

Program Description

The Department of Journalism and Communication provides students with a solid foundation in media history, theory, law, issues, ethics, and numerical literacy. Building on this foundation, students develop a wide variety of mass communication skills they'll need in today's changing media and public relations environment. They apply these skills inside and outside the classroom.

To serve these ends, the program is structured with a pre-major core that strengthens students' general understanding of mass communication, helps them develop foundational skills, and lays the groundwork for more advanced courses. Once admitted to the major, all students take courses in numerical literacy, multimedia, and the principles and theories of constitutional and case law governing the mass media. In addition, students select an area of emphasis—journalistic writing (print), broadcast/video journalism, or public relations. Courses within each emphasis add to students' understanding of mass communication while helping them develop and apply professional skills. In partnership with the School of Applied Sciences, Technology and Education, the Department also offers a degree in Agricultural Communication and Journalism (see ASTE website).

Mission statement

The Department of Journalism and Communication is committed to preparing students to be skillful, ethical, adaptable, and persuasive professional communicators. Upon graduation, our students are ready to address the challenges of a quickly changing occupational landscape and prepared to meet the diverse needs of stakeholders across society. Through a rigorous curriculum embedded within the context of a broad liberal arts education, students gain a foundation in media history, theory, law, issues, ethics, and numerical literacy and are offered ample opportunities to develop and apply mass communication skills. By wedding the theoretical foundation with skills-based training, our students are prepared to engage in work that leaves a positive impact on their communities and world.

Learning Objectives

Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:

1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives
 - a. Written, oral, and visual communication skills
 - b. An understanding of social science research methods
 - c. An understanding of journalistic investigation methods
 - d. The ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media
 - e. An understanding of professional conduct

2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions

and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school

3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience

Meeting the Learning Objectives: General Strategies

The following are general strategies used by the Department to evaluate overall effectiveness in meeting the learning objectives listed above.

1. Structure of Major and Overall Curriculum

Purpose: To assess the effectiveness of the structure of the major and the overall curriculum in meeting learning objectives 1-4

Method: Review of the major's structure (pre-major core, three areas of emphasis, additional courses required for all students within the major) and the overall curriculum (requirements for the pre-major core, requirements for each area of emphasis, issues related to the credit cap, requirements for internships) by individual faculty members, the departmental curriculum committee, and the full faculty. Review included analysis of departmental enrollment numbers, comparison with curricula at other universities, and discussions with professionals in the field.

When: Review conducted fall 2013-fall 2014 and results reported to the faculty spring 2015-fall 2015. Minor changes approved by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Curriculum Committee and University Educational Policies Committee spring 2015. These are scheduled to go into effect spring 2016. Additional changes are under discussion by the faculty.

2. Course Objectives

Purpose: To assess the effectiveness of individual courses in meeting their stated course objectives (related to learning objectives 1-4)

Method: IDEA student course evaluations

When: End of each semester

3. Job Placement/Success and Graduate School Acceptance/Completion

Purpose: To determine program effectiveness with respect to job placement/success and graduate school acceptance/completion (related to learning objectives 1, 2, and 3)

Method: Tracking of recent JCOM graduates through LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google and through personal contact

When: Ongoing; last updated spring 2015

4. Student Awards and Recognition

<u>Purpose:</u>	To evaluate program effectiveness in preparing students to compete successfully for jobs and other recognition in the communication professions (related to learning objectives 1, 2, and 3)
<u>Method:</u>	Tracking student success in statewide and regional journalism and public relations competitions sponsored by organizations such as the Society of Professional Journalists and Richter7
<u>When:</u>	Annually

Meeting the Learning Objectives: Specific Strategies

Tables 1-4 show which learning objectives are addressed by specific courses required for the major. Strategies used to assess effectiveness in meeting these objectives are summarized below. For learning objective 1, examples are selected from a range of courses to give an overview of the kind of strategies employed.

Learning objective 1 (selected courses)

JCOM 1130 (Beginning Newswriting)

Professor evaluates students' written, oral, and visual communication skills by collecting public response through comments, email, social media shares, and social media responses (objectives 1a, 1c). In addition, he contacts interview sources for feedback on students' conduct and story accuracy (objectives 1a, 1c, 1e). Student learning is also assessed through success in completing upper-division reporting/writing courses (JCOM 3100, 3110, 3200, 3310) with a C or better as well as success in completing internships.

JCOM 2010 (Media Smarts)

Student learning is evaluated through major projects that require written, oral, and visual communication skills (objective 1a); creative use of a multimedia format (objective 1a); the application of social science research methods (objective 1b); and structured analysis of media content (objective 1d).

JCOM 2020 (Communication Research Methods)

Professor evaluates student improvement through a series of assignments that culminate in a major computer-assisted reporting project requiring written, oral, and visual communication skills; application of social science research methods and journalistic investigation methods; the ability to critically evaluate ideas presented through media; and an understanding of professional conduct (objectives 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e). Student learning is also assessed through success in completing the upper-division research methods course (JCOM 3320) with a C or better.

JCOM 2030 (Multimedia Boot Camp)

Student learning is evaluated through a graded oral presentation and six graded assignments using photos and video (objective 1a). Students also complete three graded critiques of audio, photo-with-audio, and video presentations using terminology taught in class (objective 1d). They are

tested on journalistic ethics and sensitivity and sent on newsgathering assignments which require application of these guidelines (objective 1e). Learning is also assessed through attainment of a C or better in upper-division broadcast and public relations courses requiring basic multimedia skills.

JCOM 2220 (Introduction to Video Media)

Professor evaluates student progress through a series of assignments that build to the final video project. These require demonstrated communication skills (scripting, interviewing, video production, video editing, etc.) as well as the ability to critically evaluate one's own work and the work of others (objectives 1a, 1d). Students visit media outlets and also complete video production jobs for clients, developing an understanding of professional conduct (objective 1e). Learning is also assessed through success in completing the upper-division newscast classes (JCOM 4210, JCOM 4220) with a C or better.

JCOM 2300 (Introduction to Public Relations)

Students are evaluated on their ability to create a public relations plan for a professional client and present that plan orally and in writing (objectives 1a, 1b, 1e). Student learning is also assessed through success in completing the upper-division public relations classes (JCOM 3320, JCOM 5300, JCOM 5320) with a C or better.

JCOM 3110 (Feature Writing)

Professor evaluates student improvement on a series of short writing assignments plus original drafts and revisions of three major feature articles (objectives 1a, 1c). Students submit their feature pieces to editors of national, regional, and local publications, and learning is evaluated through the quality of their submission letters and articles as well as through the response from editors (objective 1e).

JCOM 3310 (Writing for Public Relations)

Professor evaluates student progress on original writing assignments and a final portfolio project (objective 1a). Learning is also assessed through success in completing the upper-division public relations courses (JCOM 5300, JCOM 5320) with a C or better as well as success in completing internships.

JCOM 4210/4220 (Newscast I/Newscast II)

These classes produce the Aggie TV newscasts. Students write, shoot video, edit, and voice news stories, which are graded by one instructor and evaluated through face-to-face group critique by a second instructor (objective 1a). Each week, students are counseled and critiqued on how well they apply journalistic investigation methods (objective 1c). Students' conduct is evaluated through the quality of their work and through direct feedback from sources and viewers (objective 1e).

Learning objective 2

The Department assesses student mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school in four specific ways.

- a. Job placement/success and graduate school acceptance/completion

As noted under general strategies, the Department tracks job placement and graduate school acceptance. Individual faculty members speak regularly with contacts in the industry about USU hires and also informally seek feedback from alumni.

b. Internship performance

The Department requests an evaluation letter from professionals who oversee students' work on JCOM 4510, CHSS 2250, and CHSS 4250 internships. These letters provide feedback on students' level of preparation for employment in the communication professions.

c. Use of students' work by professional media outlets

With the support of JCOM faculty members, students place their work with newspapers, magazines, the Salt Lake television stations, and other professional media outlets on a freelance basis. Tracking students' freelance work for national, regional, and local media helps the Department document students' understanding of and preparation for succeeding in the communication professions.

d. Maintenance of professional standards in coursework

All faculty members in the Department of Journalism and Communication have worked professionally in the communication industries and understand the standards expected in the field. As explained under learning objective 1, most of the Department's required courses emphasize holding students to professional standards. Success is evaluated through quality of student projects, placement of student work in professional media outlets, and response from students' clients. In some classes, students are required to submit a professional portfolio of their work to demonstrate understanding of the communication industries and mastery of specific skills.

Learning objective 3

The philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of media in a democratic society are covered in all pre-major core courses, Multimedia Boot Camp, Mass Media Law, several courses required for the journalistic writing and public relations areas of emphasis, and various JCOM electives. Basic understanding is evaluated through exams (such as in Introduction to Mass Communication and Mass Media Law) and through exercises, assignments, projects, and portfolios. Readiness to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences is assessed through the methods described under learning objective 2.

Learning objective 4

Meeting this learning objective involves combining a strong theoretical background with hands-on experience. Students receive training in the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media (learning objective 3) and in a variety of relevant skills (learning objective 1). Student learning is assessed through the strategies described under objectives 2 and 3.

Outcomes Data

In the past, the Department has conducted focus groups to evaluate graduating seniors' satisfaction with the program. Faculty members are currently developing new assessment techniques more closely tied to departmental learning objectives.

Assessment-Based Decisions

Departmental assessment has led to improvements. Two examples follow.

1. Media Medallion Scholar Program

Consistent with all four learning objectives, the Department strives to encourage students to fully develop their skills in preparation for entering the communication industries or graduate school. JCOM students participate in skill-building extracurricular activities, but the Department has not formally tracked this participation. The Media Medallion Scholar Program, introduced during the fall 2015 semester, will award students points for participating in relevant organizations and activities, completing volunteer work, taking select courses not required for the major, etc. Those who earn enough points will receive a graduation medallion. The program will encourage student engagement while helping the Department track student activity.

2. Curriculum Changes

Based on feedback from current students, alumni, and industry professionals, the Department has adjusted the curriculum to better meet departmental learning objectives and students' needs.

- a. A course in social media has been added to address a hole in the curriculum.
- b. JCOM 2020 (Communication Research Methods) has been moved from the pre-major core into the major, making students' transition into the major smoother while maintaining the numerical literacy requirement.
- c. The maximum number of credits students are allowed to take within the major has been raised, making it possible for students who want additional training to take up to two additional JCOM electives without requiring them to do so.
- d. Faculty are discussing launching a Utah State News Service designed to serve as a lab for courses in news reporting and production, provide content for on-campus platforms, and feed content to professional news organizations.

Table 1. Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required for All JCOM Majors

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Pre-Major Core Courses (required for admission to major)			Courses Required for All Students After Admission to the Major		
	JCOM 1130	JCOM 1500	JCOM 2010	JCOM 2020	JCOM 2030	JCOM 4030
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives a. written, oral, and visual communication skills b. an understanding of social science research methods c. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods d. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media e. an understanding of professional conduct	a. c. e.	a. d.	a. b. d.	a. b. c. d. e.	a. d. e.	a. e.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school	X		X	X	X	X
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences	X	X	X		X	X
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience	X	X	X			X

Courses:

JCOM 1130—Beginning Newswriting, 3 credits

JCOM 1500—Introduction to Mass Communication, 3 credits

JCOM 2010—Media Smarts, 3 credits

JCOM 2020—Communication Research Methods, 3 credits

JCOM 2030—Multimedia Boot Camp, 3 credits

JCOM 4030—Mass Media Law, 3 credits

Table 2. Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required Within Broadcast/Video Journalism Area of Emphasis

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Required Broadcast/Video Journalism Courses			
	JCOM 2220	JCOM 3200	JCOM 4210	JCOM 4220
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. written, oral, and visual communication skills b. an understanding of social science research methods c. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods d. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media e. an understanding of professional conduct 	a. d. e.	a. e.	a. c. e.	a. c. e.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school	X	X	X	X
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences				
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience	X	X	X	X

Courses:

JCOM 2220—Introduction to Video Media, 3 credits

JCOM 3200—Writing for Electronic Media, 3 credits

JCOM 4210—Newscast I, 4 credits

JCOM 4220—Newscast II, 4 credits

Table 3. Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required Within Journalistic Writing (Print) Area of Emphasis

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Required Journalistic Writing Courses		
	JCOM 3100	JCOM 3110	JCOM 3120
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives a. written, oral, and visual communication skills b. an understanding of social science research methods c. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods d. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media e. an understanding of professional conduct	a. c. e.	a. c. e.	a. d. e.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school	X	X	X
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences	X	X	X
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience	X	X	

Courses:

JCOM 3100—Reporting Public Affairs, 3 credits

JCOM 3110—Feature Writing, 3 credits

JCOM 3120—Copy Editing and Design, 3 credits

Table 4. Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required Within Public Relations Area of Emphasis

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Required Public Relations Courses				
	JCOM 2300	JCOM 3310	JCOM 3320	JCOM 5300	or JCOM 5320
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives a. written, oral, and visual communication skills b. an understanding of social science research methods c. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods d. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media e. an understanding of professional conduct	a. b. e.	a.	b. e.	a. e.	a. b. e.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school	X	X	X	X	X
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences	X	X			
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience	X			X	X

Courses:

JCOM 2300—Introduction to Public Relations, 3 credits

JCOM 3310—Writing for Public Relations, 3 credits

JCOM 3320—Strategic Research Methods in Public Relations, 3 credits

JCOM 5300—Case Studies in Public Relations, 3 credits

JCOM 5320—Public Relations Agency, 3 credits

Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required for All JCOM Majors

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Pre-Major Core Courses (required for admission to major)			Courses Required for All Students After Admission to the Major		
	JCOM 1130	JCOM 1500	JCOM 2010	JCOM 2020	JCOM 2030	JCOM 4030
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. written, oral, and visual communication skills g. an understanding of social science research methods h. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods i. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media j. an understanding of professional conduct 		a.	a. b.	a. b. c.	a.	
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school			X	X	X	
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences		X	X		X	
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience		X	X			

Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required Within Broadcast/Video Journalism Area of Emphasis

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Required Broadcast Courses			
	JCOM 2220	JCOM 3200	JCOM 4210	JCOM 4220
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. written, oral, and visual communication skills g. an understanding of social science research methods h. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods i. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media j. an understanding of professional conduct 	a. d. e.	a. c. e.	a. c. e.	a. c. e.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school	X	X	X	X
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences				
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience	X	X	X	X

Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required Within Public Relations Area of Emphasis

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Required Public Relations Courses				
	JCOM 2300	JCOM 3310	JCOM 3320	JCOM 5300	or JCOM 5320
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives f. written, oral, and visual communication skills g. an understanding of social science research methods h. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods i. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media j. an understanding of professional conduct					
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school					
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences					
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience					

Learning Objectives Addressed by Courses Required Within Journalistic Writing (Print) Area of Emphasis

JCOM Learning Objectives Students who major in the Department of Journalism and Communication will be prepared to:	Required Print Courses		
	JCOM 3100	JCOM 3110	JCOM 3120
1. Apply a diverse set of skills such as the following to meet a variety of media-oriented objectives f. written, oral, and visual communication skills g. an understanding of social science research methods h. an understanding of journalistic investigation methods i. the ability to critically evaluate images and ideas presented through media j. an understanding of professional conduct	a. c. e.	a. c. e.	a. d. e.
2. Demonstrate mastery of the skills required to succeed in the communication professions and/or the capabilities required to succeed in graduate school	X	X	X
3. Understand the philosophical, legal, theoretical, historical, and ethical foundations of the mass media as well as the roles and responsibilities of mass media in a democratic society and be prepared to apply this understanding when interacting with audiences	X	X	
4. Understand the challenges facing media practitioners and audiences in the global media market based on theoretical grounding and practical experience gained through their educational experience	X	X	