

COMMUNICATIONS (COMM)

COMM 0025 Fellows Proseminar I (SNF Paideia Program Course)

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

Fall

0.5 Course Units

COMM 0026 Fellows Proseminar II (SNF Paideia Program Course)

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

Fall

0.5 Course Units

COMM 0050 Fellows Proseminar III (SNF Paideia Program Course)

In the SNF Paideia Fellows Proseminar III, students engage a set of questions about how best – as scholars, as citizens, in their personal lives, and in their careers – they can apply the skills and habits of dialogue that they have acquired throughout their tenure as Paideia fellows. As they work towards completion of their major, often tackling a senior thesis or comparable culminating academic project, the fellows will be given extensive opportunities to practice discussing the substance of their work with, and communicating its importance to, people outside of their discipline. And, as the fellows prepare for life beyond Penn, they will learn how the Paideia values of intentionality, curiosity, humility, and community can guide them as they make reflective choices of and within future jobs, relationships, and civic roles. This being the final course in a series of three half-credit courses that fellows take with their cohort, it continues to nurture, and reaps the rewards of, the diverse intellectual community that was forged in the first two proseminars (and through other programs of the SNF Paideia Program). This course is open only to SNF Paideia Fellows, who are required to take it during the fall of their senior year.

0.5 Course Units

COMM 1230 Critical Approaches to Popular Culture

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

Fall

1 Course Unit

COMM 1250 Introduction to Communication Behavior

This course introduces students to social science research on the consumption, sharing, and influence of mediated communication. We will explore the motivations behind media consumption and sharing, including social identity, entertainment, information-seeking, and social connection. We also examine the impact of various types of mediated content (e.g., violence, gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, politics and activism, misinformation, health and wellbeing); genres (e.g., news, entertainment, educational, marketing); and mediums (e.g., television, film, social media) on what we think and how we act. The aim of the course is to provide students with (1) a broad understanding of both the positive and negative effects of mediated communication on personal, professional, social, and civic lives, and (2) the basic conceptual tools to evaluate the assumptions, theories, methods, and empirical evidence that underpin these presumed effects and behaviors.

Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 1300 Media Industries and Society

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

Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 2011 The Art and Science of Story-Centered Research

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 2013 Black Journalism in/and Philadelphia

What is the “Black” in Black journalism? How do questions about “Blackness” complicate how we think about and study journalism globally, locally, and especially in the city in which we live? This course provides: 1) an overview of theories about journalism’s relationship to race; 2) varied perspectives on how Black journalists have thought about and practiced journalism in their specific social and political contexts; 3) an opportunity to consider what this all means for Black journalists and for journalism in Philadelphia. The course is ideal for students who want to be more critical news consumers and/or media makers and provides opportunities to learn about diverse approaches to journalistic practice that center Black media makers and audiences. In addition to weekly analysis of relevant scholarship, news, and popular materials, we will engage with local journalists and news media institutions throughout the semester. For their final assignment, students will be able to choose between submitting a paper or a multimedia project.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2014 Visibility, Circulation, and the Everyday Life of Images

This course begins with the question: what do images do in the world? Images can be interpreted, read, and decoded. Their meanings also shift, as images are mobile, fluid, and plastic objects, taking on a life of their own as they circulate. Images operate in diverse media ecologies, as photographs and advertisements, in films and videos. They are reproduced on multiple media technologies including TV, cinema, and the internet. Images can further ideologies including but not limited to colonialism, nationalism, imperialism, producing racialized, sexualized, classed, and gendered differences. At the same time, images are mutable forces and can be bent for purposes of self-fashioning as well as disrupting, subverting, and exposing structures of power. Through close readings, assignments and in-class activities, students in this class will learn to critically evaluate and contextualize images both historically and in contemporary forms of circulation. Students will develop a nuanced understanding of images as potent objects of communication with powerful political and social effects, and of the ways in which people incorporate them in daily practices.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2015 Media, Infrastructures, and the Environment

How does the environment factor into the production, design, and use of media technologies and infrastructures? How does media shape the way we think about the natural environment? How do we make our media sustainable in an era of climate change? This interdisciplinary course explores the relationship between humans, media technologies, and the environment. Students will learn how the more-than-human world shapes communication technologies, from beacon fires and carrier pigeons to telegraph cables, radio, fiber optics, and satellites. We will begin the course by highlighting the role of media infrastructures in today’s global ecological crisis. We will then trace our steps backward, from the endpoint of e-waste, through the applications and impacts of media on and in the environment, to the elements and minerals that are the foundation of media technologies. Classes will combine short lectures, student-led discussions of the readings, local field trips, and demonstrations of multimodal scholarship, critical art practice, and activism that interrogate the concerns of each week’s theme. These alternative ways of thinking, organizing, and doing will enable students to consider the role of media in the Anthropocene, the current geological epoch defined by human impact.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2016 How Cities Communicate

When we move through urban spaces, we are always both “reading” and “writing” the city. We read the built environment and the social uses of space within it, decoding messages about where and how to move, about who or what is (un)welcome and (un)valued, about historical trajectories and future possibilities, and about identity and power. A multitude of actors co-write the city and its messages, from powerful players like municipal governments, corporations, and cultural institutions to grassroots organizations, residents, and visitors, and onward to platforms, algorithms, and global flows of capital, goods, and ideas. This course invites students to 1) explore the practices and organizations that communicate about and through cities (e.g. city diplomacy and city branding, urban planning and place-making, sports and mega-events, local journalism, community organizing); 2) interrogate how the urban built environment itself communicates (e.g. through architecture, (in)accessible design, signage and murals, the aesthetics of gentrification); and 3) examine how communication networks shape city life (e.g. platform urbanism, smart city tech, policing and surveillance). Power, inequality, and the opportunities for challenging them will be core themes throughout. We will study key theories for thinking critically about cities and for imagining more just urban futures. And we will learn from the practical, timely insights and experiences of guest speakers from Philadelphia and beyond.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2100 Research Methods in Communication

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

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 2140 Media and South Asia

This course examines the historical development of media institutions across the Indian subcontinent, and how media texts have helped to shape post-colonial national/cultural/religious/social identities, nationalism, and geopolitical relations. The course looks at how the post-colonial State in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka) has interacted with media industries, and the implications of this interaction.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: SAST 1110

1 Course Unit

COMM 2160 Games, Globalization, and Social Justice

How can playing games intervene in socioeconomic and cultural systems at a global scale? By engaging with critical scholarly readings and gameplay sessions, students in this course will become familiar with the methods and theories for investigating both gaming cultures and theories of globalization. Class discussions will explore the political stakes of communicating and simulating global issues (such as colonialism, migration, warfare, or climate change) through the medium of games. In addition to weekly assignments, students will pursue a semester-long project that includes choosing a social issue of importance to them, researching it in-depth, and producing a creative intervention that explains how that issue could be addressed through games. No prior experience with gaming is needed, but a willingness to spend several hours of the semester playing games and thinking critically about them is necessary.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2200 How to Listen: Qualitative Methods for Communication Research

This course will introduce students to a rich array of qualitative research methods including textual/discourse analysis, interviewing and ethnography, and "digital" qualitative methods that will allow students to analyze interaction in digital media environments, with apps, and elsewhere in everyday life. Students will learn how to design and carry-out their own qualitative communication projects and gain a broad understanding of the role of listening in research, the role of research in the social world, and the importance of ethical research practices. This course will prepare students for a range of careers in professional qualitative social science, including in the tech industry and design/user research, in advertising and marketing, and in social advocacy.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2230 Social Media and the Self

This course invites students to explore the performance of identity on social media apps. We begin by tracing the emergence of the idea of an individual self in early modern Europe and examine two competing ideals in particular: authenticity and self-possession. We will then look to the rise of consumer culture, alongside new visual and electronic media, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as crucial context for a "performing" self to emerge. The balance of the course will focus on the online self, from the emergence of the internet to today's social media era and its multiple forms of managed self-disclosure, from blogs to tweets, from reels to videos. We will explore changing definitions of public and private, algorithmic memory, emotional labor in the workplace, gender and sexuality, and the economics of sharing. A major question the course will pose throughout: How do users balance (or blend) competing demands to be authentic and to promote oneself strategically?

1 Course Unit

COMM 2250 Children and Media

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

Fall

1 Course Unit

COMM 2260 Introduction to Political Communication

This course is an introduction to the field of political communication and conceptual approaches to analyzing communication in various forms, including advertising, speech making, campaign debates, and candidates' and office-holders' uses of social media and efforts to frame news. The focus of this course is on the interplay in the U.S. between media and politics. The course includes a history of campaign practices from the 1952 presidential contest through the election of 2020.

Fall

Also Offered As: PSCI 1210

1 Course Unit

COMM 2320 Gender and Media

This course examines various images and performances of gender in media focusing on the late 20th century to the present. Using theories from cultural and media studies, film and gender studies, and communication studies, we will explore different processes and practices of gender, specifically in terms of media representations of femininity, masculinity, and other genders. The purpose of the course is to gain insight into the ways in which gender, and its intersections with race, ethnicity, and class, is enacted, represented, and has an impact on cultural formations and communication. We will explore the socio-cultural mechanisms that shape our individual and collective notions of identity and essentially teach us what it means to be gendered masculine or feminine or align with other identifications. The media plays a major role in "constructing" gender, and popular views of what "appropriate" gendering is, in turn, shape how we communicate with each other. In examining cultural myths about gender as well as ongoing debates on gender construction, we will consider how gender is tied in with notions of power, identity, voice, and other defining identity categories (race, socio-economic status, sexuality, etc.) Throughout the course, we will examine a variety of media forms, from film to television to streaming platforms, as well as social media such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 2400 Advertising and Consumer Culture

Advertising, it has been observed, is capitalism's way of saying "I love you" to itself. In this discussion-based course, you will explore what that might mean, for you and for society—to live in a culture that puts buying and selling at its center. Together we will trace how, over a hundred years ago, advertisers began to pair a vision of the good life with a promise to grow the economy. In the century since the advertising industry has co-evolved with, and underwritten, the media we consume—from radio to the internet—helping to drive, even shape, the technologies and businesses that entertain and inform us. In the course, you and your classmates will study advertisers—who they are, what they make, and how their business has changed—alongside the rest of us, in our roles as consumers and (more recently) proprietors of our own self-brands. Along the way we will consider how advertising and consumer culture has spilled over into politics, activism, and the environment. Is there a logic of promotion that connects how we think of ourselves with the lifestyle dreamscapes packaged by the industry? What, if anything, do colorful 1920s magazine ads have to do with the link-in-bio self-selling of our contemporary social media culture? We will consider such questions against the backdrop of recent developments, including data-driven target marketing and the rise of programmatic ads.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2410 Understanding Communication Networks via Web Based Experiments

How do new ideas spread online? Why do some take off and others fail? What determines when people will cooperate and when they will be selfish? Where do our social norms come from, and what happens when they are disrupted – as they were during the first year of the pandemic? Why is communicating about climate change so challenging? How can we make our corporate and university research teams more intelligent? The last decade in social science has seen remarkable breakthroughs in our answers to these and other profound questions about societal communication and evolution. One of the most powerful and influential tools behind these breakthroughs is Web-based social experiments. This course unveils the exciting new world of building Web-based experiments to study human collective behavior. Students will learn the big ideas behind Web-based experimental design, which will prepare them to understand the latest scientific breakthroughs in the study of social and cultural evolution, and even to design their own Web-based studies. This class does not involve coding and no programming experience is necessary. Instead, students will be introduced to a range of new experimental approaches, and will learn how they produce results that guide the policies that are currently used by governments, universities and corporations. This course will show you the science behind the big ideas and simple rules that are used to predict the future of our economy, our society and our culture.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2468 What We Value: The Neuroscience of Choice, Change, and Connection

How does the brain shape what we value, how we make decisions, and how we communicate and connect with others? This course explores the neural systems that influence our sense of self, our understanding of others, and the choices we make. Students will examine the brain's default tendencies—why we sometimes act in ways that align with our long-term goals and values, and why we sometimes don't. We will also investigate the forces that shape whether our brains synchronize with others when we consume media, engage in conversation, and collaborate, and whether that is desirable. Finally, we will learn how the brain motivates sharing and cooperation, how culture influences neural processes, and what brain patterns make for good conversation. Through hands-on activities, students will explore how we can apply these insights to improve personal and collective well-being. By the end of the course, students will have a deeper understanding of the neuroscience behind decision-making and social connection—and how to use that knowledge to make more intentional choices.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2510 Good Talk: The Purpose, Practice, and Representation of Dialogue Across Difference (SNF Paideia)

This course is an exploration of dialogue across difference through three lenses: theoretical, practical, and representational. Rather than prescribe a particular model of what dialogue should look like and accomplish, the course exposes students to a diverse range of ideas, narratives, and practices related to dialogue. By the end of the course, you'll have begun to develop and apply your own working theory and model of dialogue that is aligned with your values and meaningful for the kinds of work you are most invested in doing personally, professionally, or academically.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2520 Whose safety? Whose security? Communication Approaches to AI (SNF Paideia Program Course)

New technologies (the personal computer! the internet! social media!) all produced a range of emotional responses from excitement to fear. All that access! All that freedom! But could regular users be trusted? In many ways, contemporary debates about the promises and perils of artificial intelligence (AI) are no different. This course gives students tools to navigate the hype about AI's current harms and potential dangers by historicizing the debate about safety and innovation in technology. This course turns to an interdisciplinary range of literature that explores the sociology, anthropology, history, and politics of technological debates. We draw on approaches in political communication, science communication, and journalism to explore how technological innovation is designed, how its promises and perils are communicated to a nontechnical audience, and how it is ultimately governed in the public interest. Readings and virtual visits from Ruha Benjamin, Saifiya Noble, Timnit Gebru, and other scholars and technologists working at the intersection of social justice and public interest technology will enhance our understanding as we explore different flashpoints of domestic and foreign policy concerning technology and its deployment. Over the course of the semester, students will explore how technological innovation reproduces existing hierarchies of value, central among these existing hierarchies of safety and security. The course questions the monopoly the state holds on safety and the provision of security. We pay close attention to citizen-led and community-driven efforts to protect individuals and groups, like peer-to-peer protocols, mesh networks, and other forms of technical decentralization, autonomy, and care. No prerequisites are required but an interest in AI, the effects of data extraction on marginalized groups, community activism, decentralization, and/or policing and surveillance would be appropriate.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2550 Foundations in Data Science for Communication

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 2600 Media Activism Studies

This seminar provides an introduction to the politics and tactics underlying various types of media activism. The class will examine interventions aimed at media representations, labor relations in media production, media policy reform, activists' strategic communications, and "alternative" media making. The course will draw from an overview of the existing scholarship on media activism, as well as close analyses of actual activist practices within both old and new media at local, national, and global levels. We will study how various political groups, past and present, use media to advance their interests and effect social change. Each member of the class will choose one case study of an activist group or campaign to explore throughout the semester.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 2620 Social Movements

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

Also Offered As: SOCI 2620

1 Course Unit

COMM 2640 Media, Culture, and Society in Contemporary China

This course covers Chinese media, culture, and society from the 1970s to the present. It examines the causes and consequences of social and institutional transformation, with an emphasis on civic engagement, cultural change, and the impact of digital media. In analyzing these developments, the course pays special attention to historical contexts and draws on concepts and theories from sociology, communication, and related fields. The course helps students develop nuanced and sophisticated approaches to the understanding of contemporary Chinese media, culture, and society and cross-cultural phenomena more broadly.

Also Offered As: SOCI 2640

1 Course Unit

COMM 2760 How We Change: Social-Psychological and Communication Dynamics (SNF Paideia Program Course)

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

Also Offered As: NURS 2760, PSYC 2760

1 Course Unit

COMM 2830 Journey to Joy: Exploring the Science of Joy for Designing a Happier Life

This course examines the science of joy as a psychological, cultural, and communicative phenomenon, with an emphasis on how joy can be intentionally designed and cultivated in personal, professional, and social contexts. We will explore the role of joy in human well-being, its potential as an intervention for trauma and grief, and its application in leadership, policymaking, and digital media. Through an interdisciplinary lens, students will analyze the motivations behind joy-seeking behaviors, including self-care, manifestation, social connection, and cultural identity. The course will also investigate how various forms of media—such as social media, entertainment, advertising, and digital storytelling—shape our perceptions of happiness and influence emotional well-being. By engaging with empirical research, real-world case studies, and hands-on user research methods, students will develop (1) a broad understanding of how joy is constructed, communicated, and experienced across different communities and (2) the conceptual and methodological tools to evaluate and design experiences that foster joy in media, technology, and everyday life.

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 6030

1 Course Unit

COMM 2860 Masculinity and Media

This course examines the construction of masculinity in American and global media, highlighting how masculinity developed in parallel to social, cultural, economic, and political norms. Using case studies and multiple theoretical approaches, we will seek to understand how constructions of masculinity across the world have served to uphold - or challenge - the status quo. Analysis of individual texts across time periods and different cultural contexts will also help us better come to terms with the idea of masculinity - and its proliferation across media platforms.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 2898 The Art of Communication in Moments of Crisis (SNF Paideia Program Course)

Our worlds are infused with communication—our personal and professional lives, our lives online and offline. We have so many communication outlets and platforms that it is difficult to break through the clutter, to find our own positions and possibilities, to think critically about who and what influences us and why. Yet, it has never been more important to do this kind of work, to listen to varied viewpoints, to take different perspectives, and to be empathetic to those who have differing ideas. This course asks what it means to listen critically, and to think about how communication technologies shape, reshape, and affect fundamental questions about democratic practice and ideals. We will explore what it means to “critically listen” to others, in the context of not only politics, but also friendship, culture, and our social lives.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2900 Before Netflix: The Past and Present of Latin American Television

Since the mid-20th century, the telenovelas, newscasts, and variety shows produced by Televisa in the capital city of Mexico have traveled across the rest of the Spanish-speaking countries in the Americas. In the first half of the course, we analyze this history by considering how technological developments, industry practices, and programming trends resonated across different countries, as well as how audiences created (or resisted) a sense of “Latin American” identity through their television consumption practices. In the second half of the course, we look at the current state of television as it has been shaped by globalization, digital media, and new social movements. In particular, we are concerned with how streaming platforms such as Netflix have (and have not) disrupted longstanding practices while introducing new ideas into the television mediascape. Course content will consist of reading economic, social, and cultural studies of television and analyzing the content of a few historically significant TV shows and some newer Netflix original series. This course is a Penn Global Seminar, which includes a travel component.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2955 The First 100 Days

This course will focus on the decisions and events of the first One Hundred Days of the second Trump presidency in light of historic precedent and the factors that have typically accounted for success and failure of a president’s term in office. Our assessment of the Trump transition will attend to multiple contextual issues: immigration and trade issues, the border, hemispheric relations, the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, confirmations, the issuance of executive orders and the passage of legislation. The course objective is to enhance students’ understanding of the presidency and national political leadership, with special emphasis on the critical role played by political communications. This course is a directed research seminar. Students will be required to write short reports and a final research paper on a relevant topic approved by the instructors. Students will be expected to base their papers, in part, on primary research materials such as historical materials available in online archives pertaining to past presidents and transitions and/or interviews with or studies of past and present presidential staff, politicians, lobbyists, presidential appointees, journalists, and consultants involved in or knowledgeable about the transition process. Students will be expected to contribute fully to weekly discussions that will feature distinguished visitors experienced in presidential and national politics.

1 Course Unit

COMM 2991 Special Topics in Communication

Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: <https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses>.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 2992 Special Topics in Communication

Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: <https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses>.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3091 Communication Internship Seminar

This seminar provides a scholarly counterpart for students’ internships in various communication-related organizations. Through individually selected readings, class discussion, and individual conferences, students develop their own independent research agendas which investigate aspects of their internship experience or industry. In written field notes and a final paper, students combine communication theory and practice in pursuit of their individual questions.

Two Term Class, Student may enter either term; credit given for either

1 Course Unit

COMM 3100 The Communication Research Experience

In this hands-on course students will work with active researchers in the Communication Neuroscience lab at Penn to gain experience in how research works. Students will have the opportunity to interact closely with a mentor and will gain experience conceptualizing research questions, designing experiments, and collecting and analyzing data.

Not Offered Every Year

Prerequisite: (COMM 2100 OR HSOC 2002 OR INTR 3500 OR MKTG 2120 OR SOCI 2000 OR URBS 2000)

1 Course Unit

COMM 3130 Computational Text Analysis for Communication Research

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

Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 3180 Stories From Data: Programming for Data Journalism

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

Fall
1 Course Unit

COMM 3200 Common Sense vs. Data Science in Communications Research and Practice

Policy makers, entrepreneurs, and marketers frequently rely on common sense when planning for the future; yet their predictions are often wrong, and their plans fail for reasons that seem obvious after the fact. In this course you will learn about the nature of common sense, when it should be expected to work effectively, and why we are tempted to use it even when we should not. The course will also introduce a data science perspective on explanation, understanding, and decision making, covering topics such as experiments, predictive analytics, forecasting tournaments, scenario planning, and epistemic humility. The course will be conceptual rather than methodological and so is equally appropriate for students with technical and nontechnical backgrounds.

1 Course Unit

COMM 3220 History and Theory of Freedom of Expression (SNF Paideia Program Course)

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

Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 3230 Contemporary Politics, Policy, and Journalism

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

Spring
1 Course Unit

COMM 3280 Drawing the Blue Line: Police and Power in American Popular Culture (SNF Paideia Program Course)

The police are one of the most heavily imagined institutions in American popular culture. From Cagney and Lacey to Colors, Law & Order, The Wire and The Watchmen, evolving depictions of law enforcement help us to understand larger socio-cultural shifts that have occurred from the post-1968 riots to the dawn of the Black Lives Matter movement in the mid-2010s and police abolition in the early 2020s. Using case study and textual analysis approaches, students will examine how specific police procedurals, movies, and other cultural texts showcase police authority in relation to certain communities, and consider how these texts reflect, uphold, and/or challenge prevailing views on law and order and criminal justice. Our explorations of how media and cultural industries have framed policing will pay particular attention to questions of power, race, gender, sexuality, class, and geography. These explorations will also include learning about and learning to dialogue, given the diverse – and often contentious – views about policing in America. Students will have an opportunity to interact with speakers representing different positions that relate to mediated perceptions – as well as lived experiences of – policing. Class assignments and activities will enhance students' abilities to productively discuss complex issues that are frequently sanitized or homogenized within U.S. popular culture.

Not Offered Every Year
1 Course Unit

COMM 3350 Feminism and Surveillance

Living with surveillance has become a predictable feature of contemporary life. From work to school to online dating, surveillance shapes many facets of our daily behaviors and activities. What can feminist theory bring to questions of surveillance? How have feminist tactics been used to resist surveillance? And can surveillance ever be a form of feminist caregiving? In the first part of this course, we analyze different forms of feminist thinking, including Black feminism, indigenous feminism, crip feminism and more. From there, we turn to legal, political, cultural and activist case studies related to surveillance. Putting them together, we consider how feminist frameworks can help us to analyze practices and technologies of surveillance. This is an interdisciplinary course that brings together internet studies, queer theory, science and technology studies, human computing interaction, surveillance studies and cultural studies in order to understand the social and historical dimensions of feminism and surveillance.

Not Offered Every Year
Also Offered As: GSWS 3350
Mutually Exclusive: GSWS 3360
1 Course Unit

COMM 3360 Feminism and the Internet

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

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: GSWS 3360

Mutually Exclusive: GSWS 3350

1 Course Unit

COMM 3370 Public Health Communication in the Digital Age

This course is designed to explore the role of public health communication in the digital age to influence health behavior change in several areas: infectious disease pandemics, tobacco and substance use, mental health, cancer, nutrition and physical activity and others. Throughout the course, we will discuss a number of important considerations when designing and implementing public health communication interventions. Students will be introduced to theories of health behavior change, models of persuasive communication, practical issues in the design of effective health communication programs, countering misinformation, community engagement, audience segmentation, cultural tailoring to specific audiences, evaluation approaches, ethics, and communication inequalities. We will also explore the use of digital technologies and social media platforms, entertainment education, popular media, and social marketing in delivery of public health communication interventions.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3390 Critical Perspectives in Journalism

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

Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 3450 Adolescence and Media

How are adolescents represented in media and what effects do these portrayals have on developing teens, including in the context of climate change? What makes adolescents a “jackpot market” to be targeted by advertising, and how can they be swayed by mediated efforts to encourage health-promoting and pro-climate behaviors? What does the increasingly mediated nature of everyday life mean for adolescents, their friends, and their families during their journey into adulthood amidst a climate crisis? We will explore these questions by reading key empirical studies and by critically analyzing film, public service announcements, and climate change-related media portraying and/or targeting adolescents from the 1950s to the present day.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3451 Black Popular Culture

This course explores theories, debates, and frameworks in African American popular culture. Drawing on Africana, Gender and Sexuality, Communications and Performance Studies, it examines histories of Black representation across a number of performance forms. Television, film, dance, theater, music and more will be explored to interrogate the ways blackness has been defined, framed, and disseminated. What are the micro-politics through which racial difference is produced? How have Black people redefined and wrestled with questions of authenticity and “the real”? What are the capacities and the limits of popular culture to both render and shape Black life? In examining blackness through a number of performance mediums, we will consider the creative labor that Black people produce, and the processes of racialization produced through Black bodies.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AFRC 3451, GSWS 3451

1 Course Unit

COMM 3500 Media in the Making: Podcasting HBO

In this applied media history course, students will work with the HBO Oral History Project, a series of 38 wide-ranging interviews with key figures in the channel's creation and early development. Working in groups, students will research, script, record, and edit a series of podcast episodes, using audio extracted from the project. Readings and screenings on television history, the emergence of cable in the 1970s, and HBO in particular will be combined with readings, guest lectures, and audio on the development of podcasting as a distinctive medium. The course will rotate between two modes. The television and podcasting history components of the course will be conducted as a discussion-based seminar. In the applied workshop mode, students will be exposed to podcasting best practices, equipment, and software. Over the course of the semester, students will develop and produce standalone podcast episodes, linked by themes established in discussion. No prior podcasting or audio-editing experience is required.

1 Course Unit

COMM 3510 Media and Migration in the 21st Century

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 3600 Understanding the Political Economy of Media

This course has two aims. First, assuming that communications are central to any society, it situates media systems within larger national and international social relationships and political structures. Second, this course critically examines the structures of the communication systems themselves, including ownership, profit imperatives, support mechanisms such as advertising and public relations, and the ideologies and government policies that sustain these arrangements. Considering case studies ranging from traditional news and entertainment media to new digital and social media, the course provides a comprehensive survey of the major texts in this vibrant sub-field of media studies.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3650 Media, the Apocalypse, and the Undead

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

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3670 Communication in the Networked Age

Communication technologies, including the internet, social media, and countless online applications create the infrastructure and interface through which many of our interactions take place today. This form of networked communication opens new questions about how we establish relationships, engage in public, build a sense of identity, promote social change, or delimit the private domain. The ubiquitous adoption of new technologies has also produced, as a byproduct, new ways of observing the world: many of our interactions now leave a digital trail that, if followed, can help us unravel the determinants and outcomes of human communication in unprecedented ways. This course will give you the theoretical tools to critically analyze the impact that networked technologies have on social life and inform your assessment of current controversies surrounding those technologies.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3770 Philosophical Problems of Journalism

This course explores issues in print, broadcast and digital journalism from the standpoint of serious philosophical areas such as epistemology, political philosophy, ethics and aesthetics. Topics will include: the concept of a "fact"; the role of the press in the state; whether journalists (like doctors and lawyers) operate according to specialized "professional" ethics; and the nature of journalism as a literary or visual genre. Course materials will include philosophical writing, breaking journalism, media scholarship and classic journalism movies that bring many of the abstract issues to life. No prior experience in philosophy or journalism is necessary.

Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 3780 Journalism and Public Service

In this course we examine links between journalism and public service by scrutinizing core concepts involved, practices that sometimes put journalism and public service in conflict (e.g., investigative reporting, coverage of war), and how journalism stacks up against other forms of public service from NGO work to government employment. Beginning with a reading of Robert Coles's classic *The Call of Service*, we dissect the notion of the "public," assess so-called public-service journalism by reading Pulitzer-Prize-winning examples, and reflect on the news media as a political institution. Individual weeks focus on such topics as the conflict that arises when a journalist's obligation to a confidential source clashes with a duty to the judicial system, whether the business of journalism is business, how journalism and NGO work compares as public service, and whether journalism by committed political activists (such as I.F. Stone) surpasses mainstream "neutral" journalism as a form of public service.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3880 Ritual Communication

This course invites students to explore the enduring power of ritual in modern life. We will study rituals that unfold at the local level (prayers, proms, parades) as well as those that most of us experience only via the media (Oscars, Super Bowls, Inaugurations). We will examine how rituals forge and strengthen social connections within and across communities and how they create and communicate boundaries between "us" and "them" and between "desirable" and "deviant" behaviors. We will explore how rituals both resist and contribute to social change, consider the role of media and technology in shaping contemporary ritual practices, and examine the creativity of ritual participants. In this interactive course, students will gain hands-on research experience conducting original fieldwork on rituals of their choosing. They will learn how to interpret the language of ritual and how to develop and present compelling research proposals.

Fall

1 Course Unit

COMM 3940 India on Screen: How Global Media Industries Shape Culture and Politics

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 3950 Communication and the Presidency

This course examines the vital aspect of communication as a tool of the modern Presidency. Reading and class discussions focus on case studies drawn from modern Presidential administrations (beginning with FDR) that demonstrate the elements of successful and unsuccessful Presidential initiatives and the critical factor of communication common to both. This course is also an introduction to primary research methods and to the use of primary research materials in the Presidential Library system.

1 Course Unit

COMM 3970 New Media and Politics

This course examines the evolving media landscape and the political process from three perspectives: 1) the voter, 2) political campaigns and candidates, and 3) the evolving and expanding media environment. The course opens with a broad overview of the main theories of political communication and a historical review of the role played by new media technologies in U.S. political campaigns leading up to 1996, the year the internet debuted in presidential campaigns. The course then follows this evolution from the 1996 presidential campaign to the present. We will take a deep dive into the landmark changes brought on by new media technologies to mobilize, persuade, inform, and fundraise around modern presidential campaigns. Students will gain an understanding of the shifting role of social media and Big Tech as it relates to political content moderation, misinformation, campaign speech/ads, laws governing voting, measuring public opinion, media coverage and participation.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3991 Special Topics in Communication

Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: <https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses>.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 3999 Independent Study

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 4000 Advocacy in Emergent Technology, Digital Media and Society

This course is designed to build a critical foundation for understanding the interplay of digital technologies and society and the important role of advocates in this space. Providing an overview of the history, students will investigate and critique contemporary emergent technologies in a social context, and explore their use in advocacy efforts. The course uses interactive lecture, discussion, readings, and guest speakers from technologists in the field.

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 6000

1 Course Unit

COMM 4050 Media, Public Opinion, and Globalization

This seminar will examine American attitudes toward globalization and the role of the media in shaping public opinion toward events and people beyond our borders. Students will participate in original research on attitudes toward issues tied to globalization such as immigration, international trade, support for international organizations, isolationism, and so forth. Students will also spend time systematically studying the implications of American media coverage of these issues.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: PSCI 4209

1 Course Unit

COMM 4070 Understanding Social Networks

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

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 4110 Communication, Activism, and Social Change

This course examines the communication strategies of 20th and 21st-century social movements, both U.S. and global. We analyze the communication social movements create (including rhetorical persuasion, art activism, bodily argumentation, protest music, media campaigns, public protest, and grassroots organizing), and the role of communication in the identity formation, circulation, and efficacy of social movements. We also consider the communication created by forces seeking to undermine social change, define the study of social movements from a communication perspective, identify major historical and contemporary movements, and apply theories of communication and social change to "real world" activism. Students are required to research and design their own social movement campaign.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 4180 Global Media Industries

The phenomenal expansion of digital media infrastructures and platforms are transforming the production, promotion, and circulation of films, television programs, music, video games, and other media entertainment and popular cultural forms. Moreover, media artifacts routinely move across national borders with audiences playing an increasingly participatory role. This course focuses on the operations, discourses, and logics that drive contemporary media industries in major media capitals around the world including Mumbai, Seoul, Istanbul, Mexico City, Dubai, and Los Angeles. Taking a historical approach, we will examine the economic, political, and socio-cultural factors that shape developments in the media industries, relationships between powerful centers of media and cultural production, and the ways in which industry professionals respond to the challenges and opportunities of digitalization and new geo-political alignments in the 21st century.

1 Course Unit

COMM 4190 Talking with AI: Computational and Communication Approaches

Increasingly, our daily communications involve responding to and interacting with language produced by artificial intelligence models. On the surface, large language models (LLMs) and generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Bard, etc.) appear to have crossed a milestone in terms of their human-like ability to generate coherent and idiomatic texts. This has significant implications (both positive and negative) for human communication systems and their products, from creative fiction to news, from academic texts to social media content. It also raises many questions around whether we can identify, trust, learn from, and use AI generated language. In this course, we will begin to answer these questions in two ways: 1) Analyzing Key Issues: Drawing upon relevant frameworks in communication and language theory we will explore the transformative nature of AI-generated communication and its impact on individuals and society. 2) Hands-on Application: In parallel, students will acquire skills using Python in implementing machine and deep learning models to better understand how they work and explore their abilities and limitations. We will code various AI models, such as a simple voice assistant, image classifier, misinformation identifier, and a basic text generative application. Through this course students will be equipped for a range of contexts impacted by developments in AI. The course requires students to have a basic experience in Python coding and using Jupyter notebooks.

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 5190

1 Course Unit

COMM 4230 Communication and Social Influence Laboratory

Considerable resources are devoted to constructing mass media campaigns that persuade individuals to change their behavior. In addition, individuals powerfully influence one another without even knowing it. Still, our ability to design and select optimal messages and interventions is far from perfect. This course will review investigations in social and cognitive psychology and communication sciences that attempt to circumvent the limits of introspection by using biological and implicit measures, with particular focus on neuroimaging studies of social influence and media effects.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 4280 Conventions, Debates, and Campaigns

Offered every four years to coincide with the U.S. presidential election cycle, this course focuses broadly on the Democratic and Republican national conventions and the post-conventions campaign lasting until election day. Seminar members will travel to one of the two conventions where they will attend a variety of events and gain an in-person understanding of the convention process and the evolving role of conventions in relation to party nominee selection. Students will explore how political appeals are fashioned and presented; how campaign themes develop; how efforts are split between persuading the electorate versus mobilizing the party faithful; the role of political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and political action committees (PACs); how the campaigns forecast governance and serve American democracy. Students will produce comprehensive group reports on the conventions, debates, or major aspects of the unfolding campaigns.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 4320 Digital Inequalities

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

Fall

1 Course Unit

COMM 4330 Climate Change and Communication: Theories and Applications

This course will focus on understanding the multiple ways in which climate science is communicated to publics and how they come to understand it. In the process, we will explore ways to blunt susceptibilities to misconceptions, misconstruals, and deliberate deceptions about climate science. Forms of communication on which the class will focus include consensus statements, manifestos, commentaries, court briefs, news accounts, fact checks, op-eds, letters to the editor, speeches, and media interviews. Students will have the opportunity to interact with guest lecturers, among them leading journalists, climate activists, and climate survey analysts. Students will write letters to the editor and fact checks and will participate in mock interviews designed to increase their understanding of the nature of the interactions between journalists and climate scientists. As a class project, students will collaborate on a white paper on climate discourse fallacies to be distributed at the April 3-7 Society for Environmental Journalists annual convention (hosted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center and the Penn Center for Science, Sustainability, and Media). Students will interview attendees at that conference as part of the class project.

Also Offered As: ENVS 4330

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 6330

1 Course Unit

COMM 4360 Data Literacy in the Algorithmic Society

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 4460 Media Industries and Nationalism (SNF Paideia Program Course)

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

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 4590 Social Networks and the Spread of Behavior

This course explores the nature of diffusion through social networks, the ways networks are formed and shaped by social structures, and the role they play in health behavior, public policy, and innovation adoption. Topics include: the theory of social networks; the small world model of network structure; constructing models to represent society; the social bases of the adoption of innovations and the spread of new ideas; the role of social networks in controlling changes in public opinion; the emergence of unexpected fashions, fads, and social movements; and the connection between social network models and the design of public policy interventions. Students will learn how to use the agent-based computational modeling tool "NetLogo", and they will work directly with the models to understand how to test scientific theories. We will examine the basic theory of social networks in offline, face-to-face, networks, as well as the role of online networks in spreading new ideas and behaviors through social media. Long standing debates on the effects of social networks on changing beliefs and behaviors, their impact on social change, and ethical concerns regarding their potential manipulation will be given careful consideration throughout. Students will be taught new skills that will enable them to use and develop their own agent-based models.

Not Offered Every Year

Prerequisite: (COMM 2100 OR HSOC 2002 OR INTR 3500 OR MKTG 2120 OR SOCI 2000 OR URBS 2000)

1 Course Unit

COMM 4630 Surveillance Capitalism

Surveillance capitalism is a term academics and policymakers increasingly use to describe the world in which we live: where businesses track and classify individuals in order to decide how to sell to them, or whether to sell to them at all. Companies that millions of people turn to every hour such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Target, Walmart, and Pandora use the technologies of surveillance capitalism to drive their revenues. Critics point out that these activities are intimately bound with issues of discrimination and reputation. The "big data" analyses (often powered by artificial intelligence) may affect the ads people see, the discounts they receive, the jobs they may get offered, and far more. This course surveys the history of surveillance capitalism, how it works, and the key issues swirling around it. Students will write short (350 word) essays about each reading that will be key contributors toward their grades. Students will also conduct research and write a paper that explores a contemporary or historical topic related to surveillance capitalism.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 4640 The Industrial Construction of Audiences

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 4797 Honors & Capstone Thesis

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

Fall

Prerequisite: COMM 2100 OR HSOC 2002 OR INTR 3500 OR MKTG 2120 OR SOCI 2000 OR URBS 2000

1 Course Unit

COMM 4897 COMPS Capstone Thesis

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

Spring

Prerequisite: COMM 4797

1 Course Unit

COMM 4991 Special Topics in Communication

Special topics course covering a variety of topics in communication. A detailed course description can be found in the Section Details area of the term offering, or by visiting the Annenberg School for Communication website: <https://www.asc.upenn.edu/undergraduate/courses>.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 4997 Senior Honors Thesis

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

Spring

Prerequisite: COMM 4797

1 Course Unit

COMM 5000 Proseminar

Introduction to the field of communications study and to the graduate program in communication. Required of all degree candidates. Open only to graduate students in communication.

Fall

1 Course Unit

COMM 5020 The Politics of Code

This course allows students to think through the concept of "code" from several critical vantage points, focusing particularly on both how codes carry politics and how those politics determine and define relationships of power. Code, as we will see, can be based on a wide variety of phenomena, from coding as categorization, to coding as passwords, and to coding as computer programming languages and software. These varied understandings of code force us to consider how exactly the politics of code may interact with—and determine—the everyday.

1 Course Unit

COMM 5190 Talking with AI: Computational and Communication Approaches

Increasingly, our daily communications involve responding to and interacting with language produced by artificial intelligence models. On the surface, large language models (LLMs) and generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Bard, etc.) appear to have crossed a milestone in terms of their human-like ability to generate coherent and idiomatic texts. This has significant implications (both positive and negative) for human communication systems and their products, from creative fiction to news, from academic texts to social media content. It also raises many questions around whether we can identify, trust, learn from, and use AI generated language. In this course, we will begin to answer these questions in two ways: 1) Analyzing Key Issues: Drawing upon relevant frameworks in communication and language theory we will explore the transformative nature of AI-generated communication and its impact on individuals and society. 2) Hands-on Application: In parallel, students will acquire skills using Python in implementing machine and deep learning models to better understand how they work and explore their abilities and limitations. We will code various AI models, such as a simple voice assistant, image classifier, misinformation identifier, and a basic text generative application. Through this course students will be equipped for a range of contexts impacted by developments in AI. The course requires students to have a basic experience in Python coding and using Jupyter notebooks.

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 4190

1 Course Unit

COMM 5220 Introduction to Communication Research

The logic of scientific inquiry and the nature of research. Hypothesis development, research design, field and laboratory observation and experimentation, measurement, interviewing and content analysis, sampling, and basic statistical analysis. Required of all degree candidates. Open only to graduate communication students.

Fall

1 Course Unit

COMM 5230 Qualitative Ways of Knowing

How do social scientists create new knowledge? What are the qualitative processes and philosophies of knowing for communication scholars? This course provides students with a range of theories and frameworks for gathering data and developing claims, as well as understanding the limits of social science inquiry. Key areas of focus are identifying research questions, research ethics, understanding evidence, making causal claims and scholarly writing. COMM 5230 is required of all degree candidates and open only to graduate communication students.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 5250 Introduction to Political Communication

This course is designed as a PH.D.-level introduction to the study of political communication, and is recommended as a foundational course to be taken early in one's course of study for students interested in political communication as a primary or secondary area of research and teaching. As an introduction to the field it is structured to cover a wide-range of topics and approaches, including media institutions and the effects of both mass mediated and deliberative communications. While no single course can provide comprehensive coverage of a subfield with as long and diverse a history as political communication, our hope is that you will leave this course with a strong grasp of the major theories, trends, methods, findings and debates in this area of study, as well as the gaps in our knowledge and promising directions for future research.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 5300 Advertising and the Digital Age

It is impossible to understand the development of the contemporary digital era without understanding the role played by the advertising industry, broadly the understood. From the launch of first popular web browsers in the mid-1990s, various forms of marketing communication have shaped the most popular activities—from search to social to apps—and redefined the ways companies think about individuals in society. The aim of this course is to study these developments historically and contemporaneously. First we will range across the history of advertising and its related social force, consumerism, through the late 20th century. We will next investigate the forces that guided the rise of the internet as a commercial medium in the face of an earlier ethic that decried that very idea. Then we will dive into the ways marketers attempt to guide the internet and other digital media to their benefit by exploring a range of key contemporary activities: the rise of the smartphone as a marketing device, programmatic advertising, personalization strategies, location and cross-platform targeting and attribution, online retailing, the responses of brick and mortar retailers, advertisers' roles in the cratering of print media, native advertising/branded content, the rise of "influencers," and the transformation of "television" as a product, an activity, and an industry. We will read industry documents and other materials to assess how all these activities actually "work" and what drives them. Then we will consider their societal implications through a variety of lenses, including surveillance, privacy, pluralism, and democracy.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 5400 Discourse Analysis

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

Also Offered As: SOCI 5400

1 Course Unit

COMM 5500 Introduction to Computational Text Analysis With R

This methods course is intended to introduce computational social science skills to students with no computer programming background. Students will apply these skills to an individual research project that analyzes, visualizes, and draws meaningful conclusions about digital text data. By the end of the course they will be prepared to conduct basic computational social science research as well as continue their computational education in other classes or independently.

1 Course Unit

COMM 5530 Research Seminar on Computational Social Science

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

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 5610 Cultural Sociology

This seminar studies culture as values, scripts, practice, and performance in the contexts of everyday life, social class, social movements, and technological change. We approach politics, society, institutions, identities, and social change as dynamic processes and complex interactions at both micro/meso and meso/macro levels. We will examine the production, reception, and circulation of signs, symbols, and stories in multiple media formats and on social media. Special attention will be given to how to rethink cultural sociology from the perspective of digital sociology and platform society. Readings include both classic authors and contemporary works from sociology and communication studies.

Also Offered As: SOCI 5610

1 Course Unit

COMM 5630 Doing Media Studies: Theories, Frameworks, and Methods

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 5770 Attitude & Behavior Prediction

This course surveys classic and contemporary theory and research in the area of attitude formation and change and examines the principles of social information processing that underlie attitudes. We cover some of the basic concepts of the psychology of attitudes, including attitude structure and measurement at both conscious and unconscious levels. After this introduction, we will review persuasion approaches, the role of affect and fear in communication, influences of past behavior, to finally turn to models that explain behavioral change and allow researchers and practitioners to design ways of modifying recipients' actions.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: PSYC 5770

1 Course Unit

COMM 5800 Global Digital Cultures

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 5940 Introduction to Networks

What we think and do is shaped by social interactions: the behavior we see in other people or the information we receive from them. We pay attention to what our friends do, we monitor news through social media feeds, and we are more likely to adopt ideas already embraced by our groups of reference. 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. Networks also offer the means to analyze dynamics of diffusion, the pathways of influence, and the effects of media in an increasingly interconnected information environment. The aim of this course is to introduce networks and the relational way of thinking. Students will learn how to read, interpret, and design network-based research; how to go from concepts to metrics; and how to 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 research on networks.

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 6000 Advocacy in Emergent Technology, Digital Media and Society

This course is designed to build a critical foundation for understanding the interplay of digital technologies and society and the important role of advocates in this space. Providing an overview of the history, students will investigate and critique contemporary emergent technologies in a social context, and explore their use in advocacy efforts. The course uses interactive lecture, discussion, readings, and guest speakers from technologists in the field.

Fall

Also Offered As: SSPP 6000

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 4000

1 Course Unit

COMM 6010 Contemporary Sociological Theory

This is a graduate-level course that will explore contemporary social theory with an emphasis on theories and theoretical orientations related to social interaction, identity, culture, and inequality. For example, we will discuss sociological theories from the last half century about race and racism, gender, social class, education, emotion, and violence. Importantly, we will consider theory in the context of its application to empirical social science research and real world concerns.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: SOCI 6010

Mutually Exclusive: SOCI 3010

1 Course Unit

COMM 6030 Journey to Joy: Designing a Happier Life for Social Work, Social Policy and Non-Profit Leadership Pr

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

Fall

Also Offered As: SSPP 6030

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 2830

1 Course Unit

COMM 6110 Neurobiology of Social Influence

Considerable resources are devoted to constructing mass media campaigns that persuade individuals to change their behavior, and individuals exert powerful influence on one another without even knowing it. Still, our ability to design and select optimal messages and interventions is far from perfect. This course will review investigations in social and cognitive psychology and communication sciences that attempt to circumvent the limits of introspection by using biological and implicit measures, with particular focus on neuroimaging studies of social influence and media effects. There are no formal course prerequisites, but the ability to read primary research articles in cognitive neuroscience is recommended. Students with less background may need to do supplemental work at the front end.

1 Course Unit

COMM 6120 Meaningful Measures in a Data-Driven World

Knowledge cannot proceed without observing and measuring. And knowledge is necessary to transform society. Today we can observe a larger share of behaviors, from the individual to the collective, thanks to improvements in our measurement instruments. But extracting scientific meaning from data, and connecting that meaning with insights and applications, is still a challenge. To translate quantification into a meaningful understanding of human and social behavior we need to critically evaluate the management, use, and interpretation of social data. In this seminar we will discuss different forms of data representation and the conceptual, computational, and ethical challenges these data create. We will also discuss how measurement informs models and simulated realities (e.g., digital twins, AI-personas) and the strengths and risks of using those models as objects of study.

1 Course Unit

COMM 6150 Experimental Design and Issues in Causality

The main goal of this course is to familiarize students with experiments, quasi-experiments, survey experiments and field experiments as they are widely used in the social sciences. Some introductory level statistics background will be assumed, though this is a research design course, not a statistics course. By the end of the course, students will be expected to develop their own original experimental design that makes some original contribution to knowledge. Throughout the course of the semester, we will also consider how to deal with the issue of causality as it occurs in observational studies, and draw parallels to experimental research.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: PSCI 6350

1 Course Unit

COMM 6200 Climate Communication and Community: Youth-Centered Participatory Action Research

This doctoral-level, academically based community service (ABCS) research seminar focuses on co-developing research questions with local youth in West Philadelphia to explore their experiences with climate change and identify and develop potentially implementable solutions for how to mitigate, adapt to, and build resilience in the face of climate change. The course involves the scheduled seminar, as well as required fieldwork time at a partner high school. This course will apply frameworks and theories from climate communication, behavior change, and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). Students will engage in a hands-on, youth-engaged research project and apply YPAR principles to empower youth voices and youth action in climate discourse and action. Graduate students will learn core theories about behavior change, communication intervention design, and YPAR. They will gain experience designing and implementing a mixed-methods study, combining qualitative with quantitative research techniques to conduct formative research, message design, and testing in partnership with youth. Through this project, students will develop proficiency in data analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings. The course will also cover ethical and practical considerations in youth-centered research, relationship building, community engagement strategies, and effective facilitation skills. This course provides a unique opportunity for doctoral students to gain practical experience in participatory research while addressing pressing social and environmental issues in the West Philadelphia community.

1 Course Unit

COMM 6230 Health Psychology Seminar

Seminar members will critically review theory and research on communication, behavior, and health, with the goal of suggesting new directions that research might take. Theories of health behavior, methodological issues in health behavior research, and strategies to improve health-related behaviors, including sexual risk behaviors, physical activity, diet, and medication adherence, using a variety of approaches will be studied.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 6300 Historical Trends of Mass Communication Research

An introduction into the field of mass communication research covering classic studies from the late 19th century through 1970s. Emphasis is on the societal, organizational, political, and other considerations that shaped the field.

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 6310 Social Cohesion in the Age of Social Media

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 6330 Climate Change and Communication: Theories and Applications

This course will focus on understanding the multiple ways in which climate science is communicated to publics and how they come to understand it. In the process, we will explore ways to blunt susceptibilities to misconceptions, misconstruals, and deliberate deceptions about climate science. Forms of communication on which the class will focus include consensus statements, manifestos, commentaries, court briefs, news accounts, fact checks, op-eds, letters to the editor, speeches, and media interviews. Students will have the opportunity to interact with guest lecturers, among them leading journalists, climate activists, and climate survey analysts. Students will write letters to the editor and fact checks and will participate in mock interviews designed to increase their understanding of the nature of the interactions between journalists and climate scientists. As a class project, students will collaborate on a white paper on climate discourse fallacies to be distributed at the April 3-7 Society for Environmental Journalists annual convention (hosted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center and the Penn Center for Science, Sustainability, and Media). Students will interview attendees at that conference as part of the class project.

Also Offered As: ENVS 6330

Mutually Exclusive: COMM 4330

1 Course Unit

COMM 6370 Public Health Communication

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

Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 6372 Public Health Communication Research and Evaluation in the Digital Age

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 6390 Communication and Cultural Studies

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

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 6500 Re-Reading Canonic Texts in Media Research: Whose Canon? Which Texts? Why Now?

Can a field of study as cross-disciplinary as media studies have a set of canonic texts? Should there be a canon? And if so, which texts and scholars would we regard as canonic to the field? In 2002, Elihu Katz et al. answered these questions with a book that mapped five schools of thought - Columbia, Frankfurt, Chicago, Toronto, and Birmingham (British Cultural Studies) - and explored how they came to define areas of research and shape the formation of distinct scholarly communities. Yet two decades ago, media and communication studies scholars were only beginning to take seriously the critiques and interventions being developed by scholars of race, gender, and postcoloniality. Now, students and scholars in media studies and other allied disciplines in the humanities and interpretive social sciences are grappling with the epistemic, ideological, and moral flaws of Eurocentric thought and in the process, re-vitalizing keywords, concepts, and theories. In this seminar, we will read and engage with canonic texts, delve into the historical conditions of the production of those texts, their afterlife and varied impact(s) on the field, and engage with critical responses that help recast their theoretical and analytic value for us today. Scholars who have done this work of re-imagining canonic texts/schools of thought - for instance, Armond Towns on Marshall McLuhan, Roopali Mukherjee on the Frankfurt School, and Paula Chakravartty on critical political economy - will join class sessions as guest speakers.

1 Course Unit

COMM 6570 Publics, Forms, and Futures of Multimodal Scholarship

In this course, we take stock of the current practices, emerging potentials, and unacknowledged histories of what is currently called "multimodal scholarship," the presentation of scholarly knowledge in modes beyond the written academic journal article. In particular, we approach multimodal scholarship as a series of questions regarding "forms" and "publics". How do media such as audio, video, or interactive design contribute differently to the articulation of intellectual ideas? Who gets to engage with multimodal scholarly productions, and how? What sorts of literacies do multimodal projects demand? Finally, what types of infrastructures are needed to create and maintain these types of projects? Throughout the semester, we critically examine a variety of multimodal projects as both academic endeavors and media texts in their own right. Seminar participants will workshop their own research through a variety of media forms (e.g. podcasts, video essays, visual graphics, interactive texts, etc.) to critically examine the affordances and limitations of each. Familiarity with some kind of media production, though ideal, is not required.

1 Course Unit

COMM 6820 Communication and the Quantification of Social Identity

While social identity has historically been more of a concern for the qualitative and critical branches of communication research than for quantitative researchers, recent scholarly and political developments have raised its profile among the latter group. This course will examine the past, present, and future of how social identities—including race, ethnicity, gender, class, political ideology, religion, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, and others—have been quantified in communication research and other social sciences. Among other questions, we will read about and discuss how racial categories have evolved over the centuries and in different countries, the emergence and institutionalization of gender categories beyond the male/female binary, how available options for religious affiliation on closed-ended forms has privileged some faiths at the expense of others, and how effective AI has been at automatically detecting different social identities based on given names and physical appearances. The overall goal is to point the way toward more thoughtful and inclusive methods of reducing the rich complexity of various social identities into analytically useful categories.

1 Course Unit

COMM 6840 Data Visualization for Research

Empirical research employs data to gain insights and build a theoretical understanding of the world. An appropriate visualization of data is key to illuminating hidden patterns and effectively communicate the main findings of research. This course will discuss the visualization strategies of published research, give recommendations of best practice, and discuss tips and techniques for specific research purposes (i.e. hypothesis testing, group comparison) and data structures, including temporal, geographic, and network data. The course will equip students with tools they can use to learn through visualization and to communicate more effectively their own research.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 6990 Advanced Project in a Medium

Proposal written in specified form and approved by both the student's project supervisor and academic advisor must be submitted with registration. Open only to graduate degree candidates in communication.

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 7010 Introduction to the Political Economy of Media

This course has two aims. First, assuming that communications are central to any society, it situates media systems within larger national and international social relationships and political structures. Second, this course critically examines the structures of the communication systems themselves, including ownership, profit imperatives, support mechanisms such as advertising and public relations, and the ideologies and government policies that sustain these arrangements. Considering case studies ranging from traditional news and entertainment media to new digital and social media, the course provides a comprehensive survey of the major texts in this vibrant sub-field of media studies.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 7020 Media, Capitalism, and Democracy

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 7060 Analysis of Election Data

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

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: PSCI 8050

1 Course Unit

COMM 7150 Political Communication

This course examines the role of political communication in influencing political attitudes and behaviors. Because of the broad nature of the topic, course readings and lectures will be interdisciplinary, drawing on research in sociology, history, psychology, political science and communication research. There are two primary goals for the course. One goal is to acquaint graduate students with the wide-ranging literature on political communication. A second major goal is to stimulate ideas for original research in the field of political communication. Toward this end, by the end of the semester students will be expected to be sufficiently familiar with the field to propose original studies on topics of their choosing. The formulation of an original research question and research design will be an important component of the final examination.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: PSCI 7150

1 Course Unit

COMM 7220 Theories and Methods in Qualitative Research

The objective of this course is to ensure that students have a grasp of the fundamental theories and methods of qualitative research. After spending time immersing ourselves in the metatheories that shape social science research, we will address ethical issues that emerge in all human subjects research (qualitative and otherwise), focusing primarily on responsible treatment of participants and their data. Then we will work through a series of research techniques, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, ethnography, discourse analysis and participatory mapping. With the goal of providing practical instruction on qualitative methods and a grounding in theoretical issues, this course is meant to prepare studies for conducting a broad range of qualitative research projects in communication and media studies.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 7270 Evaluation of Communication Campaigns

The roles of research in media campaign work: foundational research, formative research, message testing, monitoring research, summative evaluation research, policy research. The place for a theory of campaign effects. The ethics of evaluation research. Alternative evaluation designs and measurement, statistical, and data analytic approaches. Focused design exercises and a final paper.

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 7385 Political Cognition

This doctoral seminar examines how individuals perceive, process, and respond to political information. Drawing from communication, political science, psychology, and cognitive science, the course explores how political belief systems form, evolve, and interact with processes like Bayesian updating, motivated reasoning, and identity-based cognition. We analyze how partisan and social identities structure beliefs, how framing and priming shape perception, and when individuals engage in rational versus motivated reasoning. The course also considers the broader implications for democratic accountability, focusing on the influence of elites, media, and institutions in shaping public attitudes.

1 Course Unit

COMM 7390 Collective Memory and Journalism

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 7410 Media Effects Research Design

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

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 7430 Media and Cultural Theory: Canon Texts and Beyond

Can a field of study as cross-disciplinary as media studies have a set of canonic texts? Should there be a canon? And if so, which texts and scholars would we regard as canonic to the field? In a landmark volume published in 2002, Elihu Katz et al. answered these questions with a book that mapped five schools of thought – Columbia, Frankfurt, Chicago, Toronto, and Birmingham (British Cultural Studies) – and explored how they came to define areas research and shape the formation of distinct scholarly communities. Yet two decades ago, media and communication studies scholars were only beginning to take seriously the critiques and interventions being developed by scholars of race, gender, and postcoloniality. Now, students and scholars in media studies and other allied disciplines in the humanities and interpretive social sciences are grappling with the epistemic, ideological, and moral flaws of Eurocentric thought and in the process, re-vitalizing keywords, concepts, and theories. In this seminar, we will read and engage with canonic texts, delve into the historical conditions of the production of those texts, their afterlife and varied impact(s) on the field, and engage with critical responses that help recast their theoretical and analytic value for us today.

1 Course Unit

COMM 7570 Media in Crisis

The climate crisis. The migration crisis. Economic crisis. Democracy in crisis. In this course we take a critical interpretive lens to analyze the role that media play in the growing "crisis imaginary" plaguing the twenty-first century. Drawing on scholarship informed by critical theory across various disciplines, we explore key questions about the relationship between mediation and crisis thinking. How do the different affordances of media (from radio to television to networked digital platforms) shape the public's perception of a crisis? How are the political stakes of a crisis informed by who has access to and power over the technologies and infrastructures of media? How is the very temporality of a crisis, its emergence, duration, and (in)finity, a question of mediation? Finally, we consider what happens when media itself is in crisis: when the institutions and norms – and theories – set up to make sense of ongoing crises are themselves in a moment of transformation or undoing.

1 Course Unit

COMM 7650 Digital Inequalities

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 7700 Feminist Theory and Communication

This course focuses on both historical and contemporary feminist theory as a site for the restructuring of knowledge, exploring the theoretical and methodological questions that arise when gendered dynamics of power are placed at the center of study. This course is designed to historicize and conceptualize past and current developments, as well as recurrent themes and movements, in feminist methodology and theory. The course material provides an overview of feminist theories as they have developed in Western and non-Western contexts, over the last two hundred years (though there is particular emphasis on the period since the 1960s), thus positioning feminism beyond the West in terms of global and transnational perspectives. It places works and scholars in conversation with others, both contemporaries who act and speak from other standpoints and predecessors who belong to the same tradition or trajectory. The organization of the course responds to the inadequacy of previous categories (liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, etc.) that do not encompass the complexity of feminist thought from the perspective of the early 21st century, given the impact of intersectionality, queer studies, globalization, political backlash, authoritarianism, and so on.

1 Course Unit

COMM 7830 Describing Your Data

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

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 7880 Research Seminar on Internet Experiments

In the last decade, new studies have used Web-based experimentation to identify previously unobservable features of communication networks - from processes of cumulative advantage, to the spread of innovations, to the emergence of cooperation. This course offers a deep-dive into the design, creation and execution of Web-based experiments. Students will learn the core principles of Web-based experimental design, which will prepare them to design their own Web-based studies. Students will learn the relationship between theory and methods through a careful analysis of the theoretical implications of past Web-based experiments (both in terms of their value for some scientific problems, and their limitations for others). To this end, students will explore Web-based experiments through the lens of the theories that motivate them. Discussions and assignments will focus on eliciting both the strengths and limitations of this approach with specific emphasis on identifying the scientific potential for new studies. Longstanding debates concerning the value of identification and replication in social science, alongwith the relationship between theoretical models, observational data and experimental data, are given careful consideration throughout. Students will be exposed to new ways of conducting empirical research that will prepare them to design their own Web-based experimental studies.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 7950 The “New” Science of Collective Intelligence

This course is a wide-ranging exploration of the scientific theories, famous experiments and public policy initiatives that have contributed to our contemporary understanding of crowd wisdom (and crowd madness). Our focus throughout will be on the seminal question of whether social influence makes collectives smarter or dumber. The ultimate goal will be to understand what the science of collective intelligence tells us about how to design new approaches to public policy, and how we might anticipate the unintended consequences of our policies. We will explore four grand challenges of collective intelligence: 1. The problem of collective choice (also known as the “wisdom of the crowd”). Examples we will focus on include democratic deliberation, fair voting, immigration, vaccination and stock market investing. 2. The problem of coordination (also known as “cultural markets”). Examples we will focus on include cultural patterns of fashion, popular baby names, technology adoption, publishing fads and music popularity. 3. The problem of cooperation (also known as “collective action”). Examples we will focus on include mobilizing political revolutions, vendetta culture, civic activism, and organ donation. 4. The problem of creativity (also known as “collective problem solving” or the “science of science”). Examples we will focus on include creating climate change working groups, MIT’s Magical Incubator, Pixar studios, building innovative research teams, and Polanyi’s theory of how to pioneer novel scientific fields. Is there a single scientific theory of collective intelligence that can address all of these challenges? This course will endeavor to find out.

1 Course Unit

COMM 7999 Independent Research

Proposal written in specified form and approved by both the student’s project supervisor and academic advisor or another member of the faculty must be submitted with registration.

Fall or Spring

1 Course Unit

COMM 8010 Filter Bubbles, Long Tails, & Information Cascades: Methodology for a Fragmented Media Environment

Scholars and pundits have made many claims in recent years about the impact that digital technologies, and social media in particular, play in shaping access to political information and the formation of beliefs. However, all these claims rely on specific measurement instruments and research designs that are not always appropriately scrutinized or evaluated. This course will discuss the different analytical approaches that can be used to measure media consumption, selective exposure, bias, opinion formation, and the diffusion of information in the online media environment. Our goal is to assess the strength and weaknesses of different research designs with an eye on how to best triangulate available evidence and advance in a cumulative fashion in this important research domain.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8140 Doing Internet Studies

This is a project-based seminar with two key objectives: introducing students to core theories and methods in internet studies and completing a research project that uses digital media, broadly construed. Comprising many methods and research approaches, Internet studies is inherently interdisciplinary, and this course is designed to provide a practical set of guidelines for doing work in this diverse and growing field. Students will have a lot of independence in developing a final research project for the course they may work individually, in pairs or in small groups, and the final project can take the form of a research paper, an art project or a piece of long-form journalism, as long as these projects use both digital media and critical theory from internet studies.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8150 Labor, Communication, and Technology

Debates about the “future of work,” automation, and the working conditions of “on-demand” work have opened up new questions rooted in long intellectual lineages. This course introduces students to key theoretical perspectives and concepts in the study of labor, communication, and technology from the 19th and 20th centuries and examines their relevance to 21st century issues. We will examine the meaning of labor from Marxist, post-industrial, cultural, and sociological perspectives as well as the place of labor in communication scholarship. We will also examine the relationship between digital transformations of the workplace and new forms of surveillance, social stratification, and inequality.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8370 The Meaning of Measures: Quantification, Culture, & Digital Technologies

It’s been said that what’s counted counts. Numbers and other measurements communicate meaning and create hierarchies of value. As such, measurement is a political act. From prices to ratings, risk scores to the 2020 Census, quantification projects surround our daily lives. This class will ask, how do numbers and other metrics communicate meaning throughout the social world? Specifically, we’ll focus on the role of technologies and data in the process of quantification and the construction of cultural meaning and conflict about knowledge and truth. How do our ideas about data shape what we know about ourselves? How we seek to know others? This course will engage in an interdisciplinary conversation about the past and present of culture and quantification, from the cultural pre-history of “big data” technologies’ appeals to objectivity and efficiency, to current conflicts over privacy and platforms.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8410 The Ethics of Forgetting: Media at Risk of Deletion

Digital information is continually being created and circulated, but it is also forgotten, deleted, and otherwise lost. Whether from the perspective of journalists, activists, artists, or academics, how do we deal with the deletion or loss of media? Where is information archived and what politics guide its organization, curation, and erasure? Where do our media live and die? This course begins with theories of institutional and individual archiving. It then moves to concepts of remediation and machine learning to complicate how information travels, data is stored, and archives are ‘retrieved’. Finally, using case studies of arts-based digital archiving projects, the course focuses on the politics of forgetting media.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8490 Labor in the Digital Economy

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 8510 Social Media and Political Information

Is social media good or bad for democracy? This seminar will unpack this question through the lens of empirical research casting light on how different actors create and consume content on social media - and the broader consequences of that content for political behavior. The discussion will center on current controversies, including the political impact of bots, the role of algorithms in radicalization dynamics, the susceptibility of different groups to misinformation, the consequences of incivility and hate speech, or the predominance of clickbait over factual news.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8520 It's About Time: Problematizing Time in Social Science Research

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

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8530 Gender, Media, and Culture

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 8540 A Sociopolitical and Intellectual History of the Communication Field

This course combines close readings of canonized works as well as lesser-known scholarship with a critical sociology of knowledge. A key theme of the course is that to understand how our field evolved, we must understand the historical context and the power relationships that shaped its intellectual and ideological contours. Although we will include some contemporary criticism of the field's historical lacunae—especially along racial, gender, sexuality, and class lines—much of the course's emphasis will be placed on the field's development during the twentieth century. As a class, we will consider the relevance of research paradigms that emerged during the print and broadcast eras for today's digital age.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8550 Polarization and Partisan Discord

In this course we examine the nature, causes, and consequences of polarization and incivility. We pay special attention to the role that the media and information plays in exacerbating these problems, as well as ways in which technology can be redesigned to ameliorate incivility and polarization.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8580 CHANGE: Networks and Policy

This course explores the policy applications of current network theories of social influence and behavior propagation. The course is developed around the book *CHANGE* focusing on the specific shortcomings of existing policies and the development of new policy strategies for collective behavior change. Students will engage with current thinking on topics including: influencers, virality, stickiness, social norms, motivated reasoning, organizational change, partisan bias, group problem-solving, and political change. This course focuses on implementation and evaluation strategies for applying the theory of network diffusion to current policy problem such as: COVID-19 vaccination, sustainable technology adoption, political campaign mobilization, justice system reform, implicit bias in medicine, the spread of political and health-related misinformation, #MeToo and changing gender norms in organizations, and other important topics. Students will engage in "translational social science," by developing theoretically motivated solutions to concrete policy problems.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8590 Diversity and the End of Average

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 8610 Surveillance Capitalism

This course explores the history, technologies, political economy, and regulatory tensions relating to the monitoring of populations and individuals in the contemporary digital media environment.

1 Course Unit

COMM 8620 Gendered Media Economies

This seminar introduces and traces feminist media studies over the past several decades, with a particular emphasis on media and cultural economies, which includes financial economies but also expands it to the production and circulation of reproducing inequalities, constituting norms, regulating and disciplining individuals and populations, commodifying difference and critique, and (potentially) enabling resistance, oppositional practices and cultural activism. Through this frame, we approach the power dynamics of gender alongside the power dynamics of race, class, sexuality, geopolitics and other social experiences. Along the way, we will examine a variety of gendered media economies from feminist media production to reality television to social media influencers and more.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8630 Utilizing Mixed Methods in Communication Research

This course will focus on applying principles and best practices in designing and conducting mixed methods research to address communication research questions and develop communication interventions to address diverse health, social, and behavioral priorities. Through this course, students will 1) learn how rigorous qualitative and quantitative methods can be integrated to answer complex research questions, 2) appreciate the relative strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative data, 3) understand the rationale, benefits, and tradeoffs of commonly utilized mixed methods study designs, and 4) obtain experience with a mixed methods investigation through field work with campus and local partners (e.g., Penn Wellness and community organizations). Each week, we will learn different aspects involved in developing, conducting, reporting, and evaluating mixed methods studies, and read examples of communication research studies that utilized mixed methods. We will review the best practices, strengths, and challenges of utilizing mixed methods to answer communication research questions drawing from these examples. Field work will include assignments to collaborate with partners to design or conduct a mixed-methods study or program evaluation, to be identified jointly with each partner. This course requires prior completion of introductory coursework in quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Not Offered Every Year

Prerequisite: COMM 5220 OR COMM 5230

1 Course Unit

COMM 8690 Ethnography & the Internet

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 8700 Advanced Qualitative Research

An important milestone in every doctoral program is the successful defense of a dissertation proposal. But what does a good dissertation proposal look like? How can students craft a proposal that sets them up for success as they advance towards writing a dissertation? This course has one objective: to provide students with the tools they need to write a convincing, well-written and well-reasoned dissertation proposal. This means having a clear problem statement, a convincing answer to the "So what?" question, and a coherent plan for moving forward with writing a dissertation. Structured more as a workshop rather than a seminar, students will provide feedback on each other's work throughout the semester, collectively addressing common issues around writing, argumentation, reviewing literature, research ethics and outlining chapters. Because qualitative and interpretive work comes with specific expectations and challenges, this course is geared towards students who draw from these research techniques; students who are conducting mixed-methods dissertations may also be allowed to join.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8760 The Black Public Sphere, from Freedoms Journal to Black Lives Matter

The field of communication projects and encourages particular visions of deliberation and the public that have been critiqued for failing to represent publics that experience identity-based exclusion and misrepresentation. In this course we correct this practice by centering work on the black public sphere, recognizing it as central to political and media theory on publics and counterpublics. We will connected "classical" works on publics (Habermas and Fraser), fields (Bourdieu), and mediascapes (Appadurai) to more contemporary critical, cultural, and institutional analysis (Squires, Gray, Brock, and more) of African American media-making, protest and deliberation.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8800 The Social Neuroscience of Communication

This interdisciplinary course focuses on understanding the mechanisms of social thinking, media effects and interpersonal communication across multiple levels of analysis. We use the brain as one powerful window to understand and predict outcomes that are challenging to predict otherwise. The course will cover foundational readings and involve weekly, seminar style discussions of recent papers in social neuroscience, neuroeconomics, and communication science.

Not Offered Every Year

1 Course Unit

COMM 8810 The Performance Society: Readings in Social and Media Theories

Social action has a performative character - people act as if on a stage in response to audience expectations, whether offline or online. This seminar traces the history of this line of critical thought from Weber and Bakhtin through Goffman and Victor Turner to contemporary authors such as Judith Butler, Byung-Chul Han, Jon McKenzie, and Charles Tilly. Special attention will be devoted to the relationship between media and performance, examined through recent work by media scholars and sociologists such as Ben Agger, Jeffrey Alexander, Jeffrey Berry, Danah Boyd, Alice Marwick, and Sarah Sobieraj. A central issue concerns the will to perform. Why are individuals in modern society compelled to perform? What are the manifestations and forms of performance in institutional and non-institutional politics (such as revolutions and social movements)? How are performances related to emotion? How do the internet and digital media shape the forms and meanings of performance? What are the consequences of the performance imperative?

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: SOCI 8810

1 Course Unit

COMM 8820 Theories of Revolutions and Social Movements

This seminar examines theories and concepts in the analysis of revolutions, social movements, rebellions, and everyday activism and resistance. To a field of academic study largely shaped by theories and concepts produced in and about North America and Europe, we will introduce critical perspectives from/in the Global South and aspire to expand social movement studies beyond the core. To this end, we will critically examine established theoretical models while also exploring alternative and indigenous perspectives, methodologies, and political practices. We will study narratives, symbols, performances, and old and new media forms in the construction and mobilization of issues, identities, and emotions. Special attention will be given to cultures, technologies, and tactics of resistance and protest. Historical and contemporary cases from the U.S. and around the world will be examined.

Also Offered As: SOCI 8820

1 Course Unit

COMM 8850 Summer Culture

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 8910 Special Topics in Media at Risk

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

1 Course Unit

COMM 8980 Explaining Explanation

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

Also Offered As: CIS 7980, OIDD 9530

1 Course Unit