Clusters

Instead of detailed distribution requirements or strict tracks, the Media Arts major offers a series of “clusters” that can serve student specializations while still allowing a general introduction to the broader field. Prior to enrolling in the culminating Capstone Colloquium in the fourth year, each student will declare a cluster.

Each cluster will include a balance of coursework in theoretical, historical, and practice-based areas. In order to demonstrate a meaningful commitment to a cluster, students should take at least three related courses and complete a component of their Colloquium portfolio project based on their specialization. The eligibility of a given course to count toward a given cluster will not be pre-defined and will instead be determined after an individualized consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

The clusters will help students achieve depth in a particular area, which will put them in a stronger position to apply for graduate programs and pursue careers in media arts and design following graduation. Available clusters are based on areas that have garnered significant student interest and in which MAAD has substantial course offerings.

1. Games
2. Creative Computing
3. Network Art
4. Electronic Music
5. Digital Moving Image
Games
The Games cluster is best for students interested in pursuing the study and/or design of games. Students can focus on any types of games they’d like – video games, card games, role playing games, and more.

Pathways in this cluster can include the pursuit of theoretical/historical study of games, game design, games journalism, the industry and economics of games, and other projects. Students in the game cluster should include a design element in their capstone project, whether that is creating a short digital game, a card game, or a video essay about a game.

Sample Games Pathway
2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 12320: Critical Videogame Studies
MAAD 25630: Videogames and Genre Storytelling

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 25416: 1990s Videogame History
MAAD 17880: Videogame Consoles: A Platform Studies Approach

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 20500: ARTGAMES
MAAD 20700: Alternate Reality Games: Theory and Production

5 Elective Courses
MAAD 23640: Embodied Data and Gamified Interfaces
MAAD 12360: introduction to Video Game Music Studies
MAAD 14945: Digital Storytelling
MAAD 22911: Augmented Reality Production
MAAD 11730: Science, Technology and Media via Japan
Creative Computing
Creative Computing in itself is a vast field and includes software art, glitch aesthetics, neural network and AI-based art. This work is happening here at the University in the Department of Visual Art and by artists such as Jon Satrom and Jason Salavon.

Sample Creative Computing Pathway
2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 10440: Desiring Machines
MAAD 14109: Machine Learning at the Archive

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 18306: Data History: Information Overload from the Enlightenment to Google
MAAD 25201: Art and Machine Intelligence

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 2111: Creative Coding
MAAD 21500: Metamedia

5 Elective Courses
MAAD 22502: Data and Algorithm in Art
MAAD 22920: Art and Digital Fabrication
MAAD 23281: Topics in Human Computer Interaction
MAAD 23640: Embodied Data and Gamified Interfaces
MAAD 23645: Body and the Digital
Network Art
Network art includes net art, social experiments online, tactical media, and netprovs. Netprov is internet improvisation – such as creating a Twitter account for a Toaster and tweets about its daily life, perhaps even engaging with other fake Twitter accounts. One example of network art would include the Electronic Disturbance Theater, which is an electronic company of cyber activists, critical theorists, and performance artists who use digital and non-digital spaces for acts of political defiance.

Creative Computing and Network Art have a lot in common, but the main difference is that creative computing has more to do with software development while network art includes websites, social media, and things that involve a level of performance.

Sample Network Art Pathway
2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 11320: Phillippe Parreno’s Media Temporalities
MAAD 25305: Virtual Worlds and Nonhuman Narratives: Cyberspace Fiction

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 18306: Data History: Information Overload from the Enlightenment to Google
MAAD 25201: Art and Machine Intelligence

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 23631: Internet Art I
MAAD 23632: Internet Art II

5 Electives
MAAD 23650: Culture Jamming in the Digital Age
MAAD 32655: Collaborative Artware
MAAD 24530: Staging the Internet
MAAD 24930: Designing Virtual Space While Staying Alive
MAAD 25305: After You: Curating the Art & Algorithm Debate
Electronic Music
Students creating electronic music will use digital tools and instruments while also learning the practice and theory of digital signal processing. The Music Department has an Electronic Music Studio that students can take advantage of for their projects.

Sample Electronic Music Pathway
2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 12355: Sounding Bodies
MAAD 12630: Introduction to Video Game Music Studies

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 15521: Music and the History of AI
MAAD 16718: Approaches to Live Electronics

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 24618: Electronic Music I: Composing with Sound
MAAD 24817: Electronic Music II: Introduction to Computer Music

5 Elective Courses
MAAD 20810: Sound / Image Mapping
MAAD 24820: Video Game Music Production and Sound Design
MAAD 26720: Musical Robotics
MAAD 28008: Sound and Scandal: How Media Make Believe
MAAD 26819: Video Game Music as Play and Discipline
Digital Moving Image
Digital Moving Image includes gifs, editing, and experimental work in cinema and images. Partnering with CMS, we offer many courses in Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, and filmmaking in various formats. This cluster also allows for the study of contemporary and non-traditional digital moving images, such as tiktoks, social media movements that make use of digital images and platforms, memes, and more.

Sample Digital Moving Image Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 10904: Media Wars
MAAD 10992: Metapictures

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 15425: Censorship, Info Control, & Revolutions in Info Technology from the Printing Press to the Internet
MAAD 15630: Television in an Age of Change

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 23820: The Mind as Stage: Podcasting
MAAD 23804: Experimental Animation: Exploring Manual Techniques

5 Elective Courses
MAAD 21900: Climate Change in Media and Design
MAAD 21011: Experimental Captures
MAAD 24910: Short Form Digital Storytelling: Creating a Web Series
MAAD 25612: Comics As Medium
MAAD 27022: Surveillance Media