

INDEPENDENT STUDY COMM 495, MCOM 496, or MCOM 795
(depending on student's major and classification)
Supervised by Professor Mark McElreath

Topic: Global trends affecting professional communicators with an emphasis on Russia and the USA

Prerequisite: Junior/senior standing; consent of instructor. No foreign language skills required.

Timeframe: 120 hours of focused work during either Minimester 2010 or the spring 2010 term.

Limited enrollment: A limited number of three-credit independent study projects for both undergraduate and graduate students will be available during Minimester 2010 and the spring 2010 term. If you are interested, you are encouraged to contact Prof. McElreath as soon as possible.

Two instructors will help each student design unique focus: Each project will be uniquely designed to meet the needs of each student. All projects will be supervised by Prof. Mark McElreath, who will be assisted by Adjunct Instructor Gala Duckworth, a professional communicator with a journalism degree from Moscow State University.

Who should apply?

- Qualified students interested in careers in journalism, new media, corporate communication, advertising, marketing and public relations
- Qualified students interested in working as a professional communicator in theater, music, art, dance, electronic media and film
- Qualified students interested in business, international studies, political science, foreign languages, and area studies—among other fields of interest to professional communicators

Purpose: The main purpose of each independent study project is for the student to gain insights into how professional communicators work in various markets around the world. Another purpose is for the student to learn best practices in how professional communicators market their services in a global economy. A student completing this independent study should be able to explain and predict how global trends may affect the student's specific career interests as a professional communicator wherever he or she may choose to work in the world.

Overview of expectations: Each student will identify a specific career interest and, in consultation with Prof. McElreath, select a country of his or her choice. Based on both classroom lectures and online discussions led by Prof. McElreath and Adjunct Instructor Gala Duckworth, each student will conduct independent research, write and present a comparative analysis of global trends affecting professional communicators in the student's choice of careers in three countries: 1) the country chosen by the student; 2) Russia; and 3) USA.

Examples of specific jobs in the field of communication that may be selected, among others:

- Journalist working for news organization
- Editor working for magazine
- Marketing/public relations manager for theater or dance company
- Advertising specialist for global retail firm
- Account executive for communication agency with global clients
- Corporate communication specialist for multinational organization
- Communications manager for non-profit association

- Community relations specialist with non-governmental agency
- Promotions and marketing manager for film studio
- Writer/producer for radio or television station
- Webmaster for any of the above organizations

Why Russia? One reason is that the media, political and social environments for professional communicators in Russia are undergoing dramatic and fascinating changes. Another reason is that your instructors can help you learn more about Russia, based on their firsthand experiences. With Russian colleagues, Prof. McElreath has written a textbook on applied ethics in professional communication; and, with Chinese and Russian colleagues, a comparative analysis of the history of public relations in Russia, China and USA. Gala Duckworth has worked as a professional communicator not only in Europe but also Asia and Africa.

Why USA? In many ways, it can be asserted, global standards for best practices in most aspects of professional communication in the 21st century—in journalism, new media, public relations, advertising, corporate communication and marketing—are well established in the USA. With suggestions from your instructors, students will be expected to conduct independent research to gather evidence that supports and contradicts this assertion.

Why a third country, of the student's choice? One reason: so the student can intellectually go on a trip to any country in the world and then think through what it would be like to work there as a professional communicator. Another reason: it's better research. Collecting data from three different countries allows a "triangulation" of insights and research findings that may provide a more realistic picture of global trends affecting professional communicators.

Specific assignments: all work will be posted on Blackboard- and Ning-based Web sites established exclusively for these independent study projects. Here are specific assignments for each independent study project:

Assignment #1: Identify a specific country of interest and, with Prof. McElreath's approval, prepare a preliminary outline of the comparative analysis of global trends affecting a specific career interest of the student. Basic outline, recommended readings and other resource material will be available online. Estimated time to complete assignment: 12 hours.

Assignment #2: Attend eight 30-minute video-taped lectures and participate in at least four online discussions led by Prof. McElreath and Gala Duckworth; and write entries in an online learning journal based on each of these exercises. Estimated time to complete assignment: 18 hours.

Assignment #3: **Undergraduate students** are expected to conduct library and Internet-based research based on an instructor-approved outline and list of recommended readings; and prepare detailed, comprehensive outline of the comparative analysis. **Graduate students** are expected to all of the above, with less emphasis on library research and more emphasis on the student's original research involving at least five interviews (at least two in person; the others may be via e-mail, telephone or online) with professional communicators in the student's specific choice of careers. Estimated time to complete this assignment: 36 hours.

Assignment #4: Based on feedback from your instructors and colleagues, prepare a draft of at least a 20-page paper and preliminary set of at least 12 PowerPoint slides. Estimated time to complete assignment: 30 hours.

Assignment #5: Based on feedback from your instructors and colleagues, revise, post final paper and set of slides; and participate in online discussion based on review of all independent study projects.
Estimated time to complete assignment: 24 hours.

Grading criteria:

Assignment #1 = 10%
Assignment #2 = 15%
Assignment #3 = 30%
Assignment #4 = 25%
Assignment #5 = 20%

Disabilities: this course is in compliance with Towson University's policy for students with disabilities. Appropriate accommodations will be made by Prof. McElreath for any student properly registered with the university's Disability Support Services (DSS) at 410-704-2638 (Voice or TDD). Please contact Prof. McElreath or DSS for additional information.

Additional opportunity to study in Russia in summer 2010:

Students may also earn three credits during summer 2010 by participating in the TU study abroad program to St. Petersburg, Russia **from May 23rd to June 2nd**. Faculty director: Prof. Mark McElreath.

Academic focus: Global trends affecting professional communicators, with a focus on Russia and the USA. Russian educators and practitioners in the communication professions will lead daily seminars, guided tours and excursions.

Eligibility: Russian language not required - all seminars and guided tours in English. Open to all majors. Open to TU and non-TU students. 2.5 minimum cumulative GPA.

Cost: \$4,750 includes tuition for three academic credits, health insurance, housing, roundtrip airfare, most meals, and excursions.

Reasons to go:

- Learn global best practices and how to market yourself as a professional communicator anywhere in the world.
- Gain an international perspective on careers in journalism, new media, strategic public relations, advertising, marketing and corporate communication.
- One-day stopover in Paris, France, and ten days in St. Petersburg, Russia—one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.
- Cultural highlights include visits to museums and palaces, a boat cruise on the Neva River, an evening at the Russian ballet...and more.

Application Deadline: MARCH 15, 2010. Admission is on a rolling basis. Early application is advised as space is limited.

Application Process: Fill out the [application \(PDF\)](#) and submit it to the [TU Study Abroad Office](#). \$250 deposit required at time of application. Non-TU students must also submit a completed [Non-Degree Enrollment Application \(PDF\)](#).

Separate learning opportunities: Students participating in the summer 2010 Study Abroad program to St. Petersburg, Russia, are not required to participate in Prof. McElreath's independent study projects.

The two academic activities are coordinated but not redundant. Russian educators and practitioners leading the seminars in St. Petersburg are engaging in learning activities that are significantly different from the learning exercises required in the independent study supervised by Prof. McElreath. More information about the summer 2010 study abroad program to St. Petersburg can be found on the TU Study Abroad Web site at <http://www.towson.edu/studyabroad/russiaMCOMsummer.asp>.

For more information: Contact Prof. McElreath at mmcelreath@towson.edu; or the TU Study Abroad Office at 410-7043-2451; or studyabroad@towson.edu.