APC Document 31: Changing Requirements for Major in Mass Communication

Changing Requirements for Declaring a Major

Changing Requirements for Minor in Mass Communication

Effective Date: Fall 2005

1. Delete: On pg. 165, under Mass Communication Major Requirements, I, II and III.

Add: On pg. 165, in place of deleted entry:

I. Required courses for the major – 37 to 39 hours, including: MCOM 104, 201, 390, 490, 492, 494; VMP 207; two courses selected from MCOM 301, 311, 313 or VMP 303, 305, 307; 8 hours selected from odd-numbered 4-credit hour MCOM or VMP courses at the 300-400 level (note that 300-400 level VMP courses have VMP 209 as prerequisite); 6 hours selected from even-numbered 3-credit hour MCOM courses at the 300-400 level.

II. Other departmental requirements—Mass Communication degree candidates demonstrate competence through successful completion of academic and professional projects and activities. Competence is expected in at least one of these areas: (1) Print media, (2) Video and film media, (3) Communication research. Specific requirements and procedures for documenting these should be obtained from the department chair. Computer competence is demonstrated through successful completion of MCOM 201. Oral competence is demonstrated through successful completion of MCOM 494.

Impact:
This encompasses four proposed changes: replaces VMP 205 with VMP 207, adds MCOM 104 as a new requirement, changes the workshop requirement from one print course and one video course to any two types of workshops, and eliminates the requirement of PHIL301. Replacing VMP 205 will have minimal effect. For majors interested in print media and/or research, the size of the major is reduced by one credit hour in the requirement of VMP 207 only. For students interested in video and film, the major is increased by two hours, as VMP 209 is prerequisite to all other production courses. MMAS will need to determine the impact of the change on their program. MCOM 104 adds three hours to the major. However, there will be no discernible impact on resources, since MCOM 101 and 102 will be phased out over the next three years to accommodate new LSIC requirements. Allowing students to choose from a wider array of workshops does not change the number of hours for the major, but provides students an opportunity to focus on a specific craft. This change will have no impact on resources. Eliminating PHIL 301 will have no discernible impact, and the chair of Philosophy has concurred with the proposal. The net hours in the major are not decreased because of other additions in this proposal. MCOM 104 will provide a tighter ethics content focus specific for mass media issues. It will be presented to ILSOC for approval as a diversity intensive course.

Resources:
This change will result in little impact on resources.

Rationale:
1) Replacement of VMP205 (3) with VMP207 (2).
In requiring newswriting and video production of all majors, regardless of the student’s primary interest, we have encountered a number of problems that get in the way of student learning. The cumulative pedagogy of newswriting is successful at bringing “video” students around to the value of the course skills and content by the end of the term. However, the reverse has not been the case. The pedagogy of the required video production course combines theory and practice (like newswriting), but video does this with the added layer of complicated technology. Self-described “print” students, and more than a few other students as well, are often frustrated at the extensive technology requirement. The goal of requiring the course was to provide students with the basic aesthetics of design for visual media. In breaking the basic video course into two, two-credit experiences, we hope to offer a pedagogy that helps students to learn these important design elements through supervised
exercises. Those who are interested in the video area can then follow this course with the other two-credit course (VMP209), which emphasizes an introduction to hands-on production activities. The latter course is a necessary prerequisite for other production courses in the curriculum.

2) Addition of MCOM104 to the required curriculum.
Here we must add that the requirement of MCOM104 sorts the MCOM curriculum out in a more rational way. With this change, Newswriting will precede our print media courses, Video Elements will precede our production courses and Media, Ethics and Society will precede our conceptual courses.

3) Change from requiring two different area workshops to requiring two workshops from any areas.
This represents a sensible response to student needs and demands. We have, for some time, been waiving the requirement for separate workshops, allowing two print or two video to count. This merely codifies the practice.

4) Elimination of PHIL301, Media Ethics, from the required curriculum.
This change was not undertaken lightly, but rather after much discussion and debate among the mass communication faculty. We are unanimous in proposing this change, with thanks to the Philosophy Department for its long years of service to our majors. There are several reasons for the change, the first of which is the logistical difficulty of scheduling, which we will not discuss. More important, we believe, are the conceptual issues. While it is unquestionably valuable for all students, in all majors, to get grounding in the ethics of modern decision-making, we believe that the specific application of ethics theories to the particular case of any profession can be addressed more directly within the particular content area of each. We have, for several years, been doing the following: First, we have been consciously mainstreaming ethics material into core requirements and conceptual electives. Secondly, we have offered experimental media ethics seminars at the upper-level. Thirdly, we have included significant ethics components in the 101 and 102 courses as a way of testing out materials and ideas. Finally, the new 100 level course will address media ethics directly and will get important ethics theories and issues on the students’ agenda early in their careers with us.

2. Delete: On pg.165, paragraph under Declaration of Major:

Students interested...from the department chair.

Add: On pg. 165, in place of deleted entry:

Declaring a major in Mass Communication requires the student to complete a Declaration of Major form that must be signed by the department chair. Prior to declaring a major, students, in consultation with a mass communication faculty member or advisor, create a plan of study, which must be approved by the department chair. Before declaring a major, students must satisfy the LANG 120 requirement.

Impact:
Students will be able to declare the MCOM major sooner.

Resources:
We are already teaching the students affected by this change. We anticipate no impact beyond getting bookkeeping credit for their presence in our department.

Rationale:
Requiring students to meet with faculty to devise a plan of study and having them articulate that plan to the department chair will set a tone of cooperation in the advising process that will serve our students and faculty well. Removing the MCOM 201 requirement allows for a more accurate counting of majors, as many currently postpone that class as long as possible, yet still function as “off the books” MCOM majors.
3. **Delete:** On pg. 166, the entry under Minor in Mass Communication

**Add:** On pg. 166, in place of deleted entry:

18 hours distributed as follows: MCOM 104; MCOM 201, or VMP 207 and 209; MCOM 301 or VMP 303; one course from MCOM 390, 490, 492; one 3-credit hour course selected from even-numbered MCOM courses at the 300-400 level; one 4-credit hour course selected from odd-numbered MCOM or VMP courses at the 300-400 level (note that 300-400 level VMP courses have VMP 209 as prerequisite).

**Impact and Resources:**
The course changes increase the number of hours for the minor. There should be no impact on resources.

**Rationale:**
This is an editorial change to accommodate the changes in number of credits for particular MCOM and VMP courses.