

Essay Competition Entry by Candide Uyanze

Introduction

As a 5th year Communication and Digital Humanities student, I feel as though I've been around the block at this institution and program. Though I live and breathe Communications, there are certainly things I wished we could have learned in our program at uOttawa.

Besides, of course, bringing back Video II and Multimedia II (Je vous en supplie!!!!), I have many ideas for courses, inspired by my own experience in the workplace, classes I've read about at other universities, and even courses offered in other Departments.

You will find that the common thread amongst these ideas is the hands-on, digital media aspect (or what the Department has now dubbed, Option 4: Strategic Communication and Digital Design). Perhaps that's my minor in Digital Humanities talking, but from my discussions with the CSA's Academic Committee, this seems to be a reoccurring need. We want to tie the theory we learn to hands-on skills, and from my own work experience, many employers assume we already have these skills. For those like me who will pursue graduate studies or who want to do freelance work, working on hands-on projects and abilities is a great way to build a creative portfolio and create deeper relationships with professors and professionals in Ottawa.

I'm very passionate about this program, which is why I'm excited to share these ideas that have been brewing in my mind for quite some time. I want our Communications program to be the best of the best, a leader in the field, and known for its incredible and relevant course offerings, both within and beyond the school.

So, without further ado, voici my list of ideas for Communication courses:

Audio Production / Podcasting

Undoubtedly, podcasts have exploded in popularity in the past few years, though they are nothing new. It seems like everyone and their mom has a podcast, and it's understandable: with tools like [Anchor](#), anyone can record, edit, and publish a podcast from their phone for free.

I've spent this school year working on a podcast about mental health on campus called [OneInFive](#), a passion project by fellow Communication student Anchal Sharma. I also remember how one of my friends, Shanna, who graduated from Communication a few years ago and was Class President at her Convocation, had started her podcast during her time at uOttawa. She had

purchased herself a microphone and would rent study rooms to record episodes for her show, [Speaking Out Loud](#). The Communication Department, however, has access to soundproof rooms and audio recording equipment in Morisset Library. It's about time the Department supported the Anchals and Shannas among our student body. For all we know, this course could be an incubator for the next big podcasting hit (or, at the very least, an excellent addition to a student's portfolio).

I know from experience that there is already a unit for podcasts in Multimedia I with Izabel Barsive, and that the Journalisme numérique I course with Jean-Sébastien Marier has an assignment where you have the option of submitting a podcast for your reportage. That said, I'm suggesting a proper course on audio storytelling. The readings could be on the history of oral culture (across the world) and the evolution of radio broadcasting. It could be a continuation of the brief history introduced in Introduction to Media Studies.

A vital element of this course, however, is the hands-on aspect. Some classes have blogs, some have videos as final exams, and some professors ask that you tweet summaries of the lecture; this class should allow students to unleash their creativity by creating podcasts on any topic they're passionate about.

Specialized one-credit weekend courses/workshops

My other idea is to offer intensive one-credit courses over the weekend on specific and variable topics in the field of Communication that can be taken multiple times. The university's [Art Music Theatre \(AMT\)](#) offers a course code with a similar concept called AMT 3105 - Workshop in the Arts, and every semester, the topics change. I've taken two of these workshops so far, and they are highly underrated. Sasha, a Visual Arts technician, taught the first workshop I took. I learned how to use green screens, and then edit the footage using DaVinci Resolve and Fusion. I also learned how to use and program Arduinos in a theatrical context from a professional and academic from Montréal.

The AMT workshops usually take place over a weekend, or two Saturdays/Sundays in a row, from 9 am to 5 pm. That said, ours could also take the form of a summer school, like the [Digital Humanities Summer Institute](#) (DHSite) or the [Simon Nehme Entrepreneurship School](#) from the Faculty of Engineering. I've participated in both initiatives, and I genuinely believe something like this would be an excellent addition to our Department, not only for

Communication students but also for students from other faculties who could learn from us. I have friends in Engineering who would probably love to learn skills from our field, and it could help with answering all of their "So what do you even do in Communication???" questions.

Having intensive workshops are also a great way to acquire emerging Communication skills without dedicating full-fledged courses for them. This way, students who can't take more specialized classes, don't have the time or attention span to follow tutorials on LinkedIn Learning, or who need help from an expert can also acquire much-needed skills. It could also be an excellent way for the Department to test out different course topics before committing to them.

Topics could include:

- AI in Communication
- Graphic Design
- Lighting techniques (for photo and video)
- Basic video editing
- Crafting compelling social media copy
- Social media analytics and SEO 101
- Creating a Twitter bot
- Newsletter marketing using MailChimp
- UX & UI design using tools like Adobe XD and Figma
- Building your brand as a young Communication professional
- Entrepreneurship/Freelance work in Communication: How to open a firm
- Creating a website using Wix, Weebly, Squarespace, etc.
- How to boost your online presence, engagement and followers (if I had a dollar for every time an employer wanted me to do this, I would have enough to buy followers for my own social media accounts!!!)
- Photography on smartphones/photo walk (Jean-Sébastien does this already, but it would be great to open it to all Communication students)
- Creative programming and animations using Codepen (like [this big dipper animation](#) taught during a workshop by the club I run, [uOttawa STEAM](#))

Conclusion

To conclude, because of space constraints, I would like to leave a list hyperlinks for courses and programs I believe the Department should draw inspiration from, and maybe even collaborate with. I fell on these as I was searching for digital media graduate programs, and they stood out to me as being very forward-thinking and topical course offerings. I believe that these could resonate with Communication students, especially in our increasingly digital future.

- [Carleton's new Interactive Multimedia and Design program \(courses\)](#)
- [Algonquin's School of Media & Design - Interactive Media Management program \(courses\)](#)
- [Programme d'Arts numériques à La Cité](#)
- [NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program \(ITP\)](#): They have a great list of digital media electives, and some of the syllabi are available online
- [D.E.S.S. en arts, création et technologies à l'Université de Montréal](#)