Saint Mary's MA in Communication
A One-of-a-Kind Master's Program

The Master of Arts in Communication at Saint Mary's College of California is the **only** one of its kind in the Bay Area. Built as an accelerated one-year program focused on strategic communication, our MA provides students from *any* undergraduate background with applied research experience and in-demand professional skills rooted in communication theory that give students a *valuable* and *competitive* edge in the post-graduate job market or when applying to PhD programs for further study. With small cohorts and committed faculty focused on student growth, Saint Mary's provides all of the benefits of a small liberal arts education alongside focused mentorship, career preparation, and cohort connection.

Our MA program accepts students with a Bachelor's degree in any major. While a background in Communication might give you a head-start on certain concepts and skills you'll encounter in the classroom, it is definitely not required to succeed in our Master's—in fact, we believe that an MA in Communication can apply to any major and help students become better in whatever field they choose to pursue.



While the Fall semester marks the official start of new one-year MA in Comm cohorts, the program can also arrange for longer-term course plans of either 1 ½ years or two years that allow prospective students to lessen the workload of the research component of the program—this involves taking one or more of our Bridge Course elective courses in the semesters leading up to the start of the program. We are **always** happy to try and accommodate the needs of prospective students, so please reach out to Collin Skeen at cas38@stmarys-ca.edu for more information.

Saint Mary's MA in Communication
Core Curriculum

The Master of Arts in Communication
A Lifetime of Experience in One Year

Course work for the MA in Communication program consists of five required core courses, four cross listed electives, and one of two options for a final "capstone" culminating experience. Students will complete a total of nine courses (34 Carnegie units). The core courses are designed to build mutually complementary competencies that are augmented by the electives and brought together in either a comprehensive exam or an internship/externship experience in June of the final year.

The core courses are offered in a hybrid format (meaning class periods may be conducted on Zoom) while electives will be offered fully in-person. Due to our multidisciplinary nature and the varied academic backgrounds of our students, there are minor variations in pathways for completion (see additional pages).

Core Courses (19 units total)
COMM 600: Theories of Communication (4 units)
COMM 605: Applied Research Design (4 units)
COMM 606: Applied Research Methods (3 units)
COMM 602: Strategic Mediated Communication (4 units)
COMM 607: Applied Research Analysis (4 units)
COMM 691: Comprehensive Exam **or** COMM 690: Intercultural Externship (0 units)

Electives (15 units total)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (3 or 4 units)*
*Starting in 2026, one 3 unit Bridge Course will count towards degree completion.

Grand Total: 34 Units

Note: Not all upper division Comm electives are eligible for cross listing. Considering the extra work and rigor required to receive graduate credit, students must make sure to register for the correct graduate-level course and section. Courses previously offered as Bridge Courses include (but are not necessarily limited to) the examples below.

COMM 506: Intercultural Communication
COMM 544: Community Media
COMM 558: Topics in Film: Brazilian Film
COMM 560: Communication and Social Justice: Whiteness
COMM 562: Communication Strategy
COMM 564: Health Communication
COMM 565: Social Media and Society
COMM 570: Group Facilitation and Leadership
COMM 577: Conflict Management
COMM 581: Television Criticism
COMM 583: Media and Relationships

Saint Mary's MA in Communication
Sample Course Plans

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Pathway #1: *Bridge Course +1 Program*

Prior to applying during their Senior year, students are encouraged to complete two Bridge Courses. These are cross-listed graduate versions of several of our upper division undergraduate electives offered to rising juniors and seniors. Successful completion of these courses results in priority entrance to the program and gives students a better sense of the kind of work they'll be doing in the one-year grad program.

Considering the importance of building their SMC schedule, we encourage any students interested in the MA in Communication program to work closely with their advisors and to get started early. This way, students can plan their entry into the program by fitting in two Bridge Courses without affecting other required classes needed for their undergraduate degree.

During Undergraduate **(8 Units Total)**
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
**One Bridge Course each semester of senior year is recommended.*

+1 Graduate Year

Fall (11 or 12 Units Total)
COMM 600: Theories of Communication (4 units)
COMM 605: Applied Research Design (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (3 or 4 units)

Jan Term (3 Units Total)
COMM 606: Applied Research Methods (3 units)

Spring (12 Units Total)
COMM 602: Strategic Mediated Communication (4 units)
COMM 607: Applied Research Analysis (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)

June Term (0 Units Total)
COMM 691: Comprehensive Exam **or** COMM 690: Intercultural Externship (0 units)

Grand Total: 34 Units

Saint Mary's MA in Communication
Sample Course Plans

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Pathway #2: *SMC Undergrad +1 Program*

In a perfect world, students would have already taken their Bridge Courses and would be ready to jump right into the graduate Comm program—but scheduling can be tough, time slips away, plans are changed, and we totally understand. So no problem! We've got students covered and we still have an easy way for students to start the one-year MA in Communication.

For students who were unable to take the recommended Bridge Courses during their undergraduate career, the program gives students the option to take the two extra classes during their Fall or Spring semesters in the program. In some years, we will also offer students the opportunity to take one of the Bridge Courses during the Summer before the program begins.

<u>+1 Graduate Year</u>

Fall (15 or 16 Units Total)
COMM 600: Theories of Communication (4 units)
COMM 605: Applied Research Design (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (3 or 4 units)

Jan Term (3 Units Total)
COMM 606: Applied Research Methods (3 units)

Spring (16 Units Total)
COMM 602: Strategic Mediated Communication (4 units)
COMM 607: Applied Research Analysis (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)

June Term (0 Units Total)
COMM 691: Comprehensive Exam **or** COMM 690: Intercultural Externship (0 units)

Grand Total: 34 Units

Saint Mary's MA in Communication
Sample Course Plans

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Pathway #3: *SMC Alumni/Non-SMC*

Our MA in Communication eagerly accepts Saint Mary's alumni and students who have graduated with a Bachelor's degree from a different school. While our cohort is typically made up of students who recently attended Saint Mary's, we appreciate and value the varied perspectives that come from people with different backgrounds.

The biggest difference for alumni/non-SMC students is that students will need to take two additional Bridge Courses in addition to the typical one-year program curriculum. We give students the option to take these two extra classes during their Fall or Spring semesters in the program. In some years, we will also offer students the opportunity to take one of the Bridge Courses during the Summer before the program formally begins.

<u>+1 Graduate Year</u>

Fall (15 or 16 Units Total)
COMM 600: Theories of Communication (4 units)
COMM 605: Applied Research Design (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (3 or 4 units)

Jan Term (3 Units Total)
COMM 606: Applied Research Methods (3 units)

Spring (16 Units Total)
COMM 602: Strategic Mediated Communication (4 units)
COMM 607: Applied Research Analysis (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)

June Term (0 Units Total)
COMM 691: Comprehensive Exam **or** COMM 690: Intercultural Externship (0 units)

Grand Total: 34 Units

Saint Mary's MA in Communication
Sample Course Plans

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Pathway #4: *Spring Start or Two-Year Pathway*

In addition to accommodating students from other undergraduate institutions and those following different degree paths, our MA in Communication also provides flexibility for students looking to start the program in Spring.

One major benefit of this pathway is the ability to take two of the required Bridge Course electives in the Spring before formally starting the one-year program. In addition to helping students acclimate more gradually to our Graduate Comm program, this pathway also allows students who did not take Bridge Courses in undergrad to lessen their overall workload during the research-intensive portions of the program.

Students looking to stretch the program to two years of coursework will take two Bridge Courses during the Fall and Spring of their first year followed by the sequence of 600-level courses in their second year. Potential three year course plans are also available by request.

<u>+1 Graduate Year</u>

Spring (7 or 8 Units Total)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (3 or 4 units)

Fall (12 Units Total)
COMM 600: Theories of Communication (4 units)
COMM 605: Applied Research Design (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)

Jan Term (3 Units Total)
COMM 606: Applied Research Methods (3 units)

Spring (12 Units Total)
COMM 602: Strategic Mediated Communication (4 units)
COMM 607: Applied Research Analysis (4 units)
Bridge Course—Cross listed elective (4 units)

June Term (0 Units Total)
COMM 691: Comprehensive Exam **or** COMM 690: Intercultural Externship (0 units)

Grand Total: 34 Units

Saint Mary's MA in Communication
2026-2027 Core Classes

The Master of Arts in Communication
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Fall 2026 COMM Core Courses (all scheduled course days/times are tentative)

COMM 600-01 – Theories of Communication (T/TH – 9:50am-11:30pm – Neeley Silberman)
This course investigates the relationship between theories of communication and culture. Students will use case studies to apply a range of communication theories to analyze problems that typically arise in "real world" settings. Students are expected to make a clear connection between a communication phenomenon (e.g., current social issues) and communication theories as they work toward critical engagement with professional communication competencies.

COMM 605-01 – Applied Research Design (T/TH – 1:30pm-3:10pm – Veronica Hefner / Ellen Rigsby)
This course is designed to focus on methods of data gathering. In this course, students will learn designs of quantitative and qualitative research, such as experiment, survey, interview, participant observation, and ethnography. Students gain research design experience by designing a project to address a particular intercultural communication phenomenon, and the importance of proper research design for professional applications, including project or training assessment and evaluation. Each student's proposed research project will be executed in the Applied Research Methods course.

January 2027 COMM Core Course

COMM 606-01 – Applied Research Methods (TBD)
This course prepares students to collect data for a research project using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The primary foci include experiment, survey, interview, participant observation, and ethnography. Continuing from the Applied Research Design course, students will collect data from the previous semester's project designs, gaining experience in a variety of methods as well as how to work in research teams.

Spring 2027 COMM Core Courses

COMM 602-01 – Strategic Mediated Communication (M/W/F – 9:15am-10:20am – Aaron Sachowitz)
This course examines media and mediated forms of communication as they intersect with cultural, economic, political or social contexts. The focus is on both the analysis and strategic use of mediated communication for various occasions, including development, social change, crisis response, corporate/organizational digital presence, and social justice. The course integrates both critical and practical approaches to understanding effective mediated communication.

COMM 607-01 – Applied Research Analysis (M/W– 2:45pm-4:25pm – Veronica Hefner / Ellen Rigsby)
This course prepares students to analyze a research project using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The primary foci of data analysis include (M)ANOVA, regression, and mediation and moderation analysis for quantitative survey data and coding based on the grounded theory approach for the qualitative data. Continuing from the Applied Research Methods course, students will analyze the data, interpret and report the results.

Saint Mary's MA in Communication
2026-2027 Bridge Courses/Electives

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NOTE: For the following classes, current Comm graduate students will take Section 01 while undergrads taking the courses as Bridge Classes will enroll in Section 02.

Fall 2026 COMM Bridge Courses

COMM 518 – Communication, Policy, and Law (T/TH – 3:20-5:00pm – Ellen Rigsby)

COMM 563 – AI in Society: Communication, Critique, and Professional Practice (T/TH – 11:40am-1:20pm – Aaron Sachowitz)

COMM 586 – Data Science for Communication (W – 4:45-7:15pm – Jeff Sheng)

Spring 2027 COMM Bridge Courses

COMM 561 – Communication and Social Justice: Drag (T/TH – 9:50-11:30am – Scott Schonfeldt-Aultman)

COMM 582 – Race and Representation (T/TH – 8-9:40am – Samantha Joyce)

COMM 583 – Media and Relationships (M/W/F – 10:40-11:45am – Veronica Hefner)