

COMMUNICATION

Degree Type: MS

The MSC program offers two paths to the degree. The **Custom Leadership Program (CLP)** and the **Online Leadership Program (OLP)**. While each program differs in its delivery method, both allow the completion of the degree in as little as one calendar year. The degree timeline is also flexible; once enrolled, students have up to five years to complete the degree requirements.

Custom Leadership Program

The Custom Leadership Program offers in-person courses (weekdays/weekends) that are typically 10 weeks each.

Under CLP, we offer three different concentrations: Organizational Leadership, Strategic Communication, and Artificial Intelligence. While not required for the degree, concentrations offer MSC students a unique opportunity to tailor their studies through selective coursework. This focused approach enables students to deepen their expertise and stand out in today's job market by strengthening relevant, in-demand skills. Students may also pursue a dual concentration for a broader skillset.

- **Organizational Leadership**

The Organizational Leadership Concentration focuses on the core curriculum themes of collaborative leadership and managing complexity. Students who complete this specialization develop more in-depth knowledge and skills necessary to be highly effective leaders and managers within an organization.

- **Strategic Communication**

The Strategic Communication Concentration focuses on the core curriculum themes of managing complexity and effective communication. Students who complete this specialization develop more in-depth knowledge and skills necessary to be highly interactive communicators to diverse audiences within and without an organization.

- **Artificial Intelligence**

The Artificial Intelligence Concentration focuses on the core curriculum themes of technological fluency and adaptive communication. Students who complete this specialization develop more in-depth knowledge and skills necessary to apply, assess, explain, and manage AI tools, enabling them to translate complex data and emerging technologies into clear strategies for diverse organizational audiences.

Online Leadership Program

The MSC Online Leadership at Northwestern University helps experienced professionals sharpen their ability to drive strategy and lead through effective communication. Whether managing global teams, leading organizational change, or moving into executive leadership, Online Leadership offers the frameworks, mentorship, and network to elevate your impact. This is a fully virtual program designed for flexibility and work-life balance. Five-week courses are offered asynchronously.

Additional resources:

- Department Website (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/socgrad/communication/msc.northwestern.edu/academics/>)
- MS in Communication (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/socgrad/communication/communication-ms/>)

MSC 481-0 Foundations of Professional Communication (1 Unit)

Designed specifically with early career professionals in mind, MSC 481 is an opportunity to develop and refine communication and analytical skills in business-oriented research, writing and oral presentation that will be useful in the professional world.

MSC 481-6 Foundations of Professional Communication (1 Unit)

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MSC 482-0 Public Persuasion (1 Unit)

This course is an exploration of the ways in which communication can be more effectively used to exert influence and to exercise power — bringing together a variety of disciplines including rhetorical analysis, leadership theory, composition, speechwriting, and public speaking.

MSC 482-6 Public Persuasion (1 Unit)

This course is an exploration of the ways in which communication can be more effectively used to exert influence and to exercise power — bringing together a variety of disciplines including rhetorical analysis, leadership theory, composition, speechwriting, and public speaking.

MSC 483-0 Using Data to Make Informed Decisions (1 Unit)

In this course, students study the use, collection, analysis and application of information in organizational planning and decision-making.

MSC 483-6 Using Data to Make Informed Decisions (1 Unit)

In this course, students study the use, collection, analysis and application of information in organizational planning and decision-making.

MSC 488-0 Organizational Behavior (1 Unit)

MSC 490-0 Strategy in the Global Economy (1 Unit)

This course will discuss the issues (problems, challenges, and opportunities) arising from the confluence of commerce, culture, and politics under the current regime of globalization.

MSC 491-0 Foundations of Strategic Communication Management (1 Unit)

This CORE MSC course explores the new foundations of strategic communication, beginning with stakeholder identification and assessment.

MSC 491-6 Foundations of Strategic Communication Management (1 Unit)

This MSC course explores the new foundations of strategic communication, beginning with stakeholder identification and assessment.

MSC 492-0 Leading & Leveraging Networks (1 Unit)

This CORE MSC course provides students with the concepts, insights, and techniques that will give them a competitive edge as they discover, diagnose and design networks.

MSC 492-6 Leading & Leveraging Networks (1 Unit)

This course provides students with the concepts, insights, and techniques that will give them a competitive edge as they discover, diagnose and design networks.

MSC 493-0 Independent Study (1 Unit)

MSC 494-0 Communication Skills Practicum (1 Unit)

MSC 494-6A Communication Skills Practicum (0.33 Unit)

In this three-part hybrid course that is spread throughout fall, winter, and spring; students will complete asynchronous preparation work and also meet live remotely at the culmination of the seminar. Students work closely with some of the world's leading academics and industry experts

to accelerate advancing their personal expertise through deliberate praxis.

MSC 494-6B Communication Skills Practicum (0.33 Unit)

In this three-part hybrid course that is spread throughout fall, winter, and spring; students will complete asynchronous preparation work and also meet live remotely at the culmination of the seminar. Students work closely with some of the world's leading academics and industry experts to accelerate advancing their personal expertise through deliberate praxis.

MSC 494-6C Communication Skills Practicum (0.33 Unit)

In this three-part hybrid course that is spread throughout fall, winter, and spring; students will complete asynchronous preparation work and also meet live remotely at the culmination of the seminar. Students work closely with some of the world's leading academics and industry experts to accelerate advancing their personal expertise through deliberate praxis.

MSC 513-0 Change Management (1 Unit)

In this CORE MSC course, a variety of theories and research projects that focus on how organizational change can be managed will be presented.

MSC 523-0 Advanced Leadership Practicum (0-1 Unit)

The MSC Advanced Leadership Practicum integrates all the coursework and practical experiences of the program and is designed to help students develop the ability to monitor their own comprehension and to make their thinking processes explicit to external audiences. Students will demonstrate that they have achieved all the learning outcomes of the program through a personally customized project that extends the duration of the program.

MSC 523-6 Advanced Leadership Practicum (0-1 Unit)

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MSC 524-0 Experiential Learning Practicum (1 Unit)

This course is designed to prepare students for post-graduate careers through a structured experience working with an external client. This course is designed to give students practical experience working in teams on a project related to strategic communication or training and management.

MSC 527-0 Corporate Citizenship (1 Unit)

MSC 528-0 Managing Global Teams (1 Unit)

This course uses an action-oriented approach to develop a good understanding of international management and their practical implications when leading and managing teams.

MSC 529-0 Master of Science in Communication Seminar Topics (1 Unit)

MSC 529-6 Master of Science in Communication Seminar Topics (1 Unit)

MSC 531-0 Nonprofit Leadership (1 Unit)

This course focuses on the challenges of leading a nonprofit organization that stretch even the most seasoned leaders & exploring concepts related to maximizing both the social impact of their work and financial obligations of the organization.

MSC 533-0 Visual Communication (1 Unit)

MSC 534-0 Marketing Topics (1 Unit)

MSC 535-0 Inclusive Communication: Leadership, Strategy & Practice (1 Unit)

This course provides an overview of the evolution of the management of diversity and inclusion and presents targeted and high-involvement diversity practices and focuses on the strategic execution of inclusive communication as the foundation for culture management.

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MSC 537-0 Information Design (1 Unit)

This course prepares students to have a solid understanding of how to secure and prepare data for visualization, how to choose a relevant visual framework to represent that data, and how to use principles of visual design to maximize comprehension, retention and appeal of those designs.

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MSC 538-0 Workplace Learning and Communities of Practice (1 Unit)

MSC 539-0 Content & Influencer Marketing Communication (1 Unit)

This course will connect evidence-based audience evaluation techniques with persuasive messaging that will empower learners to manage content as a business asset. This course will explore the mechanics of content, online networking and the power of influencers, social media and email promotion, and web analytics and marketing ROI.

MSC 540-0 Leading Collaboration (1 Unit)

The course explores the specific challenges associated with leading teams, some of which include building and designing teams, managing information exchange within and across teams, structuring effective group decision processes, igniting creative thinking, enabling complex problem solving, and managing team conflict.

MSC 540-6 Leading Collaboration (1 Unit)

The course explores the specific challenges associated with leading teams, some of which include building and designing teams, managing information exchange within and across teams, structuring effective group decision processes, igniting creative thinking, enabling complex problem solving, and managing team conflict.

MSC 541-0 Persuasive Message Design (1 Unit)

The course provides a general introduction to the social scientific study of persuasive message design, emphasizing message, source, receiver, and contextual factors that either enhance or attenuate the effectiveness of strategic messaging. The larger purpose of the course is to provide a toolkit for thinking about how to influence behaviors through effective messaging.

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MSC 542-0 Organizational Leadership (1 Unit)

This course addresses leadership as a process of maximizing the performance and unleashing the potential of self and others to create value for the communities in which we find ourselves. The course focuses on self-awareness as a foundation of leadership effectiveness, and the ways leaders engage and inspire others.

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MSC 543-0 Conflict Negotiation: Strategy and Practice (1 Unit)

This course introduces students to the field of conflict analysis and management. It teaches how to describe conflict accurately, how to assist parties in resolving it, how to negotiate and to conduct mediation, and how to manage anger, aggression and bullying that lead to destructive conflict developments.

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MSC 544-0 Creative Branding & Design (0 Unit)

This series is a fun, hands-on introduction to professional design software and the basics of typography, color, and graphic design for print and web. Content and tutorials are delivered both online and in-person to allow you to take your time and produce quality work.

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MSC 545-0 International Strategic Communication (1 Unit)

This course introduces students to the field of international strategic communication. The aim of the course is to provide you with knowledge and the skills to create and run effective strategic communication programs for foreign markets.

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MSC 546-0 Leadership, Media & Strategy (1 Unit)

This course covers strategy and leadership within the context of the global media and communications industries to discuss several important business concepts: strategies for operation in regulated environments, crisis response for business operations, and the intersection of technology and regulation.

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MSC 547-0 Digital Media Planning (1 Unit)

This course explores the evolving media landscape and the adaptation of marketers to media technology and usage. The lectures will cover

topics such as emerging media technologies, paid/owned/earned media, data-driven and data-informed media planning, brand message and DEI, social media analytics and marketing, electronic word-of-mouth and customer reviews, programmatic and computational advertising, and the business of audience and media measurement. The goal of the course is to provide students with fundamental knowledge and skills to design and evaluate evidence-based media strategies for different purposes. Students will apply conceptual and methodological tools to practice through (a) individual and group assignments and (b) a final project.

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MSC 548-0 Socially Responsible Communication (0 Unit)

Corporations, whether for profit or not for profit, are social actors. There is now general agreement among scholars and business executives that corporations must consider the impact of their activities beyond simply calculating returns to shareholders or customer satisfaction. The general acceptance of stakeholder theory demands that corporations be responsible to a wide range of stakeholders. It is, therefore, necessary for corporate communicators to assess and disseminate information about any organization's socially responsible theories and practices. In fact, it is increasingly uncommon to encounter a corporate website or report that does not contain a statement of corporate social responsibility. This course examines the role of strategic communication in coordinating information about social responsibility and ensuring that it is represented in marketing, public relations, internal and legal forms of corporate communication. Students will learn how to develop strategies for authentic development of responsible practices and how these practices can be effectively communicated for both the benefit of the corporation and its stakeholders.

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MSC 549-0 Professional Development Practicum (0-1 Unit)

The Professional Development Practicum provides the opportunity for students to gain familiarity and expertise with a wide range of

communication topics, practices, technologies, and trends that inform the practice of communication. Students will participate in quarterly workshops taught by subject matter experts and complete assignments that integrate gained knowledge and skills with their professional goals and career pathways.

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MSC 550-0 Generative AI & the Media (1 Unit)

Since the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022 generative Ai has proliferated throughout society, capturing the imagination of the public with its potential to upend much of how people create and consume media and information. In this course we'll demystify this new technology, understand how it works, how to control it through prompting, and how to implement it in various use cases found in media production and communication. We'll also step back with a critical eye to ask questions of how generative Ai changes the larger media system and raises ethical and governance issues around data, copyright, privacy, bias, and more.

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MSC 551-0 Digital Storytelling (1 Unit)

This course takes an integrated approach to digital storytelling connecting the disciplines of data-driven insights and strategy, omni channel media buying, influencer marketing and e-commerce to create and amplify behavior changing stories across mediums. Taught from a theory-connected-to-practicum perspective, students will learn how to develop and deploy compelling global stories supported by a permutation of readings, in-class activities, trainings, and perspectives shared by a roster of industry leaders. Coming out of the course, students will have practical knowledge and tools they can apply for a career in the digital marketing and communication industry.

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MSC 552-0 Persuasive Video Storytelling (1 Unit)

Today, most people have the means of production (a video camera on their phone and a computer) and the means of distribution (the Internet) to communicate their story to audiences around the world. This hands-on course combines messaging theory, storytelling, and production skills

development in conceiving, scripting, shooting & editing, and campaign implementation. Students will conceive, write, shoot, and produce their own videos on topics and/or campaigns of their choosing. The course explores how to use research techniques to refine a message and present that message in narrative form that gets noticed; and is most accessible to their chosen target audiences.

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MSC 554-0 Leading with AI (1 Unit)

This team-taught course will have students learn from three leading experts about using and managing artificial intelligence (AI) in professional and organizational settings. The focus is on providing practical skills that enable students to apply Ai responsibly in their organizations, with an emphasis on the importance of ethics and trust in Ai use.

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MSC 555-0 Brand Management (1 Unit)

Brands are ubiquitous to modern society. The logics of branding shape how we view nearly every aspect of social life and, oftentimes, how we view ourselves. But the practices of brand management—of creating, shaping, maintaining, and contesting brand meaning—have transformed dramatically in recent decades. Technological changes have “opened up” the processes of branding and shifted the distribution of communicative power within consumer culture. At the same time, brands have become more “personal,” taking on public personalities and more explicit stances

on issues of identity and justice. This course provides an overview of how these changes have altered the practices of brand management, bringing together both critical and administrative perspectives on contemporary branding. The ultimate aim is to provide students with a practical understanding of how brand management works, while also providing them with the conceptual tools to critique those practices.

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MSC 556-0 Power in Organizations (1 Unit)

Power, status, and influence are topics that make many people a little uncomfortable. However, their existence permeates all aspects of organizational and social life. Power and influence are the key mechanisms by which things get done. We have a good understanding of the rules that determine who gets to positions of power and of the tactics necessary to exercise power with integrity. This course is designed to familiarize students with concepts useful for understanding power and influence and to provide them with tools to analyze power dynamics in organizations. More importantly, this course will encourage students to think about your own personal path to power (which can include, of course, a path away from power), and to develop their ability to exercise influence. Don't be naïve about how the world works – understand the ‘rules of the game’ and come up with a strategy to achieve ones career goals.

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MSC 557-0 Design Thinking and Innovation (1 Unit)

This graduate studio course on design thinking aims to equip students with essential skills for creative problem-solving. The studio course will introduce students to the principles and mindsets of design thinking. Students will learn how to approach complex problems by emphasizing empathy, creativity, and iterative processes. Students will explore various problem spaces, identifying opportunities for improvement, understanding diverse stakeholders' needs, motivations, and pain points. Students will reframe problems to uncover new perspectives, develop

guiding hypotheses, lead brainstorming sessions, rapidly build and test prototypes, and present concepts visually and verbally. The class will include a mix of reading materials, lectures, in-class workshops, and collaborative group work.

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MSC 558-0 Communication and Decision-Making (1 Unit)

This course investigates how cognitive, affective, and motivational factors shape our preferences and impact our decision-making processes. Students will gain insight into effective communication strategies for informed decision-making by analyzing real-world scenarios. Whether navigating personal choices or professional contexts, this course equips learners with the skills to critically evaluate their decisions and enhance their decision-making processes.

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MSC 559-0 Ai for Social Media (1 Unit)

Social media is the space where organizations, publics, and algorithms interact, generating vast amounts of data every second—from online reviews of local businesses to comments on viral content and digitally mediated public debates. As artificial intelligence increasingly shapes how social media content is created, circulated, and interpreted, organizations must understand how AI influences both communication and public response.

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MSC 560-0 Executive Presence & Performance: Adaptive Delivery for Business, Media & Strategy (1 Unit)

This course introduces students to communication techniques for defining, developing, and delivering professional and personal value through spoken and non-verbal communication. Through readings and practical application, students will learn how to effectively engage others to reach desired goals in 1:1 conversation, interviews, when addressing groups virtually and in-person, and through recorded and live messaging via social, traditional (broadcast) & other media. This course will explore methods for pitching ideas, fielding Q&A, extemporaneous speaking, and influencer communication to execute communication strategies through

executive presence, message design, and audience analysis beyond data and demographics. This course will explore concepts of internal and external communication, persuasion, storytelling, branding, media/performance training and the nature of media itself.

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MSC 580-0 Career & Internship Development in Communication (1 Unit)

The Internship Course is designed to support MSC students as they engage in an internship that aligns with their interests, coursework, and goals. Through readings, reflections, projects, and other assignments, students will assess their own skills, experiences, and interests to develop a personal plan on how to further their career development and individualized goals. Topics and concepts explored include career management and planning, performance management and principles of learning & development, personal branding, professional engagement, development of career assets, and professional engagement. Students are supervised at their internship throughout the quarter to receive support and ensure successful completion. This course occurs simultaneously while students are interning to provide a structured approach to those activities and to career development during summer quarter. This course will be delivered through Zoom with two live sessions + asynchronous support and coursework through Canvas.

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