

Communications and Public Policy

The Communications and Public Policy major explores the connection between communicating with citizens and creating, implementing and evaluating public policy. Students in the program will explore the influence of communications in the process of a participatory democracy, preparing them to work as communications professionals in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

Communications and Public Policy Major

Students majoring in Communications and Public Policy (COPP) are required to complete 36 credit hours of COPP courses. Students majoring in COPP will be encouraged to explore specific areas of public policy either through a double major or a minor in another discipline, or by exploring policy areas across disciplines through the breadth and depth of the Liberal Arts experience at St. Thomas. These public policy areas might include politics and governance; law and justice; Indigenous rights and policy issues; journalism; social policy and social justice; science and technology; and environmental policy issues.

In their fourth year, students will complete a mandatory rigorously supervised internship course that will require all students to gain valuable professional experience before graduation.

Communications and Public Policy Minor

Students who would like to have a Minor in Communications and Public Policy must complete 18 credit hours in COPP courses.

Core Courses and Electives

Students must complete 36 credit hours in Communications and Public Policy Courses. A sample of the structure of the program is listed below.

Year 1

COPP 1013	Introduction to Communications
COPP 1023	Introduction to Policy Studies

Year 2

COPP 2013	Fundamentals of Writing
COPP 2023	Public Engagement
COPP 2033	Professional Communications Toolkit

Year 3

COPP 3013	Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasive Writing and Public Speaking
COPP 3023	Ethics and Social Responsibility
COPP 3033	Public Policy and the Media
COPP 3043	Business Communications and Marketing
COPP 3053	Social Media
COPP 3063	Special Topics
COPP 3073	Science Communications

Year 4

COPP 4006	Senior Seminar: Case Studies in Communications and Public Policy
COPP 4016	Internship

COPP-1013. Introduction to Communications

This course introduces students to the history and evolution of the communications profession, with particular emphasis on communications in the public policy sphere, from the pioneers who sold ideas on behalf of their clients, to the modern world of two-way communications with the public through the internet and social media tools. The course will explore how this evolution is changing the way governments, politicians, non-governmental organizations, citizens groups and corporations interact with the public.

COPP-1023. Introduction to Policy Studies

This course introduces students to the policy making process, how policies are researched, drafted, legislated, and communicated. The course will also explore how non-governmental organizations, citizens groups and corporations influence public policy.

COPP-2013. Fundamentals of Writing

Communicating public policy requires clear and effective writing at every stage in the process. This is a foundational writing course that will help students learn to express themselves in clear, compelling language. Prerequisites: COPP 1013, COPP 1023

COPP-2023. Public Engagement (POLS 2333)

This course will explore how social media and internet tools are transforming the world of communications and public policy. The course will explore cases around the world where social media and the access to information on the internet is influencing public policy and the political process. Prerequisite: COPP 2013

COPP-2033. Professional Communications Toolkit

This course will introduce students to the methods for gathering and analyzing data through interviews, surveys, focus groups, content analysis, and polls and how this information can be applied to public policy initiatives and planning an accompanying communications strategy. Prerequisite: COPP 2013

COPP-3013. Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasive Writing and Public Speaking

This course builds on the skills developed in the Fundamentals of Writing course and applies them to rhetoric, speech writing and debating. Students will read ancient and modern speeches, historical writings on rhetoric and explore the influence of persuasive writing on public affairs. Prerequisites: COPP 2013, COPP 2023, COPP 2033.

COPP-3023. Ethics and Social Responsibility

This course explores the ethical challenges that arise while communicating public policy issues for an organization in the public or private sector. The course will allow students to develop a code of ethics for a communications professional. Prerequisites: COPP 2013, COPP 2023, COPP 2033.

COPP-3033. Public Policy and the Media (POLS 3213)

This course will explore how public policies are reported in various forms of media and how communications planning can influence the success or failure of these initiatives. The course will examine communications planning and media relations strategies such as proactive and reactive methods of representing an organization in the media. Prerequisites: COPP 2013, COPP 2023, COPP 2033.

COPP-3043. Business Communications and Marketing

This course explores the role of communications in business settings, including professional writing, the power of narrative, the influence of social media, and the connection between communications and marketing.

COPP-3053. Social Media

Social media within the communications environment is becoming the most important way organizations communicate with their publics. In this course we will consider social media platforms, theories of media communications, critical understandings of social media including ethics, as well as practical application of analytics and measurement of social media including search engine optimization, Google Analytics and social media management. This course provides a review of current and emerging digital media, with particular emphasis on social media and its impact on a variety of industry sectors such as marketing and advertising, government and public policy.

COPP-3063. Special Topics

This course consists of an in-depth analysis of a specific topic in communications and public policy. The course will be organized around the special interests of full time and visiting faculty. Topics could include: policy analysis, public management, organizational social media management, organizational communications, and social media and website design including search engine optimization, Google Analytics and basic back end social media training.

COPP-3073. Science Communications

This course examines how governments and citizens communicate about critical scientific issues, spanning health, nutrition and food safety, and climate change. We ask which science communications strategies are effective and why, and we will explore cases around the world where scientific knowledge has been central to crisis management or the development of new policies and standards. As part of these discussions, we touch on topics ranging from risk communication, misinformation, the effects of communications campaigns on changing public attitudes and behaviors the effects of media echo chambers on attitudes to science, populism and science, as well as social movements and 'undone' science. Prerequisites: COPP 1013 and COPP 1023.

COPP-4006. Senior Seminar: Case Studies in Communications and Public Policy

The capstone case study course will require students to survey scholarly literature on communications and public policy analysis (regarding policy development, design and implementation) and apply this research as they write two case studies that allows them to synthesize the issues encountered with their studies in Communications and Public Policy. Prerequisites: COPP 3013, COPP 3023, COPP 3033.

COPP-4016. Internship

Students will complete two supervised professional unpaid internships in a professional communications agency, non-profit organization, or government office and will complete a detailed exit report. Where possible, students will have the opportunity to pursue internships that require them to work in French or in a bilingual office. Prerequisites: COPP 3013, COPP 3023, COPP 3033.

Cross-Listed Courses**ENVS-2043. Communicating Sustainability (COPP)**

The public sphere is filled with competing visions, agendas and styles of speaking about the critical social ecological issues facing our world such as climate change, ecosystem destruction and chemical pollution. This course examines how communication shapes our perceptions of sustainability issues; introduces various media platforms and public forums that are used for communicating about sustainability issues; analyzes the communicative strategies of various actors (scientists, corporate lobbyists, environmentalists, ordinary citizens) in trying to influence decision makers; and prepares students to participate in conversations and debates about sustainability issues in their communities. There is no prerequisite.

JOUR-3163. Journalism and Stories that Change the World

This course explores how the new media and social media are contributing to political and social change around the world.

POLS-3223. Public Administration

This course will focus on selected public policy issues in contemporary New Brunswick politics. Special attention will be given to the problems of intergovernmental affairs, recent constitutional negotiations, cabinet policy development, and public finance.

POLS-3613. Model United Nations

This course will prepare students for participation in a Model United Nations, either Canadian or American sponsored. In a model UN simulation, students represent an assigned country's foreign policy on assigned issues on the UN agenda. The course will begin with an examination of the UN and its procedures. Subsequent topics will include researching the assigned UN issues and the assigned country's policy on them; preparation of working papers and motions, and strategies for effective conference participation. Fund raising for the trip required: half credit course, but meets first and second terms; limited enrolment.