

Self -Determined Major Proposal
Student's Full Name
Class Year
Cumulative GPA
Phone Number
Faculty Advisors
Multimedia Communications
Date of Submission

Rationale:

With the advancement of technology within the world of news, journalists today have a wider variety of media to choose from to report their stories than they ever have had before. No longer is journalism limited to the newspaper or the magazine. Now the field is represented in podcasts, television, websites, radio, social media, and more. Due to the variety of possibilities within the field, a newer sub-category has sprung out called Multimedia Journalism. The field of Multimedia Journalism balances traditional journalism with digital media, meaning professionals both report stories through writing, video and/or audio, and design how the information is presented on the internet with graphics, imagery, and editing. The multimedia journalist is proficient in multiple platforms of nonfiction storytelling. Like print journalists, they are skilled writers, apt in accuracy, credible sourcing, and objectivity. However, they are also trained in telling stories through a combination of media, such as text with images, sound, video, and graphics. With such a range of media to choose from, multimedia journalists must be inherently creative and can add more personal and subjective touches to entertain and inform their digital and/or analog audiences. I intend to take a more creative approach to the field of journalism by using different mediums to convey stories, so it will be important to study contemporary artists and film to learn about how others use art to communicate information. The Multimedia Journalism major will allow me to acquire skills in nonfiction writing, interviewing, digital design, photography, media ethics, and documentary production. Additionally, it will teach me to think critically about subjects, practice different methods of research and representation, approach stories from multiple perspectives, document with precision and creativity, and understand how to think ethically about the boundaries of the storyteller's position in relation to their subjects.

My specialization within multimedia journalism will be the arts. I am also interested in making journalistic stories about artists. Thus, it will be integral to learn how to interview them, write about them, and professionally comment on their work.

I have designed the Multimedia Journalism major around my personal goals to pursue a more artistic avenue of journalism than news coverage. My aims after college are not to work for a news program, but for a magazine, website, or company that centers on arts and culture. I hope to have the opportunities to work on documentary sets, write literary nonfiction stories, travel and interview people for projects, craft visual media, and act as the creative director for the work I produce. Because of these goals, I propose my senior capstone project to either be a self-made magazine or a nonfiction multimedia website.

By pursuing a Multimedia Journalism major at Skidmore, I will be able to integrate the school's motto, "creative thought matters," into my degree with an interdisciplinary academic approach. This major will not be concentrating on news coverage, but on how to effectively tell a nonfiction story dynamically. The John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative program will give me experience in storytelling beyond the written word, helping me answer questions such as: "How can I capture my audience's interest?" "How can I edit media to create a coherent storyline?" "How do I integrate visual and audio elements into my story?" and "How can I go out into the world to interview and observe subjects in a respectful and meaningful way?"

My storytelling abilities will be further developed through the English department. I will take nonfiction writing workshops and classes, concentrating on learning the skills to write literary journalism. Literary journalism is a form of creative nonfiction that requires intensive research and often interviews, leading to a text that follows a narrative arc. With the flexibility in the subject matter of these classes, I will be able to explore what stories matter to me as a writer

and future journalist. To aptly present my written work in the digital age, I will take art courses that teach communication design. The majority of the multimedia journalist's work is presented online, therefore competence in web design and creative formatting are integral skills to acquire. Communication design courses will teach me how to create imagery that captures a viewer's attention, give me proficiency in aesthetic principles, and lend me knowledge of software such as Photoshop, After Effects, and InDesign so that I can create successful visual elements for storytelling. To fully grasp the greater picture of the field of journalism, I will take theoretical courses from the Media and Film Studies program so that I can leave school knowledgeable on the ethics of media and consumerism. I will additionally take courses from the Art History department to further conceptualize contemporary art across different mediums by studying the influential trailblazers of today. Furthermore, Art History courses focus on teaching students how to write about art, which will be integral to my journalistic pursuits.

These courses taken in conjunction with each other will help me to build up my skills in writing, graphic design, the contemporary art world, and documentary practices not as separate entities, but as complementary interdisciplinary proficiencies that can combine to create dynamic final projects. Introduction to Nonfiction Writing will teach me how to write an article that can accompany photos I've taken in Explorations of Documentary Photography, and my Digital Foundations courses will give me the skills to design the formatting of the text and images together in a creative and compelling way. The Artist Interview will instruct me on how to construct an impactful interview with creatives, my Law and Ethics for Media class will ensure I am responsible when telling other people's stories, and my Communication Design course will allow me to feature the artist's work in an article in a way that is captivating. These juxtaposed disciplines will contribute to the principles of a liberal arts education. By wearing multiple hats, I

will be independent with the creation of my stories, able to work freelance or be a desirable employee able to be held responsible for differing tasks.

My Multimedia Journalism major is influenced and inspired by those at other institutions. Northern Michigan University's Multimedia Journalism major offers courses in graphic design, writing, and media law. However, I am replacing their required credited internship in broadcasting for courses in the John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative such as The Artist Interview. Lynn University includes documentary studies in their Multimedia Journalism major, as well as Photojournalism, which I will be taking as Documentary Photography. Syracuse University has a similar major titled Magazine, News and Digital Journalism which has a course titled Multimedia Storytelling, similar to Skidmore's Creative Nonfiction, and also emphasizes web design and media ethics. By modeling my self-determined major from pieces of multiple institutions' majors, I will have interdisciplinary skills that best match both my needs and Skidmore's liberal arts approach.

Special Aspects

(2.2a) One could argue that I major in English and minor in Media and Film studies to achieve the skills of a multimedia journalist, but that would limit the knowledge I am capable of learning while a student at Skidmore. Majoring in English would lead to an emphasis on literature, while the ability to prioritize my studies on nonfiction writing courses would develop my skills in journalistic writing. The Media and Film Studies minor includes courses from a variety of departments, including communication design and the John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative. The majority of the courses I have selected for the Multimedia Journalism major are a part of the Media and Film Studies minor, therefore if I took on a Media and Film Studies

minor, an 18-credit requirement wouldn't sufficiently cover all the courses essential for me to become a skilled multimedia journalist. Rather than pursue a Media and Film studies major, which would need to be a Self-Determined major, I have titled my major Multimedia Journalism to accurately represent the courses I would choose within the department to benefit my individual goals for my liberal arts degree, also allowing me to include nonfiction writing courses from the English department.

(2.2b) I will need to use a camera and editing software for some of my classes in the John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative and in Communication Design, which are available for student access for those enrolled in the classes. When creating my final project I will likely require this software and will use the Scribner Library computers and the John B. Moore Documentary Studies Collaborative Labs, and ask for permission to borrow cameras and microphones if needed.

Course List

The following courses will make up my Multimedia Journalism major:

Foundation:

- MF 101: Introduction to Media Studies, 4 credits
- AR 136: Digital Foundations, 4 credits
- EN 228W: Special Studies: Form (Prose Bootcamp), 4 credits

Methodology:

- AR 209: Communication Design I, 4 credits
- AHDS 324: The Artist Interview, 3 credits
- DS 251C: Explorations in Documentary Photography, 3 credits

- DS 251D: Creative Nonfiction, 4 credits
- DS 351: Advanced Topics in Documentary Studies, 4 credits
- EN378: Nonfiction Workshop, 4 credits

Theory:

- AAMF 323: Law and Ethics for Media, 4 credits
- Modern Frames: European Art and Cinema, 3 credits
- AH 364: Contemporary Art, 3 credits

Capstone:

- SD 374: Self-Determined Major Final Project Prep, 1 credit
- ID 371: Final Project, 3-4 credits

Total Credit Hours: 44-47

Disciplinary Breadth

The disciplines incorporated into my major include English, Media and Film Studies, Documentary Studies, Art, and Art History.

English: EN 228W, EN 378

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

Documentary Studies: DS 251C, DS 251D, AHDS 324

Art: AR 136, AR 209

Art History: AH 364, #Modern Frames: European Art and Cinema

To be fulfilled by a course taken at DIS Copenhagen while studying abroad

Advancement of Studies

The following are the sequences that move from 100 to 300 levels within the English Department, Media and Film Studies Department, Documentary Studies Department, Art, and Art History Department.

EN 228W → EN 378

MF 101 → AAMF 323/MF 351D

DS 251C/DS 251D → AHDS 324

AR 136 → AR 209

AH 151D → AH 364 → Modern Frames: European Art and Cinema

Due to the English 100-level course being fulfilled through the school's general education requirements the English sequence has no 100-level course listed. Because Documentary Studies has no 100-level course and is covered by Media and Film Studies, I made the two subcategories with 200 to 300-level sequences.

Elective Courses:

The following courses are electives that I will take that are related to my major, but not included in the final course list:

- SO 101: Sociological Perspectives, 3 credits
- AH 151D: Visual Cultures of Americas, 4 credits

Semester Outline

Academic Year	Fall	Spring
First Year (2021-2022)		*Introduction to Media Studies *Sociological Perspectives
Second Year (2022-2023)	Explorations in Documentary Photography Creative Nonfiction The Artist Interview	Digital Foundations Prose Bootcamp Adv. Documentary Arts Practices Visual Cultures Across the Americas
Third Year (2023-2024)	Communication Design I Contemporary Art	#Modern Frames: European Art and Cinema

Fourth Year (2024-2025)	Nonfiction Workshop Capstone Prep	Law and Ethics for Media Capstone Final
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*Fulfilled by courses taken at Richmond the American International University in London which I transferred from

To be fulfilled by a course taken at DIS Copenhagen while studying abroad

Course Descriptions and Rationales

1. EN 228W: Special Studies: Form (Prose Boot Camp)
Credits: 4

Prose Boot Camp - "Can you really teach anyone how to write?" a New York Times reporter once asked Kurt Vonnegut. Writers—especially writers who teach—are accustomed to that question, and generally have a ready reply. Vonnegut’s answer was unusual: “Listen, there were creative writing teachers long before there were creative writing courses, and they were called and continue to be called editors.” He neglected to mention a crucial difference between teachers and editors: the latter are responsible for preparing writing for publication. Teachers can let things go—in fact, they may have been trained to work with students on one or two weaknesses at a time. If you are sincerely interested in improving your writing at the level of the sentence, Prose Boot Camp offers straight talk about problems and how to fix them. You will undertake the work and be held to the standards of a professional ghostwriter or copywriter. The instructor will furnish you with material; with her guidance, you will shape it into publishable or, as the case may be, presentable prose.

This course is listed as foundational due to its emphasis on writing structure. Designed to teach students the ability to write coherent and reputable sentences and paragraphs, the course gives a basis for nonfiction writing on an introductory level. It will serve as a technical writing introduction so that future writing pieces can garner more creative flow.

2. EN378: Nonfiction Workshop
Credits: 4

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 will further develop the skills learned in EN 280, enhancing writing ability in terms of nonfiction. Due to the flexibility in writing subject and the workshop set-up, the course will help to cultivate personal voice, and allow for emphasis on literary journalism in its coursework. Because the class is writing intensive and is based on teaching skill, it is included under methodology.

3. DS 251C: Explorations in Documentary Photography
Credits: 3

This course will introduce students to the practice of documentary photography. The history, theory and politics of non-fiction storytelling will be examined and discussed through readings, lectures, the work of past and present photographers and class field trips. Students will experiment with a variety of different documentary styles and begin to develop their own personal documentary practice. By the end of the semester, students will produce a coherent documentary body of work, considering both the use of imagery and text. In addition, students will also learn to question how the contemporary documentary photograph can often create alternative ways of seeing, recording and understanding events that shape the world in which we live.

This course is listed under methodology due to its practical elements. This course will teach the physical skills in photography with a narrative lens. Photographic journalism is a required course in many Multimedia Journalism majors, with it covering a specific non-written form of journalism. DS 251C covers the same skills as such a course. It will help to build a portfolio of work and a development of personal voice.

4. DS 251D: Creative Nonfiction
Credits: 4

This multi-media documentary course will introduce students to the variety of ways in which to creatively tell a non-fiction story through mediums that may include photo, video, sound, web, design, performance, etc. This course will help students to understand what stories they are interested in telling, the ethical considerations that apply to creative non-fiction, and how different medium choices can support their creative decisions and expressions.

This course is included in methodology because it teaches practical skills. It explores a variety of mediums that can be used to cover nonfiction storytelling. This will give me an opportunity to discover which mediums I enjoy using to convey journalistic practices, as well as further develop my voice and learn what kind of journalist I strive to be.

5. AHDS 324: The Artist Interview
Credits: 3

An exploration of the artist interview as a form of original art historical research. Students will learn how oral histories can function in a museum collection archive. Working in teams, students will closely examine and research artworks in the Tang Museum collection, prepare questions for the artists, and create videotaped interviews. Students will learn different methodological approaches to the interview and consider such questions as: how does editing play a role in making meaning; who defines the meaning of an artwork; and is the artist always the best source about his or her own work?

This class is listed under methodology due to the questions posed in its coursework: how does one conduct research on art? How can one design a valuable interview? The class will both teach me how to conduct research and how to develop an interview, as well as what the relationship between those two processes is. Those skills are essential for multimedia journalism.

6. MF 101: Introduction to Media and Film 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 course is listed under foundation due to it being an introductory course on the culture of mass media. MF 101 covers the study of how media affects society in various mediums, which is fundamental for Multimedia Journalism. Journalism is a field that covers society and is consumed by society, therefore comprehending how media affects the social sphere is inherent in its study.

7. AAMF 323: Law and Ethics for Media

Credits: 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 intersection of storytelling, business, art, law and creative expression.

This course teaches the legal and ethical practices that those who create artistic media must be aware of with the rights and protections of their content. It will instruct me on both the principles that the artists I will work with must follow and also on the logistics I must be aware of when creating multimedia nonfiction artwork, thus it is included under theory.

8. MF 351D: Advanced Documentary Arts Practices
Credits: 4

This advanced seminar is a space to focus on and develop a final individual artwork using documentary art practice as our starting point. How do we make art from the material of lived experience? What unique ethical questions are born from this engagement? How have other artists responded in their practices? We will draw inspiration from close study of artists and their practices. This ‘process’ class is an exploration of form, and the ways that we can use different mediums in our storytelling practice. Students will workshop their project ideas/material — imagining and reimagining them in different forms/genres/mediums/intentions. Final artworks can be short films (narrative or documentary), multimedia works, installations, or forms that defy easy categorization.

This course will deepen the dexterities learned in DS 251C and DS251D. The advancement of multi-media nonfiction storytelling skills and working on a long-form project will strengthen the abilities needed for the major.

9. AR 136: Digital Foundations
Credits: 4

A survey of aesthetic and technological best practices in visual communication today. Students will study the basic functions and integral properties of Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, as well as After Effects or other video software while learning the principles of design. Vector and raster imaging techniques, scanning, printing, and font and file management are introduced through a series of demonstrations/projects that build upon each other. Through projects and critiques, students will work to make a visual voice that is distinctive and original. No digital experience necessary.

This class is included under foundation as it is an introductory course for communication design. It will teach computer design software such as Photoshop, After Effects, and InDesign. Proficiency in these software is essential for the multimedia journalist, as developing final works in this technologically driven age requires experience in computer-based art design.

10. AR 209: Communication Design I
Credits: 4

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.

Included under methodology due to the hands-on topic, this course expands upon what is learned in AR 136 to teach the principles of communication via art.

Learning the craft of typography and visual awareness will aid this major both in presenting video and/or photography and also in web layout, article design, and aesthetically accurate representations of subject matter.

11. AH 364: Contemporary Art
Credits: 3

Recent developments in American and European art. The class situates a range of contemporary art movements and practices, including pop, earthworks, performance, video, and the more traditional forms of painting, sculpture, and photography, in their cultural and art historical contexts. Students will explore such issues as the status of art institutions, the connections between high art and popular culture, theoretical readings of art works, and artists' self-conscious expression of an identity politics.

This course discusses the variety of practices of contemporary artists. It will educate me on the different forms modern creatives are using, and how to understand them. It is included under theory because it studies the current state of the modern art world.

12. *Modern Frames: European Art and Cinema
Credits: 3

From the great auteurs in European filmmaking to the provocateurs of the contemporary art scene, this course examines artistic practices in European cinema and visual arts. What role do art house film and art movements play in 20th and 21st century Europe? How are aesthetics influenced by the changing political landscape? How are intellectuals and artists working during and after Socialism? When do visual arts go beyond consumerism? We will do a case study of subversive art in Vienna and post-communist Prague and meet with Danish, Austrian, and Czech film people to discuss film in the late-capitalist era.

This course will provide me with a basis for contextualizing the visual arts and film by teaching me how to interpret and reflect upon it. It will educate me on the history of the creative field, and since it will be taken abroad it will deepen my understanding of the topic by providing me with the subject matter in person.

13. SD 374 Self-Determined Major Final Prep

Credits: 1

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. Pre-requisite: Self-determined majors who have completed at least 90 credit-hours of college course work.

This course will guide me in writing the proposal for my Self-Determined Major final project.

14. ID 371 Independent Study

Credits: 3 or 4

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 course 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 complete the final project which I will have proposed in SD 374, using the interdisciplinary skills I'll have learned in my major of Multimedia Journalism.

Courses Taken Outside of Skidmore

Two courses were fulfilled during my freshman year at Richmond the American International University in London, MF 101 and SO101, which are identified by the asterisk (*) beside their titles. One course will be fulfilled while studying abroad at DIS Copenhagen, Modern Frames: European Art and Cinema, which is identified by the hashtag symbol (#).

Final Project

For my final project, I have two ideas. The first concept is that I create my own issue of a magazine of my design. Within it, I would include articles, interviews, and photography. I would need to format the magazine in an artistic and cohesive way and create a final product that reads as an interrelated body of work. My second idea would be to create an interactive website. Similar to a blog, it would include written articles, but it would also have visual, video, and audio elements incorporated to enhance the reader's experience. It would be held to the same principles as the magazine, except that it would give me the opportunity to explore video and audio media as well. Both possible projects would include stories about and depictions of artists and their work and would also be designed

in an artful way to feature my own creativity. Alternatively, I could do both projects in adjacence with each other. This may limit the depth into which I could go in one, but it would allow me to be proficient in both print and digital communication.