



## **M.A. in Communication – Digital Media (major)**

The Digital Media major is offered by the Department of Communication Studies which also houses the Center for Digital Media.

This unique program was conceived as our faculty surveyed the academic landscape for programs focused on, or incorporating, digital media. Our search revealed over 50 such graduate programs within the United States; we explored the curricular offerings of 23. Two different approaches were noted: the one was highly specific to the computer science world – web mastering, etc., while the vast majority of the programs are generalist in nature; that is, they incorporate some digital aspect of currently offered programs in television, film making, etc.

We determined to develop a curriculum that would provide a distinctive alternative to existing programs. To do so, we began with possible outcomes and worked our way back to creating specific curricular offerings to meet those outcomes. We surveyed literally hundreds of job descriptions listed online for positions incorporating the words, ‘digital media’. The majority of those job offerings were for managers, directors, vice-presidents, etc.; in essence, leaders. The companies seeking these employees are from a broad base of industries, many not typically recognized as media organizations, but each obviously seeking to move their communication into the digital milieu.

These findings are perfectly in line with our University’s stated goal to prepare *Christian Leaders to Change the World!*

Our course of study reflects our findings and desire for distinction among other universities offering a digital curriculum by incorporating the following strategies:

- A focused cohort model consisting of five consecutive semesters of study.
- A 39 credit hour degree program.
- A strong convergence of theory and practice.
- A team-teaching model in which each course will have a Lead Professor who assembles two or three additional faculty or adjuncts in an effort to provide a comprehensive and targeted learning experience.
- A clearly defined series of pre-required skills within the digital media milieu; this should mitigate the potential experience/skill level disparity often found amongst incoming students.
- A unique culminating experience in which students are embedded in existing corporations for an entire semester of professional experience. This directed project is intended to supersede any traditional internships in which oftentimes menial labor/tasks are assigned.

## LEARNING GOALS

1. To develop critical and analytical skills in our students to understand and evaluate the cultural, social, economic and creative effects of digital communication.
2. To prepare students for the effective creation, production and dissemination of digital content.
3. To provide our students with clear understanding of Christian worldview issues vis-à-vis the digital media environments and thus prepare students for leadership positions within the corporate or entrepreneurial digital environments.

## COURSES TO BE OFFERED

The Digital Media major is offered both on-campus (Virginia Beach) and online via distance education. The program is a highly structured cohort model of study consisting of 39 credit hours. Two (2) electives are allowed within the five-consecutive-semester configuration.

*Required Courses (33 credit hours + 6 credit hours of electives = 39)*

### Semester One (Fall)

COM 636 Critical & Cultural Approaches to Digital Communication.....	5
COM 600 Communication & Worldview.....	3

### Semester Two (Spring)

COM 637 Marketing & Effects of Digital Media.....	5
COM 601 Evaluation Methods.....	3

### Semester Three (Summer)

COM 638 Creative Approaches to Digital Media.....	5
Elective (of student's choice).....	3

### Semester Four (Fall)

COM 639 Management Issues in the Digital Age.....	3
COM 640 Law, Policy, & Ethics in Interactive Communication.....	2
Elective (of student's choice).....	3

### Semester Five (Spring)

COM 641 Directed Project in Digital Media.....	5
COM 642 The Christian in the Digital Age.....	2

## SUMMARY

Each incoming cohort begins study during the Fall semester. Anticipated graduation for each group of Master of Arts students would be in the Spring semester – 20 months later.

Below, please see a description of the various courses in the program.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

### **M.A. in Communication – Digital Media (major)**

#### **Semester One (Fall)**

##### **COM 636 Critical & Cultural Approaches to Digital Communication (5)**

This course is designed to provide a rhetorical, historical, and critical theoretical framework for thinking about the convergence of digital media technologies and cultural norms and practices. Students will explore the confluence of digital media and society; how these confluences exert symbolic/persuasive force to shape how individuals and communities think; how they see reality, themselves, and their relationships with other people; what they value; and what they hope for, and how they view the world. Students will apply critical skills to learn how to analyze all forms of digital communication, including films, television programs, scripts, news media, and advertisements.

##### **COM 600 Communication, Theory, Ethics & Worldview (3)**

As Christian artists and intellectuals we need to develop a biblical and ethical view of how we create and tell stories. All humans create stories and the stories we tell affect the moral and spiritual fabric of our lives. Several spiritual, ethical and aesthetic challenges facing both professionals and artists working in the field will be addressed. Understanding the role and function that stories have on our culture—both in the creation and consumption of texts and media from a critical Christian perspective--form the foundation of this class. This course satisfies the Regent University requirement for a cornerstone class.

#### **Semester Two (Spring)**

##### **COM 637 Marketing & Effects of Digital Media (5)**

The course is designed to explore the best of traditional and new and emerging principles of marketing that are applicable to the digital media environment and their effects on individuals, audiences, publics and cultures. Interactive marketing theories, database and search engine marketing, and innovative digital media product development, branding, distribution, promotion, public relations and social influence strategies will be studied, applied and evaluated for their effectiveness.

##### **COM 601 Evaluation Methods (3)**

This is a required course for all students pursuing the M.A. in Communication. The course is designed to provide knowledge of practical research methods and how to apply research to common uses in digital media, theater, television, film, journalism and communication studies disciplines. Students will learn about and conduct quantitative and qualitative (or textual critical) research in their respective majors. This course should be taken within the first two semesters of study in the graduate student's degree program.

### **Semester Three (Summer)**

#### **COM 638 Creative Approaches to Digital Media (5)**

This course combines artistic design and technical aspects of digital media production in theory and practice. Emphasis will be placed on the theory and production of interactive media and the deployment of digital product to the various distribution methods and channels. Students will use mid level and advanced applications of web design software, graphics design software and other digital content production software such as audio and video encoders.  
**(Plus one Elective of student's choice)**

### **Semester Four (Fall)**

#### **COM 639 Management Issues in the Digital Age (3)**

This course will examine key leadership theories and apply them to real-world situations and settings where digital technologies are being employed. It will address issues and explore solutions in matters of budgeting, corporate economics, managing digital workflow and digital assets, managing communication, and developing highly functional virtual teams and organizations.

#### **COM 640 Law, Policy, & Ethics in Interactive Communication (2)**

This course teaches analysis of the legal and ethical principles related to creating all forms of content for mass media and interactive communication channels. This includes such topics as understanding intellectual property issues, freedom of the press, production contracts, music licensing, the role of producer, privacy, unions and guilds, and libel within the various publishing and distribution options within the digital milieu. The course will also investigate emerging legal and ethical issues in the changing relationship between producer and consumer.

**(Plus one Elective of student's choice)**

### **Semester Five (Spring)**

#### **COM 641 Directed Project in Digital Media (5)**

This course provides a culminating project (student's final semester) within a professional digital media industry location. Intended to be a technologically immersive and practical experience, the student will be placed in a position with a professional organization that employs digital media. Throughout the term, students will meet weekly with the Lead Professor who will mentor and monitor progress, assign appropriate readings, etc. Assessment of the student's work will be provided by an industry supervisor in consultation with the Lead Professor.

#### **COM 642 The Christian in the Digital Age (2)**

The goal of this course is to provide a synthesis of the theoretical and practical learning experienced in the Digital Media Communication program with an emphasis on implementing the Christian worldview into an understanding of the rapidly changing industries utilizing digital media. Students will be mentored in developing a personal strategy for effectively presenting themselves in their professional endeavors.