

COMMUNICATIONS, B.A. (ALTOONA)

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Altoona

Program Description

The curriculum of this B.A. in Communications provides a general grounding in traditional media forms along with work in the area of media convergence. Students must do coursework at both the practical and theoretical level. On the theory side, coursework will be offered in the areas of media criticism and theory, visual communications, and media history at the introductory and advanced levels. On the applied side, coursework will be offered in video and audio production, news writing and photojournalism, radio and television studio production, and public relations and advertising at the introductory and advanced levels. In the Convergent Media News Service courses, which form the most distinctive component of the program, students will actually produce and deliver a college news service in print, broadcasting (TV and streaming radio), and a multimedia online format. This hands-on experience will provide students an opportunity to create materials suitable for inclusion in a portfolio. Although not required, students will be strongly encouraged to do an internship sometime during their junior or senior years. Finally, the capstone Convergent Media Seminar will bring seniors together to consider the larger, theoretical issues related to the fast-paced changes in communications today and into the future. With a degree in this program, students will be well-positioned to go right into industry, where they will be able to compete in a number of different job markets, or to graduate school for advanced training.

What is Communications?

Communications is an academic discipline that deals with the creation and distribution of mass communication messages through media such as books, newspapers, television, radio, film, video games, and the Internet. Mass communications use writing, speech, photographs, video, and interactive content to give information or influence the audience. Communications also concerns the study of how we communicate in different ways with diverse audiences through marketing, advertising, public relations, corporate communications, digital journalism, film and other media.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You want the experience, knowledge, and skills you need to become a versatile media practitioner.
- You are interested in a career in journalism, media, public relations, advertising, or marketing.
- You would like to gain practical experience and build a portfolio of work in a state-of-art production facility.

Entrance to Major

In order to be eligible for entrance to this major, a student must:

1. attain at least a C (2.00) cumulative grade-point average for all courses taken at the University; and
2. have at least third-semester classification (<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/enrollment/semester-classification.cfm>).

READ SENATE POLICY 37-30: ENTRANCE TO AND CHANGES IN MAJOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/37-00-entrance-to-a-college-or-major/>)

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Arts in Communications, a minimum of 123 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	12
Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements	24
Requirements for the Major	42

3 of the 24 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements are included in the Requirements for the Major, General Education, or Electives and 0-12 credits are included in Electives if foreign language proficiency is demonstrated by examination.

Requirements for the Major

A grade of C or better is required for all courses in the major. To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn at least a C grade in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#82-44>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
COMM 100N	The Mass Media and Society	3
COMM 150N	The Art of the Cinema	3
COMM 260W	News Writing and Reporting	3
COMM 490		3

Additional Courses

Additional Courses: Require a grade of C or better

Select 12 credits from the following, including 6 credits at the 400-level:

COMM 1	Newspaper Practicum ¹	
COMM 2	Newspaper Editorial Staff ¹	
COMM 215	Basic Photography for Communications	
COMM 241	Graphic Design for Communications	
COMM 242	Basic Video/Filmmaking	
COMM 251	The Nature of Media	
COMM 269	Photojournalism	
COMM 270	Introduction to Multimedia Production	
COMM 282	Television Field Production	
COMM 283	Television Studio Production	
COMM 296	Independent Studies	
COMM 337	Intermediate Documentary Production	
COMM 339	Intermediate Alternative Production	
COMM 346	Writing for the Screen I	
COMM 360	Radio Reporting	
COMM 374	Audio Production	
COMM 415	Advanced Photography for Communications	
COMM 421W	Advertising Creative Strategies	

COMM 436	Advanced Audio Production
COMM 439	Advanced Alternative Production (max 6 credits)
COMM 448	Advanced Group Production I
COMM 460W	Reporting Methods
COMM 461	Magazine Writing
COMM 462	Feature Writing
COMM 467	News Editing and Evaluation
COMM 468	Graphic Applications in Print Communications
COMM 469	Photography for the Mass Media
COMM 471	Public Relations Media and Methods
COMM 472	Public Relations Event Planning
COMM 481	Advanced Multimedia Production
COMM 495	Internship
COMM 496	Independent Studies
Select 12 credits from the following, including 6 credits at the 400-level: 12	
COMM 110	Media and Democracy
COMM 180	Survey of Electronic Media and Telecommunications
COMM 190	Gaming and Interactive Media
COMM 205	Gender, Diversity and the Media
COMM 250	Film History and Theory
COMM 251	The Nature of Media
COMM 261	The Literature of Journalism
COMM 292	Introduction to Media & Politics
COMM 294	Research Project Courses
COMM 296	Independent Studies
COMM 320	Introduction to Advertising
COMM 370	Public Relations
COMM 401	Mass Media in History
COMM 403	Law of Mass Communications
COMM 408	Cultural Foundations of Communications
COMM 409	News Media Ethics
COMM 411	Cultural Aspects of the Mass Media
COMM 412	Sports, Media and Society
COMM 413W	The Mass Media and the Public
COMM 417	Ethics and Regulation in Advertising and Public Relations
COMM 431	Topics in Television Culture and Communication
COMM 451	Topics in American Film
COMM 452	Topics in International Cinema
COMM 454	Documentary in Film and Television
COMM 494	Research Project Courses
COMM 496	Independent Studies
Select 6 credits from the following: 6	
COMM 470A	Convergent Media News Service: Newspaper Production
COMM 470B	Convergent Media News Service: TV
COMM 470C	Convergent Media News Service: Radio and Online Publications

¹ A student may apply only 6 credits total of COMM 1 and COMM 2 towards the requirements of the Communications degree.

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Quantification (GQ):** 6 credits
- **Writing and Speaking (GWS):** 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- **Arts (GA):** 3 credits
- **Health and Wellness (GHW):** 3 credits
- **Humanities (GH):** 3 credits
- **Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS):** 3 credits
- **Natural Sciences (GN):** 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- **Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain):** 6 credits

Exploration

- **GN**, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- **GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses.** This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/#83-80>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

B.A. Degree Requirements

Foreign Language (0-12 credits): Student must attain 12th credit level of proficiency in one foreign language. See the Placement Policy for Penn State Foreign Language Courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/advising-planning-degree-program/course-placements/placement-policy-world-language-courses/>).

B.A. Fields (9 credits): Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arts, Foreign Languages, Natural Sciences, Quantification (may not be taken in the area of the student’s primary major; foreign language credits in this category must be in a second foreign language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the first language)

Other Cultures (0-3 credits): Select 3 credits from approved list. Students may count courses in this category in order to meet other major, minor, elective, or General Education requirements, except for the General Education US/IL requirement.

Program Learning Objectives

- Effective written communication skills
- Effective oral communication skills.
- Effective visual communication skills
- Knowledge of professional standards and practices.
- Ability to perform in professional settings with clarity, effectiveness, and in a manner that is appropriate to industry standards.
- Ability to understand and connect communications theory and research methods to ensure the development of effective critical thinking skills.
- Knowledge of the roles communications systems and professionals play in shaping communities at the global, national, and local levels.

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university’s academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee’s unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

Altoona

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2023-24 academic year. To access previous years’ suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition (*Note: the archive only contains suggested academic plans beginning with the 2018-19 edition of the Undergraduate Bulletin*).

Communications, B.A. at Altoona Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year		
Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 30H, or ESL 15 [†]	3 General Education Course (GQ) [‡]	3
COMM 100N/AMST 106N or 150N*	3 General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
PSU 3	1 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 Elective	3
World Language Course Level 1	4 World Language Course Level 2	4
General Education Course	3	
	17	14.5

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
General Education Course (GQ) [‡]	3 COMM 242 [*]	3
World Language Course Level 3	4 CAS 100 [‡]	3
COMM 100N/AMST 106N or 150N [*]	3 ENGL 202B [‡]	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
B.A. Requirement	3 General Education Course (GHW)	1.5
	Elective	2
	16	15.5

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
Communications Theory Course [*]	3 Communications Theory Course [*]	3
Communications Application Course [*]	3 Communications Application Course [*]	3
General Education Course	3 COMM 470A or 470B [*]	3
COMM 260W [*]	3 US Cultures Course	3
B.A. Requirement	3 General Education Course	3
	15	15

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
Communications Theory Course [*]	3 COMM 490A [*]	3
Communications Application Course [*]	3 Communications Application Course [*]	3
COMM 470A or 470B [*]	3 B.A. Requirement	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
Elective	3 Elective	3
	15	15

Total Credits 123

* Course requires a grade of C or better for the major

‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education

Course is an Entrance to Major requirement

† Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Bachelor of Arts Requirements:

Bachelor of Arts students must take 9 credits in Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) Fields (Humanities; Social and Behavioral Sciences; Arts; World Languages [2nd language or beyond the 12th credit level of proficiency in the 1st]; Natural Sciences; Quantification). The B.A. Fields courses may not be taken in the area of the student's primary major. See your adviser and the Degree Requirements section (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/academic-information/>) of this Bulletin.

Bachelor of Arts students must take 3 credits in Other Cultures. See your adviser and the full list of courses approved as Other Cultures courses (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/course-lists/ba-other-cultures/>).

Additional Notes**Communications Theory Courses**

Code	Title	Credits
COMM 110	Media and Democracy	3
COMM 180	Survey of Electronic Media and Telecommunications	3
COMM 190	Gaming and Interactive Media	3
COMM 205	Gender, Diversity and the Media	3
COMM 250	Film History and Theory	3
COMM 251	The Nature of Media	3
COMM 261	The Literature of Journalism	3
COMM 292	Introduction to Media & Politics	3
COMM 294	Research Project Courses	1-3
COMM 296	Independent Studies	1-6
COMM 320	Introduction to Advertising	3
COMM 370	Public Relations	3
COMM 401	Mass Media in History	3
COMM 403	Law of Mass Communications	3
COMM 408	Cultural Foundations of Communications	3
COMM 409	News Media Ethics	3
COMM 411	Cultural Aspects of the Mass Media	3
COMM 412	Sports, Media and Society	3
COMM 413W	The Mass Media and the Public	3
COMM 454	Documentary in Film and Television	3
COMM 417	Ethics and Regulation in Advertising and Public Relations	3
COMM 451	Topics in American Film	3
COMM 452	Topics in International Cinema	3
COMM 494	Research Project Courses	1-12
COMM 496	Independent Studies	1-18

Communications Application Courses

Code	Title	Credits
COMM 1	Newspaper Practicum	1-3
COMM 2	Newspaper Editorial Staff	1-3
COMM 215	Basic Photography for Communications	3
COMM 241	Graphic Design for Communications	3
COMM 242	Basic Video/Filmmaking	3
COMM 251	The Nature of Media	3
COMM 269	Photojournalism	3
COMM 270	Introduction to Multimedia Production	3

COMM 282	Introduction to Video Field Production	3
COMM 296	Independent Studies	1-6
COMM 337	Intermediate Documentary Production	3
COMM 338	Intermediate Narrative Production	3
COMM 339	Intermediate Alternative Production	3
COMM 346	Writing for the Screen I	3
COMM 360	Audio News Production	3
COMM 374	Audio Production	3
COMM 415	Advanced Photography for Communications	3
COMM 421		3
COMM 438	Advanced Narrative Production	3-6
COMM 439	Advanced Alternative Production	3-6
COMM 448	Advanced Group Production I	3
COMM 460W	Reporting Methods	3
COMM 461	Magazine Writing	3
COMM 462	Feature Writing	3
COMM 467	News Editing and Evaluation	3
COMM 468	Graphic Applications in Print Communications	3
COMM 469	Photography for the Mass Media	3
COMM 471	Public Relations Media and Methods	3
COMM 472	Public Relations Event Planning	3
COMM 481	Advanced Multimedia Production	3
COMM 495	Internship	1-9
COMM 496	Independent Studies	1-18

<https://altoona.psu.edu/academics/bachelors-degrees/communications/contact-information> (<https://altoona.psu.edu/academics/bachelors-degrees/communications/contact-information/>)

Career Paths

The Communications major is a good fit for students interested in a career in media, as well as those considering graduate school. The major is designed to give you the experience, knowledge, and skills you need to become a versatile media practitioner. The program emphasizes a balance of theory and practice, as you develop hands-on skills (in a state-of-the-art production facility) while gaining an understanding of the many complexities of today's media landscape. The Communications major is a good fit for students interested in a career in media, as well as those considering graduate school.

Careers

In addition, graduates have achieved distinction in a variety of areas. Recent Communications alumni have won Emmy Awards, the prestigious Murrow Award, and several AP awards in multiple states.

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

Graduates of the Communications program excel in the job market and graduate school. Student acceptance rate among graduate programs exceeds 90 percent.

Contact

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