

Courses in the master's programme Communication Studies

Academic year: 2018-2019

Obligatory courses

Essentials in Communication Science

In this course, we will make an inventory of relevant theories and key concepts within communication science. The first part of the course focuses on the general communication theories; the second part addresses a selection of theories that are relevant for the chosen specialization. Students are expected to actively work with theories and key concepts. To do so, they will describe and explain theories and key concepts, compare and relate them to each other, and reflect on their merits and limitations. Based on these activities, they formulate their own vision on the discipline and their chosen specialization. They are encouraged to explore their personal fascinations.

Societal Challenges

Major concerns shared by people often involve communication, as their cause, the possible solution, or both. A challenge-based approach on science calls for students to understand, study and engage with societal challenges in domains such as health, demographic change, security, efficient energy, governance, sustainability, inclusion, and freedom. In this course, students will practice setting their footprint by exploring a societal challenge from a communication perspective. Working in groups of students with different master specializations, students will focus on one societal challenge using a combination of fieldwork and literature research. Students analyse the societal challenge from the perspective of their specialization, and to collectively write an advice report on the role of communication.

Research Topics

In this course, students gain experience with identifying a relevant research problem within the chosen specialization and writing a research proposal. To do so, they conduct a literature study, write a literature review, formulate relevant research questions, and select a suitable research approach. Students work individually on their research proposal, supervised by a senior teaching staff member and supported by a small group of peers. They are instructed about effectively writing and presenting research proposals. The course ends with a pitch, in which the proposal is convincingly presented. Students also practice judging research proposals and presentations. The research proposal may serve as the start of the Master's thesis.

Internship

Students have the possibility to do an internship within an organization in the Netherlands or abroad. An internship may be aimed at gaining work experience, orienting on a future career, or confronting acquired knowledge and skills with the practice of academic professionals working in the field. The internship may or may not be combined with the Master's thesis. In their internship, students are expected to function as a junior communication professional, to describe their activities, and reflect on their functioning and personal competencies. The programme provides a supervisor from the teaching staff.

Specialization courses

Advanced Big Data Analytics

Specialization: Digital Marketing Communication

In this course, we explore the use of big data analytics to analyse and interpret the communication, actions, and organization of social relations of people in organizations. Attention will be paid to text mining and various machine learning techniques will be studied. Students can familiarize themselves with software dedicated to handling and analysing textual data. Besides, we will focus on how to analyse and use large data sets. Special attention will be paid on how to interpret the results, and how to integrate the advantages of big data analytics in operational settings. Students will be introduced to the literature on big data analytics in communication and management studies. We will explore how organizations can benefit most of their data.

Advanced Topics in Digital Marketing

Specialization: Digital Marketing Communication

In his course we get the students in touch with established and emerging technologies, part of the marketing toolbox. We expose the students to various aspects of the Digital Transformation in the Marketing and teach them the skills and knowledge underpinning the work of the modern and future marketer. The course reviews current theories, models and management approaches in the field of marketing in digital environments with focus on four technology domains that are shaping already the marketing practice: Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), the Consumer Neuroscience (Neuromarketing) and the Big Data as the basis of marketing information and data-driven marketing. The students explore cutting-edge topics of the marketing practice in a research paper based on a critical literature review of a topic they choose. Two practical assignments allow students to apply neuromarketing methods in real-life situations and get familiar with the emerging marketing method of Behavioural Targeting.

Advertising and Consumer Psychology

Specializations: Digital Marketing Communication *and* Marketing Communication & Design

Having a great product with a well-balanced price, effective distribution and a company with vision and passion behind it to satisfy the desires of consumers are some of the fundamental prerequisites for business success. Effective marketing communications in a digital world is another critical element. In this course we will discuss relevant psychological theories behind advertising, branding, design, media, in-store promotions, word-of-mouth, virality, influencer marketing, native advertising, content marketing, social media, etc. During the lectures students will be stimulated to discuss various marketing communication cases. The focus of this course will be on the effective use of psychological theories towards the application of on and offline advertising and other marketing communications activities to achieve business success.

Design and Behaviour Change

Specialization: Marketing Communication & Design

In this course, we explore how design may contribute to behaviour change in the areas of health and wellbeing, pro-social behaviour, and sustainability. Throughout the course, students will work in multi-disciplinary teams together with students from Industrial Design Engineering. In these teams, students will bring together insights from design research and consumer psychology and will actually 'use' these findings to create and test a design for behaviour change intervention. By bridging the gap from theory to practice, students will become aware of individual, social and environmental determinants of behaviour change, and will be able to identify opportunities for using the communicative potential of design. At the end of the course, teams will present their work and lay down their findings in a scientific report.

Design and Service Experience

Specialization: Marketing Communication & Design

Managing consumer experience and behaviour is very important for service organizations. We explore how environmental design decisions impact the way consumers think, feel and behave. The servicescape consists of a complex interaction of social and environmental elements which are experienced holistically. Within the service environment, customer motivations vary. Dependent on the activity at hand (i.e., are consumers performing a complex or simple task), situational context (i.e., peak or off-peak hours), and the consumer's emotional and motivational state (i.e., are consumers looking for a specific goal, or just enjoying the environment), environmental design of the servicescape impacts consumer experience and behaviour. In this course, key concepts and theories of consumer experience and the service environment will be discussed and students will translate theory into practice. In a group assignment, students will develop and present a conceptual design for a specific service environment.

E-strategizing

Specialization: Digital Marketing Communication

In this course the student will learn how to develop a Digital Strategy for a chosen company and assess information strategies in practice. The student will also become familiar with the latest scientific insights by the study of e-strategy articles that cover e-strategies from different angles and follow the book "Digital Future". On macro level a network perspective is chosen. Strategy is an inter-organizational effort with many stakeholders with many different interests. The student will specifically learn how to make a digital media strategy with a canvas approach. The student will take part in a case study and write an integral Information plan for a given company, using the information planning literature provided. The course balances comprehensive, incremental and transactional planning and includes inter organizational e-strategizing and e-governance. A socio-technical approach is followed with pre-sensing versus top down approach.

Human-Centred Design

Specializations: Technology & Communication *and* Marketing Communication & Design

In this course we focus on Human-Centred Design (HCD) processes and methods. Starting from an advanced understanding of usability, user experience, and accessibility garnered from recent literature, students will work on designs meant to inform, assist, and communicate with specific target groups. Students will engage with a range of methods throughout the different stages of a human-centred design process, with the end goal of delivering a concept or prototype app for a group of target users. The course has a workshop character, requiring intensive team-based participation. Students will iterate on their concept app with knowledge gained from the literature and their own findings researching user groups. Throughout this course, we place the intended user in the middle of the design process to ensure the resulting app will be best suited to their specific needs and abilities.

Innovative Digital Public Digital Services

Specialization: Technology & Communication

In this course, we explore the most important developments in digital public services. We focus on how to apply and design ICT applications for citizens, how to market them and how all kinds of citizens do cope with the accelerating digitization of government. All these aspects are studied within specific contexts of governmental agencies, such as municipalities, provinces, national governments and international agencies such as the EU. Topics that are addressed in this course are amongst others history, presence and future of digital public services; how governments cope with differences in users of the digital society; how public services are designed, how citizens are nudged by governments to use government-preferred channels. Students will be introduced to literature at the intersection of public communication, public administration and technology studies. This course will provide a framework for students who will work or do research in the public sector in the future.

Networked Business Communication

Specialization: Organizational Communication & Reputation

In this course, we explore how communication is affected by disrupted entrepreneurship. Since traditional business structures are declining, entrepreneurs use new communication (strategies). Instead of traditional communication instruments in organizations, the use of Social Networking Sites, instant messaging, remote meetings and collaborative tools is common. In this course we focus on current experiences, habits and trends, advantages and pitfalls and future perspectives. In cooperation with various organizations, students will work on assignments from and for dynamic, entrepreneurial organizations on the one hand. And on the other hand, based on theoretical insights, we will analyse how disruptive organizations organize themselves and relate these analyses to the existing scientific field. Company visits and guest lectures are the core of this course.

Public Affairs

Specialization: Organizational Communication & Reputation

Organizations increasingly invest in public affairs activities to respond to societal and political developments, to promote relationships with key stakeholders, and to influence policy making. In this course, we will explore the theoretical foundations of public affairs and its practical applications. We focus on how activities such as issue management, stakeholder management, and lobbying, can be applied for the organization's interests. As public affairs is a relatively young scientific discipline and still in search of an identity, students are challenged to critically reflect on it from an academic perspective. Furthermore, students will apply theory in practice by designing a public affairs strategy for an organization.

Reputation Management

Specializations: Organizational Communication & Reputation *and* Marketing Communication & Design

As products and services have become more and more alike, organizations increasingly acknowledge the need to differ based on what makes them unique: their corporate reputation. Organizations with an attractive reputation prove effective in attracting customers, investors and good staff. Also, they can survive corporate crises that may be fatal for other - less reputable - organizations. Therefore it is important for both organizations and scholars to pay systematic attention to issues concerning the process of reputation formation. In this course, we analyse how to manage corporate reputation by relating the concept to the following topics: identity and image; stakeholder management; reputation measurement; corporate social responsibility; crisis communication; and media coverage. Every week another organization is put central that serves as a case to discuss relevant reputational topics.

Social Implications of the Internet

Specialization: Technology & Communication

The Internet has been associated with changes in many areas of social life. Debates about the social implications focus on important topics such as digital inequality, economic growth, participation in policy making, cultural consumption, health, family, and regulation. Discussions of the implications often result in utopian and dystopian effects and are often supported by shallow arguments. In this course, students are encouraged to take a more critical look, resulting in a better understanding of the main perspectives and key findings about the social implications of the Internet. The course will be taught in weekly classes, each consisting of a lecture followed by discussion. The discussion will require familiarity with the provided readings. The goal is to expose students to several insights about which they have to write two short essays (on any two of the topics covered).

Trust and Risk

Specializations: Organizational Communication & Reputation *and* Digital Marketing Communication *and* Technology & Communication

In this course, we will explore the positive impact of trust on the establishment and the creation of various forms of interactions and exchanges, just as we will discuss the link between risk perception and trust in different contexts. The general discussion of what trust is and the relevant theories on its emergence and evolution will then proceed to an elaborate discussion of the role of trust in enhancing a range of positive organizational outcomes (e.g. commitment, satisfaction, productivity). Subsequently, the importance of trust for the success of organizations in both offline and online environments will be examined. Within this course, we will also focus on diverse strategies used to mitigate the negative consequences of breach of trust. For the duration of the course, seminal literature on trust from a range of disciplines (psychology, sociology, management science, marketing, human-computer interaction, and communication science) will be used.

User Support

Specialization: Technology & Communication

In this course, we explore how organizations nowadays design, implement and update their user documentation. At home and at work, many people want or need to use new and complex technologies. User documentation is needed to support them using these technologies effectively and efficiently. Contemporary user documentation systems allow organizations to design and implement all user documentation in an efficient and flexible way. This facilitates the process of tailoring documentation to the target group's specific needs. Students in this course have to advise an organization about a new user documentation system. This includes advice on the content and structure of documentation, including some examples they have designed themselves, and advice on how to manage all user documentation efficiently.

Vision, Strategy and Leadership

Specialization: Organizational Communication & Reputation

In this course, we explore how professionals and organizations can cope with the current major transitions in societies and markets. Developments in technological, cultural, economic, ecological and behavioural fields fundamentally affect organizations and will change the demands on communication professionals dramatically. This course focuses on these transitions and will give students an overview in contemporary theoretical insights and practical implications for organizing and communicating. We will visit companies that face these challenges. Students will think about and create their own portfolio of competences and vision needed for 21st century professional life.

Work and Technology

Specializations: Organizational Communication & Reputation

In this course, we explore how technologies change the ways people communicate, act, and organize their social relations in organizational contexts. The interplay between individual experiences and social dynamics surrounding technology use is central in this course. We focus on people's individual experiences when interacting with work-related technologies and how their experiences are related to their particular usage, needs, motivations, skills, expertise, and professional identity. Furthermore, we focus on the social dynamics that emerge when people collectively make sense of technology use in organizations, with special attention to organizational norms, processes, and practices which enable and constrain the adoption and use of new technologies. Students will be introduced to literature at the intersection of organization theory, organizational communication, and technology studies. We will explore how technology impacts work and organizations through theoretical lenses, like structuration theory, practice theory, affordances, and sociomateriality.