

Master of Arts

Lifespan and Digital Communication (MA)

Gary Beck, Ph.D., Graduate Program Director

The Master of Arts in Lifespan and Digital Communication focuses on the study of human communication and digital media as they develop across the lifespan and is based on the assumption that relational communication, information gathering, conflict management, entertainment consumption, and social media use differs among, within, and between people at various stages of life (childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle age, and elder adulthood). Understanding and analyzing the inseparable relationship between lifespan communication and digital media is a key to success in most 21st century jobs, particularly in the interrelated employment areas of applied research and policy, community networking and outreach, creative industries, education and training, and health and wellness. *This program is offered traditionally and fully online.*

Admission Information

In addition to meeting all general University requirements, an applicant must have an undergraduate average of at least 3.25 in Communication or a related field and a 3.0 overall; two letters of recommendation from faculty members, or those who can evaluate the applicant's academic potential; and a 500-word essay that outlines the applicant's professional and personal goals in pursuing this degree, while explaining the relationship of these aforementioned goals to the Lifespan and Digital Communication degree program. The GRE is waived for this degree.

Curriculum Requirements

The Master of Arts degree in Lifespan and Digital Communication requires 36 credit hours for either the non-thesis or thesis option. No more than 12 credit hours may be taken at the 500 level. Both non-thesis and thesis option students take five required core courses (15 hours) as well either a thesis preparation course (3 hours) or a capstone course (3 hours) for a total of 18 hours of required classes that include:

COMM 601	Lifespan Communication Research and Theory	3
COMM 602	Digital Communication Theory and Research	3
COMM 603	Social Change and Communication Systems	3
COMM 604	Lifespan Communication Research Methods	3
COMM 605	Critical Methods and Digital Communication	3
Total Credit Hours		15

Additional Requirements

In addition, students pursuing the non-thesis option take 18 credit hours of COMM electives and a required 3-credit hour capstone seminar COMM 685. Students pursuing the thesis option take an additional 9 credit hours of COMM electives, COMM 689 (3 hours) (in the first semester they register for thesis hours) as well as COMM 698 & COMM 699: Thesis (six hours) in lieu of COMM 685. This thesis is based on original scholarly research and must address a specific and viable topic salient to the student's core and elective coursework in Lifespan and Digital Communication.

The thesis option is recommended for those students who have maintained a high GPA, have the support of a faculty advisor from the Communication and Theatre Arts department, and who are considering further studies at the doctoral level. The thesis committee, consisting of a chair and two other faculty members certified for graduate instruction, direct and evaluate the student's work. Approval of the thesis proposal by the student's committee and GPD is required before the completion of 27 hours of coursework. Upon completion of the thesis, the committee will conduct a two-hour examination and defense of the thesis.