The Future for Communication Studies Majors

The fall of 2017 brought with it a whirlwind of changes for the Communication Studies department. A series of retirements occurred, including that of former long-time Communication Studies professors Verna Corgan and Patricia Palmerton. All Communication Studies classes this fall semester were taught by three professors, Suda Ishida, George Gaetano, Kate Zittlow Rogness, and one adjunct professor Keith Bistodeau. This year, Gaetano has also continued in the role of the Chair of Communication Studies Department.

In the midst of these transitions, even more changes are expected that will alter the course of the major beginning as soon as next school year. By fall 2018, it is expected that the Communication Studies major will no longer exist solely as a general field of study, but have several tracks incorporated into it. Students entering the major will have the option of choosing between three tracks: the “General Communication Studies Major Track,” the “Communicating Across Differences Track,” or the “Global Communication and Critical Media Studies Track,” each with their own differing set of class requirements. While some general requirements will remain the same, such as Introduction to Communication Studies, core classes will have an increased focus on the chosen specified area of communications. However, students may also choose to complete requirements for the major as it is now.
Communication Studies majors at Hamline are a diverse group of students that all apply the skills learned from this field of study in differing ways.

Many students at Hamline study subjects in addition to communications and have double majors. Because of the broad applicability of communication studies as a topic, the skills learned through this major complement many other fields. Natasha Semanko (‘19) is a double major in Communication Studies and Elementary Education. Through her communications courses she has studied specific topics that could play important roles in her future career as an educator, such as family communications.

“Teaching does not just involve the student, but it truly involves the family or loved ones of the student as well. Family communication has educated me about the various communication styles of families, which will be beneficial when addressing and interacting with the families of my students,” Semanko said.
“Communication Studies is such a unique subject because it can be connected to so many different aspects, which is what makes it so special and beneficial to study.”

Natasha Semanko ’19

“My major and minor go hand-in-hand in the work field,” according to Abha Karnick (‘19). She is a Communication Studies major and nonprofit management minor with big ideas for applying her education. “I will be using skills of understanding and developing nonprofit organizations right alongside advocating for minorities and developing interpersonal relationships with co-workers and clients I strive to be a Communications Director for a nonprofit where I can connect with people who are also trying to change the world,” said Karnick.
Communication Studies and music major Samantha Lindquist (‘18) also finds that both fields of study work hand in hand to strengthen her skills. “I feel that my Communication Studies background strengthens my ability to communicate through music,” Lindquist said. “I think problem solving through creativity is a skill you learn in music education that is applicable to communication at work, and life in general. Communication Studies education on the other hand, has a more specific, clear cut way to express yourself through research and professional writing.” For Sam, choosing majors that encouraged her to be both creative and analytical has allowed her to stay engaged and interested in multiple ways.
Spotlight On:
Gender, Communication, and Knowledge

For the first time this semester, Communication Studies Professor Kate Zittlow Rogness is teaching the Gender, Communication, and Knowledge course (COMM 3670). This is an upper level Communication Studies class with the goal of increasing students’ awareness of the relationship between communication and gender. It analyzes how the concept of gender is socialized into our lives and the implications this has.

According to Zittlow Rogness, those in the class this Spring 2018 will approach the material “through a lens of reproduction, both in the literal and symbolic sense.” She said students will “consider how gender is produced and reproduced in our communication, and the way this shapes what we know and how we know.” Moving deeper into the class, there will be a specific focus on reproduction and sexual violence.

Even in a broader context, it is important for students in all areas of study to have an understanding of the topic of gender in society, as it shapes all of our everyday experiences. “For the first time in decades, issues related to gender, like sexual violence and the pay gap, are taking center stage,” said Zittlow Rogness. This becomes relevant to Hamline students and Communication Studies majors in particular because they will have the ability to apply what they learn in positive ways that aim to combat how gendered norms facilitate injustice or inequality.

As Zittlow Rogness says, “Hamline students are intelligent and passionate, and I believe they can take the lead in shaping these public conversations, whether they happen in their living room, between their professional colleagues, or in civic spaces.” After taking Gender, Communication, and Knowledge,
Professor Zittelw Rogness hopes that students will “walk away with a strong understanding of the way that... personal and political crises that are generated by gendered norms and the communication skills to address these crises in personal, professional, and civic contexts.”

For the final project in this class, students will be completing a new and exciting kind of assignment. They will be creating and presenting what Zittelw Rogness is calling a “TEDhed Talk” – “hed” meaning Hamline education. These talks could be on any topic that stood out to students during the semester and will also be open to the public. More information and announcements will become available.

Overall, Zittelw Rogness is “positively thrilled to teach this class!”

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Kacie Connelly ’17
posing with fellow New Student Mentors.

Johannah Kueen ’17
attending a Hamline football game.

Jack Bryan ’17
at Hamline’s 2017 commencement ceremony.
For Kacie Connelly ‘17, knowing what career she wanted was a decision made by her sophomore year. “As a Sociology and Communication Studies double major, paired with my involvement on campus, I knew that I wanted to pursue a career as a Student Affairs Professional,” Connelly said. During her time at Hamline, Connelly was very active with organizations and jobs on campus. She was involved with Orientation & First-Year Programs as a New Student Mentor for two years and then as a Student Coordinator for the program. She was also a Fellow for the McVay Youth Program, a participant and student leader with STLF, a member of the NCORE team for 2016-2017, and a member of Student Alumni Board and Senior Team.

Moving towards graduation last year, Connelly was faced with the universal decision of many graduates: whether to work towards grad school or her career. “I thought I was going to go straight into a graduate program after I graduated, however I realized that having some work experience was best for me personally as well as to enhance my resume and overall application to programs,” Connelly said. She accepted a position with College Possible in Milwaukee, a non-profit college access and success organization serving students from low-income backgrounds to support them to and through earning their Bachelor’s degree. Currently, Connelly is doing a year of service with AmeriCorps as a tech-connected College Coach. She supports 140 students in navigating the many barriers of pursuing higher education. “I really enjoy building relationships with students and work on being an assertive coach to help build self-advocacy in them and not pressure students to do certain things,” she said. Being in this field, she has seen how her Communication Studies background directly applies to her work. Connelly says she has
to “use various methods of communication to not only reach [her] students, but also adapt to the communication that best suits them.”

She also enjoys helping recruit high school students to the program. It has helped her realize the path she hopes to take in her career. “I work with mostly students of color who are also first-generation students and it has made it clear I want to work in some capacity as a student affairs professional to help shape policy for this population of students as they are vastly underserved and represented,” she said.

Communication Studies provided Connelly a background and context that has been useful in terms of both intercultural and interpersonal relationships. “[It] has been really useful as I do work with students who are close in age to me but also come from very diverse backgrounds and have much different lived experiences than I do so making sure my coaching is genuine and assertive rather than passive or aggressive is important,” Connelly said.

Through both her college career and professional life, Kacie Connelly is a good example to future Communication Studies majors at Hamline. She is an alum that is now successfully applying her education to her work and enjoying what she does.

-Kacie
Ever since high school, Johannah Kneen ‘17 had set her goals on becoming a broadcast journalist. To make this dream a reality, she used her time at Hamline to gain concrete experience in the field she was interested in through both on-campus work and internships, while also being involved in Hamline A Cappella Choir all four years.

Kneen had the opportunity to intern in the Office of Strategic Communication and Marketing under Gail Nosek. As the former director of public relations and social media at Hamline, Nosek was able to provide her with valuable expertise and support. “This position gave me the tools to launch into a career in the communication and marketing industry,” Kneen said.

Then during her senior year, Kneen also completed an internship at a well-known local television station. Through these experiences, she found that “internships are crucial to fostering yourself as a young career person.” They could cause you to realize the career you wanted is nothing like you imagined or it could solidify your interests, but both are valuable insights. Kneen’s advice to undergraduate students is to “do yourself a favor and take a trip down to the Career Development Center and speak with one of the counselors. You’ll be happy you did!”

Now Kneen works as a Project Manager at a marketing agency in Minneapolis called Street Factory Media. In her professional life, Kneen sees how her Communication Studies background translates into much of what she does. “Every day we communicate,” she said. “Regardless of your chosen industry, communication can translate from colleague to colleague, emails to clients, skype calls with international partners, phone meetings with a boss, training sessions with new hires, [and more].”

“Learning how to navigate through the gray areas of communication in the workforce... has been transferable in my life every single day,” Kneen said. She credits her Communication Studies professors at Hamline for helping her learn these skills that she applies to her post-graduate work. In her experience, “[Hamline] professors go above and beyond to incorporate the intricacies of 21st-century communication into their lessons.”

Kneen’s education and her Communication Studies major both broadened her horizons and made her thankful for her time at Hamline. “We are the future,” she said.
Finding a career that utilized his passion for both Communication Studies and Digital Media Arts was essential for 2017 Hamline graduate Jack Bryan. Now, working at a local non-profit, he is proud to be doing what he loves. However, the process to achieving this goal began long before his graduation.

As an undergrad student, Bryan learned a lot as a Strategic Communications Intern in Hamline’s Marketing and Communications Department. He acted as a student news reporter for Hamline, creating digital content for the website and social media. During his senior year, he applied for a Digital Media Internship position at a non-profit organization, Global Volunteers.

“The bricks of my post-graduation career path were laid months before I moved my tassel,” according to Bryan.

After working as an intern for about a year, Bryan met with the CEO and Senior Vice President of Global Volunteers about his permanent employment following graduation. He was “overjoyed... [that] they realized the value in [his] contributions and wanted to keep [him] around.” Currently, Bryan is working as the Digital Media Production Coordinator in the Marketing Department. He is responsible for the coordination and creation of Global Volunteers’ digital content from concept through delivery.

“In this position, I am able to utilize my knowledge and skills I developed as a Hamline Student studying Communication Studies and Digital Media Arts,” Bryan said.

Global Volunteers was an organization that began international volunteering in 1983, working with local leaders on the problems that they communicate are most important. The themes of collaboration and justice motivate Bryan in his work. “I know my contribution is playing a role in waging peace, promoting justice, and raising children’s potential around the world,” he said. “I’m proud to work here.”

Overall, his education at Hamline helped Bryan prioritize his values, gain confidence, and apply his knowledge to his work beyond school. He said that “pairing Communication Studies with Digital Media Arts has been one of the best decisions [he has] ever made.”

- Jack
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