Communication Arts 155: Introduction to Digital Media Production

MIU PROPOSAL SUMMARY
The ubiquity of mobile, interactive and high-definition media has not only changed the speeds and methods of communication, but it has also altered the contexts by which we view and understand media. It is important that University of Wisconsin-Madison students be adequately prepared to enter their respective fields with the skills they need to produce, engage with, and understand these new and emerging technologies within the context of critical media studies.

In order to address this acute need, the Department of Communication Arts proposes an introductory course at the 100 level introducing core concepts and hands-on training in digital media production so that incoming first-year students will benefit from our department’s longstanding commitment to digital media production pedagogy and infrastructure at an early stage in their undergraduate careers.

Students who complete this course will learn important skills in the growth field of digital media production including: web design and programming, high-definition video shooting/editing, digital audio production, and linear and non-linear storytelling. These are skills that will benefit every undergraduate as competency in digital media production becomes a requirement in a wide range of academic disciplines as well as career paths. In recognition of this critical need, we seek funding to:

- Offer Communication Arts 155: a course in foundational concepts of digital media production. This course will accommodate up to 300 students each semester and emphasize the convergence of interactive media and moving image production. Course concepts can be applied across a broad spectrum of disciplines. This course can be a central component of the Digital Studies Initiative.
- Hire a Faculty director and up to 10 Teaching Assistants to develop and teach Com Arts 155.
- Redesign existing studios in Vilas Hall into digital media production classroom facilities (each with 15 networked computer work stations) for Com Arts 155.
- Upgrade digital video and audio production equipment throughout the Communication Arts production program. Expand the existing Vilas Hall fibre channel network and storage.

A DIGITAL MEDIA PRODUCTION COURSE AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS
CA 155: Introduction to Digital Media Production

Course Structure
The core curriculum of CA155 introduces basic skill sets that are applicable across digital media such as podcasts, websites, mobile applications, and in a variety of fields such as marketing, broadcast, film, news, and entertainment. All concepts will be taught through project-based assignments in which students learn to collaborate with other students and
evaluate each other’s work through structured in-class critique. The class will be structured as a group lecture and lab sections of 15 students each that will emphasize hands-on, individualized, and interactive learning.

Core Concepts in Converging Media
By introducing core concepts that transcend and cross the boundaries between film, television, multimedia, and the Internet, this class builds on the common attributes of various types of emerging media in order to prepare undergraduate students for success within a wide range of disciplines.

Content Development
Along with practical exercises to illustrate key concepts in digital media production, this class will help students develop challenging ideas in creating content for digital media production. Students will learn to develop their ideas by storyboarding both sequential narratives (such as videos and podcasts) and non-linear structures (such as websites and games).

Visual and Aural Aesthetics
Students in CA 155 will learn to design media by developing their own visual and audio vocabulary. They will learn aesthetic principles of frame composition, visual depth, light, color and sound. They will be introduced to theories of perception and explore the formal qualities of time-based media.

Practical Skills Taught in CA 155
- Storyboarding and Pre-visualization
- Interactive Design and Programming with HTML
- High-definition Video Shooting and Editing
- Digital Photography and Image Manipulation/Editing
- Digital Sound Production
- Video and Audio Compression for Broadband Delivery

CRITICAL NEEDS OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Earlier Access to Courses
CA 155 will cater to students with first-year standing and emphasize a broad range of skills that are beneficial to students in all majors regardless of their chosen field of study. Students will not need any prerequisites to take the course or define Communication Arts as their major. We seek to provide an opportunity for students to engage with digital media production at an earlier point in their academic careers. Exit surveys of recent graduates in our department indicate that students feel frustrated at not having early access to such courses, as students do at other peer institutions.

The problem of Bottlenecks
Due to enrollment pressures, Communication Arts majors and non-majors with an interest in this area are often unable to take the production courses they need and want prior to graduation. Such students are forced to stay for an additional semester or year in order to take advanced classes in digital media production. We find that students who do
not take advanced production courses in order to graduate earlier are less prepared for the needs of emerging industries.

Students who decide to become Communication Arts majors will also benefit from CA 155. By taking digital media courses in the production sequence earlier they will be likelier to complete the more advanced production and capstone courses within four years. It is important for students to gain access to our advanced courses because these classes offer direct contact with full-time faculty. Students in these courses often make great strides as they benefit from individualized attention and instruction that caters to their specific needs at a more advanced level. Capstone courses enable students to leverage their skills and develop a portfolio project to showcase their creative work.

A Curriculum for a fast growing industry
It is easy to understand why there is such intense student demand for digital media production courses. Internet-related technologies such as mobile media communications are giving rise to new career opportunities in Wisconsin as well as nationwide. Digital communications technology has revolutionized the production and distribution of media, and the rapid pace of innovation in this field will continue for the foreseeable future. It is important that our students be adequately prepared to enter their respective fields with the skills needed to work with and understand these emerging technologies.

DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION ARTS
Existing Curriculum and Faculty
The Department of Communication Arts has offered media production courses as an essential part of its curriculum since the 1970s. Our experienced media production faculty members have been teaching digital media courses since 1994 and our curriculum includes: 2D and 3D computer animation, interactive media production, digital video and sound production, screenwriting and editing alongside a strong film, media and internet studies curriculum. We believe that the best environment for teaching digital media production is within a well-established academic tradition of production in a department devoted to this field.

In addition, our curriculum incorporates classes in Media and Cultural Studies, Film Studies, Digital Rhetoric, and Communication Science. Within this interdisciplinary context, the study of digital media production makes sense because these courses extend the critical faculties of students in engaging with and understanding the power of media as it is increasingly distributed over the internet, mobile media, digital television and high-definition radio.

Existing Infrastructure and Resources and Necessary Improvements
We plan to expand upon the recent construction of a digital media lab and the hire of a digital production professorship generously donated by the Hamel family. The equipment, the facilities, and the seven-person technical support staff in the Department of Communication Arts, including the Hamel Family Digital Media Lab with its fibre channel network (which allow students to access large video files anywhere in our
facility) provide a strong infrastructure for digital media production that we plan to leverage with this new course.

To accommodate CA155, new computer labs with high-definition projection systems will be created in Vilas Hall and added to the existing high-speed network and storage facility. However, all equipment (cameras, lights, audio recorders) we circulate to students dates from 1999 or earlier and needs to be modernized with high-definition production equipment, the new standard. Once we introduce new equipment into CA155, the curriculum would be consistent and logical, if we upgrade equipment throughout our advanced courses. The proposed network storage and reusable video storage media (SD and P2 cards) will significantly lower the costs of student productions, increasing accessibility to our courses.

Digital Media Convergence
The intersection of film and video with digital technologies has changed the landscape of media production. Today, television programs are stored for later viewing, films are viewed online, and computer games are played on game consoles as well as mobile devices. Interactive media refers to this type of media—a creative and collaborative media that is produced for digital distribution. Interactive media production is a high-growth area. Not only has interactive media changed the speeds and methods of communication, but it has also changed the contexts in which we view and understand media.

Today’s students must learn to create and curate imagery, juxtapose images with sounds, and relate different sets of images and audio elements into both traditional linear narrative structures as well as digital non-linear structures. Digital technologies have changed traditional media practice, making it both more ubiquitous and interdisciplinary. Animation and special effects are integrated into narrative and documentary video production. Photographic images are created or manipulated in the computer. Digital audio now incorporates over ninety-nine different soundtracks at once, and basic sound mixing is an increasingly important part of digital media production. As a result, an increasing number of students produce and edit audio podcasts, multimedia blogs and websites, digital video, and computer animations.

**METRICS:**
Evaluating the success of this course and its impact will depend on student feedback, including course evaluations and senior exit interviews. In addition, faculty will actively track and promote student creative output both during and after matriculation. This will involve archiving and streaming student work on the program’s website, facilitating student shows, screenings, broadcast and online presentations while also tracking and publicizing student projects that receive recognition in outside venues beyond the university.
FUNDING:
Option 1: CA 155 for 150 students

One-Time Equipment Investments
HD cameras: $125,000
Sound equipment: $12,000
Computer/media lab: $54,000
Software: $9,000
Storage expansion: $68,000
Total $268,000

Ongoing Costs
CA 155 faculty position: $65,000
Five CA 155 teaching assistants: $70,500
Repair & student hourly budget: $10,000
Software upgrades: $19,000
Total $164,500
Grand Total $432,500

Option 2: CA 155 for 300 students

One-Time Equipment Investments
HD cameras: $270,000
Sound equipment: $20,000
Computer/media lab: $110,000
Software: $41,000
Storage expansion: $142,000
Studio modernization: $39,000
Total $622,000

Ongoing Costs
CA 155 faculty position: $65,000
Ten CA 155 teaching assistants: $141,000
Repair & student hourly budget: $20,000
Software upgrades: $24,000
Total $250,000
Grand Total $872,000

Option one will allow us to serve 150 students with five TAs and one new media lab. Option two enables us to teach 300 students with ten TAs and construct two computer labs for CA 155. In option two, we would modernize our two studios to accommodate instruction of HD video for students in CA 355: Intermediate Media Production. We intend to collaborate with the Digital Studies Initiative to explore whether they can assist with funding for some of the TAs in this request.
CONCLUSION
CA155 will offer incoming first-year students an opportunity to work with state-of-the-art creative tools in order to communicate more effectively in their chosen academic and career fields. Most immediately, however, this MIU proposal provides the University with an opportunity to respond to undergraduate student demand for courses related to emerging media technologies and the career opportunities these new technologies afford.

Respectfully submitted:
William Brown, Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies
Sabine Gruffat, Hamel Family Assistant Professor of Digital Media
Erik Gunneson, Faculty Associate, Instructional Media Center
J. J. Murphy, Professor of Film
MEMORANDUM

December 1, 2010

To: Provost Paul DeLuca

From: Gary Sandefur, Dean

Re: MIU Round 3 proposals

We are pleased to submit proposals from the College of Letters and Science for MIU Round 3. We solicited two page pre-proposals and received over 40. We reviewed these pre-proposals in the Academic Planning Council and in Senior Staff. Based on these reviews, we invited 15 submissions of full proposals. These proposals were reviewed by Senior Staff and we decided to forward these 15 to you for consideration. All are worthy of funding and would help meet critical needs in the University.

The proposals are grouped into three tiers in order of their importance in meeting the goals of the MIU, with tier 1 being the most important. Importance is based somewhat on the quality of the proposals but primarily on undergraduate educational needs. We also took into account losses in faculty numbers prior to the MIU and the success or lack thereof of departments in previous rounds of the competition.

Tier 1: Communication Arts, English, French and Italian, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, Philosophy, Political Science

Tier 2: Anthropology, Chemistry, Math, Sociology, Statistics

Tier 3: Communicative Disorders, Religious Studies, Service Learning, Undergraduate Research Scholars

We did not carefully assess the budgets of the proposals since we assumed that this would be done by the office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance.

xc: Associate Vice Chancellor Aaron Brower
Associate Dean Nancy Westphal-Johnson
Academic Associate Deans
Associate Dean Anne Gunther
Sheila Voss, Office of the Provost

Office of the Dean

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