



Choosing Between Communication Studies and Film Studies

Many students with an interest in media arts come to UNCW. They often struggle with whether to major in Communication Studies (COM) or Film Studies (FST). This brief position statement is designed to help in that decision.

Common Ground

Both programs have at least three things in common. First, they share a common set of technologies and software. Both shoot projects in digital video. Both use Adobe Creative Suite for manipulation of digital images, in particular, Adobe Premiere for video editing. Second, they both address the genre of documentaries. Documentaries blend the interests of both “news” and “narrative” in compelling ways and consequently are of interest to both departments. Finally, both departments are “studies” departments: Communication Studies and Film Studies. Those labels indicate that issues such as history, criticism and theories matter and form the context for the study of any particular skills. Neither department is attempting to compete with Full Sail or other technical training institutes. Critical thinking and application of theory to practice are critical to success in FST and COM.

Communication Studies

The primary purposes for the majority of video projects are to inform and persuade. Creativity and artistry are encouraged within a wide variety of client-centered and audience-centered production genres. With rare exception, projects are approached with the goal of local or regional broadcast. Many projects are service learning oriented such as creating productions for area non-profit organizations. Students will create public service announcements (PSA), news and sports programming, interview and entertainment programs, training videos, short form documentaries and informational and promotional videos. The COM program is holistic and embraces its heritage as a liberal art, social science and craft. Each tradition informs our emphasis on versatility. Students are expected to learn and apply a broad range of communication skills and concepts (e.g., interpersonal, collaborative and persuasive communication, etc.), while pursuing mastery of video production. Even within our digital production sequence, versatility is stressed. Students participate in the entire digital media creation process from client interviews, research, storyboarding, lighting, digital video and audio capture, performance, editing and more. Students carry out a variety of roles within their production teams even as they identify and refine their preferred specialization. Find out more here: <http://uncw.edu/com/>



Film Studies

Most university film programs segregate cinema study and motion picture production. What distinguishes Film Studies at UNCW is the belief that a comprehensive knowledge of film history, theory, and analysis enriches the creative filmmaking process, and that film scholarship benefits from an understanding of how filmmakers conceive, develop, and realize their vision. The Film Studies curriculum reflects this integrated approach; Film Studies majors perform substantial work in both critical studies and film production. Film Studies courses cover all modes of cinematic expression: narrative, documentary, avant-garde/experimental, and animation. In addition, the critical studies curriculum covers film analysis, history, rhetoric and theory, and a wide range of world cinema. The film production curriculum encompasses every aspect of the integrated film production process, including screenwriting, directing, producing, cinematography, camera operation, lighting, sound recording and design, 3D and 2D animation, and interactive media. The motion pictures our students produce and study are those that primarily serve the creative vision of the filmmaker (or filmmakers); the client is a movie theater, film festival, streaming web, or television audience. These fiction, non-fiction and/or abstract movies may certainly inform or persuade, but they may just as likely be designed to entertain, arouse, or provoke the viewer. Film Studies curriculum emphasizes applied learning: FST students program and produce an annual film festival and conference, edit a cinema studies journal, participate in film industry internships, and make movies. Find out more here: <http://uncw.edu/filmstudies/>

