



Interdisciplinarity: Insights from more than one field

It's called [interdisciplinarity](#). It isn't new, but the idea of seeing the complex world through different lenses has been growing in popularity. A student might learn business and art, or music and medicine, or any combination of topics. In journalism, interdisciplinarity offers greater context for understanding today's society. Combining the knowledge from different disciplines can encourage new ways of thinking.

Assignments for students on three levels:

Flashlight: Collaboration may be especially important in small journalism programs, where maybe just one or two run the show. English composition classes teach writing basics. Class discussion: Suppose you just received this creative writing assignment, [to write an essay from the point of view of a lobster](#). What science would you need to know to do a realistic job? Even if team-teaching isn't an option because of the small size of your school, would it be possible for another teacher to provide links or handouts that could help?

Spotlight: At Michigan State University, students are learning how to use [drones as part of their environmental journalism classes](#). Would that be considered part of the [interdisciplinary program pondered by this professor](#)? Ask students to find universities that offer interdisciplinary programs. Which majors seem to offer the most varied combination of subjects? Are any of them in journalism or communication majors? Which disciplines is journalism usually paired with? Have a class discussion.

Searchlight: At [New York University's Steinhardt School of Media, Culture, and Communication](#) and [Georgetown University's Communication, Culture and Technology Programs](#), among others, faculty infuse journalism and communication with social, cultural, political and technology studies. Look at all the programs offered in your school now. Create three custom interdisciplinary tracks for journalism majors. Explain why you chose certain specialties over others.

Extra credit: At the University of North Carolina, Penny Abernathy studies digital media economics. In this [FOX interview she talks about paying for online news content](#). As old economic models collapse and [digital ad marketing dollars keep growing](#), isn't a better understanding of journalism economics an essential part of new media education?

New fields of inquiry, like Digital Brand Attachment (studied by UNC's [JoAnn Sciarrino, an expert in digital advertising and marketing](#)) measures the emotional connection between people and brands. How much business should journalism students be taught, and who should do the teaching? Examine [the successful French online newspaper Mediapart](#), profitable from subscriptions only. How would you rearrange lesson plans and collaborate with other teachers to show students how the business office of Mediapart functions?