COMMUNICATIONS (COMM)

COMM 0025 Fellows Proseminar I (SNF Paideia Program Course)
The SNF Paideia Fellows Proseminar I introduces sophomore SNF Paideia Fellows to academic research and practice related to the civic engagement mission of the SNF Paideia program. We engage diverse perspectives on the purpose of higher education, the nature of citizenship, the value of civility, and the relationship between individual and community wellness. Students will develop their personal civic identity and wellness goals through intentional course exercises and assignments. The goal of the course is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and ethical frameworks for healthy, sustainable and robust civic leadership at Penn and in their local, national, and global communities. This course is open only to SNF Paideia Fellows, who are required to take it during the fall of their sophomore year.
Fall
0.5 Course Units

COMM 0026 Fellows Proseminar II (SNF Paideia Program Course)
In the SNF Paideia Fellows Proseminar II, Fellows engage in deeper exploration of the themes of dialogue, citizenship, wellness, and service, especially considering potential connections with their chosen major. In this course, junior Fellows investigate engaged scholarship in their home discipline and reflect on the ways their designated SNF Paideia courses influence their research, career, and service trajectories. Building on the course materials from Proseminar I, Fellows will delve deeper into the scholarship that evaluates dialogue strategies for the ways they contribute to service, citizenship and wellness. Moving beyond Penn, the course invites several researchers or practitioners at the national or international level to share how they put theory into direct practice addressing real world problems. The culminating assignment is to develop a draft proposal for a capstone project that in some way incorporates SNF Paideia themes. Fellows in this course also develop their leadership skills by mentoring students in the sophomore Fellows course. The goal of the course is to equip students with the knowledge, skills, experiences, and ethical frameworks for healthy, sustainable and robust civic leadership at Penn and in their local, national, and global communities. This course is open only to SNF Paideia Fellows, who are required to take it during the fall of their junior year.
Fall
0.5 Course Units

COMM 1130 Data Science for Beginners
This course serves as an entrance to the world of data science and is aimed at students who have little to no background in data science, statistics, or programming. The core content of the course focuses on data acquisition and wrangling, exploratory data analysis, data visualization, inference, modelling, and effective communication of results. This course, which will rely on R, the statistical programming language, will prepare students for more advanced data science and computational social science courses.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 1230 Critical Approaches to Popular Culture
Popular culture has been alternately condemned as too trivial to warrant attention and too powerful to resist. Its consumers have been dubbed fashion victims, couch potatoes, and victims of propaganda. This course considers these critiques, as well as those that suggest that popular culture can be emancipatory, allowing for the creation and renegotiation of meaning. Over the course of the semester, we consider the impacts of various forms of popular culture, and discuss their effects on how we see ourselves and others. We explore the ever-shifting distinctions between high, middlebrow, and low culture and analyze how power and resistance structure the production and consumption of popular texts.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 1250 Introduction to Communication Behavior
This course introduces students to social science research regarding the influence of mediated communication on individual and collective attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Throughout the semester we explore the impacts of various types of mediated content (e.g., violence, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, politics and activism, health and wellbeing); genres (e.g., news, entertainment, educational, marketing); and mediums (e.g., television, film, social media) on what we think and how we act. The aim of the course is to provide students with (1) a general understanding of both the positive and negative effects of mediated communication on people's personal, professional, social, and civic lives; and (2) the basic conceptual tools needed to evaluate the assumptions, theories, methods, and empirical evidence supporting these presumed effects. Class meets twice a week as a lecture and once a week in smaller discussion groups led by graduate teaching fellows. In addition to a midterm exam and occasional short assignments, students have the option of producing a multi-media capstone project or a final term paper on a media-effects topic of their choice. Group projects or final papers are permitted, with approval of the instructor.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 1300 Media Industries and Society
The aim of this course is to prepare you to work in the media business as well as to be an informed citizen by acquainting you with the work and language of media practitioners. The class also investigates the exciting, and (to some employed there) scary changes taking place in the news industry, internet industry, advertising industry, television industry, movie industry, magazine industry, and several other areas of the media system. In doing that, the course ranges over economic, political, legal, historical, and cultural considerations that shape what we see when we go online, use social media, watch TV, read books, play video games, and more.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 2010 Power and Misconduct in Popular Music: An Archival Study
This course asks students to interrogate power and identity in America's popular music industries through a close examination of sexism and sexual misconduct. Designed as a research practicum that teaches interdisciplinary methods of archival research, this course explores the challenges individuals face within the cultural and professional landscapes of popular music. We will spend the first half of the semester exploring theories and practices of archives and archiving, developing critical analytical approaches to archival research in media and popular music. In the second half of the semester, students will apply this methodological and theoretical foundation to a focused examination of select case studies. Students will engage with a range of primary sources and archival texts, including memoirs, artist biographies, music histories, documentaries, and traditional and social media to consider how dynamics of power intersect in popular music. This course will provide students with the opportunity to contribute important insight and archival research to a new digital archive on sexual misconduct in America's popular music industries. Students will gain hands-on experience conducting in-depth media analyses and archival research, which will culminate in the development of a comprehensive research portfolio.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2011 The Art and Science of Story-Centered Research
Stories are a powerful communication tool that can be used to entertain, connect, inform, and inspire. Stories also play varied and vital roles in communication research. This course explores the relationship between storytelling, inquiry, and knowledge production. Engaging with interdisciplinary and multi-modal scholarship, students will learn how stories can be used to formulate and answer research questions, shape and share knowledge, and create meaningful change. Students will develop foundational knowledge in a variety of qualitative methods (e.g., interviewing, observation, textual analysis), and foster their skills producing accessible, ethical, critical, and creative research.
1 Course Unit

COMM 2012 Journalism, Crime, and Justice
This class explores the politics of crime reporting in an age of mass incarceration, police expansionism, and endemic racial and gender injustice and economic inequality. Students will be introduced to the various institutional, legal, economic, symbolic, and material entanglements between news agencies and journalists, on the one hand, and criminal justice institutions, on the other. Adopting a critical cultural approach, we will consider issues such as: accuracy, bias, and distortion in crime reporting; the newsworthiness of crime; stereotyping and criminalization; access and gatekeeping; moral panics and electoral politics; 'copaganda' and the professionalization of police public relations; the rise of citizen journalism and 'cop watching'; and emerging practices of self-mediation and storytelling. The class will also introduce students to important critical perspectives on how practices of journalistic storytelling and representation are implicated in the politics of crime control and broader struggles for safety and justice.
1 Course Unit

COMM 2100 Quantitative Research Methods in Communication
This course is a general overview of the important components of social research. The goal of the course is to understand the logic behind social science research, be able to view research with a critical eye and to engage in the production of research. It will cover defining research problems, research design, assessing research quality, sampling, measurement, and causal inference. The statistical methods covered will include descriptive and inferential statistics, measures of association for categorical and continuous variables, inferences about means, and the basic language of data analysis. Course activities will include lectures, class exercises, reading published scientific articles, using statistical software, and discussing research featured in the news.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 2130 Social Media and Social Life
The irruption of social media as a means of communication has been said to transform many dimensions of social life, from how we interact with significant others to how we engage in public life - but has it, really? Regardless of the specific technology (blogs, micro-blogs, social networking sites, peer-to-peer networks), social media make interdependence more prevalent, and exposure to information more pervasive. But social networks, and the ties that bring us together, have long mediated the way in which we obtain information, engage in public discussion, and are recruited or mobilized for a public cause. So what has social media brought to the table that is new? This course will evaluate the evidence that can help us answer this question, as well as challenge conventional views and discuss questions that remain open. The effects of social media on ideological polarization, social influence and peer pressure, agenda-setting dynamics, and the formation and effects of social capital are examples of the substantive topics and theoretical debates that will be considered.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2140 Media and South Asia
This course examines the historical development of media institutions across the Indian subcontinent, and how media texts have helped to shape post-colonial national/cultural/religious/social identities, nationalism, and geopolitical relations. The course looks at how the post-colonial State in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka) has interacted with media industries, and the implications of this interaction.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: SAST 1110
1 Course Unit

COMM 2250 Children and Media
This course examines children's relationships to media in their historic, economic, political, and social contexts. The class explores the ways in which "childhood" is created and understood as a time of life that is qualitatively unique and socially constructed over time. It continues with a review of various theories of child development as they inform children's relationships with and understanding of media. It reviews public policies designed to empower parents and limit children's exposure to potentially problematic media content and simultaneously considers the economic forces that shape what children see and buy. The course also provides a critical examination of research on the impact of media on children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Students in this course produce a proposal for an educational children's media product as their final project.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 2260 Introduction to Political Communication
This course is an introduction to the field of political communication and conceptual approaches to analyzing communication in various forms, including advertising, speech making, campaign debates, and candidates' and office-holders' uses of social media and efforts to frame news. The focus of this course is on the interplay in the U.S. between media and politics. The course includes a history of campaign practices from the 1952 presidential contest through the election of 2020.
Fall
Also Offered As: PSCI 1210
1 Course Unit

COMM 2300 Advertising and Society
This course explores the historical and contemporary role of the advertising industry in the U.S. media system. The course will cover the social history of advertising; the structure of today's advertising industry; the workings of advertising in digital media; and critical analyses of advertising's role in society. In addition to academic writings, the class will read industry reports to understand contemporary strategies and processes.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2310 Gender and Sexuality in Global Media
Media play a powerful role in both constructing and challenging local and global understandings of gender and sexuality. This course focuses on how practices and norms of gender and sexuality are represented, complicated, and resisted across different forms of global media. We draw on insights from media/communication, anthropology, and queer and feminist theory to examine historical and contemporary media production, consumption, and circulation across nations, with a special emphasis on the Global South. Via a series of case studies (including tv melodrama, the global #metoo movement, and gay dating apps), we will explore the “top down” power of media industries and nation-states, the “bottom up” power of media users, and the dynamic cross-cultural encounters in which they interact.
1 Course Unit

COMM 2320 Gender and Media
This course examines various images and performances of gender in media focusing on the late 20th century to the present. Using theories from cultural and media studies, film and gender studies, and communication studies, we will explore different processes and practices of gender, specifically in terms of media representations of femininity, masculinity, and other genders. The purpose of the course is to gain insight into the ways in which gender, and its intersections with race, ethnicity, and class, is enacted, represented, and has an impact on cultural formations and communication. We will explore the socio-cultural mechanisms that shape our individual and collective notions of identity and essentially teach us what it means to be gendered masculine or feminine or align with other identifications. The media plays a major role in "constructing" gender, and popular views of what “appropriate” gendering is, in turn, shape how we communicate with each other. In examining cultural myths about gender as well as ongoing debates on gender construction, we will consider how gender is tied in with notions of power, identity, voice, and other defining identity categories (race, socio-economic status, sexuality, etc.) Throughout the course, we will examine a variety of media forms, from film to television to streaming platforms, as well as social media such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2410 Introduction to Network Dynamics and Collective Behavior
How do new ideas spread online? Why do some take off and others fail? What determines when people will cooperate and when they will be selfish? Where do our social norms come from, and what happens when they are disrupted – as they were during the first year of the pandemic? How did ‘wearing a face mask’ and ‘getting vaccinated’ become political issues and what role did social media play in this? Why is communicating about climate change so challenging? The last several decades in social science have seen remarkable breakthroughs in our answers to these and other profound questions about societal communication and evolution. One of the most powerful and influential tools behind these breakthroughs is computational modeling. Models are used to simulate the spread COVID, and to test strategies for halting the pandemic. They are used to test strategies for international relations, and to predict the emergence of new terrorist cells. Models are also used to predict voting outcomes and create better forms of political representation. This class does not involve coding and no programming experience is necessary. Instead, students will be introduced to a range of computation models and learn how they work to guide our governments and businesses. You will learn about the big ideas and simple formulas that are used to predict the future of our economy, our society, and our ecology.
1 Course Unit

COMM 2445 Civil Dialogue Seminar: Civic Engagement In A Divided Nation
The goal of this course is to help students develop concepts, tools, dispositions, and skills that will help them engage productively in the ongoing experiment of American democracy. This nation's founders created a governmental structure that sets up an ongoing and expansive conversation about how to manage the tensions and tradeoffs between competing values and notions of the public good. These tensions can never be fully resolved or eliminated; they are intrinsic to the American experiment. Every generation must struggle to find its own balance, in no small part because in every era people who previously had been unjustly excluded from the conversation find a way to be heard. That inevitably introduces new values and changes how enduring ones get interpreted. The challenge of each generation is to develop that capacity to its fullest. The goal of this course is to equip you to engage fully in your generation's renewal of the conversation. Class sessions will use a variety of modalities: lecture, discussion, case studies, opportunities to experiment with the tools and techniques of civil dialogue and writing. Each session will include some theory or historical context, a case study, exploration of a key concept of civic dialogue with a related tool or technique, and an interactive exercise. This course is part of a larger effort by the university (called the Paideia program) to help Penn students build these skills
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: EDUC 2445, URBS 2445
1 Course Unit

COMM 2530 Divine Mediation: Media and the Shaping of Religious Identity and Practice
This course surveys how religious groups interact with media, and how media texts and institutions have played a role in defining religions. The intersections between media and religion are numerous, from the mediated growth of national identities, the rise of online religious extremism, the ingroup/outgroup dynamics within and among religious groups, and the ways in which media is used to legitimize/delegitimize theological positions. We examine how media institutions have played a role in propping up religious norms (both explicitly and implicitly) and the shaping of religious identities. This course looks at media as both enforcer and disruptor, as well as the ways in which religions have been challenged by those with media literacy and access. The evolution of religious practice and social norms can also be linked with technological innovations such as the mass distribution of Bibles in the 15th and 16th century thanks to the printing press, the rise of radio and television messiahs in the 20th century, and the individualization of religious practices through new apps.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2550 Foundations in Data Science for Communication
Acquiring and demonstrating data literacy, namely, the ability to find, appropriately handle, analyze, and communicate insights from the rapidly growing spectrum of data in all aspects of modern life, is now a vital skill for virtually all workers and researchers. This course provides a foundation in the concepts, methods, and applications of data science (including network science) to questions in Communication. The course will build data literacy and help you start to develop skills working with large and complex datasets of relevance to communication behaviors in the digital world. Students will become familiar with basic programming skills for data analysis using the R and Python programming languages, along with some of the common tools used for network and data analysis and visualization. It will provide an introduction and overview of the key elements of applied data science, including the analysis of networks and machine learning (ML). The practical and ethical challenges of 'big data' and the increasing use of algorithmic (ML) decision systems will also be explored. No prior programming or data analysis experience is required.
1 Course Unit

COMM 2600 Media Activism Studies
This seminar provides an introduction to the politics and tactics underlying various types of media activism. The class will examine interventions aimed at media representations, labor relations in media production, media policy reform, activists' strategic communications, and "alternative" media making. The course will draw from an overview of the existing scholarship on media activism, as well as close analyses of actual activist practices within both old and new media at local, national, and global levels. We will study how various political groups, past and present, use media to advance their interests and effect social change. Each member of the class will choose one case study of an activist group or campaign to explore throughout the semester.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2620 Social Movements
This course examines the main sociological theories and concepts in the analysis of revolutions, popular protest, and social movements. Special attention will be given to three theoretical traditions: resource mobilization, political process, and cultural analysis. We will study narratives, symbols, performances, and old and new media forms in the construction of identities and solidarities and the mobilization of publics. Historical and contemporary cases from the U.S. and around the world will be examined.
Also Offered As: SOCI 2620
1 Course Unit

COMM 2640 Media Culture & Society in Contemporary China
This course covers Chinese media, culture, and society from the 1970s to the present. It examines the causes and consequences of social and institutional transformation, with an emphasis on civic engagement, cultural change, and the impact of digital media. In analyzing these developments, the course pays special attention to historical contexts and draws on concepts and theories from sociology, communication, and related fields. The course helps students develop nuanced and sophisticated approaches to the understanding of contemporary Chinese media, culture, and society and cross-cultural phenomena more broadly.
Also Offered As: SOCI 2640
1 Course Unit

COMM 2750 Communication and Persuasion
This course examines theory, research, and application in the persuasive effects of communication in social and mass contexts. The primary focus will be on the effects of messages on attitudes, opinions, values, and behaviors. Applications include political, commercial, and public service advertising, propaganda, and communication campaigns (e.g. anti-smoking). Students will develop their own communication campaign over the semester. The campaign will include dentifying and analyzing the persuasion problem, the target audience's characteristics and media habits, and then reating a persuasive message consistent with research and practice targeted to the problem and its solution.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2760 How We Change: Social-Psychological and Communication Dynamics (SNF Paideia Program Course)
Have you wondered why people undergo religious conversion, change their political affiliation, suddenly endorse conspiracy theories, alter their taste in music, or seek hypnosis to quit smoking? What is common to these processes of change, and how does resistance to change play out across these seemingly different contexts? In "Why We Change," we will ask unique questions such as how religious change might highlight methods of transforming public health communications or how the study of attitude change might yield new theories about the impact of life experiences on personality. Broadly speaking, the class will provide an opportunity for students to learn theories of belief formation, attitudes and persuasion, normative influence, and behavioral change. For example, we will work to understand how specific beliefs, such as group stereotypes, or specific attitudes, such as trust and values, change in response to variations in the environment and communication with other people. We will cover culturally based and professional approaches to change, from fear appeals to motivational interviewing, to hypnosis. Students will read empirical studies and conduct observational projects about potential sources of social, cultural, or psychological change and resistance to change in Philadelphia.
Also Offered As: NURS 2760, PSYC 2760
1 Course Unit

COMM 2820 Sick and Satired - The Insanity of Humor and How it Keeps Us Sane
This course will examine how and why humor, as both an instigator and peacemaker, might be considered one of the most influential and profoundly useful forms of communication devised by human beings. The unique ability of jokes and satire to transcend familiar literary and journalistic forms for the purpose of deepening (or cheapening) socio-philosophical arguments and to inspire (or discourage) debate and participation in public conversations about innumerable political and social issues will be explored. The fearless analytical nature of both high and lowbrow comedy will be examined, as well as its deflective qualities. The course will enable students to consider, through analysis of both contemporary and historical examples, the political and cultural satirist's unique role in society as a witness, a predictor and, in some circumstances, an instigator of public and private debate. We will examine the role of satire in revealing and mediating differences between disparate social groups based not solely on language differences, but also on political affiliation, cultural identity, ethnicity, gender, religious fellowship, sexual orientation, and socio-economic caste.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 2860 Masculinity and the Media
This course examines the construction of masculinity in American and global media, highlighting how masculinity developed in parallel to social, cultural, economic, and political norms. Using case studies and multiple theoretical approaches, we will seek to understand how constructions of masculinity across the world have served to uphold - or challenge - the status quo. Analysis of individual texts across time periods and different cultural contexts will also help us better come to terms with the idea of masculinity - and its proliferation across media platforms.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2920 WARNING! Graphic Content - Political Cartoons, Comix, and the Uncensored Artistic Mind
This course examines the past, present, and future of political cartooning, underground comix, graphic journalism and protest art, exploring the purpose and significance of image-based communication as an unparalleled propagator of both noble and nefarious ideas. The work presented will be chosen for its unique ability to demonstrate the inflammatory effect of weaponized visual jokes, uncensored commentary, and critical thinking on a society so often perplexed by artistic free expression and radicalized creative candor.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 2991 Special Topics in Communication
Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 2992 Special Topics in Communication
Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3010 Global Media and Society: Perspectives on Africa
This course offers an introduction to media, culture, and society in postcolonial Africa. It takes into account diverse media forms and cultures across the continent, to examine ways in which media interconnect with globalization, colonialism and imperialism, development, and social change. The course is designed to train students to do critical comparative analyses of media across nations. Suggested readings, activities, and assignments are designed to help students situate media technologies, forms, and artifacts in relation to broader political, economic, social, and cultural contexts. At the end of the course, students will be able to contextualize media across national borders paying attention to the ways in which media both shape and are shaped by social, political, religious, and economic factors.
1 Course Unit

COMM 3011 Media, Medicine, and the Art of Mortality
This seminar explores how death has shaped and been shaped by modern communication, healthcare, and the arts. We'll examine the politics, ethics, and aesthetics of mortality in film, television, journalism, digital media, and literature. Our methodological approach will build on insights from media studies and medical humanities. Topics may include the emergence of the "end-of-life" as a life stage in popular culture and medical care; protest, activism, and other political movements against death and injustice; and the creation of knowledge, media, and art in the wake of mourning and loss.
1 Course Unit

COMM 3091 Communication Internship Seminar
This seminar provides a scholarly counterpart for students' internships in various communication-related organizations. Through individually selected readings, class discussion, and individual conferences, students develop their own independent research agendas which investigate aspects of their internship experience or industry. In written field notes and a final paper, students combine communication theory and practice in pursuit of their individual questions. This course is restricted to Comm majors.
Two Term Class, Student may enter either term; credit given for either
1 Course Unit

COMM 3100 The Communication Research Experience
In this hands-on course students will work with active researchers in the Communication Neuroscience lab at Penn to gain experience in how research works. Students will have the opportunity to interact closely with a mentor and will gain experience conceptualizing research questions, designing experiments, and collecting and analyzing data.
Not Offered Every Year
Prerequisite: (COMM 2100 OR HSOC 2002 OR INTR 3500 OR MKTG 2120 OR SOCI 2000 OR URBS 2000)
1 Course Unit

COMM 3120 Studying Digital Worlds: Qualitative Social Science for Research
This course will prepare students to design and conduct qualitative research projects that seek to understand the social life of digital technologies and digital media. Students will learn about inductive research design and key qualitative methods such as interviewing, ethnography, and content analysis. We will also explore the ethical challenges of research in digital worlds. This qualitative methods course will equip students to analyze interaction in digital media environments, with apps, and elsewhere in everyday life.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3130 Computational Text Analysis for Communication Research
In this 'big data' era, presidents and popes tweet daily. Anyone can broadcast their thoughts and experiences through social media. Speeches, debates, and events are recorded in online text archives. The resulting explosion of available textual data means that journalists and marketers summarize ideas and events by visualizing the results of textual analysis (the ubiquitous 'word cloud' just scratches the surface of what is possible). Automated text analysis reveals similarities and differences between groups of people and ideological positions. In this hands-on course students will learn how to manage large textual datasets (e.g. Twitter, YouTube, news stories) to investigate research questions. They will work through a series of steps to collect, organize, analyze, and present textual data by using automated tools toward a final project of relevant interest. The course will cover linguistic theory and techniques that can be applied to textual data (particularly from the fields of corpus linguistics and natural language processing). No prior programming experience is required. Through this course students will gain skills writing Python programs to handle large amounts of textual data and become familiar with one of the key techniques used by data scientists, which is currently one of the most in-demand jobs.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 3180 Stories From Data: Introduction to Programming for Data Journalism
Today masses of data are available everywhere, capturing information on just about everything and anything. Related but distinct data streams about newsworthy events and issues -- including activity from social media and open data sources (e.g., The Open Government Initiative) -- have given rise to a new source for and style of reporting sometimes called Data Journalism. Increasingly, news sites and information portals present visually engaging, dynamic, and interactive stories linked to the underlying data (e.g., The Guardian DataBlog). This course offers an introduction to Python programming for data analysis and visualization. Students will learn how to collect, analyze, and present various forms of data. Because numbers and their visualizations do not speak for themselves but require context, interpretation, and narrative, students will practice making effective stories from data and presenting them in blogs and other formats. No programming experience is required for this class.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 3220 History and Theory of Freedom of Expression (SNF Paideia Program Course)
If we were to fashion new laws for speech from scratch in our media-saturated, fake news world, would they be different laws from those we have? The rootedness of free speech in our civic DNA springs from enduring philosophical arguments over what truth and knowledge are, what human nature is like, and what we think society owes to and requires from its members. We explore foundational debates at the core of the First Amendment, the evolving interpretation of the amendment by the Supreme Court, its determined historical challengers, and struggles over its applicability to contemporary controversies. We address strong claims that unfettered speech is central to democratic societies and strong claims that society can be made more democratic by removing discriminatory speech from social media and public discourse more generally. Every society limits speech in significant ways. What are these limits in the United States, why are these the limits, and are they the ones we want? This reading and discussion seminar meets for lively, informed dialogue and debate.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 3230 Contemporary Politics, Policy, and Journalism
This course focuses on how modern media intersect with politics and government in the 21st century. Case studies will include examining media coverage of the Gore v. Bush 2000 presidential election recount, 9/11, Barack Obama's election and presidency, the Trump administration, and the 2020 election. The course will include several guest speakers, all of them prominent press/political figures. In addition, students will participate in a DC field trip where they will get to hear from, and interact with, Washington leaders in the fields of politics, policy, and journalism. Course materials, in addition to a number of books, will include the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, left- and right-wing social media sites, cable broadcasts, and network news shows. There will be three written assignments: an analysis of the first two weeks of the next Administration; a column or op-ed; and a final research paper. In this discussion-based seminar there will be a premium on class participation.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 3280 Drawing the Blue Line: Police and Power in American Popular Culture (SNF Paideia Program Course)
The police are one of the most heavily imagined institutions in American popular culture. From Cagney and Lacey to Colors, Law & Order, The Wire and The Watchmen, evolving depictions of law enforcement help us to understand larger socio-cultural shifts that have occurred from the post-1968 riots to the dawn of the Black Lives Matter movement in the mid-2010s and police abolition in the early 2020s. Using case study and textual analysis approaches, students will examine how specific police procedurals, movies, and other cultural texts showcase police authority in relation to certain communities, and consider how these texts reflect, uphold, and/or challenge prevailing views on law and order and criminal justice. Our explorations of how media and cultural industries have framed policing will pay particular attention to questions of power, race, gender, sexuality, class, and geography. These explorations will also include learning about and learning to dialogue, given the diverse – and often contentious – views about policing in America. Students will have an opportunity to interact with speakers representing different positions that relate to mediated perceptions -- as well as lived experiences of -- policing. Class assignments and activities will enhance students' abilities to productively discuss complex issues that are frequently sanitized or homogenized within U.S. popular culture.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3300 The Hidden World of Privacy Policies
The US Federal Trade Commission considers privacy policies essential for internet sites and apps. Lawyers for firms with internet sites and/or apps spend much time writing privacy policies. Yet surveys show that most Americans don't read the policies, and in fact cannot understand them because of their legal jargon. Moreover, surveys indicate, most Americans don't even correctly understand what the label privacy policy means. The aim of this course will be to examine this crucial but misunderstood aspect of modern life. You will learn how to read privacy policies, how to understand their strategic business purposes within the internet industry, and how to think about the implications for society when the key rules of surveillance and privacy are hidden from all but a relative few. You will also work with others in the class to create and carry out a survey of college students' understanding of privacy policies. There will be one exam and a paper related to the survey.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3360 Feminism and the Internet
From the earliest message boards and email chains, the internet has given people a way to connect, not just digitally but sexually. Porn, online dating, sex education: digital technology has made it easier for people to find each other and explore sexuality, but these same tools have also been used in relationships that are exploitative and criminal. In this course, we look at the different connections between sex, gender, queerness and the internet: changing policies regulating sex (like FOSTA and SESTA), the platforms that have created controversies around sex (for example, craigslist, tumblr and Grindr) and shifting norms around how sex and sexuality manifest online. This is an interdisciplinary course that brings together internet studies, queer theory, and cultural studies in order to understand the social and historical dimensions of sex, sexuality and digital technologies.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: GSWS 3360
1 Course Unit

COMM 3370 Public Health Communication in the Digital Age
This course is designed to explore the role of public health communication in the digital age to influence health behavior change in several areas: infectious disease pandemics, tobacco and substance use, mental health, cancer, nutrition and physical activity and others. Throughout the course, we will discuss a number of important considerations when designing and implementing public health communication interventions. Students will be introduced to theories of health behavior change, models of persuasive communication, practical issues in the design of effective health communication programs, countering misinformation, community engagement, audience segmentation, cultural tailoring to specific audiences, evaluation approaches, ethics, and communication inequalities. We will also explore the use of digital technologies and social media platforms, entertainment education, popular media, and social marketing in delivery of public health communication interventions.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3390 Critical Perspectives in Journalism
This course aims to provide students with a critical understanding of journalism. It combines theoretical perspectives on the making of news with primary source material produced by and about journalists. Students will analyze theoretical material on journalism -- about how news is made, shaped, and performed -- alongside articles and broadcasts appearing in the media, interviews with journalists in the trade press, and professional reviews. Topics include models of journalistic practice, journalistic values and norms, gatekeeping and sourcing practices, storytelling formats in news, and ethical problems related to misrepresentation, plagiarism, and celebrity.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 3400 Peace Communication: The Use and Abuse of Comm in Intergroup Conflict (SNF Paideia Program Course)
Why are conflicts between groups of humans so tragically predictable? What drives us to exclude, demean and fight with members of other groups? And what can we do about it? In this class, we will examine the biological roots of intergroup conflict between religious, ethnic and political groups, and take a critical view of the ways in which psychology and communication have been employed to help foment or transcend conflict. In the first part of the course, we will examine the theoretical work from intergroup psychology. In the second part of the course, we will examine the specific biases that drive conflict (e.g., stereotypes, emotions, prejudice, dehumanization) and how they are measured using both explicit self-report and implicit measures (e.g., physiology, neuroimaging); in the third part, we will explore the interventions that have been demonstrated to work (and fail) to decrease intergroup conflict. No prior experience in psychology or neuroscience is required. The course is lecture-based, but will include class discussions and in-class activities.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3450 Adolescence and Media
How are adolescents represented in media and what effects do these portrayals have on developing teens? What makes adolescents a "jackpot market" to be targeted by advertising and how can they be swayed by mediated public health efforts to encourage health-promoting behaviors? Finally, what does the increasingly mediated nature of everyday life mean for adolescents, their friends, and their families during their journey into adulthood? We will explore these questions by reading key empirical studies and by critically analyzing film, music, and public service announcements portraying and/or targeting adolescents from the 1950s to the present day.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3510 Media and Migration in the 21st Century
This seminar examines how media represent the lives and journeys of people who migrate from the Global South. We explore how migrant stories are framed and circulated across different media networks and we address how public perceptions of migrants shift based on factors such as gender, race, class, and disability. We also consider the affordances and pitfalls of heightened visibility when migrants turn to new media to represent themselves and advocate for rights and recognition. Course materials will include different types of non-fiction media (documentaries, news reports, online content, social media posts) created by a variety of stakeholders (e.g. corporate newsrooms, governments, NGOs, migration activists).
1 Course Unit

COMM 3600 Understanding the Political Economy of Media
This course has two aims. First, assuming that communications are central to any society, it situates media systems within larger national and international social relationships and political structures. Second, this course critically examines the structures of the communication systems themselves, including ownership, profit imperatives, support mechanisms such as advertising and public relations, and the ideologies and government policies that sustain these arrangements. Considering case studies ranging from traditional news and entertainment media to new digital and social media, the course provides a comprehensive survey of the major texts in this vibrant sub-field of media studies.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3650 Media, the Apocalypse, and the Undead
Global media industries have long been fascinated with the idea of the apocalypse, particularly humanity's attempts at survival against (seemingly) mindless hordes. Whether in the form of zombies or infected masses, cultural industries' preoccupation with humankind's collapse - and potential resilience - has led to lucrative film, comic, and television franchise universes. Using texts from around the world, including - but not limited to - The Night of the Living Dead, The Walking Dead, Black Mirror, Reality Z, Dead Set, KL Zombie, The Road, Ravenous, Bird Box, Train to Busan, Kingdom, Adventure Time, and The Girl with all the Gifts, this course invites students to explore the ways in which media and cultural industries seek to define human existence through the Otherness of the undead/infected. Central to the course will be an examination of the ways in which post-apocalyptic portrayals of human survival amidst rampaging hordes include important commentaries and subtexts about race, gender, power, and class, as well as the connections to a political moment or era.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3670 Communication in the Networked Age
Communication technologies, including the internet, social media, and countless online applications create the infrastructure and interface through which many of our interactions take place today. This form of networked communication opens new questions about how we establish relationships, engage in public, build a sense of identity, promote social change, or delimit the private domain. The ubiquitous adoption of new technologies has also produced, as a byproduct, new ways of observing the world: many of our interactions now leave a digital trail that, if followed, can help us unravel the determinants and outcomes of human communication in unprecedented ways. This course will give you the theoretical tools to critically analyze the impact that networked technologies have on social life and inform your assessment of current controversies surrounding those technologies.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3730 Black Geographies: Race and Visual Culture
What is the relationship between the Flint water crisis, the hyper-policing of racialized people, and the increased surveillance of neighborhoods deemed “poverty-stricken” or “at risk?” How do regimes of security, surveillance, policing, and forms of violence depend upon the concept of “risk” as central to their operation? How is risk informed by systemic racism and forms of anti-Blackness? How does visual culture (e.g., media coverage, documentary photographs, etc.) inform how we come to see and define certain people, communities, and ways of life as “risky?” How have those living in racialized geographies of “risk” found ways to live in, make do, and challenge the faulty narratives of risk? This interdisciplinary course will examine critical debates and key moments—historical (e.g., MOVE bombing in Philadelphia) and contemporary (e.g., Ferguson riots)—that have informed the concept of risk. Over the course of the semester, we will read scholarly texts and engage with objects such as archival documents, photographs, conceptual art, performance art and installations, journalistic texts, and films. This communications course will be approached from a cultural studies perspective, with particular attention to race, gender, and sexuality.
1 Course Unit

COMM 3770 Philosophical Problems of Journalism
This course explores the relationship between journalism and philosophy by examining particular issues in epistemology, political philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics. Topics will include: the concept of a "fact"; the role of the press in the state; whether journalists (like doctors and lawyers) operate according to specialized "professional" ethics; and the limits of journalism as a literary or visual genre. Course readings will include philosophical texts, breaking print journalism, and blogs that specialize in media issues.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 3780 Journalism and Public Service
In this course we examine links between journalism and public service by scrutinizing core concepts involved, practices that sometimes put journalism and public service in conflict (e.g., investigative reporting, coverage of war), and how journalism stacks up against other forms of public service from NGO work to government employment. Beginning with a reading of Robert Coles's classic The Call of Service, we dissect the notion of the "public," assess so-called public-service journalism by reading Pulitzer-Prize-winning examples, and reflect on the news media as a political institution. Individual weeks focus on such topics as the conflict that arises when a journalist's obligation to a confidential source clashes with a duty to the judicial system, whether the business of journalism is business, how journalism and NGO work compares as public service, and whether journalism by committed political activists (such as I.F. Stone) surpasses mainstream "neutral" journalism as a form of public service.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3870 Comparative Journalism
Is journalism the same all over the world? Do press systems and practices differ in fundamental ways that affect how we evaluate them politically, morally, aesthetically, epistemologically, and economically? Where does U.S. journalism fit among the models? This undergraduate seminar will introduce students to concrete differences in journalism around the world, but it won't only be an empirical look at how various press systems operate. We will also examine and argue about which journalistic practices and systems work best for which purposes, and explore the distinctive journalistic and philosophical assumptions and histories that undergird diverse practices and systems. Asian, European, African, and Mideast journalism will all be attended to.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3880 Ritual Communication
This course explores the power of ritual in contemporary culture. We examine how rituals help forge and strengthen social groups, be they generational, ethnic, religious, familial, regional, professional and/or institutional. We also consider how rituals create and communicate boundaries between "us" and "them" and between "desirable" and "deviant" behaviors. Students will have the opportunity to examine a diverse range of case-studies, from quinceañeras to rodeos, from weddings to reunions. We will explore rituals that unfold at the local level (proms, Thanksgiving dinners), as well as those that most of us experience only in mediated form (Oscars, Super Bowls, Presidential Inaugurations). We will also consider the profoundly disruptive impact of Covid-19 on ritual and explore the creative ways in which people hastily improvised online versions of vital rites of passage. From Gathertown graduations to Zoom memorials, the rapid rise of virtual rituals during the pandemic confirms their fundamental importance to our everyday lives and identities. Students in this interactive course will get to select their own ritual foci, will gain hands-on experience conducting original fieldwork, and will learn how to develop and present compelling research proposals.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 3890 Black Visual Culture and Its Archives
This undergraduate seminar examines the intersections of visual culture and race in the United States. It aims to provide a historical, cultural, and visual foundation for understanding the representation of and by Black people from the 19th to the 21st centuries, including texts such as, but not limited to, photography, film, television, conceptual art, and performance. Students will be introduced to critical concepts in the field of visual studies, black studies, communication, cultural studies, and rhetorical studies. The course will pay special attention to concepts such as Blackness, visuality, visibility and invisibility, surveillance, photographic theory, the gaze, and spectatorship. We will consider questions such as: What is "black visual culture"? What are its archives? How is Blackness produced, represented, and negotiated through visual modes? In what ways does Blackness and Black people challenge, refract, and rewrite the various visual modes that have sought to represent it? The course will explore various theoretical and methodological approaches to answering the aforementioned questions and enable students develop their own questions for understanding the complex ways in which race and the visual have been, and continue to be, entangled.
1 Course Unit

COMM 3940 India on Screen: How Global Media Industries Shape Culture and Politics
This course offers an overview of media, culture, and society in contemporary South Asia and the South Asian diaspora worldwide. Engaging with a diversity of media forms and cultures across the subcontinent – Hindi and regional-language cinemas, television, podcasts, social media platforms, and streaming video – we will explore what the histories of media technologies and the production, circulation, and consumption of media reveal about cultural and political developments in South Asia and the South Asian diaspora worldwide. Readings and assignments are designed to help students situate media technologies, forms, and artifacts in relation to broader political-economic, social, and cultural issues involving nationalism, religion, caste, gender, and sexuality.
1 Course Unit

COMM 3950 Communication and the Presidency
This course examines the vital aspect of communication as a tool of the modern Presidency. Reading and class discussions focus on case studies drawn from modern Presidential administrations (beginning with FDR) that demonstrate the elements of successful and unsuccessful Presidential initiatives and the critical factor of communication common to both. This course is also an introduction to primary research methods and to the use of primary research materials in the Presidential Library system.
Two Term Class, Student may enter either term; credit given for either
1 Course Unit

COMM 3970 New Media and Politics
This course examines the evolving media landscape and the political process from three perspectives: 1) the voter, 2) political campaigns and candidates, and 3) the evolving and expanding media environment. The course opens with a broad overview of the main theories of political communication and a historical review of the role played by new media technologies in U.S. political campaigns leading up to 1996, the year the internet debuted in presidential campaigns. The course then follows this evolution from the 1996 presidential campaign to the present. We will take a deep dive into the landmark changes brought on by new media technologies to mobilize, persuade, inform, and fundraise around modern presidential campaigns. Students will gain an understanding of the shifting role of social media and Big Tech as it relates to political content moderation, misinformation, campaign speech/ads, laws governing voting, measuring public opinion, media coverage and participation.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3991 Special Topics in Communication
Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3999 Independent Study
The independent study offers the self-motivated student an opportunity for a tailored, academically rigorous, semester-long investigation into a topic of the student's choice with faculty supervision. Students must complete and file a designated form, approved and signed by the supervising faculty member and the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies. This form must be received by the Undergraduate Office before the end of the first week of classes in the semester in which the independent study will be conducted.
1 Course Unit

COMM 4040 Media and Politics
Media and Politics will examine multiple issues specific to the past and present political media environment in the United States. Focus will be primarily, though not exclusively, on the contemporary news media. Topics covered will include political primaries, how elections have been influenced by the rise of partisan media, selective exposure, freedom of political speech as it relates to elections, the theoretical purpose of elections, money and media, political targeting, etc. We will also explore the quantitative and qualitative methods underlying what is and is not known about how elections work. Under the supervision of the professor, students will write an original research paper examining a specific topic in greater depth.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: PSCI 2208, PSCI 4208
1 Course Unit

COMM 4050 Media, Public Opinion, and Globalization
This seminar will examine American attitudes toward globalization and the role of the media in shaping public opinion toward events and people beyond our borders. Students will participate in original research on attitudes toward issues tied to globalization such as immigration, international trade, support for international organizations, isolationism, and so forth. Students will also spend time systematically studying the implications of American media coverage of these issues.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: PSCI 4209
1 Course Unit

COMM 4070 Understanding Social Networks
Digital technologies have made communication networks ubiquitous: even when we can't really notice them, they mediate most aspects of our daily activities. Networks, however, have always been the backbone of social life: long before Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, or other similar platforms, communication created channels for information diffusion that linked people in myriad other ways. Through letters, commerce, or simply face to face interactions, people have always been exposed to the behavior of others. These communicative ties embed us into an invisible web of influence that we can make tangible and analyze. This course will teach you how to map those connections in the form of networks, and how to study those networks so that we can improve our understanding of social life. The goal is to help you grasp the consequences of connectivity, and how small changes in the structure of our ties can lead to big differences in how networks behave.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 4110 Communication, Activism, and Social Change
This course examines the communication strategies of 20th and 21st-century social movements, both U.S. and global. We analyze the communication social movements create (including rhetorical persuasion, art activism, bodily argumentation, protest music, media campaigns, public protest, and grassroots organizing), and the role of communication in the identity formation, circulation, and efficacy of social movements. We also consider the communication created by forces seeking to undermine social change, define the study of social movements from a communication perspective, identify major historical and contemporary movements, and apply theories of communication and social change to "real world" activism. Students are required to research and design their own social movement campaign.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 4230 Communication and Social Influence Laboratory
Considerable resources are devoted to constructing mass media campaigns that persuade individuals to change their behavior. In addition, individuals powerfully influence one another without even knowing it. Still, our ability to design and select optimal messages and interventions is far from perfect. This course will review investigations in social and cognitive psychology and communication sciences that attempt to circumvent the limits of introspection by using biological and implicit measures, with particular focus on neuroimaging studies of social influence and media effects.
Not Offered Every Year
Prerequisite: COMM 2750
1 Course Unit

COMM 4280 Conventions, Debates, and Campaigns
Offered every four years to coincide with the U.S. presidential election cycle, this course focuses broadly on the Democratic and Republican national conventions and the post-conventions campaign lasting until election day. Seminar members will attend either one or both conventions in order to make a close study of the convention process as well as the role of the convention in launching the two major party nominees. Students will explore how political appeals are fashioned and presented; how campaign themes develop; how efforts are split between persuading the electorate versus mobilizing the party faithful; the role of political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and political action committees (PACs); how the campaigns forecast governance and serve American democracy. Students will produce comprehensive group reports on the conventions, debates, or major aspects of the unfolding campaigns.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 4320 Digital Inequalities
Digital information and communication technologies are intertwined with our everyday lives, from banking, to working, and dating. They're also increasingly crucial parts of our most powerful institutions, from policing, to the welfare state, and education. This course examines the ways that these technologies combine with traditional axes of inequality like race, gender, and class in ways that may deepen social inequality. We'll consider major approaches to understanding digital inequalities and apply them to case studies of both problems and solutions. Students will learn to critically analyze policies and programs from a variety of perspectives, and to evaluate the promise of digital technologies against their potential perils.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 4360 Data Literacy in the Algorithmic Society
Algorithms regulate many areas of social life: they shape the information you see online, how resources are allocated, or how hiring and matching happen in private and public settings. In these and many other examples, algorithms rely on data informing the automated decisions they encode. Our ability to think critically about that data is, thus, paramount to understanding how the algorithms operate. In this course, we will discuss how data is transformed into information and actionable knowledge. You will learn how to question data to ensure their validity, reliability, and representativeness. Understanding how data are collected, analyzed, and used is key to being able to demand transparency in automated decision-making, and to exercising our democratic role of demanding accountability when decisions are made based on questionable data.
1 Course Unit

COMM 4460 Media Industries and Nationalism (SNF Paideia Program Course)
Media institutions have long played a central role in constructing national identity, particularly in the era of nation-states. As globalization increases, media industries have also helped countries project their national identities – and nationalism – for both domestic and international audiences. With contemporary nationalist movements in the spotlight, this course examines how media institutions and cultural industries help to shape nationalism while framing in-group/out-group dynamics for audiences. This course examines case studies in mediated nationalism, paying particularly close attention to – but not limited to - countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, China, Hungary, Israel, India, Russia, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Ukraine. Using Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities as a theoretical basis, this course seeks to investigate how media industries affirm – and occasionally challenge – nationalistic sentiment, and how much of a role state intervention has played in the production of media texts. This course provides students with an understanding of the deep connection between media institutions and state-sponsored/populist nationalist movements, as well as the dynamics that shape nationalism in both wartime and peacetime eras. This course will also help students engage in constructive dialogue on the impact of nationalism domestically and internationally, while interacting with scholarship and speakers representing a wide range of viewpoints. Students will have an opportunity to learn more nuanced understandings about the ways in which nationalism and media intersect, reflecting the ideological, social, geographic diversity of what it means to be a part of community and nation.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 4590 Social Networks and the Spread of Behavior
This course explores the nature of diffusion through social networks, the ways networks are formed and shaped by social structures, and the role they play in health behavior, public policy, and innovation adoption. Topics include: the theory of social networks; the small world model of network structure; constructing models to represent society; the social bases of the adoption of innovations and the spread of new ideas; the role of social networks in controlling changes in public opinion; the emergence of unexpected fashions, fads, and social movements; and the connection between social network models and the design of public policy interventions. Students will learn how to use the agent-based computational modeling tool "NetLogo", and they will work directly with the models to understand how to test scientific theories. We will examine the basic theory of social networks in offline, face-to-face, networks, as well as the role of online networks in spreading new ideas and behaviors through social media. Long standing debates on the effects of social networks on changing beliefs and behaviors, their impact on social change, and ethical concerns regarding their potential manipulation will be given careful consideration throughout. Students will be taught new skills that will enable them to use and develop their own agent-based models.
Not Offered Every Year
Prerequisite: (COMM 2100 OR HSOC 2002 OR INTR 3500 OR MKTG 2120 OR SOCI 2000 OR URBS 2000)
1 Course Unit

COMM 4630 Surveillance Capitalism
Surveillance capitalism is a term academics and policymakers increasingly use to describe the world in which we live: where businesses track and classify individuals in order to decide how to sell to them, or whether to sell to them at all. Companies that millions of people turn to every hour such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Target, Walmart, and Pandora use the technologies of surveillance capitalism to drive their revenues. Critics point out that these activities are intimately bound with issues of discrimination and reputation. The "big data" analyses (often powered by artificial intelligence) may affect the ads people see, the discounts they receive, the jobs they may get offered, and far more. This course surveys the history of surveillance capitalism, how it works, and the key issues swirling around it. Students will write short (350 word) essays about each reading that will be key contributors toward their grades. Students will also a conduct research and write a paper that explores a contemporary or historical topic related to surveillance capitalism.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 4640 The Industrial Construction of Audiences
This course will explore the ways in which media companies, advertisers, and the ratings and/or analytics firms they hire (Nielsen, ComScore, Liveramp, 84.51°, Experian etc.) count, track, estimate, and label the people who make up their audiences. The descriptions they present are industrial constructions in the sense that they are portrayals of population segments and individuals that are based on data; they may or may not reflect the views that the populations or individuals have of themselves. The class will explore how internet giants such as Google, smaller internet firms such as The New York Times, multimedia companies such as NBC-Universal, connected TV manufacturers such as Vizio, and supermarkets such as Kroger construct their audiences. We will discuss the controversies such activities engender, and the possible implications the industrial constructions of audiences have for society as well as media industries.
1 Course Unit

COMM 4797 Honors & Capstone Thesis
The senior thesis provides a capstone intellectual experience for Honors students and Communication and Public Service Program (ComPS) participants. Students conduct a primary research study on a communication-related issue over the course of two semesters. Students should consult with and arrange for a faculty supervisor no later than the summer before senior year. Students must also file a designated form and topic statement, approved and signed by the supervising faculty member, no later than the first day of class. Required of all students planning to enroll in COMM 4897 or COMM 4997 in the Spring. All Honors students must have a 3.5 cumulative GPA at the end of junior year for eligibility. See the Annenberg website for complete eligibility requirements.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 4897 COMPS Capstone Thesis
Second semester of two semester thesis course. Successful completion of COMM 4797 is required for enrollment. The capstone thesis is a requirement for all Communication and Public Service Program participants. Students complete the primary research project started during COMM 4797. For students graduating with a 3.5 cumulative GPA after completing COMM 4897 with a grade of 3.7 or higher, the capstone thesis may be designated as a senior honors thesis in communication and public service.
Spring
Prerequisite: COMM 4797
1 Course Unit

COMM 4991 Special Topics in Communication
Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 4997 Senior Honors Thesis
Second semester of two semester thesis course. Completion of COMM 4797 with a grade of 3.3 or higher and a 3.5 cumulative GPA at the end of the Fall semester of senior year are required for enrollment. The Senior Honors Thesis provides a capstone intellectual experience for students who have demonstrated academic achievement of a superior level. Students complete the primary research project started during COMM 4797.
Spring
Prerequisite: COMM 4797
1 Course Unit

COMM 5000 Proseminar
Introduction to the field of communications study and to the graduate program in communications. Required of all degree candidates. Open only to graduate students in communication.
Fall
0 Course Units

COMM 5220 Introduction to Communication Research
The logic of scientific inquiry and the nature of research. Hypothesis development, research design, field and laboratory observation and experimentation,measurement, interviewing and content analysis, sampling, and basic statistical analysis. Required of all degree candidates. Open only to graduate communication students.
Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 5230 Qualitative Ways of Knowing
How do social scientists create new knowledge? What are the qualitative processes and philosophies of knowing for communication scholars? This course provides students with a range of theories and frameworks for gathering data and developing claims, as well as understanding the limits of social science inquiry. Key areas of focus are identifying research questions, research ethics, understanding evidence, making causal claims and scholarly writing. COMM 5230 is required of all degree candidates and open only to graduate communication students.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 5250 Introduction to Political Communication
This course is designed as a PH.D.-level introduction to the study of political communication, and is recommended as a foundational course to be taken early in ones course of study for students interested in political communication as a primary or secondary area of research and teaching. As an introduction to the field it is structured to cover a wide-range of topics and approaches, including media institutions and the effects of both mass mediated and deliberative communications. While no single course can provide comprehensive coverage of a subfield with as long and diverse a history as political communication, our hope is that you will leave this course with a strong grasp of the major theories, trends, methods, findings and debates in this area of study, as well as the gaps in our knowledge and promising directions for future research.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 5300 Advertising and the Digital Age
It is impossible to understand the development of the contemporary digital era without understanding the role played by the advertising industry, broadly the understood. From the launch of first popular web browsers in the mid-1990s, various forms of marketing communication have shaped the most popular activities-from search to social to apps-and redefined the ways companies think about individuals in society. The aim of this course is to study these developments historically and contemporaneously. First we will range across the history of advertising and its related social force, consumerism, through the late 20th century. We will next investigate the forces that guided the rise of the internet as a commercial medium in the face of an earlier ethic that decried that very idea. Then we will dive into the ways marketers attempt to guide the internet and other digital media to their benefit by exploring a range of key contemporary activities: the rise of the smartphone as a marketing device, programmatic advertising, personalization strategies, location and cross-platform targeting and attribution, online retailing, the responses of brick and mortar retailers, advertisers' roles in the cratering of print media, native advertising/branded content, the rise of "influencers," and the transformation of "television" as a product, an activity, and an industry. We will read industry documents and other materials to assess how all these activities actually "work" and what drives them. Then we will consider their societal implications through a variety of lenses, including surveillance, privacy, pluralism, and democracy.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 5400 Discourse Analysis
Discourse Analysis examines both verbal and non-verbal communication to explore the making of claims of meaning, truthfulness, and authority, in everything from political speech to advertising to scientific reports. The course presents a range of methods and theoretical frameworks for analyzing discourse in a wide variety of social contexts (journalistic, legal, political, medical, familial). Readings and exercises draw from theories of signs, symbols, gestures, and language to analyze communicative acts and events. The goal of the course is to provide a solid grounding in the theories of speech, writing, symbols, and images, and to survey a broad array of empirical studies that have grown out of these theoretical frameworks. The course is appropriate for graduate students and advanced undergraduates.
Also Offered As: SOCI 5400
1 Course Unit

COMM 5530 Research Seminar on Computational Social Science
This is a graduate research seminar in which top researchers in the field of Computational Social Science will present cutting-edge research. Our focus will be on carefully reading the speaker's work, and discussing in detail their theoretical models, empirical methods, and overall scientific contribution. Participants will also present in the seminar, which will help to prepare them for professional presentations of their work at conferences and job talks.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 5610 Cultural Sociology
Studies culture as values, scripts, practice, performance, and style in the contexts of everyday life, social class, and status groups, social movements, and changes of communication technologies. Approaches politics, society, institutions,identities, and social change as dynamic processes and complex interactions at both micro/meso and meso/macro levels. Examines the production, reception, circulation and effects of signs,symbols, and stories. Readings include both classic authors (Elias, Simmel,Bakhtin, Goffman, Foucault, Bourdieu, Raymond Williams, etc.) and contemporary works from sociology and communication studies.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: SOCI 5610
1 Course Unit

COMM 5630 Doing Media Studies: Theories, Frameworks, and Methods
This seminar provides an introduction to theoretical and methodological developments in media and critical-cultural studies from the 1960s until the present. We will examine how a range of theoretical frameworks and methods that are central to media and communication research – textual and discourse analysis, ethnographic techniques, archival and historical research, memory studies, science and technology studies, postcolonial studies, and so on – emerged in conversation with broader philosophical and theoretical debates across the humanities and the social sciences. Taking a comparative approach – reading scholarship that addresses a range of media forms and technologies, cultural contexts, and historical periods – we will map the development of the field by exploring four distinct but overlapping terrains: 'texts' and discourses; audiences, users, and publics; industries and institutions; and media history and historiography. Throughout, we will pay close attention to research design, the promises and limits of various qualitative and interpretive research methods (in-depth interviews, participant observation, close reading, etc.), and most importantly, connections and disjunctures across theoretical frameworks, types of evidence, and narrative style and argumentation.
1 Course Unit

COMM 5750 Social Psychology of Communication
Contributions of social psychology to understanding communication behavior: message systems; social cognition; persuasive communications; attitude formation and change; face-to-face interactions and small group situations; strategies of attributional and communicative interpretation; mass communication effects; social influence and networks.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 5770 Attitude & Behavior Prediction
This course surveys classic and contemporary theory and research in the area of attitude formation and change and examines the principles of social information processing that underlie attitudes. We cover some of the basic concepts of the psychology of attitudes, including attitude structure and measurement at both conscious and unconscious levels. After this introduction, we will review persuasion approaches, the role of affect and fear in communication, influences of past behavior, to finally turn to models that explain behavioral change and allow researchers and practitioners to design ways of modifying recipients' actions.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 5800 Global Digital Cultures
What do histories of media technologies and the production, circulation and consumption of media artifacts reveal about cultural and political developments across the postcolonial world? What happens when media and communication technologies become the site of intelligibility instead of serving as a conduit for investigating some other questions(s) (globalization, nationalism, secularism, etc.)? What new life-worlds come to the fore when we think the postcolonial world with digital media? With these broad questions in mind, this seminar offers a critical introduction to the unfolding impact of digitalization across the postcolonial world. Situating digital infrastructures and platforms in relation to diverse media forms and cultures across print, national and regional cinemas, television, and pirate and other non-formal media circuits, readings and assignments are designed to help students locate the digital turn in relation to broader political-economic, social, and cultural forces that transformed the 'rest of the world' beginning in the 1980s. Drawing on scholarship from global media and communication studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, cultural anthropology, and science and technology studies, we will adopt a trans-regional and connected histories approach to examine how digital media are positioned in relation to existing media infrastructures, changing urban environments, the ongoing transformation of established sound and screen industries, and emergent forms of everyday media practice and use that are reconfiguring socio-cultural, political, and economic terrains. From massive state-driven digital identity projects to YouTube influencer cultures, from Twitter and primetime television to WhatsApp and political rumors, readings and discussions will reflect on enduring concerns of representation, identity, and power while grappling with logics of algorithmic curation, datafication, and user-participation.
1 Course Unit

COMM 5940 Introduction to Networks
Much of what we think and do is shaped by social interactions, by the behavior we see in other people, or the information we receive from them: we pay attention to what our friends or we monitor news through the feeds of social media, and we are more likely to use technologies already embraced by other users. Networks are behind those (and, by extension, most) dimensions of social life. They offer the language to capture the invisible structure of interdependence that links us together, and the means to analyze dynamics like diffusion, influence, or the effects of media in an increasingly diverse information environment. The aim of this course is to introduce networks and the relational way of thinking. Students will gain the necessary literacy to read, interpret, and design network-based research; learn how to go from concepts to metrics; and draw and interpret networks through the lens of substantive research questions. We will pay equal attention to the theory and the empirics of network science, and set the foundations for more advanced work on networks.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 5980 Special Topics in Communication
Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/graduate/courses
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 6000 Advocacy in Emergent Technology, Digital Media and Society
This course is designed to build a critical foundation for understanding the interplay of digital technologies and society and the important role of advocates in this space. Providing an overview of the history, students will investigate and critique contemporary emergent technologies in a social context, and explore their use in advocacy efforts. The course uses interactive lecture, discussion, readings, and guest speakers from technologists in the field.
Fall
Also Offered As: SSPP 6000
1 Course Unit

COMM 6010 Contemporary Sociological Theory
This is a graduate-level course that will explore contemporary social theory with an emphasis on theories and theoretical orientations related to social interaction, identity, culture, and inequality. For example, we will discuss sociological theories from the last half century about race and racism, gender, social class, education, emotion, and violence. Importantly, we will consider theory in the context of its application to empirical social science research and real world concerns.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: SOCI 6010
Mutually Exclusive: SOCI 3010
1 Course Unit

COMM 6030 Journey to Joy: Designing a Happier Life for Social Work, Social Policy and Non-Profit Leadership Pr
What does joy really mean? Could joy be an intervention for complex trauma, pain, grief, and loss? How does joy show up in policy making and leadership? This innovative new course combines cutting-edge research, practical techniques, and real-world examples to help you understand the power of joy and develop community-informed, anti-racist strategies for promoting it. From exploring the latest in clinical intervention, popular ideas around manifestation, self-care, and #Blackjoy, to examining the role of technology and cultural differences, you will gain a culturally humble and comprehensive understanding of what it takes to design a happier life. This course includes a blend of immersive, hands-on activities, short lectures, and engaging reflexive discussions that will leave you feeling inspired and empowered. Whether you are social work, non-profit leader or social policy student, or someone who wants to increase their own experiences of joy and happiness, this course is a perfect way to jump start your journey to joy.
Fall
Also Offered As: SSPP 6030
1 Course Unit

COMM 6110 Neurobiology of Social Influence
Required prior experience: A graduate level statistics course and ability to read primary research articles in cognitive neuroscience. (No course prereqs, but students with less background may need to do supplemental work at the front end.) Description: Considerable resources are devoted to constructing mass media campaigns that persuade individuals to change their behavior and individuals exert powerful influence on one another without even knowing it. Still, our ability to design and select optimal messages and interventions is far from perfect. This course will review investigations in social and cognitive psychology and communication sciences that attempt to circumvent the limits of introspection by using biological and implicit measures, with particular focus on neuroimaging studies of social influence and media effects.
1 Course Unit

COMM 6120 Meaningful Measures in a Data-Driven World
Knowledge cannot proceed without observing and measuring. And knowledge is necessary to transform society. Today we can observe a larger share of behaviors, from the individual to the collective, but extracting scientific meaning from that data, and connecting that meaning with insights and applications, is still a challenge. New approaches to the management, use, and analysis of social data are required to transform new forms of quantification into meaningful understanding of human and social behavior. This seminar will discuss and evaluate new forms of data representation and the conceptual, computational, and ethical challenges they create. We will discuss how our theories can keep up with rapidly changing realities and our capacity to analyze those realities, focusing on the central principles of measurement and questions of access and ethics.
1 Course Unit

COMM 6150 Experimental Design and Issues in Causality
The main goal of this course is to familiarize students with experiments, quasi-experiments, survey experiments and field experiments as they are widely used in the social sciences. Some introductory level statistics background will be assumed, though this is a research design course, not a statistics course. By the end of the course, students will be expected to develop their own original experimental design that makes some original contribution to knowledge. Throughout the course of the semester, we will also consider how to deal with the issue of causality as it occurs in observational studies, and draw parallels to experimental research.
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: PSCI 6350
1 Course Unit

COMM 6230 Health Psychology Seminar
Seminar members will critically review theory and research on communication, behavior, and health, with the goal of suggesting new directions that research might take. Theories of health behavior, methodological issues in health behavior research, and strategies to improve health-related behaviors, including sexual risk behaviors, physical activity, diet, and medication adherence, using a variety of approaches will be studied.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 6300 Historical Trends of Mass Communication Research
An introduction into the field of mass communication research covering classic studies from the late 19th century through 1970s. Emphasis is on the societal, organizational, political, and other considerations that shaped the field.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 6310 Social Cohesion in the Age of Social Media
Social media platforms have created an information infrastructure that decentralizes the curation of content, reinforces selective exposure to like-minded sources, and offers very loose moderation policies to govern interactions. As a result, social media platforms have created an environment prone to conflict, polarization, incivility, and information disorders. But how much do we actually know about the role social media play in undermining social cohesion? Do social media reflect larger societal trends or is there something specific to these platforms that creates or aggravates conflict? Do the effects of social media vary by platform or by affordances within platforms? The goal of this seminar is to evaluate existing empirical evidence about the role social media plays in eroding social cohesion, and to connect this evidence with ongoing policy discussions on how to regulate social media companies.
1 Course Unit

COMM 6370 Public Health Communication
Theories of health behavior change and the potential role for public health communication; international experience with programs addressing behaviors related to cancer, AIDS, obesity, cardiovascular disease, child mortality, drug use and other problems, including evidence about their influence on health behavior; the design of public health communication programs; approaches to research and evaluation for these programs.
Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 6372 Public Health Communication Research and Evaluation in the Digital Age
This research seminar focuses on formative and evaluation research methods used to design and examine the effectiveness of public health communication interventions in the digital age. Students will learn about behavioral change theories and program planning frameworks used to inform communication intervention design; mechanisms of how communication interventions influence health behaviors; formative research used in determining targeted beliefs, message themes, and message effectiveness; research designs to measure campaign exposure and effects. The course will emphasize unique affordances, ethical considerations, and limitations of communication interventions using digital technologies. We will explore these research topics across different settings, health issues, and populations including public health communication to promote vaccinations, tobacco cessation, mental health care utilization, cancer screening, healthy nutrition and physical activity among others.
1 Course Unit

COMM 6390 Communication and Cultural Studies
This course tracks the different theoretical appropriations of "culture" and examines how the meanings we attach to it depend on the perspectives through which we define it. The course first addresses perspectives on culture suggested by anthropology, sociology, communication, and aesthetics, and then considers the tensions across academic disciplines that have produced what is commonly known as "cultural studies." The course is predicated on the importance of becoming cultural critics versed in alternative ways of naming cultural problems, issues, and texts. The course aims not to lend closure to competing notions of culture but to illustrate the diversity suggested by different approaches.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 6750 Message Effects
Current research, theory and statistical methods for assessing the effects of messages. Specific focus on messages designed to have a persuasive effect on attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or behaviors. Experimental and non-experimental research from mass and interpersonal communication, health, social psychology, advertising, political science and journalism will be considered. Unintended effects--such as the consequences of violent pornography--are not considered.
Not Offered Every Year
Prerequisite: COMM 5750
1 Course Unit

COMM 6840 Data Visualization for Research
Empirical research employs data to gain insights and build a theoretical understanding of the world. An appropriate visualization of data is key to illuminating hidden patterns and effectively communicate the main findings of research. This course will discuss the visualization strategies of published research, give recommendations of best practice, and discuss tips and techniques for specific research purposes (i.e. hypothesis testing, group comparison) and data structures, including temporal, geographic, and network data. The course will equip students with tools they can use to learn through visualization and to communicate more effectively their own research.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 6990 Advanced Project in a Medium
Proposal written in specified form and approved by both the student's project supervisor and academic advisor must be submitted with registration. Open only to graduate degree candidates in communication.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 7010 Introduction to the Political Economy of Media
This course has two aims. First, assuming that communications are central to any society, it situates media systems within larger national and international social relationships and political structures. Second, this course critically examines the structures of the communication systems themselves, including ownership, profit imperatives, support mechanisms such as advertising and public relations,and the ideologies and government policies that sustain these arrangements. Considering case studies ranging from traditional news and entertainment media to new digital and social media, the course provides a comprehensive survey of the major texts in this vibrant sub-field of media studies.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 7020 Media, Capitalism, and Democracy
In this course we critically examine the complex and often-invisible relationships between political-economic structures and information/communication systems. Drawing from various schools of economic and democratic theory, we will explore historical and international case studies of how capitalism shapes media systems, infrastructures, and institutions. In doing so, we will interrogate how commercial logics affect media organizations' ability to provide for democratic society's communication and information needs. As we unpack and denaturalize the ideologies, imaginaries, and unexamined assumptions that undergird these relationships, we also will consider structural alternatives, always asking the utopian but necessary question: Is another media system possible?
1 Course Unit

COMM 7060 Analysis of Election Data
This course is intended to serve as a workshop for students interested in the empirical analysis of elections, public opinion and political communication more generally. The centerpiece of the course will be an original research paper produced by each student on a topic of his or her own choosing. The requirements for these papers are fairly open, but demanding: the research papers must a) involve empirical analysis of a major election data set, b) be oriented toward answering an original research question selected with the guidance of the instructor, and c) aim to be of publishable quality. There are no formal prerequisites for the course. However, if you have less than two semesters of statistical training, and/or no formal background in the study of elections, public opinion or political communication, then this is probably not the right course for you. In order to be able to formulate an original research question, you need some background in the literature, which is provided by other courses, but is not a formal part of this course.
Fall or Spring
Also Offered As: PSCI 8050
1 Course Unit

COMM 7100 Rhetorical Criticism
Drawing on the 2008 election for materials, the course will focus on two themes: the relationship between the rhetoric of presidential campaigns and the rhetoric of governance and the rhetorical role of biography, age, race, and gender in the construction of a candidate's political identity.
1 Course Unit

COMM 7150 Political Communication
This course examines the role of political communication in influencing political attitudes and behaviors. Because of the broad nature of the topic, course readings and lectures will be interdisciplinary, drawing on research in sociology, history, psychology, political science and communication research. There are two primary goals for the course. One goal is to acquaint graduate students with the wide-ranging literature on political communication. A second major goal is to stimulate ideas for original research in the field of political communication. Toward this end, by the end of the semester students will be expected to be sufficiently familiar with the field to propose original studies on topics of their choosing. The formulation of an original research question and research design will be an important component of the final examination.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: PSCI 7150
1 Course Unit

COMM 7220 Theories and Methods in Qualitative Research
The objective of this course is to ensure that students have a grasp of the fundamental theories and methods of qualitative research. After spending time immersing ourselves in the metatheories that shape social science research, we will address ethical issues that emerge in all human subjects research (qualitative and otherwise), focusing primarily on responsible treatment of participants and their data. Then we will work through a series of research techniques, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, ethnography, discourse analysis and participatory mapping. With the goal of providing practical instruction on qualitative methods and a grounding in theoretical issues, this course is meant to prepare studies for conducting a broad range of qualitative research projects in communication and media studies.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 7270 Evaluation of Communication Campaigns
The various roles of research in campaign work: foundational research, formative research, monitoring research, summative evaluation research, policy research. The place for a theory of campaign effects. The ethics of evaluation research. Alternative designs, measurement, statistical, and analytic approaches.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 7390 Collective Memory and Journalism
How do understandings of the past impact what academics know? Collective memory has emerged as one of the most widespread, yet least understood, manifestations of contemporary culture. This course uses the study of collective memory to better explain the charting of disciplinary knowledge about journalism. Students will consider major theories and histories of collective memory and explore the ways in which they have taken shape as disciplinary approaches to journalism's study. Considering disciplines as communities of memory, whose participants gravitate toward codified ways of approaching problems, issues and events, the course uses the idea of shared memory as a way to explain and evaluate how the academy develops and legitimates knowledge, how the past is strategically used to drive engagements with the present, and how simplified notions from the past stand in for complicated phenomena of the present. The course aims to develop student familiarity with the vagaries of collective memory, the workings of the academy, and the frames for understanding the study of journalism, all with an eye to improving students' skills as cultural critics on a variety of topics.
1 Course Unit

COMM 7410 Media Effects Research Design
This course will include three components. Part one will focus on readings and lectures about media effects research design, with some emphasis on exposure measurement, and on constructing out-of-laboratory designs including natural and quasi experiments, longitudinal and time series designs and designs appropriate for evaluating persuasive campaigns. Part two will be case focused, asking for design critiques of current published research studies. Part three will provide an opportunity for development of designs relevant to students' own interests.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 7650 Digital Inequalities
This graduate course will introduce students to key approaches to understanding digital inequalities across communication, media studies, and sociology. From divides in access and skills, to institutional and intersectional approaches, this emerging research area utilizes different types of theories about social inequalities and social scientific methods to understand novel issues arising in our increasingly digitally mediated society. Over the course of the semester, students will develop a research proposal that will prepare them to utilize and contribute to theory and methods discussed in the course.
1 Course Unit

COMM 7830 Describing Your Data
This course is for students who have collected empirical data and will explore ways of describing data for scholarly and translational purposes. For example, students will explore different ways to explore and visualize their data (e.g., a conference abstract vs. a blog post), present their data (e.g., a conference talk vs. a pop talk) and make their findings more reproducible. Students will also read scholarly work (oversampling, though not limited to work on media effects and the science of science communication) and critique their work in relation to what is known about effective communication and reproducibility. Students should come prepared to engage with art, science, and computer programming.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 7880 Research Seminar on Internet Experiments
In the last decade, new studies have used Web-based experimentation to identify previously unobservable features of communication networks - from processes of cumulative advantage, to the spread of innovations, to the emergence of cooperation. This course offers a deep-dive into the design, creation and execution of Web-based experiments. Students will learn the core principles of Web-based experimental design, which will prepare them to design their own Web-based studies. Students will learn the relationship between theory and methods through a careful analysis of the theoretical implications of past Web-based experiments (both in terms of their value for some scientific problems, and their limitations for others). To this end, students will explore Web-based experiments through the lens of the theories that motivate them. Discussions and assignments will focus on eliciting both the strengths and limitations of this approach with specific emphasis on identifying the scientific potential for new studies. Longstanding debates concerning the value of identification and replication in social science, alongwith the relationship between theoretical models, observational data and experimental data, are given careful consideration throughout. Students will be exposed to new ways of conducting empirical research that will prepare them to design their own Web-based experimental studies.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 7999 Independent Research
Proposal written in specified form and approved by both the student's project supervisor and academic advisor or another member of the faculty must be submitted with registration.
Fall or Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 8010 Filter Bubbles, Long Tails, & Information Cascades: Methodology for a Fragmented Media Environment
Scholars and pundits have made many claims in recent years about the impact that digital technologies, and social media in particular, play in shaping access to political information and the formation of beliefs. However, all these claims rely on specific measurement instruments and research designs that are not always appropriately scrutinized or evaluated. This course will discuss the different analytical approaches that can be used to measure media consumption, selective exposure, bias, opinion formation, and the diffusion of information in the online media environment. Our goal is to assess the strength and weaknesses of different research designs with an eye on how to best triangulate available evidence and advance in a cumulative fashion in this important research domain.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8140 Doing Internet Studies
This is a project-based seminar with two key objectives: introducing students to core theories and methods in internet studies and completing a research project that uses digital media, broadly construed. Comprising many methods and research approaches, Internet studies is inherently interdisciplinary, and this course is designed to provide a practical set of guidelines for doing work in this diverse and growing field. Students will have a lot of independence in developing a final research project for the course they may work individually, in pairs or in small groups, and the final project can take the form of a research paper, an art project or a piece of long-form journalism, as long as these projects use both digital media and critical theory from internet studies.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8150 Labor, Communication, and Technology
Debates about the “future of work,” automation, and the working conditions of “on-demand” work have opened up new questions rooted in long intellectual lineages. This course introduces students to key theoretical perspectives and concepts in the study of labor, communication, and technology from the 19th and 20th centuries and examines their relevance to 21st century issues. We will examine the meaning of labor from Marxist, post-industrial, cultural, and sociological perspectives as well as the place of labor in communication scholarship. We will also examine the relationship between digital transformations of the workplace and new forms of surveillance, social stratification, and inequality.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8370 The Meaning of Measures: Quantification, Culture, & Digital Technologies
It's been said that what's counted counts. Numbers and other measurements communicate meaning and create hierarchies of value. As such, measurement is a political act. From prices to ratings, risk scores to the 2020 Census, quantification projects surround our daily lives. This class will ask, how do numbers and other metrics communicate meaning throughout the social world? Specifically, we'll focus on the role of technologies and data in the process of quantification and the construction of cultural meaning and conflict about knowledge and truth. How do our ideas about data shape what we know about ourselves? How we seek to know others? This course will engage in an interdisciplinary conversation about the past and present of culture and quantification, from the cultural pre-history of "big data" technologies' appeals to objectivity and efficiency, to current conflicts over privacy and platforms.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8410 The Ethics of Forgetting: Media at Risk of Deletion
Digital information is continually being created and circulated, but it is also forgotten, deleted, and otherwise lost. Whether from the perspective of journalists, activists, artists, or academics, how do we deal with the deletion or loss of media? Where is information archived and what politics guide its organization, curation, and erasure? Where do our media live and die? This course begins with theories of institutional and individual archiving. It then moves to concepts of remediation and machine learning to complicate how information travels, data is stored, and archives are 'retrieved'. Finally, using case studies of arts-based digital archiving projects, the course focuses on the politics of forgetting media.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8490 Labor in the Digital Economy
Long before the rise of platforms, scholars connected the role of media and communication technologies in the re-organization of labor. This course introduces students to key concepts and theories in the study of labor, communication, and technology from the 19th and 20th centuries and examines their relevance to 21st century issues. We will examine the ways that technological transformations have prompted scholars to reconsider the meaning and value of work; from Marxist, cultural, and feminist perspectives, as well as the place of labor in communication scholarship. Key areas of focus will include the relationship between digital transformations of the workplace and precarity, control, resistance, and inequality.
1 Course Unit

COMM 8510 Social Media and Political Information
Is social media good or bad for democracy? This seminar will unpack this question through the lens of empirical research casting light on how different actors create and consume content on social media - and the broader consequences of that content for political behavior. The discussion will center on current controversies, including the political impact of bots, the role of algorithms in radicalization dynamics, the susceptibility of different groups to misinformation, the consequences of incivility and hate speech, or the predominance of clickbait over factual news.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8520 It's About Time: Problematizing Time in Social Science Research
Human experience is characterized by a complex interplay of processes that play out across multiple timescales: from second to second, from week to week, and from generation to generation. We will critically examine an expansive literature touching on emotions, personality, media engagement, health communication, political communication, and more, all in the service of identifying notions of time that are often implicit in theories of human experience. In doing so, students will become accustomed to identifying and evaluating notions of change, accumulation, speed, timing, tempo, sequences, and applying the following questions to the topics they encounter in their everyday readings and their own research: What timescale(s) are addressed by a theory, either implicitly or explicitly? Is the timing of measurement matched to the timescale(s) over which phenomena are unfolding? Seminars will be accompanied by a data science laboratory in which students will gain hands-on experience in describing, visualizing, and analyzing intensive longitudinal data, data consisting of 5 or more repeated measures over relatively short (seconds, minutes, hours, days) timescales. Intensive longitudinal data are increasingly feasible to collect due to the widespread availability of smartphones and come with both data wrangling and analytic challenges as well as opportunities to operationalize complex, time-related concepts. Some familiarity with linear regression is recommended but not required.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8530 Gender, Media, and Culture
This course focuses on contemporary feminist theory as a site for the restructuring of knowledge, exploring the theoretical, methodological, and intersectional questions that arise when gender and race are placed at the center of study. This course is designed to historicize and conceptualize past and current developments, as well as recurrent themes and movements, in feminist methodology and theory, as well as to gain insight into the ways in which gender, and its intersections with race, ethnicity and class, is enacted, represented and mediated, and has an impact on cultural formations and communication. The course material provides an overview of feminist theories as they have developed in the West, especially the United States, with a particular emphasis on the period since the 1960s. It also suggests that we must consider feminism beyond the West in terms of global and transnational perspectives. It places works and scholars in conversation with others, both contemporaries who act and speak from other standpoints and predecessors who belong to the same tradition or trajectory.
1 Course Unit

COMM 8540 A Sociopolitical and Intellectual History of the Communication Field
This course combines close readings of canonized works as well as lesser-known scholarship with a critical sociology of knowledge. A key theme of the course is that to understand how our field evolved, we must understand the historical context and the power relationships that shaped its intellectual and ideological contours. Although we will include some contemporary criticism of the field's historical lacunae--especially along racial, gender, sexuality, and class lines--much of the course's emphasis will be placed on the field's development during the twentieth century. As a class, we will consider the relevance of research paradigms that emerged during the print and broadcast eras for today's digital age.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8550 Polarization and Partisan Discord
In this course we examine the nature, causes, and consequences of polarization and incivility. We pay special attention to the role that the media and information plays in exacerbating these problems, as well as ways in which technology can be redesigned to ameliorate incivility and polarization.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8580 CHANGE: Networks and Policy
This course explores the policy applications of current network theories of social influence and behavior propagation. The course is developed around the book CHANGE focusing on the specific shortcomings of existing policies and the development of new policy strategies for collective behavior change. Students will engage with current thinking on topics including: influencers, virality, stickiness, social norms, motivated reasoning, organizational change, partisan bias, group problem-solving, and political change. This course focuses on implementation and evaluation strategies for applying the theory of network diffusion to current policy problem such as: COVID-19 vaccination, sustainable technology adoption, political campaign mobilization, justice system reform, implicit bias in medicine, the spread of political and health-related misinformation, #MeToo and changing gender norms in organizations, and other important topics. Students will engage in "translational social science," by developing theoretically motivated solutions to concrete policy problems.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8590 Diversity and the End of Average
There are persistent inequities in academic experiences and careers between individuals from different demographic backgrounds. There are also differences in the extent to which certain groups of people are represented in our scholarship, preventing these groups from experiencing the benefits of our research innovations and, in turn, perpetuating inequity. The aim of this class is twofold. Seminar readings will provide insight into the long history of inequity, discrimination against, and lack of representation of groups marginalized because of their sex, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, intersectional identities, and more, that persists in our communities and our scholarship. A data science laboratory run in parallel with the seminar will introduce students to person-specific approaches to data collection, analysis, and intervention to provide students with a toolkit that allows them to circumvent approaches that rely on the presumption that empirical studies recruiting diverse samples produce an average result that is appropriately reflective of the individuals themselves.
1 Course Unit

COMM 8610 Surveillance Capitalism
This course explores the history, technologies, political economy, and regulatory tensions relating to the monitoring of populations and individuals in the contemporary digital media environment.
1 Course Unit

COMM 8620 Gendered Media Economies
This seminar introduces and traces feminist media studies over the past several decades, with a particular emphasis on media and cultural economies, which includes financial economies but also expands it to the production and circulation of reproducing inequalities, constituting norms, regulating and disciplining individuals and populations, commodifying difference and critique, and (potentially) enabling resistance, oppositional practices and cultural activism. Through this frame, we approach the power dynamics of gender alongside the power dynamics of race, class, sexuality, geopolitics and other social experiences. Along the way, we will examine a variety of gendered media economies from feminist media production to reality television to social media influencers and more.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8630 Utilizing Mixed Methods in Communication Research
This course will focus on applying principles and best practices in designing and conducting mixed methods research to address communication research questions and develop communication interventions. Through this course, students will 1) learn how rigorous qualitative and quantitative methods can be integrated to answer complex research questions, 2) appreciate the relative strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative data, 3) understand the rationale, benefits, and tradeoffs of commonly utilized mixed methods study designs, and 4) practice designing a mixed methods investigation. We will learn different aspects developing, conducting, reporting, and evaluating mixed methods studies, and read examples of communication research studies that utilized mixed methods. We will review the best practices, strengths, and challenges of utilizing mixed methods to answer communication research questions drawing from these examples. This course requires prior completion of introductory coursework in quantitative and qualitative research methods.
Not Offered Every Year
Prerequisite: COMM 5220 OR COMM 5230
1 Course Unit

COMM 8690 Ethnography & the Internet
This course covers qualitative and interpretive methods for investigations of socio-technical phenomena related to digital culture and online life. Concentrating on ethnographic methods, the course will cover methodological issues common to research on digital technologies, drawing on theorists from communication, media studies, information studies, sociology, anthropology and internet studies. In addition to developing a sophisticated understanding of ethical and methodological issues surrounding ethnography and online life, students will complete a research proposal for a qualitative or interpretive study of online phenomena.
1 Course Unit

COMM 8700 Advanced Qualitative Research
An important milestone in every doctoral program is the successful defense of a dissertation proposal. But what does a good dissertation proposal look like? How can students craft a proposal that sets them up for success as they advance towards writing a dissertation? This course has one objective: to provide students with the tools they need to write a convincing, well-written and well-reasoned dissertation proposal. This means having a clear problem statement, a convincing answer to the "So what?" question, and a coherent plan for moving forward with writing a dissertation. Structured more as a workshop rather than a seminar, students will provide feedback on each other's work throughout the semester, collectively addressing common issues around writing, argumentation, reviewing literature, research ethics and outlining chapters. Because qualitative and interpretive work comes with specific expectations and challenges, this course is geared towards students who draw from these research techniques; students who are conducting mixed-methods dissertations may also be allowed to join.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8760 The Black Public Sphere, from Freedoms Journal to Black Lives Matter
The field of communication projects and encourages particular visions of deliberation and the public that have been critiqued for failing to represent publics that experience identity-based exclusion and misrepresentation. In this course we correct this practice by centering work on the black public sphere, recognizing it as central to political and media theory on publics and counterpublics. We will connected "classical" works on publics (Habermas and Fraser), fields (Bourdieu), and mediascapes (Appadurai) to more contemporary critical, cultural, and institutional analysis (Squires, Gray, Brock, and more) of African American media-making, protest and deliberation.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8800 The Social Neuroscience of Communication
This interdisciplinary course focuses on understanding the mechanisms of social thinking, media effects and interpersonal communication across multiple levels of analysis. We use the brain as one powerful window to understand and predict outcomes that are challenging to predict otherwise. The course will cover foundational readings and involve weekly, seminar style discussions of recent papers in social neuroscience, neuroeconomics, and communication science.
Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 8810 The Performance Society: Readings in Social and Media Theories
Social action has a performative character - people act as if on a stage in response to audience expectations, whether offline or online. This seminar traces the history of this line of critical thought from Weber and Bakhtin through Goffman and Victor Turner to contemporary authors such as Judith Butler, Byung-Chul Han, Jon McKenzie, and Charles Tilly. Special attention will be devoted to the relationship between media and performance, examined through recent work by media scholars and sociologists such as Ben Agger, Jeffrey Alexander, Jeffrey Berry, Danah Boyd, Alice Marwick, and Sarah Sobieraj. A central issue concerns the will to perform. Why are individuals in modern society compelled to perform? What are the manifestations and forms of performance in institutional and non-institutional politics (such as revolutions and social movements)? How are performances related to emotion? How do the internet and digital media shape the forms and meanings of performance? What are the consequences of the performance imperative? A term paper is required.
Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: SOCI 8810
1 Course Unit

COMM 8850 Summer Culture
Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/graduate/courses
1 Course Unit

COMM 8910 Special Topics in Media at Risk
The Center for Media at Risk hosts a visiting scholar each semester who teaches a course related to the risks associated with engagement in journalism, documentary, entertainment or digital spaces, with particular attention paid to practitioners under threat from political intimidation. For more information about the course, please see: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/graduate/courses
1 Course Unit

COMM 8980 Explaining Explanation
In the social sciences we often use the word "explanation" as if (a) we know what we mean by it, and (b) we mean the same thing that other people do. In this course we will critically examine these assumptions and their consequences for scientific progress. In part 1 of the course we will examine how, in practice, researchers invoke at least three logically and conceptually distinct meanings of "explanation:" identification of causal mechanisms; ability to predict (account for variance in) some outcome; and ability to make subjective sense of something. In part 2 we will examine how and when these different meanings are invoked across a variety of domains, focusing on social science, history, business, and machine learning, and will explore how conflation of these distinct concepts may have created confusion about the goals of science and how we evaluate its progress. Finally , in part 3 we will discuss some related topics such as null hypothesis testing and the replication crisis. We will also discuss specific practices that could help researchers clarify exactly what they mean when they claim to have "explained" something, and how adoption of such practices may help social science be more useful and relevant to society.
Also Offered As: CIS 7980, OIDD 9530
1 Course Unit