Fall 2015 Course Descriptions


456. Propaganda and Persuasion. Introduction to theories of propaganda and persuasion. Examination of symbolic strategies designed to secure or resist social and institutional change. Attention given to case studies of social, political, economic, and religious reformation. Special consideration of the ethical ramifications of such efforts.

457. Introduction to Language and Social Interaction. Research and theory that define the area of interpersonal communication. Examination of the associations between communication and such social phenomena as self-concept, social attraction, relationship development, and health.

504. Introduction to Argumentation. Persuasive discourse as inquiry and advocacy grounded in practical inductive and deductive reasoning. Discovery, analysis, and testing of practical arguments. The nature and function of proof. Some emphasis on applied presentation. Prereq: CMN 456 with C or better, or by permission. Writing intensive.

505. Analysis of Popular Culture. Situates the development of popular cultural artifacts and practices within the 20th-century social history of the U.S. Examines the experiences and cultural expressions of various groups in the context of social and economic struggles. Prereq: CMN 455. Inquiry Course.

515. Analysis of News. Explores the psychological, social, economic, political, and cultural factors that influence the definition and reporting of news. Prereq: CMN 455 with C or better, or by permission.

567. Gender, Race, and Class in Media. The symbolic construction of sexuality and gender in specific social, historical, and cultural settings. Examines the power to define media images and the media's function as one element in the preservation and gender inequalities. Prereq: CMN 455.

572. Language and Social Interaction. This course introduces students to major works in the study of language and social interaction. Topics covered explore how discursive activities construct identity, gender and ethnicity, race, culture and power. This course is devoted to intensive reading and writing of these central themes. Prereq: CMN 457.

588. Analyzing Institutional Interaction. Examinations of institutional interactions in emergency services, justice/law, medicine, family school encounters, journalism and politics. Shows how the work of society gets done through interaction. Students get hands-on experience analyzing persons' conduct in these interactions. This course is designed to develop students' analytic skills in studying social interaction in institutions, using recorded data in the form of naturally-occurring interactions in these settings. Prereq: CMN 457.

596.01. Digital Democracies. Is the Internet an inherently "democratizing" technology? Are digital technologies morally neutral? What role did social media play in the Arab Spring? How are Google, Facebook, iPads, and smart phones changing our perception of news? This course explores how emerging media technologies alternately enhance and obstruct the pursuit of democratic values. We first examine the meaning of key terms like democracy and freedom through a critical-historical lens, asking how the political economy of mass media impacts our understanding of these values and our ability to realize them. We examine the early history of computers and the Internet, highlighting the ways that digital technologies reflect and shape broader cultural values. We examine the impact of digital media on national and international politics, from U.S. presidential elections to the recent uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. We devote special attention to understanding how professional journalists and the newspaper industry have adapted to digital environments. We ask how technologies that enhance grassroots activism may also empower corporations and governments to increase surveillance, suppress dissent, and promote consumerism over citizenship. We discuss the impact of digital media on forms of creative expression like music and art. Class discussions also include examination of key policies such as the 1996 Telecommunications Act as well as more recent debates about online privacy, data aggregation, and network neutrality. While this is not a production course, it does include a "digital literacy" component. Students will be expected to do a production project utilizing do-it-yourself online tools and freeware. Prereq: CMN 455 with C or better, or by permission.

596.03. Analysis of Online Identity. This course will explore how digital media technologies infuse strategies of self-presentation and practices of identity formation. We will draw on sociological theories of identity to examine how the internet and mobile media challenge traditional understandings of concepts such as anonymity, authenticity, reputation, and privacy and explore how the emergence of an "attention economy" has encouraged practices of "micro-celebrity" and "self-branding." Students will be asked to think critically about the ways in which traditional identity markers such as race, gender, and class are undermined or privileged in digital environments. Prereq: CMN 455 with C or better, or by permission.

596.05. Media Ethics. This class will explore how to apply ethical principles to problems you may face as working media practitioners (e.g., digitally altering photos, plagiarizing stories, being asked to lie to cover up the misdeeds of corporate clients) and to contemporary media controversies (e.g., Anonymous engaging in vigilante justice online, Youtube serving as a platform for pirated content, prank videos engaging vulnerable people). The class is both theoretical and practical. We will read about ethical principles, true-life stories of ethical dilemmas faced by media professionals, and background information about contemporary media controversies. By the end of the class, you should also be better able to apply the ethical principles we discuss to real-life situations you may encounter in your personal life or professional career. The class requires reading background information for each class session, participating in class discussion and debates, and writing a few short papers. Prereq: CMN 455 with C or better, or by permission.

597.01. Rhetoric of Science. In this course we will consider the ethos and force of scientific knowledge and inquiry in our civic culture. We will consider the role of language and argument within various scientific discourses. We will also consider the extent to which scientists need the help of various communication experts to make their work public and applicable. We will explore some of the ways that scientific discourse informs public policy. We will also learn what some of the best rhetorical critics have said about science in the past couple of decades. We will explore some of the most prominent scientific debates of our era ... in fields such as energy production, climate and conservation, health and medicine, and physics. Finally, we will look into real opportunities for communication students and scholars to collaborate with experts in a broad range of sciences—for civic, intellectual, and commercial purposes. Prereq: CMN 456 with C or better, or by permission.

598.01. Storytelling in Interaction. This course takes storytelling as a site for examining major topics in the field of Language and Social Interaction. We ask: What do people use stories for in interaction? What communicative resources—e.g., language, the body, and context—do people make use of when they tell stories? What is the relationship between the stories we tell and our identities? What is the role of stories in meaning making and understanding the world around us? And, how can we use stories to affect our relationships in positive ways? As a 500-level analytic class, our focus will be on learning the practical skills, modes of inquiry, and intellectual orientations necessary for the analysis of social interaction. Prereq: CMN 457 with C or better, or by permission.

599. Internship. Designed to integrate classroom study and supervised practical experience in a work setting. Each student is required to write a series of reports focusing on aspects of the work experience that are related to coursework in the Communication Department. Assignments are variable, depending on number of credits (1-4). Students must submit a written proposal to both the work supervisor and faculty sponsor before starting. May be repeated for a maximum of 4 credits. Prereq:
Intro courses (455, 456, 457) passed with C or better, declared CMN major, and 2.0 GPA. Cr/F.


615. Public Opinion and Mass Communication. Examines the 18th-century development of public opinion as a democratic force. Traces the transformation of the politically ideological press to one grounded in a commercial ideology. Analyzes the consequences of contemporary mass consumer-oriented media for various publics and democratic life. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level analysis courses or permission.

630. Psychology of Communication. Exploration of differing world views in the study of the individual in interaction, with emphasis on how they generate very different conceptions of the human communication process. Specific attention to such notions as the construction of social meaning, the construction of self, and the construction of interactive patterns. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level analysis courses or permission.

650.01. Critical Perspectives on Film. This course will rely on film and sociological theories and concepts to analyze how the U.S. film industry has contributed to the stories, the mythologies, the consumer-oriented media for various publics and democratic life. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level analysis courses or permission.

680. Perspectives on Culture and Communication. Critical interpretation of culture focused on the communication practices and resources of diverse groups. Examination of the reciprocal relationship between communication practices, forms of culture, and cultural identity. Exploration of the conditions necessary for dialogue between differing cultural groups. Emphasis on the role of communication in constructing race, powers, culture and resources of diverse groups. Examination of CMN 455, 456, 457 with C or better and two 500-level courses with a C- or better, or by permission. Writing intensive.

696.01. Seminar/Popular Music Studies. This course provides an opportunity to critically examine and research popular music. Popular music represents one of the most significant of the global industries, transcending borders and economies as a potent form of mass media. Perhaps due to this global ubiquity, popular music is one of the most heavily contested industry terrains, especially as technology ushers in new ways to listen, share, produce, and perform music. This course will look at the role of popular music in providing a mediated form of culture, through examining its historical and cultural development. As with all mass media, popular music cannot be separated from its technological underpinnings, which presents unique challenges to studying its impact on culture and society. While divisions in studying popular music are artificial in some sense, this course will frame its study of music through the following four units: Music as Mediated Communication and Culture; The Music Industry and Policy; Texts, Genres, Styles, and Place; and Technologies and Popular music. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses, (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

696.02. Seminar/Digital Culture and Society. How have the techno-cultural changes of the digital era transformed our world, and where are we headed? In this course we will work to understand and identify “web culture” (aka cybertechnologys, etc.)--the culture that has emerged from almost two decades of increasingly popular web use and innovation. We will look at the history of web culture, from the early technologys and cyberspace to the 90s to the more mainstream (and increasingly global) web culture of today. We will explore where web culture is produced, who and what drives its production, and how it is spread, shaped, and reproduced. Once we establish a working understanding of web culture, we will spend time looking at the relationship between the emergence of web culture (along with its participants, interests, values, ethics, politics, and cultural change. We’ll learn from past revolutions in communication technology (the evolution of writing systems, the printing press, the rise of mass media, the electronic age) to better understand the changes occurring in the digital era. Specifically, we’ll look at medium theorists, technology scholars, and others who have sought to understand these transformations. Central will be a question over how digital communication forms enable (or hinder) new forms of social and economic organization, production, collaboration, control, and ultimately power. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses, (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

697.01 Rhetorical Criticism of the Media. This course covers critical rhetorical approaches and methods of criticism specific to contemporary forms of visual media culture. Students will examine the implications of contemporary film and visual media culture and will learn to situate their analysis within a rhetorical framework. The goal of this course is to familiarize students with approaches to media criticism, to increase their ability to write and think about media with agency, and to develop an understanding of the growing field of rhetorical media criticism. Through hands-on analysis of media (including television, film, advertising, print and broadcast), students will learn to produce textual analyses and frame these through various rhetorical approaches. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, and 457 with a C or better and a C- or better in two 500-level courses (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

698.01/02 Seminar/Organizational Communication. Organizational Communication is a course about participating in the process of organizing. We will examine the ways people communicate in organizational contexts and the ways in which communication creates and sustains organizations and societal rules and resources. We also explore the ways individuals and society are shaped by interactions with the organizations around them. Through deep reading and practical, resume building assignments, this course will demonstrate how communication is key to understanding how organizations work. Additionally the course fosters deep knowledge, and develops particular ethical and social values via organizational theories that will enable you to lead and work with others in many different organizational environments, with various leadership structures, decision-making practices, and cultures. Only through this deep understanding of how organizations work can we lead, change, and control our own experiences with them. An underlying theme to the theories and context for studying organizations is organizational (corporate, social) responsibility and ethics. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

702.01 Sem/Communication and the Body. The human body is a rich and complex communicative resource. In this class, we will examine how the body, in coordination with talk, contributes to meaning making in face-to-face interaction. We will look closely at the movements of the eyes, face, hands, head, torso, and legs, as well as the use of objects and space, for their role in the moment-by-moment accomplishment of a range of activities: opening and closing encounters, telling stories, aligning to an interactional
703.01 Rhetoric of the Photograph. In this class we will explore the enormous rhetorical powers of photographic images - whether combined with text or not - to inform, educate, delight, and, of course, persuade viewers. We will learn how to consider the rhetorical function of photographs that were taken with the intent to record as well as those that were taken with the intent to persuade; “disposable” photographs as well as famous “classics”; single, unique photographs as well as those commonly embedded in social movements and photo-essays; contemporary photographs “in the prime of” their original rhetorical function as well as some that have outlasted their original message to take on new rhetorical functions. In addition to thinking about particular photographs, we will also consider the ethos of photography itself as a scientific imaging technology. We will supplement our viewing by reading what some of the theorists have had to say about photographs and other kinds of pictures. And, finally, we will sample some of the work rhetorical critics have produced as the discipline has expanded to acknowledge the importance of visual as well as verbal rhetorical artifacts. Prereq: permission. Writing intensive.

742. Dialogue and Teamwork. This course is about team building, alternative conflict resolution, and creative problem solving. We will explore the idea that, contrary to prevailing cultural assumptions, a significant factor in our achievements at work and play can be traced not to our individual attributes but rather to the relationships that we develop in our conversations with others. We will examine the dialogic basis of these relationships, drawing on a range of philosophic traditions and practical activities that highlight the social basis of thought. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level analysis CMN courses, or permission.

756. Rhetorics of Display. This course examines a selection of displays with the goal of acquiring perspective for understanding and evaluating how they engage with people who come into contact with them. Displays examined range among oratory, photographs, advertisements, films, architecture, monuments and statuary, public demonstrations, and presentations of self. Attention is given to questions about identity and belonging, authenticity and simulation, and public memory. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level CMN analysis courses, or permission. Special fee.

772.01 Youth in Media. This course will situate contemporary debates about youth and media in historical, critical, and theoretical context by examining the ways in which media texts and technologies construct and reflect ideas about youth culture. With a focus on western societies, we will examine the cultural, economic, and political factors that contributed to the social construction of childhood and adolescence as distinct lifecycle stages in the nineteenth century. We will examine how mid-twentieth century “moral panics” about youth culture and counter cultural movements are reflected and reproduced in current fears about the effects of media technologies and texts on children and teens. We will explore representation in media targeted at young people, including texts created by Disney and Nickelodeon, paying particular attention to constructions of gender, race, and sexuality. We will explore the commodification of youth culture through an examination of advertising and media outlets such as MTV. We will conclude by investigating how these various interventions play out in discussions about media and youth in a digital environment in which young people are simultaneously constructed as sophisticated “digital natives” and naive media consumers in need of continual guidance and supervision. Prereq: at least one 600-level course or permission. Writing intensive.