Spring 2016 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.

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. Pre-req: 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.

596.01. Analysis of Online Identity. This course will explore how digital media technologies inform 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.

596.03. Intercultural Communication and Globalization. Communication and transportation technologies have opened up more possibilities for us to interact with others across spatial boundaries. We can chat on Reddit about antique car models with a retiree living in Brazil, we can watch and comment on a K-pop video (produced in Korea) on Youtube, we can become Facebook friends with a German we met on vacation, or watch newscasts from al-Jazeera (based in Qatar) that give us a slightly different perspective on the world. In this class, we will consider: a) the role of the media in globalization and b) how we interact with both messages and individuals we encounter from other cultures. This class is both theoretical and practical. By the end of the course, you should be more aware of how globalization works and of how culture shapes our interpretations of intercultural interactions. The course requires keeping up with the reading, an interview assignment, and a journal/project based on your own experience with mediated intercultural "communication." Prereq: CMN 455 with C or better, or by permission.

598.01 & .02. Collaborative Leadership. We encounter groups in almost every context in life beginning with our families and expanding participation in on-line communities, chat groups, etc. This course grounds the study of groups and leadership in the bona fide group perspective, which challenges us to understand groups as they are situated in natural, dynamic contexts. The first part of the course practices group communication via theories of community collaboration, stakeholders, dialogue, principled negotiation, appreciative inquiry, team building, and consensus decision-making. The second half of the course examines other collaborative contexts such as family, community, civic, and crisis. Students participate in an extended mock role play practicing the skills taught throughout the course. Prereq: CMN 457 with C or better, or by permission.

598.03. Lying and Deception. This course covers the field of ‘deception detection’ in particular how it applies to the field of communication. We will contrast this body of research with the different approaches to social and interactional uses of lying and deception provided by research in the field of Language and Social Interaction. This will give us a basis for re-examining traditional ethical approaches to the ‘problem’ of lying in everyday life. Students will learn about knowledge and relationships and the management of obligations in everyday life, putting lying and deception in a social context. 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 Depart. 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.

602. Theories of Interpersonal Communication. Analysis and criticism of contemporary perspectives on interpersonal communication. Theories, concepts, issues, and research models are examined as they contribute to our understanding of social interaction. 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.

634. Media and Politics. The goal of this course is to study the role of the media in American politics, and what media evolution means for future politics. Topics such as political campaigns, media effects, news reporting, framing terrorists, etc. are studied in depth. Timely topics such as “are the media liberal or conservative?” are debated in class. Research projects and papers study questions related to important social issues such as women in the media. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level CMN analysis courses.


650.01 Critical Perspectives on Film: Independent Documentaries. Advanced analysis of independently produced documentary films, from the origins of the genre to the present. A primary focus is on the impact that specific independently produced documentaries had on public opinion, mainstream media, politics, the legal system, and other sectors of society. In addition to viewing and discussing various films, there will be advanced reading, original research, and intensive writing. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level CMN analysis courses.

666. Conversation Analysis. Exploration of how participants in interpersonal communication display their orientation to the fundamental concepts of human communication. Basic concepts covered include the interactional analysis of turn-taking, repair, overlap, openings, closings, silences, adjacency pairs, disagreement, preference, and the role of various linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonlinguistic features in the conversational process. 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, cultural domination, and globalization. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, and 457 with C or better and two 500-level courses with a C- or better, or by permission. Writing intensive.

696.01. Global Media. This course will critically explore the inextricable relationship between processes of globalization and our contemporary media. While the forces of globalization have strengthened, especially due to exponential technological advancements over the last thirty years, the defining role of media to globalization is long-standing. The importance of media to globalization will be abundantly clear as we turn our attention toward a case study on the troubling “collaboration” between Hollywood and Hitler during the 1930s. Broadly conceived, this course will explore the increasing impact of global media on local cultural practices, multiculturalism, nationalism, identity formation, trade, and cultural policy. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses, (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

696.02. Media Audiences. Many early media scholars assumed that we could infer the effects of a message on an audience by looking at the message itself. Today, many of us still operate under similar assumptions. A generation raised on Jersey Shore will be more concerned about GTL and lifestyles of leisure and pleasure, and those of us exposed to a barrage of negative political ads will become more cynical about politics in general, deterring us from following the weekly turn in elections. While such correlations may (or may not) exist, these assumptions overlook the different ways in which we consume and adapt media messages into our lives and existing worldviews. Each of us has been a member of an audience at one point. As a (rather amorphous) group, we are usually distracted from the message sender and, at least until recently, from other audience members as well. This spatial distance can make the audience rather abstract, leading to many facile conclusions. This course will look at social scientific, rhetorical, and critical theories to help us better understand what audiences may be doing with the messages that they receive. Students in this course will be expected to keep up with the weekly readings (there will be reading quizzes), attend class, and submit regular analytical writing samples, including a final paper based on a qualitative research project. Students will analyze how a sample audience interacts with a substantial audiovisual message (television show, documentary, advertising campaign, set of music videos, etc.) through direct observation of a focus group and through online interactive media discussion. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses, (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

696.03. New Media & Political Engagement. This course will explore the role of new information and communication technologies in emerging forms of political engagement. The impact of these technologies, often referred to as “new media”, has been a focus of many major news stories recently, including the role of social media in democratic reform movements (such as in the Arab Spring), the largest coordinated digital protest in history in response to proposed copyright legislation (SOPA/PIPA), and protesters using participatory media to organize against the political influence of Wall Street (as in the Occupy movement). This course will draw on critical, theoretical, and historical approaches to better understand the intersection of new media and politics. We’ll look at the political economy of new media, the digital public sphere and participatory media, as well concepts such as open source, remix culture, and convergent media as they relate to political and cultural processes. An important theme in this course will be the question of what being an “informed citizen” means in the digital age, given the digital transformation of news and political information. We’ll also examine new uses of digital tools for national, state, and local civic engagement. Although there has largely been positive discourse associated with new media and democratic participation, skeptical and critical perspectives, both historically and contemporary, will be used to counter-balance what many critics view as rising technocentric views. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses, (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

696.04. Theorizing YouTube. How many YouTube videos have you watched today? How about in the last week? In the last month? YouTube has become one of the most important, influential, and downright popular online platforms. YouTube alone accounts for almost 20% of all Internet traffic in North America. Still seen as a part of “new media”, at this point YouTube has a significant history, and will be turning 10 years old in April. Although typically lumped together with “digital media” or “the Internet”, it might be useful to think about YouTube as a specific medium itself (or at least, a dominant platform). That is, ultimately, what this class is designed to do. We will immerse ourselves not only in YouTube, but also the growing body of scholarship and more popular commentary and criticism, about YouTube and society. YouTube will be our focal point through which we will examine many of the larger questions and issues of the digital age, such as: entertainment, identity, journalism, education, cultural production, fandom,
news & politics, political economy, audiences, community, marketing, and public discourse. In addition to the expected writing components of a writing intensive class, students will also have the opportunity to use the modality of video to enhance their scholarship: curating, remixing, and even creating original critical video pieces. No previous experience with video editing or production is expected or required. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses, (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

696.05. Histories of New Media. New media are a defining feature of twenty-first century society, from the internet to smart phones and social networking sites. This course considers the concept of new media from a historical and cultural perspective. Among the questions addressed are: What makes new media “new”? What is the relationship between new and old media? How do new media affect existing social norms, including notions of intimacy, privacy, community, and identity? Under what conditions are new forms of communication technology assimilated, resisted, or even rejected? By examining the social construction of technology, the idea of technological progress, and through comparative studies of both “old” and “new” media, this course offers critical reflection on the social impact of new media and technological change. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level courses, (each with a different 400-level prereq), or permission. Writing intensive.

698.01 Seminar/Pathology, Comm and Identity. This course is centered on the idea that identity is a byproduct of social discourses and thus of social interaction. With this notion firmly intact, we will explore the influence of certain ways of talking and acting on our sense of who we are and, by extension, on our relational lives. As we shall see, these discourses (that we take for granted as simply “the way things are”) have enormous ramifications for how we think about ourselves, about what we are capable (or not) of doing and achieving, and of the disciplinary nature of our social institutions. Through our readings, discussions, and assignments, we will come to see the propensity to assess and evaluate individuals as an easy (but not satisfying) answer for addressing larger social, cultural, and global issues. The proliferation of deficit discourse is dominant in our present culture. We live in an historical moment when the common impulse is to critique and thereby highlight the deficiencies in each other, our institutions, and our forms of life. There is ample evidence, in the mental health field of the acceleration of diagnoses of depression, ADD, anxiety disorder and more. In the media we see vitriolic accusations emanating from TV personalities and politicians, and in education interest in learning is increasingly substituted with a focus on testing and scoring. We have become a culture focused on discerning the deficiencies in individuals; the unquestioned impulse is to negatively evaluate another rather than work toward transforming our ways of living together. This broader issue of operating under the guise of an unquestioned, dominant cultural discourse is important for our purposes because it helps us to understand the accelerated creation and use of diagnostic categories and labels in our most central institutions: education, healthcare, mental health, organizations, politics, etc. We are hard pressed to locate any institutional or general cultural context within which evaluation is not dominant. Why is there such a profusion of evaluation in general and an urgency to uncover problems, pathologies, deficits, and inadequacies, specifically? Central to this impulse to evaluate persons, practices, and institutions is the impact of this way of being on identity construction. Who do we become as we offer ourselves daily to these evaluative standards? This course will explore the notion of identity construction in the context of contemporary discourses of pathology, deficit and evaluation. The hope is that through thoughtful examination of the discourse of evaluation and diagnosis, we can reconstruct generative forms of social life. 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 partner, and so on. Although we will mainly draw on interactionist studies of the body, we will also consider cognitive, cultural, developmental, and even evolutionary themes in our investigations. Class will center around the use of videotaped data to examine embodied behaviors in interaction. Students will be asked to collect their own videotaped data to use for class assignments. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457 and two 500-level CMN courses. Writing Intensive.

703. 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.

732. Communication Theory. Covers broad range of theories of human communication, including contributions from anthropology, sociology, mathematics, and psychology. Students master the central ideas, models, and vocabularies associated with each theory and explore each theoretical perspective’s strengths, weaknesses, and applications. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level analysis courses or permission.


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.

757. Social Protest: Rhetoric & Resistance. This course will consider this evolution of rhetorical theorizing about social movements as a backdrop to inform a critical examination of an array of recent movements for social and political justice. We will begin with the premise that
social movements are definitively rhetorical in that they manage symbolic resources in order to challenge particular worldviews, construct possibilities for new realities, and motivate collective social change. We will investigate movements in terms of members, audiences, and discursive tactics utilized as a means to encourage mobilization, critique culture, and intervene into the mass media. Movements considered for analysis will include those concerned with gun control, pro-life and pro-choice, animal rights, LGBT rights, environmentalism, and anti-globalization, as well as anti-corporate and anti-consumerism activism. Further, we also will critically dissect the very recent emergence of movements that masquerade as grassroots social and political campaigns while further empowering establishment groups, including practices such as astroturfing, greenwashing, and corporate activism. Finally, we will critically engage with debates over the evolution of online activism, which has been dubbed “slacktivism” and “mouse-click activism,” and the future of rhetorical movements for social change. Prereq: CMN 455, 456, 457, and two 500-level analysis courses or permission. May be repeated for credit when topic varies.

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 naïve media consumers in need of continual guidance and supervision. Prereq: at least one 600-level course or permission. Writing intensive.

772.02 Media & Ethics. This course begins with the idea that questions of ethics form the core of what it means to be human. To flourish as a human being requires that we engage questions of integrity, authenticity, justice, courage, and wisdom—to name a few of the virtues we will explore. Ethics permeates every aspect of experience, from the personal to the political. As Media Studies scholars, we must therefore ask: What kinds of media environments are most conducive to the achievement of human virtue? As networked, digital devices permeate more aspects of our lives, the achievement of human flourishing involves questions about the role of artists, audiences, lawmakers, and industry executives in the development, design, regulation, and use of media technologies. By exploring such questions in a variety of contexts—including popular music, journalism, social media, and artificial intelligence—this course will challenge you to develop a clear and well-informed ethical framework for the most pressing issues we face today. Through a series of focused research, writing, and presentation exercises, you will create a Media Ethics Portfolio that represents your vision of an authentic life of human flourishing in the digital era. Your portfolio will address such questions as: What artists, industry leaders, and/or activists serve as role models for your creative or professional endeavors? What in your estimation are the most important questions of media ethics facing us today, and how can we address them? What efforts toward media reform do you deem most pressing, and how do you intend to contribute to those efforts? This project is intended to serve as a forward-looking road map as you prepare to graduate and enter the next phase of your personal, professional, and civic lives. Prereq: at least one 600-level course or permission. Writing intensive.

795. Independent Study. Advanced individual study in rhetoric, media, or interpersonal communication. Project to be developed with supervising instructor. May be repeated up to a maximum of 8 credits. Prereq: permission.

799H. Honors Thesis. Written thesis based on substantial and original research under the direction of a full-time member of the communication faculty. Thesis must be in the form and style of a publishable, scholarly work. Restricted to seniors seeking honors in major.