

MAPW

Department of English
Carnegie Mellon University

Elective Course Requirements and Descriptions

All Information Current as of August 2007

Rhetoric & Research Methods Requirements

As noted on the Curriculum Overview website page, all 6 elective courses required for the MAPW degree are “free” electives for which you have a broad range of options. The only restrictions that apply are that your course selections must be approved by your MAPW advisor, and at least one of the 6 must be a Rhetoric course and one must be a Research Methods Course.

Broadly speaking, all courses offered in the MAPW program are rhetoric courses because they are grounded in a very situated sense of language use and constantly examine the relationship between specific textual practices and the social, professional, and historical contexts in which they are created and used. And all include research and research methods to one degree or another. Course do differ, however, in the extent to which they foreground, emphasize, or balance work in history, theory, and analysis with instruction in and the production of professional genres and the extent to which they provide instruction in specific research methods. MAPW students will generally take multiple electives that can satisfy the rhetoric and research methods requirements but must take at least one in each category.

Courses that fulfill the **Rhetoric requirement** foreground the relationships between specific language practices and the contexts in which they develop and examine these practices from analytic, theoretical, historical, or methodological perspectives. While they may include some instruction in related professional genres or encourage projects in which MAPWs apply the perspectives and methods of the course to problems in professional communication, courses designated as meeting the rhetoric requirement tend on the whole to focus more on theoretical frameworks and analytic methods than on the production of professional texts. Rhetoric courses complement related courses that more explicitly foreground writing and production of professional genres, and students are encouraged to take a mix of course types. So, for example, a student interested in writing in the sciences or healthcare would be encouraged to take Rhetoric of Science as well as Science Writing and/or Healthcare Communication and Environmental Rhetoric. Rhetoric of Science foregrounds how language practices affect our individual and collective understanding of science and support for science policy, while the Science Writing and Healthcare Communication courses provide detailed instruction and practice in the genres common to those fields. Similarly, a student interested in a career in web design might take Communications Revolutions to gain an historical and theoretical understanding of the intricate relationships between technology and communication coupled with courses in On-Line Information Design and Writing for Multimedia to gain experience in the production of relevant contemporary genres.

Rhetoric courses that MAPW students typically take include Processes of Reading and Writing, Communicating in the Global Marketplace, Rhetoric & Public Policy, Visual/Verbal Communication, Communications Revolutions, Language & Culture, Argument, Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, and special topics courses in rhetoric and language study.

Courses designated as fulfilling the **Research requirement** include a substantive focus on reading and applying communications-related research and/or learning and applying specific methods for gathering, evaluating, and testing information and documents. Some courses focus exclusively on research methods; some include research as a substantive element. English Department courses that MAPW students typically take to fulfill this requirement include On-Line Information Design, Research for Writers, Planning & Testing Documents, Instructional Text Design, Journalism, Discourse Analysis, and Sociolinguistics. Other options include courses in statistics, social studies, psychology, or history with appropriate research emphases.

Elective Course Descriptions

The descriptions below cover many of the courses from which MAPW students select their 6 electives. See the **Customizing Your MAPW Degree** section of the website for detailed suggestions on which electives are most relevant to your career path.

Almost all of the courses described below are offered within the English Department and readily available to MAPW students. Elective courses may also be taken through other CMU departments such as business, computer science, public policy, psychology, history, computer science, and design. We've included a sampling of such courses that are relevant and generally available to MAPW students with the caveat that MAPW enrollment in these courses is necessarily subject to space limitations and the pre-requisites or other requirements of the sponsoring departments. All courses listed below are offered on a regular basis. Students will also be informed on a semester-by-semester basis of new or periodic offerings relevant to the degree.

Courses are arranged in alphabetic order. All courses are offered by the English Department unless otherwise indicated.

R = Courses that fulfill Rhetoric requirement

M = Courses that fulfill Research Methods requirement

Advanced Journalism (M)

This continuation of a two-course sequence builds on and extends the skills developed in Contemporary Journalism. Students will cover beats and will be assisted in finding outlets to publish their assignments. Weekly sessions will focus on the history and evolution of journalism in the 20th century as a way of understanding contemporary practices and trends. In addition, classes will include presentations of student projects; discussion of practical problems in newsgathering; analysis of published stories; and visits by professional journalists.

American English (R)

Ever since the development of radio in the early 20th century, Americans have expected that we would soon all talk alike. The conviction that the media would make us all sound the same revived with the widespread adoption of television,

starting in the 1940s, and the development of the internet in the 1990s led to worry about how soon we'd all be writing the same. But fears of the homogenizing effects of the mass media on American English have proven to be exaggerated: Americans still talk and write in many different ways. In this course we explore why this should be. Why don't we all speak alike? Why do we need variation in language? We will explore how regional and social dialects and varieties come to be and what their functions are, and you will learn how to hear, see, and describe varieties of language. We will also touch on American languages other than English. Documentary films and online materials about language will be the basis for another strand of the course, as we work together to explore how linguistic variety can best be represented and explained in non-technical ways, and in a variety of media, for the general public.

Argument (R)

This course begins with the assumption that many of the genres we use in both our personal and professional lives have argumentation as either a dominant or substantive feature. The course is designed for professional writing majors and focuses on developing skill in both analyzing how various arguments and argument strategies work and in learning to produce more effective arguments. The course is concerned with the theory and practice of argument: what an argument is, what makes an argument good or bad, and how arguments are best constructed, analyzed and evaluated. The course explores these questions by drawing upon rhetorical, philosophical, and psychological theories; empirical research; and multiple examples of arguments from a range of situations and genres, including proposals and grant applications. An important focus of the course is on developing the abilities necessary for arguing effectively in various personal and professional contexts.

Basic & Advanced Typography (*School of Design – permission required*)

Basic Typography is designed as the first studio course for students in the communication design program. Students explore the fundamental principles of typography, where type is regarded as an image that serves a variety of communicative purposes. Projects allow students to explore issues of form and meaning, hierarchy, legibility and readability, structure and composition, and the design process. Special tutorials provide basic instruction in software such as InDesign and Adobe Illustrator. In addition, we will also discuss some of the key figures, philosophies, and technologies that have shaped typography. The course will also include a demonstration of letterpress operation in the Design Department's Lab Press and a guided visit to the Hunt Library's Rare Book Room.

Advanced Typography develops advanced skills in typography and communication design, including the study of type and motion. Students learn to conceptualize and visualize more complex bodies of information for a variety of communicative purposes. Projects encourage students to develop a deeper understanding of the expressive potential of type and image and to develop critical and creative thinking skills with which to assess the effectiveness of their own work and that of their peers.

Communicating in the Global Marketplace (R)

This course is a broad introduction to international professional communication. Readings, discussion, and assignments focus on the complex ways in which culture influences communication; the tasks faced by writers, translators and interpreters in international communication; and specific communicative norms and writing techniques appropriate for the global marketplace. We address a number of pressing questions concerning communication across cultural contexts: How do professional

and technical communicators avoid the potential for misunderstanding and conflict that comes with cultural difference? How do companies whose business philosophies have been shaped by certain values and beliefs reach a workforce and customers who subscribe to different worldviews? How can international communication be effectively planned, measured, improved? This course prepares you to address these questions by explaining the specific ways in which national culture influences professional and technical communication, the impact of globalization on business environments, and the ways in which you can rely on general concepts and principles in order to communicate effectively in specific international settings and situations.

Communications Revolutions (R)

What does it mean to live in today's communication technology revolution? In a time when many forms of communication are digitally based, traveling as bits at e-speeds on global computer networks? To begin answering these questions about the present, we will examine the origins and historical development of various communication revolutions – from the invention of writing, the printing press, the telegraph, and so forth – to the Internet. The discussions and readings will seek to provide a comprehensive overview of how communication revolutions developed, with discussion of cognitive, social, political, economic and technological aspects. We will work to put the development of communication technologies in their historical context: How were new forms of communication received? How were they used? How did they affect communication? How did they influence political and social institutions? Our main focus, however, will be on relating historical development to current ones. We will take as case studies several new discursive digital formations such as digital books, on-line newspapers, and possibly global non-government and non-profit organizations (NGOs). The goal of the seminar is for participants to acquire the concepts needed to read the current research/scholarship on communications technologies with perspective and understanding, to apply the research to the analysis of new discursive digital formations, and to be positioned to develop new research and perspectives on these changes.

Computer Programming (Computer Science)

Courses Recommended for MAPW Students. Note that 15-105 is the most general of the courses and appropriate for both those who anticipate doing programming as part of their technical writing career and those who simply want to understand the programming process and be able to work effectively with programmers.

15-100 Introductory/Intermediate Programming

15-100 is an introduction to the process of program design and analysis using the Java programming language for students who have NO prior programming experience. Topics to be covered include basic data types and their operators, I/O, control structures (selection, loops), classes (including methods and fields), arrays, and simple sorting and searching algorithms. Students with prior programming experience are strongly encouraged to take 15-111. If you've taken a programming course in a language other than Java and have used functions, loops, and arrays, you should enroll in 15-111 rather than 15-100.

15-105 Principles of Computation

15-105 is an introduction to principles that form the foundation of computer science for students with no prior background in computing. This course is suitable for students with a non-technical background who wish to study the key principles of computer science rather than just computer programming. Topics include the history of computation, writing algorithms and using programming constructs, data organization, the role of the compiler, programming language paradigm, recursion, algorithm correctness and efficiency, limits of computability and the Turing machine

as a universal computer, the role of the operating system, an introduction to artificial intelligence, and alternative models of computation including parallel, quantum and molecular computing. Although programming principles and programming languages will be discussed, there will be no significant programming exercises in this class.

15-111 Intermediate/Advanced Programming

15-111 is a continuation of the process of program design and analysis. It's appropriate for students who have completed 15-100 or have some prior programming experience (functions, loops, and arrays, not necessarily in Java). The course reinforces object-oriented programming techniques in Java and covers data aggregates, data structures (e.g., linked lists, stacks, queues, trees, and graphs), and an introduction to the analysis of algorithms that operate on those data structures.

Contemporary Journalism (M)

Contemporary Journalism explores how newspaper and magazine reporters think, and how they approach writing stories for newspapers, magazines and/or electronic media. The course focuses on developing the fundamental and necessary skills of journalism. Topics include interviewing, sourcing of stories, accuracy, fairness, voice, audience, ethics and libel law, as well as the acquisition of skills to write news and feature stories. Case studies examine professional ethics and the role of the journalist in framing public discourse. The writing assignments – four stories and several exercises – enable experienced and inexperienced writers to extend their ability to cover events, identify and document trends, and write profiles and interpretative stories. Weekly readings are assigned from coverage of historic events and the writers who covered them. The course also explores online publishing, the effect it is having on journalism and the reliability of information the public receives via the Internet. The course is taught by a practicing journalist.

Discourse Analysis (R or M)

"Discourse" is quite simply "language in use": people talking or signing or writing. Discourse Analysis explores various methods for studying and systematically describing such "language in use" and the linguistic, cognitive, cultural, psychological, and rhetorical considerations that shape its form and function. The various methods taught in the course allow students to systematically analyze and describe specific language practices in both everyday and professional settings as a way of both understanding these practices and considering ways that they might be changed or improved. Theoretical issues that may be discussed include the influence of beliefs about language, the role and influence of standards, how language changes over time in response to current practices, gender and status effects, the influence of audience, and effects of genre and media. The specific methods taught are highly relevant to all professional writers and generally include ethnographic participant-observation, transcription, qualitative text analysis, and standards of evidence.

Environmental Rhetoric (R)

Who speaks for Nature? The poet, the hiker, the rancher, the scientist, or the activist? How do these different stances "represent" the meaning of environment in their words and actions? This introduction to ways we talk about the environment and understand our relation to the natural world will trace an American history that has combined mystical celebration with militant critique, and scientific research with public debate. We will read the "classics" and the current, from Thoreau, Muir, and Carson, to contemporary policy analysts, scientists, and journalists. Your project for this course will be to create an Environmental Dialogue Book that will show how different discourses, from natural history, to science, to action advocacy, allow us to

represent nature and understand environmental issues in dramatically different ways.

Healthcare Communication

Healthcare Communications is designed for all those with an interest in understanding how medical and health care information is constructed by medical experts, healthcare providers, and writers and then communicated to patients, family members, and the general public, all of whom are generally not medical experts but need to thoroughly understand the information to make important health care decisions. Throughout the course, we will (1) explore the interactions of current theory and practice in medical communication and (2) explore the role of writing in the communication and adoption of new therapies and promising medical research. We will also study how new technologies such as the Internet and computer-based training alter the way that information is both constructed and distributed. Last, we will read and discuss published literature dealing with issues related to clinical research and patient care. You'll learn both theory and practice and be expected to use both in your work. Early in the semester, you'll choose a medical area of interest that you will research using sources such as journals, articles, books, web sites as well as direct contact with appropriate medical, healthcare, and/or research professionals. For your final project, you will write and design materials designed to meet a specific need or gap in existing information. The final project can take many forms ranging from magazine articles to informational websites and patient education material such as brochures or training materials. The course is taught by an experienced healthcare communication specialist working actively in the field.

History of Print Culture

This course studies the cultural-historical impact of the printed book and related print media. This is a history we now see with new eyes thanks to the advent of digital media and some provocative new scholarship on media and print history. Both as a material object and a text to read, the book became the focus of many historical practices including new modes of reading, thinking, commerce, action, and political debate. We will focus upon how books were published and bought; how readers grasped and used what they read; how authors, editors, publishers, and/or booksellers collaborated in the market; how regulation and censorship attempted to control print; and how the forming of different print cultures produced social inequality. Such knowledge of the history of print has become especially crucial in an era of emerging new media and communications technologies, and we will explore key moments in the cultural history of books and reading: the earliest books or "incunables" of the 15th century, the commercial revolutionizing of print communication in the 18th, the disciplining of print in the 19th, and the competition of print with new media in the 20th and 21st centuries. Far from merely replacing print, the new-media and digital environments have instead been rapidly transforming our way of seeing the book as a cultural agent and understanding how print has worked as a medium over the past five centuries

Instructional Text Design (M)

Instructional Text Design provides an introduction to the major theories and procedures of instructional design (ID) and explores these theories and procedures across a range of instructional situations. The types of instruction studied range from textbooks, on-line help and user instructions to seminar and workshop presentations and employee training. The course is particularly appropriate for professional and technical writers and prospective teachers, but also a good option for anyone interested in fields such as adult education, consulting, human resources, or

employee training that involve a substantial instructional component. The course is a combination seminar and workshop. Students study the history, major theories, related research, and issues of instructional design, including a detailed examination of models of how people learn from text and what textual features enhance learning. Students complete a series of hands-on assignments, including a final project, in which they design, write, and evaluate instruction.

Human Computer Interaction Methods (*HCI – permission required*)

This course provides an overview and introduction to the field of human-computer interaction (HCI). It introduces students to tools, techniques, and sources of information about HCI and provides a systematic approach to design. The course increases awareness of good and bad design through observation of existing technology, and teaches the basic skills of task analysis as well as analytic and empirical evaluation methods.

Language & Culture (R)

The subject of this course is the life-world of language, the inseparable link between a language and the culture of its speakers. We will investigate this relationship through a range of questions including the following: How do the words and conventions of our own language both influence and limit what we understand about the world? What are the social consequences of differences in speech? What happens when languages compete for political exclusivity? Can language be legislated? What role does language play in areas of ethnic difference? Along what dimensions do the roles of language vary in different societies, and among their own speakers? By what methods do linguists and anthropologists research language in its cultural setting?

Language, Power, and the Law

Professionals in many fields – in particular people engaged in professional communication, in public/community deliberation, or in discussions of personal rights – often find themselves working in legal and regulatory environments without a clear understanding of how legal language operates. This course will give you an introduction to legal discourse and its specialized forms of language and argument as well as a working knowledge of the ways professional writers and ordinary citizens can successfully function within that discourse. It will address the nature of legal language, modes of argument in legal discussion, and critical legal studies. Students will learn practical strategies for navigating and manipulating legal discourse such as locating and reading pertinent legal information and texts; for managing the role of this text in political, corporate, and non-profit situations; and for working with documented public deliberations that surround community action. Writing will focus on legally-oriented professional documents such as memoranda for decision makers, public comment on pending legislation, advocacy and lobbying documents, and consumer and regulatory information for lay readers. The course is taught by a practicing attorney with broad experience teaching legal writing.

Leadership, Dialogue, and Change (R)

Leadership is often associated with the exercise of institutional authority or individual power. However the tradition of leadership based on dialogue shows us a powerful counter-rhetoric – one that organizes people to work together on complex problems through problem-posing, pragmatic inquiry, and the inclusion of marginalized perspectives. We will learn how this approach to leadership and change works in the public voices of writers such as Emerson and Martin Luther King, in the community organizing of an Alinsky, in the cultural critiques of African-American and feminist scholars such as Cornel West or bell hooks, and, of equal importance, in the ways

