Clusters

The Media Arts major offers a series of "clusters" that can serve student specializations while still allowing a general introduction to the broader field. As part of completing the Capstone sequence in their fourth year, students will officially align themselves with a cluster. Prior to Capstone, students are welcome to use clusters to help organize their studies and are encouraged to discuss their interests with the Director of Undergraduate Studies during the declaration process and throughout their studies

Clusters can 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. The major currently offers the following clusters:

1. Creative Computing
2. Digital Sound and Music
3. Expanded Cinema
4. Games
5. Media Performance

Creative Computing

In this cluster students will explore the expansive possibilities of the "meta-media" of computing, learning to harness its capacity to merge text, images, sound, and interactivity in blended and novel ways. The Creative Computing cluster encourages students to redefine the landscape of digital media, challenging conventional norms and crafting innovative forms of creative expression not previously possible with traditional media. Key faculty in this cluster include Jon Satrom, Jason Salavon, Nick Briz, Pedro Lopes, Diana Franklin, and Ken Nakagaki.

Sample Creative Computing Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MADD 12043: The Aesthetics of Artificial Intelligence
MADD 14109: Machine Learning at the Archive

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

3 Media Practice and Design Courses
MADD 23631: Internet Art & Web Design
MADD 23645: Body and the Digital
MADD 22502: Data and Algorithm in Art

4 Elective Courses
MADD 23220: Inventing, Engineering and Understanding Interactive Devices
MADD 21111: Creative Coding
MADD 23281: Topics in Human Computer Interaction
MADD 20380: Actuated User Interfaces and Technology

Digital Sound and Music

In the Digital Sound and Music cluster, students delve into the world of digital sound production, learning techniques to compose and score for nonlinear media such as video games. This cluster goes beyond traditional music-making, inviting students to redefine its boundaries, creating sound installations, algorithmic instruments and other innovative auditory experiences that challenge and expand our understanding of sound. Classes in this cluster are often cross-listed with the Music Department which has an Electronic Music Studio that students can take advantage of for their projects. Key faculty to note include Paula Harper, David Bird, Jennifer Iverson, Nick Briz, and Takashi Shallow.

Sample Digital Sound and Music Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MADD 12422: Hearing Popular Music
MADD 14723: Divas, Idols, Material Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Music Videos

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

3 Media Practice and Design Courses
MADD 24618: Electronic Music I: Composing with Sound
MADD 24817: Electronic Music II: Introduction to Computer Music
MADD 24820: Video Game Music Production and Sound Design

4 Elective Courses
MADD 20023: Composing for Intermedia
MADD 26720: Musical Robotics
MADD 22506: Online Algorithmic Music
MADD 17212: Sonic Cultures of Japan

Expanded Cinema

In this cluster, students push moving images outside their typical frames exploring an assemblage of contexts including mixed reality (VR/AR), transmedia storytelling, video installation and AV performance. This cluster is a creative playground for filmmakers interested in experimental, participatory, hypermedia and other non-linear modes of storytelling that engage audiences in unprecedented ways. Key faculty in this area include Daniel Morgan, Marc Downie, AE Stevenson, Tom LaMarre, Ian Jones, and Scott Wolniak.

Sample Expanded Cinema Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MADD 20810: Sound / Image Mapping
MADD 14110: Digital Cinema

2 Media History Courses
MADD 15300: The Loop as Form
MADD 15630: Television in an Age of Change

3 Media Practice and Design Courses
MADD 21011: Experimental Captures
MADD 24920: Virtual Reality Production
MADD 28309: Experimental Animation: Digital and Camera-less Production

4 Elective Courses
MADD 24540: Multimedia Fashion Design
MADD 14865: Adaptation: Text and Image
MADD 24910: Short Form Digital Storytelling: Creating a Web Series
MADD 23820: Oral History and Podcasting

Games

In the Games cluster, students explore the vast universe of game design and development. Beyond video games, the cluster also explores the intricate design of card games, the imaginative realms of role-playing games and the innovative landscapes of alternate reality games. Here, students learn to craft not just games, but compelling experiences, mastering the art of storytelling, strategy, and design to create interactive adventures that resonate with a diverse set of audiences and themes. Key faculty for this cluster include Patrick Jagoda, Katherine Buse, Ian Jones, Chris Carloy, and Ashlyn Sparrow.

Sample Games Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MADD 12320: Critical Videogame Studies
MADD 25630: Videogames and Genre Storytelling

2 Media History Courses
MADD 25416: 1990s Videogame History
MADD 17010: Gaming History

3 Media Practice and Design Courses
MADD 20500: ARTGAMES
MADD 22322: Introduction to Game Design
MADD 24820: Video Game Music Production and Sound Design

4 Elective Courses
MADD 22800: 3D Modeling and Sculpting for Videogames
MADD 14350: Videogame Level Design
MADD 22911: Augmented Reality Production
MADD 23220: Inventing, Engineering, and Understanding Interactive Devices

Media Performance

The Media Performance cluster offers a unique blend of traditional performance arts with the dynamic realms of digital media. In this cluster, students dive into the world of experimental audio-visual real-time performances, exploring how technology can augment and transform the theatrical experience. Key faculty for this cluster include Heidi Coleman, Patrick Jagoda and Jon Satrom.

Sample Media Performance Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MADD 24515: Contemporary Political Strategies in Performance
MADD 14207: Mindfulness: Experience and Media

2 Media History Courses
MADD 24550: Evolution of Improvisation in Chicago
MADD 13020: Opera Across Media

3 Media Practice and Design Courses
MADD 24420: Games & Performance: Live Action Role Playing Games
MADD 24410: Transmedia Puzzle Design & Performance
MADD 23820: The Mind as Stage: Podcasting

4 Elective Courses
MADD 24530: Staging the Internet
MADD 28250: Performance as Event
MADD 20420: Painting with Light in Space
MADD 23860: Screendance: Movement and New Media