesting courses as well as a liberal arts approach to my education.

Special Aspects (2.2A)

One could argue that this major could be accomplished by majoring in Sociology and double-minoring in Media/Film and Management and Business, but I don't find this to be true. Without this self-determined major, I would have already completed the Media/Film minor, which would hold me back from mixing media studies into the courses I would take in other disciplines.

Business and sociology should be approached in a media lens to be useful for this major, since specifics such as entertainment law and societal problems in media may not be addressed without the mixture of courses I have chosen. Media/Film is the basis of this major, and it is very important to me that I continue to learn and challenge myself within that department. Skidmore doesn't offer majors in Media/Film or in Communications, and to maximize the benefits of my Skidmore education, I feel it will be most rewarding to pursue my interests without being restricted by the course requirements and set course of study of any one department. This major will provide the well-rounded and approachable education in Media Communications that will lead to the knowledge, skills, and career I seek.

Course List:

The following courses will make up my Media Communications major:

Foundation:

- *MF 101: Introduction to Media Studies, 4 credits
- *MB 107: Business and Organization Management, 4 credits
- *SO 101: Sociological Perspectives, 3 credits

Methodology:

- *MF 151: Screenwriting, 4 credits
- MB 214: Foundations of Marketing, 4 credits
- *MF 351: The Transient Present, 4 credits
- SO 371: Independent Study in Sociology, 1-4 credits
- MB 351: Brand and Market Communications, 3 credits

Theory:

- SO 228: Statistics for the Social Sciences, 4 credits
- SO 227: Social Research Methods, 4 credits
- AAMF 323: Law and Ethics for Storytelling in Media, 4 credits

Total Credit Hours: 38-42

***Already completed**

Other Core Courses

- *EN 253: Graphic Narratives and Comic Books, 3 credits
- ^WLL 252: (Italian) Cinema: From Fiction to Film, 4 credits

^ = This course (or one equivalent) to be taken abroad location dependent

Disciplinary Breadth:

The disciplines incorporated into my major include Media and Film Studies, Management and Business, and Sociology.

Media and Film Studies: MF 101, MF 151, MF 351, AAMF 323

Management and Business: MB 107, MB 214, MB 351

Sociology: SO 101, SO 227, SO 228, SO 371

Advancement of Studies

The following are the sequences from 100 level to 300 level courses within the Media and Film Studies, Management and Business, and Sociology departments.

- Business: MB107 → MB214 → MB 351
- Media/Film: MF101 → MF151 → MF351
- Sociology: SO 101 → SO 227 → SO 228 → SO 371

Semester Outline

Academic Year	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
Junior Year (2024-2025)	Foundations of Marketing Statistics for the Social Sciences	<i>*Studying Abroad*</i> <i>Location TBD</i> *(Italian) Cinema Studies*
Senior Year (2025-2026)	SDM Final Project Prep Sociology Independent Study Social Research Methods Brand and Market Communications	Law and Ethics for Storytelling in Media Final Project Class

Course Descriptions

MF 101: Introduction to Media Studies

Credits: 4

An introduction to multiple forms of modern and contemporary mass media. The course examines film and at least two other forms of mass media (such as television, radio/audio, digital media, print mass media). Students will learn how to analyze media images, texts, and systems and understand how media both informs and is informed by social structures and forces.

This is a foundational course that introduces the history of media and the culture that surrounds it. To work in a field having to do with media, it is necessary to have a fundamental understanding of the many aspects of media including filmmaking, history, theory, and social contexts, all of which are central to Media Communications.

MF 151: Screenwriting**Credits: 4**

In the first half of the semester, students will learn the classic Hollywood three-act structure for creating a screenplay. They will learn how to craft a compelling logline, as well as create a skeleton treatment from which to build their story. They will develop a final film treatment, which can be shared with other participants in the often collaborative work of making movies. The craft of storytelling for the screen will be honed through examining landmark films. We will put what we learn into practice through writing our own screenplay scenes and class discussion. Students will complete the class with a treatment for a classic Hollywood screenplay, which they can use to move forward within other classes or outside of school.

Tapping into the creative side of media is an important skill to have and opens an opportunity for exploration within the vast field of Media Communications. By being able to write effectively for a show or movie, one can venture into the film industry and utilize those skills to write something meaningful and impactful.

MF 351: The Transient Present**Credits: 4**

This seminar utilizes media theory and practice to examine how notions of New and Now exist through time. How is it possible to interpret old (or even recent) media from our inescapable but unstable existence in the present? How do radical and transgressive forms of media from the past exist differently today? What media feels more radical/relevant now than it did originally? How are formerly overlooked perspectives being revived and celebrated now? How do paranoia/censorship factor into our understanding of the media? Can obsolete media deemed irrelevant or even offensive remain valuable in interpreting our world? Which media should be retired and/or forgotten? How does our cultural need for notions of progress operate even as we exist with a reality of entropy, and how can we speculate on making meaning for the future? As part of this course, we will look closely at the legacy (and historical erasure) of BIPOC, queer, trans and women voices in film and video. We will also view, research and discuss films and videos that engage with the Male Gaze, old and contemporary anthropological film, movies from the past about the future (sci-fi), Hollywood Code, propaganda, radical video art, and more. Students will make two video projects relating to chosen positions in time, and we will collectively produce a video-based exhibition on campus.

This course contains an emphasis on theoretical topics while also exploring sociological perspectives within gender, race, class, sexuality time, culture, politics, and more, all while looking through the lens of media. This will adequately prepare me to do work that is objective, critical, and thoughtful by working through social issues and discussing different perspectives. It also includes a live exhibition and opportunities for digital media work which offers the opportunity to create and share art in a way that will prepare me for media in the public space.

AAMF 323: Law and Ethics for Storytelling in Media**Credit: 4**

The study of how filmmakers and documentarians, authors and artists, musicians, makers, marketers and storytellers protect their ideas, expressive works, and creative endeavors from being copied or stolen by others, especially in the digital age. Students will consider the legal and ethical issues these individuals confront as they produce their creative projects, particularly creations which incorporate other media content. Employing interdisciplinary methods and approaches, students will explore the legal, ethical, and practical issues involved in varying media production forms (video/film, photography, music/audio, documentary, web and exhibit-based narratives, etc.) for fiction and non-fiction storytelling. Students will develop approaches which synthesize underlying policies and best practices in order to challenge assumptions at the intersection of storytelling, business, art, law and creative expression.

This course is essential for anyone working in an art/media/content driven field. Understanding what is at stake when creating a work and what can be done to protect that work, whether fiction or nonfiction, is necessary to be safe and smart working in the media business.

MB 107: Business Organization and Management**Credit: 4**

A broadly based introduction to the field of business that can serve either as the first course in the departmental sequence or as an only course for a student desiring an overview of business and organization management. Topics include strategy, accounting and finance, industry and environmental analysis, company/internal analysis, marketing, ethics, social responsibility, sustainability, and work team dynamics. Students present individual written analyses and engage in group oral presentations. This course covers the following dimensions for studying management and business in context: I, II, III, IV, V, VI.

An applied understanding of the fundamental concepts that create a business plan is an incredibly useful skill to have in the media industry, in which a solid foundation is necessary for success in a competitive field. This course also effectively prepares students for collaboration, discussion, teamwork, and presentation skills, all of which will be useful tools for a future in communications.

MB 214: Foundations of Marketing**Credits: 4**

A comprehensive assessment of marketing's dynamic role in contemporary global society. The course emphasizes the development of marketing strategies which reflect domestic and cross-national competitive structures and diverse marketplace realities. Topics include consumer analyses, target market identification, positioning, e-commerce, ethics, sustainability, and coordination of marketing mix-elements. This course covers the following dimensions for studying management and business in context: I, III, V.

Marketing is a skill that, when utilized correctly, can be incredibly beneficial for a media brand, company, or work. Understanding marketing will open up doors on the business side of the media and communications industry and be a useful skill in working on all kinds of projects in the future.

MB 351: Brand and Market Communications

Credits: 3

Branding is about a product/service's engagement with the world. In a nutshell, a brand is a promise with a personality. The best brands are built from emotional insight derived from the target audience. Branding is deeply creative; it is psychological as well as practical. The strongest, most well-defined brands result in more engaging advertising and promotion. Branding is both strategic and creative, and this course will explore the fundamental nature of branding as well as best practices and methodologies. We will examine existing brands in various categories including Fashion, Automotive, Entertainment, Hospitality, and Healthcare. Through exercises and projects, the class will come to understand that branding is the cornerstone of effective marketing communications.

This class will allow me to build upon the concepts I've learned in Marketing and will aid me in working on my final project in which I'll be using the practices, methodologies, and marketing communications learned in this class to analyze the branding of a cultural star.

SO 101: Sociological Perspectives

Credits: 3

The basic concepts and principles of major sociological perspectives. Attention is given to how these perspectives have been developed and used by social scientists to explain social phenomena. Recommended as an introduction to the discipline.

This is a foundational course that prepares me to have a societal view on topics such as race, class, gender, inequalities, social norms and values, family, and more, as well as learn about research methods. I can apply these topics to my studies in the future, using them to inquire about societal issues and do work to learn about parts of our society in depth.

SO 227: Social Research Methods

Credits: 4

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.

By studying social research methods, I will be equipped to carry out my own research in my independent study and have the knowledge to evaluate the validity of research as well as when to use different methods.

SO 228: Statistics for the Social Sciences

Credits: 4

Examination of quantitative analysis in the social research process. This course involves the study and application of statistics for solving problems in the social sciences. Students use computers as tools for social research as they analyze sociological data sets.

Statistics will, in conjunction with Social Research Methods, prepare me to carry out research and use technological resources to understand data sets.

SO 371: Independent Study in Sociology

Credits: 1-4

Individual reading and/or research in sociology under the guidance of a member of the department. Open with the consent of the department to qualified students. Individual conferences to be arranged.

Professor Andrew Lindner will be sponsoring an independent study in sociology with a concentration in media during my senior year. We will choose a topic the semester prior to beginning in order to tailor it to my needs at the time. Carrying out research and practicing formal writing will prepare me for applied sociology and media studies.

EN 253: Graphic Narratives and Comic Books

Credits: 3

An exploration of major graphic narratives from the past thirty years, focusing on how authors intertwine text and image in ways that create new approaches to narrative, new perspectives on social and cultural issues, and new ways of reading. Topics for consideration may include how authors explore questions of power and politics, memory and trauma, identity and embodiment, and time and space through this hybrid form.

This course will allow me to explore a medium I may otherwise not be exposed to, therefore expanding my knowledge of how mediums can be used to create social and emotional reactions and be impactful. This class allows me the opportunity to strengthen my writing and apply sociological concepts to the various complex topics covered in the course.

WLL 252: Italian Cinema: From Fiction to Film**Credits: 4**

An examination of the literary and sociopolitical trends of Italian culture as portrayed by the media of literature and film. The course will focus on the literary works of Boccaccio, Machiavelli, Moravia, De Filippo, Bassani, and the cinematographic adaptations of those works by such directors as Pasolini, Lattuada, Visconti, and De Sica. The course also specifically examines the role in Italian cinema of such director-authors as Fellini and Wertmuller and the importance of Italian cinematic Neorealism in the films of Rossellini, De Sica, and Visconti.

This course (or one equivalent) will give me a worldly perspective on media and how different countries' use of media reflects their own standards and ideas. Taking this course while abroad will also familiarize me to the country's culture and make my experience abroad richer.

Please note: This course may be swapped out for an equivalent one in a different country, location dependent on where I end up studying abroad.

Final Project Proposal

For my final project I plan to use all of the knowledge I've gained through media, business, and sociology to analyze a cultural phenomenon: Taylor Swift. As she has recently become the first billionaire off of music and performing alone, her journey, tactics, and cultural impact is singular in this age. She has mastered the use of marketing, branding, social media, and economic gain to create an overwhelming influence on society. Her multigenerational impact is fascinating and can be boiled down to calculated moves as an intelligent businesswoman. I will analyze multiple aspects of her career spanning topics such as her branding tactics, responses to social/media-focused issues, musical impact, and more in a multimedia presentation that includes pictures, videos, writing, statistics and articles to explain what has made her the most influential media figure of this millenia. This is a meaningful way to connect ideas having to do with business, media, and sociology in a culturally relevant way that reflects our time in this digital age.