Jacobs University Bremen
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

GRADUATE PROGRAM

MA-program
GLOBAL VISUAL COMMUNICATION
(GVC)

PhD-program
VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND EXPERTISE
(VisComX)

June 2010

Content

2

1 Academic Master's Program Global Visual Communication (GVC)

1.1 Program Orientation

The 2-year Research Master is based on communication studies as a social science. Thus, a sound methodological foundation in the social sciences is a key feature of the program. The MA in Global Visual Communication provides knowledge and research tools in order to understand the growing relevance of communication patterns transcending national and cultural boundaries. These communication phenomena are scrutinized from three different perspectives: comparative communication, visual communication, and transnational/global communication. Thereby, students acquire a solid understanding of ongoing media and communication trends and of the increasing importance of mediated communication in a globalized environment.
This Research MA aims primarily at students with a social science background. The program also puts a strong emphasis on key analytical and methodological skills.

Typically, the courses offered in the *Specific Thematic Area (M2)* alternate between a focus on the theoretical and methodological "Foundations" of the respective module topic, and a more empirical and exemplary approach in the "Issues"-courses. The courses labelled "Foundations" and "Issues" are not sequential. "Issues"-courses can be taken before "Foundations"-courses and vice versa.

1.2 Program Design

The MA in Global Visual Communication provides students with the competencies necessary to understand both the contemporary structures, functions and patterns of international, transnational and global communication and the fundamental changes that media and communication systems are subject to. Mass and network media are shaped by internationalization and globalization. At the same time media are also shaping those processes, which currently transform nations, societies and cultures. National systems have become less contained and more open for international influences. The acceleration of these exchange processes among media producing and media consuming countries has been furthered by a visualization trend that can be observed worldwide. Thus, the program places particular emphasis on the dynamics of internationalization and visualization that transform national communication systems and complement them with transnational/global elements.

1.3 Job Perspectives

The MA-program is a Research Master aiming at preparing students for the PhD-track, including the PhD-program Visual Communication and Expertise (VisComX), and thus a career in academia. However, the MA program provides conceptual schemes, factual knowledge, and methodological skills of major importance for a range of job activities in highly qualified service

professions. This applies in particular for professions concerned with planning, consulting, evaluation and campaigning tasks, as they are performed in public administration, international organizations, private business, private and public media and non-governmental organizations.

1.4 Module Areas

The program is divided into four overarching areas, as follows:

- The *Methods Thematic Area* (M1) comprises two methods modules.
- The *Specific Thematic Area* (M2) comprises three modules. The modules consist of a foundations seminar and an issues seminar.
- The *Optional Area* (M3) is covered by any graduate course from the social sciences or humanities at Jacobs University (with the exception of the Research Colloquium, see M4 below).
- The *Research Area* (M4) is covered by the Research Colloquium, which MA students are required to attend throughout their 2-year study.

The courses provide insights indicated in the general module description but vary in focus regarding the area of exemplification chosen to demonstrate these insights. A particular focus can be indicated as a subtitle to the module title.

1.4.1 Methods Thematic Area (M1)

This area realizes the insight that communication as a social science depends on a common pool of methodological tools and that any further specialization requires a basic understanding of social science methods.

Methods provide the practical tools necessary to conduct theory-driven research. Because methods become ever more sophisticated it is of critical importance that students acquire a sound understanding of methods. The two methods modules widen this understanding and improve the students' technical mastery of various practices. Thus, students acquire highly relevant skills that apply to all fields of professional activities involving analytical tasks.

1.4.2 Module M111 Advanced Quantitative Methods

The module aims at improving the mastery of quantitative methods, that is, research techniques in which measurement, numbers, and statistics play a crucial role. A handling of quantitative methods becomes ever more critical in an era in which the advance of information technology leads to an unprecedented expansion of sociometrics and manifold forms of quantification. Thus, students are familiarized with the logics of large-N comparison, standardized survey methods, coding and scaling construction, quantitative content analysis, time-series analyses, multivariate analyses, multi-level analyses. The selection of methods as well as the focus on particular techniques can vary as long as students obtain an overview of the variety of approaches.

1.4.3 Module M112 Advanced Qualitative Methods

Both qualitative and quantitative methods gain insights from empirical material. The scientific procedure differs insofar as qualitative methods use

textual or visual information rather than numerical data. The module familiarizes students with the logics and handling of qualitative methods, covering such topics as the logic of small-N comparison, purposive sampling and research design, qualitative interviewing, observation, coding of texts and visuals, content analysis, image analysis, discourse analysis, typologies, or hermeneutics. The combination of topics can vary as long as an overview of the diversity in the field is provided.

Students mandated to take the course "Advanced Quantitative Methods" are required to participate in a placement test of their knowledge of quantitative research methods and statistics. The results of this placement test will form the basis for a recommendation regarding which courses from the Jacobs University undergraduate curriculum the students should take to remedy any potential gaps in statistics knowledge. As from the Academic Year 2009/10 onwards, recommendations made on the basis of the placement test will encompass the possibility to mandate students to register for undergraduate courses and complete the courses successfully (i.e., with at least a passing grade).

Recommendations made after the placement test can be fourfold:

(1) Students whose knowledge of quantitative research methods and statistics is sufficient to successfully take the course "Advanced Quantitative Methods"' will be exempt from taking any undergraduate methods courses for remedial purposes;

(2) Students with a good basic knowledge in quantitative research methods and statistics will be advised to take the undergraduate course "Statistics II"' in their first semester at Jacobs University, without making a successful and graded completion of this course mandatory;

(3) Students with a basic knowledge of quantitative research methods, but little or no knowledge in the field of statistics will be mandated to take the undergraduate course "Statistics I", in parallel to the "Advanced Quantitative Methods" course, and can only receive a passing grade in the latter course when they also receive a passing grade in the former course;

(4) Students with no knowledge and experience of either quantitative research methods or statistics will be mandated to take the undergraduate course "Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods"' in their first study semester and the "Statistics I" course in their second study semester, and will be required to successfully complete both courses (i.e., receive a passing grade in both courses).

1.4.4 Global Visual Communication (M2)

This Master's program provides students with the competencies necessary to understand the complex structures of contemporary media and communication systems, their transformations and upheavals, as well as their particular role in globalization.

Mass and network communication is less confined to national borders than ever before. Technological changes such as the proliferation of the Internet and mobile devices have facilitated global flows of information and entertainment visually and verbally. There emerged a tendency towards the

domination of visual information in international, transnational and global communication. From Internet websites to advertising, from art to photography and film industry, mass and network communication employ visuals that provide wider international reach and exercise deeper emotional appeal. People of all generations are becoming active producers and consumers of visual culture. Due to the expansion of digital technology and the shifts in social interaction, expertise in visual communication and design becomes essential for meeting the global challenges of education and communication.

The Master's Program in Global Visual Communication is based on a transdisciplinary curriculum that provides students with advance knowledge in the field of communication studies related to the following areas: transnational and global communication, new media and the decline of traditional media institutions, the role of visuals in today's mass and network communication, visual communication and identity formation, Internet-based media and democracy, global network studies. Addressing the recent trends in international, transnational and global mass and network communication from different theoretical, methodological and empirical perspectives, the first module M221 provides students both with comparative methodological tools and a visually comparative perspective; the second module M222 focuses on visual media and their role in international, transnational and global communication, while the third module M223 scrutinizes the very current and complex phenomena of transnational and global communication patterns.

1.4.5 Module M221 Comparative Communication

This module familiarizes students with the comparative analysis and synopsis of visual media production, distribution, networking and cultural participation processes. The module consistently scrutinizes the socio-economic, technological, cultural and political contexts and configurations, which shape visual communication and visual media and are in turn shaped by the latter. On the macro level cross-national and cross-cultural comparisons as well as comparisons between local, regional, national and global media will be conducted. On the micro level media usage is compared both across different countries and across different audience, market or public sphere segments defined by age, gender, social status and the like. The method of comparison is thus applied to various social and political levels, ranging from country-specific case studies, regional, national and global comparisons to comparisons among different segments of society. The comparative approach is further applied to multimodal comparisons of different types of visual media, ranging from print to broadcast, satellite, mobile and network media, their similarities and differences. Students are trained in identifying such differences and similarities as well as detecting and analyzing the underlying forces and structures that lead to their persistence or dissolution.

1.4.6 Module M222 Visual Communication

Visualization is one of the most prominent features in international, transnational and global communication. This module focuses on the structures, functions as well as on the formats and contents of visual

communication. Visual and textual aspects of communication are complementary, but visual communication transcends national borders more easily, for images are (at least on the level of human perception) not restricted by language barriers. Textual communication also follows a different communication pattern than visual communication. While media texts are usually read and interpreted according to an underlying argumentative structure, the logic of media visuals is rather based on association. As a consequence the global transfer of visual mass and network media products appears to be easy, because no translation seems to be necessary. But visuals from other cultures can violate cultural and religious traditions and thus create social and political tension. Moreover, visual content is interpreted in different ways around the world. The contextualization of visual communication in terms of its role in mixed sign systems, especially in audio-visual communication is thus an important aspect of this module. Students learn how the social, political and cultural configurations and contexts in which visual media are perceived are crucial for comprehending the structures, functions and messages of global visual communication.

1.4.7 Module M223 Transnational and Global Communication

This module covers communication processes that cross the borders of national societies, cultures and milieus or that transcend such demarcations altogether. Topics include: the cross-border flow of information and entertainment, the establishment of transnational or global media offerings such as satellite television or the World Wide Web, the emergence of hybrid media cultures as well as the mobile communication environments of migrant communities or transnational elites. The module links communication to the processes of political, cultural and economic transnationalization and the emergence of cross-cultural networks: Are these different developments synchronous or asynchronous, and which links can be discerned between them? Answering these questions will clarify, among other things, the propensity of the different visual media to foster the emergence of transnational or global audiences, markets or public spheres, to provide opportunities for transnational civil society actors and to facilitate dialogue in situations of conflict and war. Students will thus explore the factors hindering and facilitating the production of shared visual meaning across different socio-economic, technological, cultural and political contexts: from transnational and transcultural to global visual communication.

1.4.8 Optional Area (M3)

This area has no predefined thematic focus. It intends to provide students with the opportunity to extend their knowledge into an area of their individual choice within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and particularly from the MA-program Intercultural Humanities, but also including courses in the International Relations program that Jacobs University Bremen and Universität Bremen run jointly. Thus, any graduate course offered within the school is eligible to cover this module (with the exception of the Research Colloquium). It offers also faculty an opportunity to hold courses on more

specific topics in the centre of their own research as well as additional courses by media professionals on new types of screen media productions. We also recommend an internship of 2 months after the first year.

1.4.9 Research Area (M4)

The research area is covered by the Research Colloquium, which takes place every semester. Its purpose is to familiarize students with concrete problems in the actual practice of visual communication research.
The attendance and active participation in the Research Colloquium is mandatory and credited in all four semesters.

1.5 Study Organization

All MA students in GVC take two methods courses (M111, M112), six courses in the *Specific Thematic Area (M2) in the* three specific modules(M221, M222, M223), and one course from the *Optional Area (M3)* . Additionally, students are integrated into the research agenda of the Research Center VisComX throughout their studies through their active participation in the VisComX-Research Colloquium which is offered each semester. The attendance of the Research Colloquium is credited and mandatory throughout the two year program. Active participation is required.

To cover the optional thematic module, students take one graduate course of their choice from the Humanities Program. Alternatively, the optional module can be covered by taking a course, which is offered explicitly as an optional social science graduate course. To cover the research module all second year students participate in their fourth semester in the research colloquium.

The typical requirements for graduate courses include (notwithstanding additional requirements):

- Regular reading of the mandatory literature
- Active participation in class discussions
- In-class presentations
- Producing reviews (500-1,000 words) and research papers (4,000-6,000 words).
- Producing and presenting research posters

The usual workload of graduate courses is as follows (notwithstanding deviations in specific cases):

Course attendance and participation: 35 hours
- Course reading: 70 hours
- Presentation, research, writing: 120 hours
- Total: 225 hours = 7.5 ECTS.

Semester-wise:

Semesters 1-3	3 courses each + Research Colloquium
Semester 4	Thesis + Research Colloquium

Depending on course planning constraints, it is possible that one course has to be taken in the 4th semester.

Overall course load - GVC:

Methods courses	2
GVC courses	6
Optional course	1
Research Colloquium	4

ECTS calculus

2 courses from the Methods Modules Area   2 x 7.5 ECTS = 15.0

6 courses from GVC Bloc   6 x 7.5 ECTS = 45.0

1 course from the Optional Module   1 x 7.5 ECTS= 7.5

4 colloquium from the Research Module   4 x 7.5 ECTS= 30.0

MA thesis   1 x 22.5 ECTS=22.5

SUM   120.0

Table 1 provides a basic overview of the modular structure.

Table 1. MA program in Global Visual Communication

Module Areas	2 MA in Global Visual Communication	Type of Course
M1 Methods Thematic Area	M111 Advanced Quantitative Methods M112 Advanced Qualitative Methods	Seminars or Lectures with Tutorials

M2 Specific Thematic Area	M221 *Comparative Communication*
	    a Foundations seminar
	    b Issues seminar
	M222 *Visual Communication*
	    a Foundations seminar
	    b Issues seminar
	M223 *Transnational and Global Communication*
	    a Foundations seminar
	    b Issues seminar
		Seminars

M3 Optional Area	M331 Optional Graduate Course	Seminar
M4 Research Area	M441-444 Research Colloquium	Colloquium

3 PhD Program Visual Communication and Expertise (VisComX)

At the beginning of the 21st century, visual communication and expertise is of key importance in all areas of life on a global scale. Digital technology has transformed traditional publication patterns; digital photography coupled with ubiquitous telecommunication networks has the potential to turn every bystander of an event into a "news photographer", thereby creating a new kind of mobile multimedia lay journalism. Visuals elicit both cognitive and emotional reactions, oftentimes influencing decision-making and communication patterns. Contemporary artists embrace new media, integrating video, digital art, hard- and software, transforming technology into artwork that in turn influences the aesthetics of entertainment, advertising, and user interfaces. Software applications increasingly rely on visualization. The investigation of these complex interrelations of visual communication processes in a global setting is at the focus of the VisComX PhD Program.

The PhD program is an integral part of the VisComX Research Centre (www.jacobs-university.de/viscomx). The Centre was founded in 2009 at Jacobs University with the aim to promote collaborative visual research and understanding of pressing problems in the contemporary world by uniting aesthetic, cultural, historical, psychological, social scientific and technological experts. Sharing its research agenda with the Centre, the PhD program stands at the forefront of cutting-edge transdisciplinary research in the field of visual communication. It is a structured 3-year program. For researching the heightened complexity of visual communication processes, the PhD program draws upon an integrated, transdisciplinary approach combining and interrelating four core disciplines: communication science (including media studies) as nexus discipline is connected to art history, experimental psychology as well as computer science. The four main research areas are built upon the expertise in these four disciplinary fields, thus capturing the full visual process: 1. Visualization, 2. Perception, 3. Interpretation, 4. Evaluation (see the multidisciplinary architecture of the VisComX PhD program in relation to research foci below).

PhDs are offered in all of the contributing sciences, but the area of study will always be cross-disciplinary. This transdisciplinary profile is directly inserted into the supervision structure, thereby guaranteeing innovative research in the individual PhD projects. Over the full period of three years, each dissertation project is co-supervised by two professors from different disciplines, ideally the core disciplines of the research program.
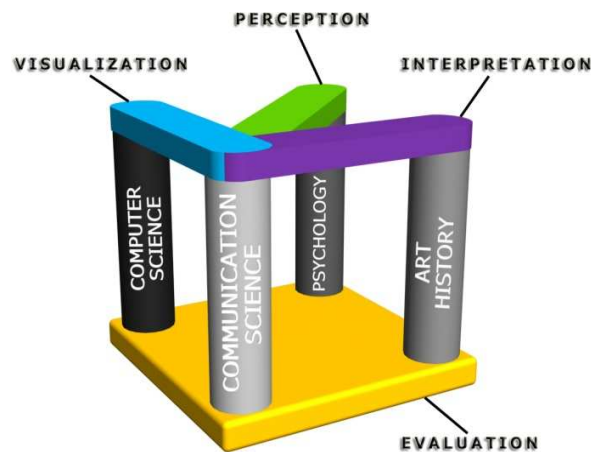
VisComX Architecture Connecting Disciplines and Research Fields

The program is structured by qualification modules that consist of different course offerings, including the regularly offered VisComX Research Colloquium, and varying academic exchange formats.

The program consists of three years of PhD study. Major work includes the program-guided development, elaboration, and finalization of the research plan, resulting in a dissertation. Every student in the program develops a PhD proposal in cooperation with a PhD advisor. This proposal is a written document and presented in public upon invitation by the Dean at most eight months after the qualifying exam or after entrance into the PhD Program. The Dissertation Committee approves the PhD proposal, which is required not to exceed 6000 words. In addition, active participation in all program activities is required. As part of their training, supervisees are expected to assist in teaching and in research activities and to participate in the preparation of further program events.

The PhD program is tailor-made for qualifying and professionalizing graduate students to become leaders in academic and applied contexts of visual communication. We are offering a highly stimulating environment with excellent facilities for social and behavioral research, profound training in visual methods and theories, visualization and statistics and close contact to supervisors in multiple disciplines.

For formal requirements of admission please check:
http://www.jacobs-university.de/graduate-admission