COMMUNICATIONS (COMM)

COMM 123 Critical Approaches to Popular Culture
Popular culture has been variously dismissed as mere trivia, "just entertainment," it has been condemned as propaganda, a tool of mass deception; and its consumers have been dubbed fashion victims and couch potatoes. This course considers these critiques, as well as those that suggest that popular culture offers valuable material for the study of social life. We will consider the meanings and impact of popular culture, including its effects on how we see ourselves, others, and American life; who makes distinctions between high, middlebrow, and low or mass culture; and how power and resistance structure the production and consumption of popular texts.
Taught by: Paxton
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 125 Introduction to Communication Behavior
This course introduces students to the theoretical models and research methods used to study communication and behavior, with a focus on mass media processes and effects. Topics examined include: the social construction of meaning through communication, effects of media violence, children's responses to educational television, the political impact of the news, and the influence of social media on relationships, and the role of media in creating and perpetuating gender, racial, and ethnic stereotypes. The aim of the course is to provide students with (1) a general understanding of research on attitudinal and behavioral aspects of mediated and interpersonal communication, and (2) the basic conceptual tools needed to critically evaluate the assumptions, theories, and empirical evidence supporting conclusions about communication behavior and media effects. Toward this end, the class will focus on social scientific approaches to understanding communication behavior.
Taught by: Jeffries-Fox
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 130 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, the advertising industry, the movie 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. You'll never look at media the same again.
For BA Students: Society Sector
Taught by: Turow
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 203 Media, Culture & Society in Contemporary China
This course studies contemporary Chinese media, culture, and society in the context of globalization. Major topics include Internet expression and censorship, mass media commercialization, entertainment media, middle class and consumerism, environmental degradation, new forms of inequality, and civil society and popular protest. Taking a sociological approach, this course introduces methods and theories for analyzing media, institutions, inequality, and social change.
Taught by: Yang
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 209 Urban Communication
How cities communicate has had to evolve with the times and circumstances. Even as there is extraordinary optimism about the future of America's cities, most continue to grapple with the devastating effects of 20th century deindustrialization and racial disparities in education, income, housing, and health and unplanned crisis. It has become the task of municipal leadership to both balance the demands of disparate interests, govern fairly and effectively and communicate to various constituencies about policy and government's role. In the age of social media that perpetuates a 24/7 news cycle, municipal governments and their leadership have had to respond to queries, concerns and circumstances while governing, all in new ways. Using personal experiences from serving 4 US Big City Mayors. I will provide examples about how cities have had to communicate through the varying levels of leadership during times of crisis.
Taught by: Peterkin-Bell
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 210 Quantitative Research Methods in Communication
This course is a general overview of the important components of social science research. The goal of this class 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. The first third of the semester focuses on defining research problems, research design, and assessing research quality. We cover such topics as sampling, measurement, and causal inference. These topics are then illustrated through reviews of two research areas: survey research and content analysis. The last third of the semester focuses descriptive and inferential statistics, measures of association for categorical and continuous variables, and the basic language of data analysis. For those classes, we make use of STATA, a program useful for learning statistics. Most modules are illustrated through lectures, class exercises, reading published scientific articles, and discussing research featured in the news.
Taught by: Bleakley
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 211 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.
Taught by: Pickard/Various
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 213 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.
Taught by: Gonzalez-Bailon
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 217 New Media and Politics in the Time of Trump
New media always have been the keys to American politics. Every era-changing president was the first to master a new medium: from Lincoln (telegraph) and FDR (radio), to JFK (broadcast television) to Obama (Facebook) and now Trump (Twitter). We will study traditional forms for context, but focus on the cutting-edge digital/social news gathering and distribution, examining the journalistic benefits and risks of several newer forms. These include broad-based agnostic platforms, ideologically-tailored websites, social video apps, podcasts and comedy-as-news. The course also will feature guests from across all sectors. Our core mission is to assess whether the latest revolution in media encourages or impedes the survival of self-government in America, where the Founders had hoped that a free press would inform the citizenry – and not merely incite anger, division and fear.
Taught by: Fineman
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 218 Social Media, Social Data
What are social data and how can we critically, ethically and effectively capture, analyze and use them? During this course, students will gain a well-grounded theoretical understanding of social media combined with practical, hands on experience in capturing and analyzing their own sets of social data. The first part of the course provides an overview of the history of social media, then looks at how practices and platforms vary across the world. Students will also discuss current issues related to social data and questions of ethics and intellectual property as they apply to a number of contexts. The second part of the course delves into capturing and analyzing social data using a wide array of techniques and platforms. Students will gain hands-on experience and a valuable toolkit for data analysis that will allow them to apply the course material to real world problems of their choosing.
Course usually offered summer term only
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 225 Children and Media
This course examines children’s relationship to media in its 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 relationship with and understanding of media. It next 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 concludes with 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 prototype for an educational children’s media property as their capstone project.
Taught by: Woolf
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 226 Introduction to Political Communication
This course is an introduction to the field of political communication, conceptual approaches to analyzing communication in various forms, including advertising, speech making, campaign debates, and candidates’ and office-holders’ uses of news. The focus of this course is on the interplay in the U.S. between traditional and social media and politics. The course includes a history of televised campaign practices from the 1952 presidential contest through the election of 2016.
Taught by: Jamieson
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 230 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.
Taught by: Turow
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
COMM 237 Health Communication
An examination of the influence of public health communication on health behavior. The course will consider: intervention programs addressing behaviors related to cancer, cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS, drug use, obesity and others; theories of health behavior change; issues in the design of effective health communication programs; concerns about the portrayal of health and medicine on mass media.
Taught by: Hornik/Staff
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 243 Ethnography and Media for Social Justice
How do qualitative social scientists study urban communities? What kinds of powerful tales can be told about urban lifestyles and social issues in places like Philadelphia? This course will allow students to study various ethnographic treatments of urban communities in the United States, using films, articles, TV serials, and books as guides for the framing of their own independent research on the streets of Philadelphia. Students will also form production teams of two or three people, and these production teams will be responsible for (i) identifying and researching an important urban issue in contemporary Philadelphia; (ii) turning that research into a 15-30 minute video documentary or pod cast. Mixing video/audio journalism with ethnographic methods will enhance their skills at archival and social research, from participant observation and interviewing techniques to sound editing and production. This course is intended to be a rigorous and exciting opportunity for students to tell empirically grounded stories using the voices of their participants and the sounds of the city.
Taught by: Lingel
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 245 Teens and Screens: Understanding Youth Media Behavior
Why do screen media and digital technologies captivate youth? In this course we address this question by examining the role media play in adolescent development and behavior. We begin by considering adolescence as a unique period of psychological and social development and discussing emerging adults as a special population. Next, we will explore how adolescents use and interact with media and how their media preferences are related to their developmental needs, with particular attention to social media use and media content targeted to, and popular with, adolescent audiences. Finally, we will investigate how media influence adolescent self-identity and behavior by reviewing media effects in areas of sex, violence, gender norms, and friendship quality. The strength of the evidence for media effects and its behavioral and policy implications will be presented and debated within each area of study. Relevant theoretical perspectives will inform these discussions. Throughout the semester students will critically reflect upon current empirical research while also spotlighting different media-TV shows, social media apps (e.g., Yik Yak) and social movements (e.g., #iammorethanadistraction).
Taught by: Bleakley
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 262 Visual Communication
Examination of the structure and effects of visual media (film, television, advertising, and other kinds of pictures).
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 270 Global Digital Activism
This seminar examines the forms, causes, and consequences of global digital activism, defined broadly as activism associated with the use of digital media technologies (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, mobile phones, and the Chinese Weibo). The goal is to provide students with a theoretical tool-kit for analyzing digital activism and to develop a critical understanding of the nature of contemporary activism and its implications for global social change. Major cases to be examined include the "Occupy Wall Street" movement in the US, the Arab Spring, the "indignados" protests in Spain, and internet activism in China. Students are required to conduct primary, hands-on research on a contemporary case (or form) of digital activism and produce a final research paper. This research project may be done individually or in small groups.
Taught by: Yang
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 275 Communication and Persuasion
Theory, research and application in the persuasive effects of communication in social and mass contexts. Primary focus 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).
Taught by: Cappella/Staff
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 282 Sick and Satired - The Insanity of Humor and How it Keeps Us Sane
The goal of this course will be to prove definitively 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 reflective qualities, and the corollaries construed from humor's dissection of straight society's monomania will be inspected and tested for cohesion and viability. Additionally, the course will teach students to recognize and assert, through informed justification based on both contemporary and historical examples, the indispensability of 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 conceived and exercised for the purpose of revealing and mediating differences between disparate groups based, not solely on language differences, but also on social status, political affiliation, cultural identity, ethnicity, gender, religious fellowship, sexual orientation and socio-economic caste.
Taught by: Booth
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
COMM 290 Special Topics in Communication
This is an intermediate level special topics course that covers varying topics in communication. For more information about the course, please see: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/academics/undergraduate-program/curriculum-and-major-requirements
Taught by: Various Instructors
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 292 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.
Taught by: Booth
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 294 Chicks and Cyborgs: Gender, Technology and Culture
Information and communication technologies (ICT) are powerful tools of connectivity and social change, but they also contain embedded ideological tensions that can produce inequalities and deep inter-group disparities. At the core of this class is a sustained analysis of the effects of gender on the development and use of ICT. Drawing on a range of theories for communication, gender, information, media, sexuality and technology, this course helps students understand feminist critiques of science and technology; develop critical analyses of public policies that have consequences; identify barriers to the recruitment and retention of historically marginalized groups in the technology industry; and understand frameworks for thinking about communication technologies as shaping everyday life.
Taught by: Lingel
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 300 Public Space, Public Life
Public space as a mediated system of communication anchored in embodied practice. Historical aspects, public space as a cultural signifier, how the organization and regulation of collective spaces facilitates and enriches or hinders common life, public space as a critical component of democracy.
Taught by: Marvin/Staff
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 301 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.
Taught by: Pickard/Various
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 307 Communication, Sports, and Social Justice
This course will examine the current relationship between sports, celebrity and the power to communicate for social justice. Through case studies, review of current events, and empirical evidence from experience, students will learn to evaluate the patterns and strategies that athletes have employed to elevate an issue. This course will pull from hot button moments in our current landscape from athletes protesting against racial inequality to the sports leagues’ communication challenges to publicly address those concerns. There will be a review of the pioneering efforts that were successful, unsuccessful, or to be determined. Our studies will develop a critical eye for communication approaches and how well those tactics yield the desired changes. We will draw upon this insight to formulate ways to improve communication and determine the most influential and effective practices to date.
Taught by: Glanville
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 310 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. Research topics will depend on student interests, with emphasis on one or more of the following: social influence and persuasion, health communication, peer influence in teens, mobile technology, social media, emotion regulation, peace and conflict resolution, mindfulness, interpersonal communication, political communication, adolescent brain development, communication neuroscience. Students will have the opportunity to interact closely with a mentor and will gain experience conceptualizing research questions, designing experiments, collecting data, and making an analysis plan.
Taught by: Falk
Course not offered every year
Prerequisites: COMM 210 (Communication Research Methods) or permission of the instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 311 Peace Communication
When ‘me’ and ‘you’ becomes ‘us’ and ‘them’, a suite of psychological processes are amplified or come online. In this course, we will examine the forces that drive people to engage in intergroup conflict through the lenses of evolutionary biology and psychology, and then examine the effectiveness of communications-based interventions at easing conflict. In the first part of the course, we will learn about the theoretical work on intergroup psychology, in the second part, we will examine the specific processes that drive conflict (e.g., stereotypes, 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.
Taught by: Bruneau
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 312 History and Theory of Freedom of Expression
Historical origins, purpose, theory, practice of freedom of expression in the United States. Philosophical roots of contemporary law and debates about expressive limits, especially problems associated with media of communication. Major topics include, but are not limited to traitorous and subversive speech, insulting speech and hate speech, sexual and violent expression, non-verbal expression, artistic expression.
Taught by: Marvin
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 313 Computational Txt Analys
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).
Taught by: O'Donnell
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 314 Peace Communication
When ‘me’ and ‘you’ becomes ‘us’ and ‘them’, a suite of psychological processes are amplified or come online. In this course, we will examine the forces that drive people to engage in intergroup conflict through the lenses of evolutionary biology and psychology, and then examine the effectiveness of communications-based interventions at easing conflict. In the first part of the course, we will learn about the theoretical work on intergroup psychology, in the second part, we will examine the specific processes that drive conflict (e.g., stereotypes, 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.
Taught by: Bruneau
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 332 Survey Research and Design
Survey research is a small but rich academic field and discipline, drawing on theory and practice from many diverse fields including political science, communication, sociology, psychology, and statistics. Surveys are perhaps the most ubiquitous tool of measurement in the social sciences today. Successful practitioners develop expertise in the art and science of survey methodology, including sampling theory and practice, questionnaire instrument development and operationalization, and the analysis and reporting of survey data. Survey researchers are scientists of the method itself testing various practices by which surveys can be improved upon, as well as developing a keen understanding of the nature of error in surveys and how to control it. This course is a canvass course on survey research and design, highly experiential but also based upon introductory statistical theory and analysis.
Taught by: Dutwin
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 339 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.
Taught by: Zelizer
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 377 Philosophical Problems of Journalism
An exploration of the relationship between journalism and philosophy by examining particular issues in epistemology, political philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics. Among likely topics: the concept of a "fact"; the role of the press in the state; whether journalists (like doctors and lawyers) operate according to a specialized "professional" ethics; and the limits of journalism as a literary or visual genre. Course reading will include philosophical texts, breaking print journalism, and blogs that specialize in media issues.
Taught by: Romano
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 381 The Journalism of Social Change
From Thucydides to #METOO, journalism has been more than a pipeline for the transmission of facts. It has moral purposes, including the advancement of social justice. We will examine that crucial role in depth, from Engels’ descriptions of 19th century English factory life, through the Muckrakers in Progressive Era America, and on to 20th and early 21st century reporting that has exposed racial and gender discrimination, poverty, government corruption and authoritarianism (including conservative crusades against both) and the ravages of wars, both justified and not. We will find, explain and critique up-to-the-minute examples of this tradition in digital and social media, and ask whether and how well "new media" is upholding journalism’s moral calling.
Taught by: Fineman
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 382 Media and the Construction of Class
From Homer Simpson to Kim Kardashian, Lebron James to Jeb Bush and from Duck Dynasty to PBS documentaries on poverty, American media are filled with stories and debates about the meaning and importance of class in American life, and why people occupy the class positions they do. This course will consider some of the key patterns, assumptions, and tensions in popular media representations and explorations of class, with a focus on 21st century media. We will discuss how media portrayals reflect, and might affect, the lived experience of class and inequality in the United States.
Taught by: Shapiro
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 384 Memes, Media, and Meanings
This class covers both identity politics and media logics and their interplay in an increasingly playful and rapidly changing media landscape. Students will read a combination of media theory, feminist media theory, and cultural studies literature in the first half of the semester in order to have the theoretical grounding to conduct research paper/case studies of "media moments" that act as important markers in identity making of either individuals or groups. In the second half of the semester the class will work as a group to examine several cases from across geographical boundaries of identity making in and through media in order to discover both how identity is produced, constructed, and negotiated through media as well as how media platforms and formats interact to enable this process of identity making. Various theorists will be brought to bear to examine the framework of media industries, affordances of media platforms, and possibilities for media engagement and performance. These theories will then be deployed as part of empirical research projects through which students will discover how we engage with media and how that engagement impacts our understandings of our social locations.
Taught by: Rajabi
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 388 Ritual Communication
This course explores the significance of rituals as communicative events in contemporary American culture. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which rituals contribute to the making and re-making of social groups, be they ethnic, religious, familial, or institutional. And we will also attend to the obverse: the ways in which rituals create and perpetuate boundaries between “us” and “them” or between “appropriate” and “deviant” social behavior. Issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality will be central to our exploration of how rituals function. Over the course of the semester, we will analyze individual rites of passage—the quinceañera for example—as well as rituals that mark transitions on a far local level as well as those that most of us experience only in mediated forms. Students will conduct original ethnographic fieldwork and learn how to develop compelling research proposals.
Taught by: Paxton
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 390 Special Topics in Communication
This is a special topics course that covers varying topics in communication. For more information about the course, please see: https://www.asc.upenn.edu/academics/undergraduate-program/curriculum-and-major-requirements
Taught by: Various Instructors
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 393 Political Polling
Political polls are a central feature of elections and are ubiquitously employed to understand and explain voter intentions and public opinion. This course will examine political polling by focusing on four main areas of consideration. First, what is the role of political polls in a functioning democracy? This area will explore the theoretical justifications for polling as a representation of public opinion. Second, the course will explore the business and use of political polling, including media coverage of polls, use by politicians for political strategy and messaging, and the impact polls have on elections specifically and politics more broadly. The third area will focus on the nuts and bolts of election and political polls, specifically with regard to exploring traditional questions and scales used for political measurement; the construction and considerations of likely voter models; measurement of the horserace; and samples and modes used for election polls. The course will additionally cover a fourth area of special topics, which will include exit polling, prediction markets, polling aggregation, and other topics. It is not necessary for students to have any specialized mathematical or statistical background for this course.
Taught by: Dutwin
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 395 Communication and the Presidency
This course examines the vital aspect of communication as a tool of the US Presidency. Reading and class discussions focus on case studies drawn primarily from Presidential administrations beginning with FDR of the radio-televisio-internet era, studies that demonstrate the elements of successful and unsuccessful presidential initiatives and the critical factor of communication, common to both. Readings and discussion will cover the range of issues of presidential import; issues pertaining to war and peace, the drive for civil rights and equal rights, domestic prosperity and development, international leadership and issues attending the rise of an interdependent world and a global economy. The key objective and requirement of 395 is an individual paper project that centers on a presidential speech (or set of speeches) addressing a key national or international topic. Student papers are to be based in part on primary research, hence, Communications 395 is also an introduction to primary research methods and to the use of primary research materials housed in the Presidential library system.
Taught by: Eisenhowe
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 397 New Media and Politics
This course seeks to trace the evolving relationship between new media technologies and political power, process, and change from multiple perspectives: the citizen/voter, the campaign, and the news media. Major theories of communication and persuasion are the foundation of this course. We will apply these theories to each of the above perspectives beginning with a brief history of U.S. political campaigns before the advent of the internet in presidential campaigns in 1996. From there we will take a deeper dive into the landmark changes brought on by new media technologies to mobilize, persuade, inform, and fundraise around the presidential campaigns since then. We will then follow how the new U.S. president and new Congress operate in this ever evolving media and digital landscape through the crucial first 100 days. Finally, we will examine issues of social media and activism, including its use as a tool for regime change, social change, and terrorism in the U.S. and around the world. New media include, but are not limited to, the internet, email, texting, blogging, social media, and "Big Data."
Taught by: Winneg
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 402 Arab Uprisings: Local and Global Representations
This course explores the Arab uprisings as a battleground where multiple narratives battle for visibility across a variety of media platforms. We will examine local and global representations of the popular movements that have swept Arab countries since December 2010, analyzing different media, styles and modalities of representations. We will focus among other things on social media, political humor, graffiti, and the human body as instruments of communication, and focus on various related debates and polemics about the political impact of technology, the effectiveness of political satire, and the role of gender and sexuality in revolutionary politics. The overall approach of the course is critical/theoretical.
Taught by: Kraidy
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 404 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 (as opposed to political advertising and other marketing-oriented communications). Topics will include the rise of partisan media, selective exposure, news as entertainment, etc. Reading expectations will be relatively heavy, and under the supervision of the professor, students will be expected to write a research paper on a topic not directly a part of the course material.
Taught by: Mutz
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 407 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 a 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.
Taught by: Gonzalez-Bailon
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 417 The Politics of Digital Media Policy
This discussion-oriented course examines key digital media policy debates and their underlying politics. We will examine policies affecting news and entertainment media, social media, telecommunications, and the Internet. Drawing from major texts within this growing sub-field, we will formulate analyses about the future trajectory of U.S. and global digital media and evaluate relevant policies in relation to democratic theory and ethical concerns. In particular, we will focus on how media policy is shaped by political processes in and outside Washington, D.C., and consider to what extent new digital media have disrupted pre-existing policy regimes. Students will choose one specific case study of a digital media policy debate to explore throughout the semester.
Taught by: Pickard
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 419 Communication, Culture & Revolution
This seminar explores revolutionary communication and cultural expression. Looking at the ongoing Arab uprisings in comparative perspective, we will examine modalities of communication through which revolutionaries express themselves, describe and attack incumbent dictators and other opponents, call for new social solidarities, and construct revolutionary political identities. Revolutionary contexts are considered as battlegrounds where multiple narratives contend for visibility. We will explore relevant debates and polemics, historical and contemporary, concerning the political impact of technology and the role of gender and sexuality in revolutionary politics. We will focus on social media, political humor, graffiti, and the human body as instruments of communication. The overall approach of the seminar is theoretical, critical and transnational.
Taught by: Kraidy
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 423 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.
Taught by: Falk
Course not offered every year
Prerequisites: COMM 275 or a media effects or persuasion course at ASC, psych, or Wharton
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 431 Is Public Opinion the Voice of the People?
Democracy relies on mechanism in which the public communicates with policy makers. This course examines the extent to which public opinion effectively represents this mechanism. We begin with historical conceptions of public opinion tracing back to ancient Athens and 18th century enlightenment thinking. We then consider the extent to which public opinion can be captured by modern day polling, or whether it only emerges after considered deliberation and discussion. We then discuss the ways in which elite rhetoric and the media move public opinion, including through the use of public opinion polls. Finally, we ask whether policymakers are actually sensitive to the voice of the people or only the voice of some of the people.
Taught by: Lelkes
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 439 Media Criticism
Criticism has at its core an assumption of judgment about the target or performance being evaluated. Yet whose judgment is being articulated? On which basis and authority? To which ends? And with which effects? This course examines the shape of contemporary media criticism, focusing on its meaning function in different domains of popular culture (including music, television, news, and film) and the patterns by which it is produced. Students will become acquainted with theories and ongoing debates about contemporary media criticism themselves. The course aims to sensitize students to the nuances of their own consumption of criticism and patterns by which it is typically produced.
Taught by: Zelizer
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 441 The Internet versus Democracy
At the turn of the 21st century, many claimed that the internet would make the world a more democratic place. Have these prophecies born out? We examine the effects the internet has had on democracy, looking at research that examines whether, for instance, the internet has increased or decreased inequality, polarization, and political participation. In addition to reading and discussing empirical literature, we will also test many of the theories in this course through hands-on workshops in data science.
Taught by: Lelkes
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 453 Internet Experiments Practicum
In this hands-on course, students will work with active researchers in the Network Dynamics Group at Penn to gain experience in how research works. Research topics will depend on student interests, with emphasis on one or more of the following: network dynamics of peer influence, social media technologies, political polarization, processes of social diffusion, and social change through online networks. Students will have the opportunity to learn from leading researchers in the field of computational social science, and to participate in building their own Internet experiment. This will involve designing a research study, collecting and analyzing data, and working on a team to produce a co-authored, Internet-based experimental research study on social dynamics. Prerequisites: COMM 210 (Communication Research Methods), COMMYYY (Coursera Course, Angela has info on Title, etc.), and permission of the instructor
Taught by: Centola
Course not offered every year
Prerequisites: COMM 210 (Communication Research Methods and permission of the instructor.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 485 Globalization and the Music Video
This seminar focuses on the music video genre to explore topical and conceptual issues at the heart of the globalization of the media and cultural industries. After a formative period largely grounded in North America and Western Europe, the music video migrated to other parts of the world in the 1990s as a wave of privatization and liberalization engulfed national media systems worldwide. Based on a variety of scholarly and trade readings about the globalization of media and culture, the changing media and creative industries, and the music video genre itself, questions to be tackled include: What changes when a media form migrates from its original context? What does the content of music videos reveal about socio-economic and cultural change worldwide? How do music videos rearticulate gender and sexuality, and nationalism? What transnational circuits of ideas, images and ideologies are enabled or constrained by music video?
Taught by: Kraidy
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 491 Communication Internship
Seminar for students concurrently participating in department-approved internships in communication-related organizations. Students will develop independent research agendas to investigate aspects of their internship experience or industry. Building on written field notes, assigned readings, and classroom discussion and evaluation, students will produce final papers using ethnographic methods to describe communications within their site or industry in order to understand and critically examine their hands-on experiences.
Taught by: Haas
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 493 Independent Study
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

COMM 494 Honors & Capstone Thesis
First semester of the two semester thesis course; completed during the Fall semester of senior year. 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 495 or COMM 499 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.
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 495 COMPS Capstone Thesis
Second semester of two semester thesis course. Successful completion of Comm 494 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 494. For students graduating with a 3.5 cumulative GPA after completing COMM 495 with a grade of 3.7 or higher, the capstone thesis may be designated as a senior honors thesis in communication and public service.

Two terms. student may enter either term.
Prerequisites: Written proposal approved by both thesis supervisor and major chair.
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

COMM 498 Experimental Design
The main goal of this course is to familiarize students with experiments, quasi-experiments, population-based survey experiments and field experiments as they are widely used in the social sciences. By the end of the course, students will be expected to understand what it is about a study that allows for a strong causal inference. Whether one is reading about studies in a newspaper or reading academic journal articles, it is important to know how to distinguish convincing versus unconvincing evidence of any given claim. As a final project, students will be expected either to develop their own original experimental design or to analyze the evidence pertaining to a causal claim of their choosing based on what they have learned in class. 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 between experimental and observational research.
Taught by: Mutz
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 499 Senior Honors Thesis
Second semester of two semester thesis course. Completion of Comm 494 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 494.

Two terms. student may enter either term.
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

COMM 500 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.
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
0 Course Units

COMM 509 Directed Readings in Theory
In the crush of academic life, it is not always as easy to read dense theoretical texts carefully and in as much details as we'd like. This course offers a chance to slow down, step back, and revel in the opportunity to read informing texts that address the relationship between social theory and communication. Here are texts that are often quoted; we will explore their content and place them in conversation with one another, with their interlocutors, and with ourselves. Besides lively discussion, requirements include several essays and a long-form critically annotated citation analysis of a foundational text.
Taught by: Marvin/Pearl
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 522 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.
Taught by: Delli Carpini/Hornik
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 525 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.
Taught by: Moehler
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 530 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.

Taught by: Turow

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

COMM 553 Computational Social Science Research Seminar

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. This seminar will meet weekly.

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

COMM 575 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.

Taught by: Cappella

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

COMM 594 Intro To Networks

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

COMM 609 Comparative Political Communication

This course explores major themes in the study of political communication from a comparative perspective. It focuses on how communication affects political behavior, attitudes, and outcomes. In doing so we will question how different political and social institutions shape individual-level communication effects. We also examine the roles of mass media and interpersonal communication under different regime types and economic systems. Finally we also ask how media systems are influenced by political institutions. For each topic we will critically examine the working hypotheses, methods, and evidence. The class is designed to provide a greater understanding of comparative political communication theories, as well as to develop social science reasoning and methodology. The readings, class discussions, and assignments will move back and forth between theories, empirical evidence, and public policies. The seminar will require active student participation in class discussions. The discussions will focus on the assigned readings for the week, but students are encouraged to discuss additional works that are relevant. Students must also write an original research paper, which can hopefully become a published article. The course readings span every major region but students are free to choose a geographic focus for their research paper.

Taught by: Moehler

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

COMM 615 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.

Taught by: Mutz

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

COMM 623 Seminar on Communication, Behavior, and Health

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.

Taught by: Jemmott

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

COMM 630 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.

Taught by: Turow

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit
COMM 637 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.
Taught by: Hornik
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

COMM 639 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.
Taught by: Zelizer
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 644 Communication and Space
Physicalized space is said to be crucial to public life. Perhaps so. But it is also critical to urbanization, globalization, modernity, mobility, social hierarchy, flow, scale, imperialism (what Said called the geography of violence), revolution, intimacy, shopping malls, simulacra, and being-in-the-world. Space is not only mediated and dialectical; it is a privileged strategy of post-modernity, "the everywhere of modern thought." So far as media go, the analytic of space implies a shift away from narrative and toward process and practice as ways of structuring experience. What are the theories that get at this? How can we use theories of space to think about media and culture, to rediscover the richness of the world? And what about the explosive iteration of screen culture that logically ought to imperil lived space but seem to offer new modes for grounding it. We will explore these themes in the relevant literatures for the purpose of developing fabulously interesting research projects, including some in visual format. No spatial pre-requisites.
Taught by: Marvin
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 660 Content Analysis
An introduction to content analysis, the analysis of large bodies of textual matter, also called message systems analysis, quantitative semantics, propaganda analysis, and (computer-aided) text analysis. The course inquires into the theories, methods, and empirical problems common to these analytical efforts: sampling, text retrieval, coding, reliability, analytic constructs, computational techniques, and abductive inference. It illustrates these problems by studies of mass media content, interview or panel data, legal research, and efforts to draw inferences from personal documents typical in psychology and literature. Students design a content analysis and do the preparatory work for an academic or practical research project. They may also use the opportunity of forging available theories into a new analytical technique and test it with available texts, or solve a methodological problem in content analysis research.
Taught by: Krippendorff
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 665 Digital Media and Social Theory
This course explores critical issues in contemporary society through the lens of digital media studies and social theory. The goal is to build constructive dialogues between digital media studies and contemporary social theory. Special attention will be given to how social theory may inform the theorizing and empirical analysis of digital culture, politics, and practices. We will read monographs on globalization, power and control, dissent and protest, self and community, and the public sphere as they relate to digital media technologies. They include works by McLuhan, Castells, Turkle, Papacharissi, Lievrouw, Bimber, W. Chun and more. These monographs will be examined alongside the works of Gramsci, Foucault, Williams, Habermas, Bourdie, Giddens, and Melucci. Students are required to submit weekly reading reports, make oral presentations, and complete a term paper.
Taught by: Yang
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 667 Computational Social Science
This is an advanced graduate research seminar in which guest speakers will present cutting-edge research in Computational Social Science. 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. This seminar will meet weekly.
Taught by: Centola
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 673 Arts & Propaganda
This course (seminar) deals with examples of controversy or struggles, through public art or exhibition, to define or proclaim, contest or reinforce national identities. Some are internal debates, within national boundaries, some are transnational and exist in a global frame. In most instances, there are sharp disputes- having to do with history and its interpretation and representation, about the role of museum & implications for legitimacy, about the relationship of patronage to power. Some sessions will be rooted in art history and iconography, some in the use of archival material to bring fresh perspectives to bear, some on aspects of law and regulation.
Taught by: Price
Course offered fall; even-numbered years
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 675 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.
Taught by: Cappella
Course not offered every year
Prerequisite: COMM 575
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 684 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. This course will equip you with tools you can use to learn through visualization and to communicate more effectively your own research.
Taught by: Gonzalez=Bailon
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 689 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. One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

COMM 701 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.
Taught by: Pickard
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 703 International Communication: Power and Flow
The tumultuous rise of new media technologies, including the Internet and social media, combine with grinding geopolitical change to create dramatic changes in law and policy regarding speech and society. This course is an examination of current dilemmas in historical context; about strategic communications in contrast or challenge to goals of free expression and to the exercise of power over the flow of information. Taking relevant contexts, including societies in transition, authoritarian societies, states and societies in conflict, we explore the relationship of the state and other entities to the flow of words and images, and how these messages impact public opinion, stability, and democratic growth. We start with a theoretical orientation focused on two competing paradigms- the paradigm of free expression and the paradigm of national identity, conflict management, and sovereignty. The class will then explore several case studies viewed through the lens of narrative theory. Areas of discussion may include case studies such as Ukraine, Russia, Syria, Iran and, as well, the drama of the development of global internet policy.
Taught by: Price, M.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 706 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.
Taught by: Mutz
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 712 Race, Media and Politics
"Race" has and continues to play an important role in American politics. In this course we will critically review the relevant Communication and Political Science literature with an eye towards understanding: (1) the role of the mass media in the construction and dissemination of race as a sociopolitical concept; (2) how race affects political attitudes, opinions and behaviors; (3) the unique methodological problems researchers face in studying racial attitudes and opinions; and (4) shortcomings in the existing scholarship on race, media and politics and how these shortcomings might be addressed.
Taught by: Delli Carpini
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 713 Historical and Visual Culture Methodology
This methodology class will examine different historiographical and visual approaches, particularly as they relate to the study of communication. Students will be guided through archival research skills, working extensively with primary sources in their final projects. Each week will feature a different "research question" that will require archival exploration to answer, and the readings will relate to different ways to approach the question. The second half of the course will be devoted to developing and workshopping final projects.
Taught by: Pearl
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 715 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.
Taught by: Mutz
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 721 Theory and History in Global Communication
For more than a half century, global communication theory has been shaped by interaction between worldwide geopolitical developments on the one hand, and theoretical trends in the social sciences and humanities on the other hand. This course is designed to give you a firm grasp of the historical trajectory of global communication theory and to develop knowledge of the central debates that have animated the field since the mid-20th century. We will discuss how these debates have changed, under what circumstances, and how contemporary scholarship wrestles with them; and how language and jargon in the field has shifted from "international" to "global." We will also explore why some key issues and media have received relatively scant attention in global communication research, while others have arguably been over-emphasized. We will read a mixture of primary sources by luminaries in the different paradigms that have dominated global communication, complemented with secondary texts that are carefully selected to give you a sense of the architecture of the field, an understanding of what sub-areas of global communication scholarship are published and the journals and presses that publish in those sub-areas.
Taught by: Kraidy
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 722 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.
Taught by: Lingel
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 727 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. Taught by: Hornik
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 731 Beauty & Technology
Have concepts of beauty changed over time? According to Darwin, the meaning of facial expressions and emotions are consistent across cultures and are universally understood. Modern scholarship would have us believe that notions of human beauty are framed by facial symmetry and reproductive fitness, while fashion magazines seem to challenge both these claims. What role does technology play in communicating and shaping ideas of beauty? By the same token, to what extent is technology deployed in service of the ideas of those behind the lens? In this course, we will explore changing notions of beauty and their relationship to the technologies and media through which it is viewed. Taught by: Pearl
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 741 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. One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 745 Media Ethnography: Theory and Practice
This course will allow students to conduct ‘critical readings’ of ethnographic engagements with television, radio and film as cultural phenomena. We will examine how ethnographers use their method and genre to understand the production, reception and circulation of mass media. We will also draw on contemporary social/critical theory to unpack some of the epistemological assumptions organizing and anchoring such qualitative work. (The internet will also be discussed.) Taught by: Jackson
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 753 The Internet, State Power, and Free Expression: Media Policy Evolution in a Evolving Global Context
Global Internet policy is a zone of contestation, with states, corporations, civil society, and “netizens” seeking to assert particular perspectives. This course studies processes and rhetoric of Internet policy-making. It seeks to identify the major competing positions and the structures in key countries charged with projecting and obtaining global consensus. Among the concepts to be analyzed in this context are “sovereignty,” “Internet freedom,” “multi-stakeholder involvement,” and the growing role of cybersecurity. There will be sessions on the WCIT meetings in Dubai in 2012 and its predecessors, on approaches to Internet policy in US, China and Brazil, Russia and India. We shall explore the relationship between national policy making and global approaches. Taught by: Price
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 760 Language and Social Constructions of Reality
This seminar inquires into the principles and processes by which realities come to be socially constructed and discursively maintained. It serves as an introduction to the emerging epistemology of communication, which is concerned less with what communication is than with what it does, constitutes, and actively maintains, including when being studied. The seminar develops analytical tools to understand how realities establish themselves in language and action, how individuals can become entrapped in their own reality constructions, how facts are created and institutions take advantage of denying their constructedness. After reading several exemplary studies, students explore the nature of a construction on their own. The seminar draws on the discourse of critical scholarship and emancipatory pursuits, which are allied with feminist writing, cultural studies, and reflexive sociology. It is committed to dialogical means of inquiry and takes conversation as an ethical premise. Taught by: Krippendorf
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 799 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. One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

COMM 801 Filter Bubbles, Long Tails, and Information Cascades: Research Methods 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. Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 811 Neurobiology of Social Influence
A graduate level statistics course, ability to read primary research articles in cognitive neuroscience (no course prereq., but students with less background may need to do supplemental work at the front end). Considerable resources are devoted to constructing mass media campaigns that persuade individuals exert 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. Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 813 Theor Hist Global Comm
For decades, global communication theory has been shaped by interaction between worldwide political, economic and technological developments and theoretical trends in the social sciences and humanities. This course is designed to give you a firm grasp of the historical trajectory of global communication theory and to acquire knowledge of the central debates that have animated the field since the mid-20th century. From development communication to global digital culture, we will discuss how these debates have changed, under what circumstances, and how contemporary scholarship wrestles with them. We will also explore why some key issues and types of media have received relatively scant attention in global communication research, while others have arguably been over-emphasized. We will read a mixture of primary sources by intellectual leaders of different paradigms that have dominated global communication complemented with secondary texts that are carefully selected to give you a sense of the architecture of the field; an understanding of what sub-areas of global communication scholarship are published and the journals and presses that publish in those sub-areas. Required readings will be available on electronic reserves. Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 815 Community, Network, and Crowd: Critical Perspectives on Forms of Human Togetherness
Between the micro-level of individuals and the macro level of society is the meso level of social phenomena, where much sociological research locates its scholarship. This seminar considers theories of human togetherness that have shaped research in the humanities and the social sciences. As researchers shift between terms like community, network, public, and collective, what connotations drop out and emerge? What are the relevant theories that can help us be critical and precise about the analysis of social groups? Our discussions will examine the meanings of a broad range of concepts, from crowds and publics to community and networks, from secret societies and gangs to counter-cultural communes. Special attention will be given to the sources, functions, and influences of different types of communities and the relationship among communication, community, and solidarity. Readings will include classical statements by Durkheim and Simmel as well as contemporary writings by Kristen Ross, Jodi Dean, Judith Butler, Michael Warner, Etienne Wenger Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, danah boyd and others. Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 835 Revolting Media: Communication and Social Change
Social change has always had its communicative element: pamphleteers calling for the abolition of absolute monarchy, citizen journalists campaigning against tyranny, filmmakers celebrating revolution, broadcasters publicising civil rights, illegal radio stations supporting anti-colonial struggles, bloggers organising pro-democracy movements. This course celebrates the role of media in historical revolts and considers the work of key theorists - - including Fanon, Enzensberger, Williams and Mattelart - who mapped out the the conditions in which communications could play a progressive role in reform and revolution. The course then moves from an emphasis on the media in revolt to more recent debates concerning a revolt against the media. This includes looking at the collapse of trust in key public institutions, the breakdown of the traditional liberal consensus, increased pressures on impartiality and the rise of populist media forms and outlets. The course features a timeline of revolting media that includes everything from purposeful struggles against inequality and injustice to more recent manifestations marked by 'fake news', 'post truth' and 'emotion-driven journalism' in an effort to demonstrate the diversity of media models available (but not always offered).
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 848 Decoding the Social World
Have digital technologies, and the new data they provide, helped us advance old theoretical debates about communication and the role it plays in social life? How was social thought shaped by previous technological breakthroughs and how is the digital revolution shaping our theories today? What are the questions that are still open, the puzzles that require further research and more theoretical development? This seminar will consider these and related questions, offering a (personal) overview of the frontiers of communication research as seen through the lens of digital data and with a focus on the identification of social mechanisms. The discussions will be articulated around two forthcoming books 'Decoding the Social World: When Data Science Meets Communication;' and 'The Oxford Handbook of Communication in the Networked Age,' which will offer a starting point to start thinking about theoretical problems and the best empirical strategies to solve them. Taught by Gonzalez-Bailon
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 850 The Body: Theory, Method, Discourse
Taught by: Kraidy
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

Notes: This seminar examines the body as a central communication problematic in theory research. We will read a wide-ranging selection of essays, articles and books, examining a variety of research traditions that have focused on the body - phenomenology, feminism, biopolitics, etc-across the humanities and social sciences. We will explore how the body has been understood as tool, symbol, icon, battleground, and lived experience. In turn we will examine contemporary applications, ending with digital culture, of these approaches through notions of affect, aesthetics, materiality, embodiment, performativity, docility, social action, and creative insurgency. Though theoretical, this seminar has a strong methodological component focusing on discourse analysis.
COMM 856 Privacy, Surveillance & Marketplace
This class will look at various philosophical and sociological perspectives on privacy, put them into historical context, and explore some of the dynamics of the contemporary marketplace that may (or may not) affirm Sun Microsystem CEO Scott McNealy's 1999 comment to reporters and analysts, “You have zero privacy anyway. Get over it.” The class will involve mainly reading and discussion, with possibly a paper that extends a stream of the readings in a particular direction.
Taught by: Turow
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 857 Advanced Qualitative Research
For students writing qualitative dissertation proposals. Seminar members will read and respond to one another’s developing drafts and preliminary research. We will talk through unfolding projects and develop research and writing practice. For most students the goal is to produce a defensible proposal by the end of the semester. In some cases students who are not writing formal proposals but are beginning to focus on literature review & dissertation design may find this seminar useful. Adviser approval required for enrollment.
Taught by: Marvin
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 860 Global Media Activism: The 1960s
The long 1960s witnessed the explosion of media and activism on a global scale. From the French May Movement in 1968 to the Chinese Cultural Revolution, from the student protests in Zimbabwe, Germany and Brazil to Women’s Liberation and the New Left in the United States, political radicalism was deeply intertwined with activist and alternative media and the mainstream press. The ideological divide of the Cold War not only failed to stop the transnational flows of the narratives and icons of radicalism, but gave them a fateful potency. In this process, the meanings and forms of political activism were transformed. This seminar analyzes this wave of political activism and its media practices while tracing its long-term consequences, memories, and legacies. Our goal is to understand media and activism in a pivotal period of global modernity as well as the historical origins of mediated activism in the 21st century.
Taught by: Yang
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 867 Media and Social Movements
Examines the meanings and roles of media and communication in social movements; analyzes media reform activism; studies both historical movements and contemporary protests around the world (Arab Spring, Indignados, Occupy, etc); covers a broad range of theoretical perspectives, especially network and diffusion theories, political economy, narrative theory, and theories of performance. Students are required to submit a final research paper.
Taught by: Gonzalez-Bailon, Pickard & Yang
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 869 Ethnography and 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.
Taught by: Lingel
Course not offered every year
Pre requisite: Completion of graduate level research methods course
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 871 Computational Social Science Seminar
This is an advanced graduate research seminar in which guest speakers will present cutting-edge research in Computational Social Science. 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. This seminar will meet weekly.
Taught by: Centola
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 872 Internet Experiments Practicum
Web-based experiments are an exciting new way to do social science research online. They have created a vast number of new scientific opportunities for studying complex social systems. This course is an advanced undergraduate / graduate practicum that focuses on how to build Internet experiments. Class participants will be exposed to the literature in computational social science that uses the Internet to study human behavior. Students will be expected to participate in a hands-on research project in which we build a new experiment to study complex social behavior. This course requires strong research and analytic abilities, and would be appropriate for both advanced social science majors with a strong technical background, and advanced computer science and engineering majors with a strong interest in social science. The practicum will meet weekly. Interested students will need to prepare a paragraph describing their interest and preparation for this course, and will be asked to discuss their background with Professor Centola.
Taught by: Centola
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 880 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.
Taught by: Falk
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 883 Describing Your Data
This course is for students who have collected empirical data and will explore ways of describing data for scientific and translational purposes. For example, students will explore different ways to explore and visualize their data, write about their data (e.g., a conference abstract vs. a blog post), present present their data (e.g., a conference talk vs. a pop talk) and make their data more reproducible. Students will also read scholarly work (oversampling, though not limited to work on media effects) 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.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 889 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 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.
Taught by: Yang
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 891 Censorship: Global Sur
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 892 Critical Data Studies
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 893 Networks, Theories, and Online Data: New Approaches to Social Change
How do fads and innovations spread across a population? Why do political parties polarize, or reach an unexpected consensus? How can social technologies help to promote the emergence of social movements and new democratic politics? This course examines theories of social change and innovation diffusion, in light of methodological advances in network science and computational social science. The new revolution in computing has creating remarkable opportunities for doing social science research, and understanding the dynamics of how collective behaviors emerge and spread. The goal of the course is to think carefully about how formal/predictive models can be connected with empirical data. This course addresses research at the forefront of social science and complex systems. Participants will get the most out of the material by aggressively pursuing questions that emerge from the readings, and from participating in hands-on research projects. The expectation is that students will develop research projects, or mature existing projects, which will be the focus of their work for the course. They should use this course as a foundation for developing publishable research. This course will also focus on the presentation of research - emphasizing clear, intelligible presentations, suitable for disciplinary conferences.
Taught by: Centola
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

COMM 894 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.
Taught by: Gonzalaz-Bailon
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
COMM 898 Social Influence, Media Effects and the Brain
Considerable resources are devoted to constructing mass media campaigns that persuade individuals to change their behavior and individuals exert 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.
Taught by: Falk
Course not offered every year
Prerequisites: A graduate level statistics course, 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)
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit