

COMM Graduate Courses

Fall 2020

COMM 616: Research Design and the Scientific Method (Dr. Johanna Dunaway)

Wednesday, TBA

This course is designed to introduce students to social science approaches to studying communication. Regardless of your particular substantive field or methodological approach, when you finish this course you will be able to formulate, implement and evaluate a research project as a social *scientist*. To accomplish these aims, we will first examine the ultimate questions of epistemology and the nature of the scientific method. This introduction is followed by a consideration of the nature of social science theory and explanation, and issues which relate to the use of empirical observations to test theories: concept formation, hypothesis construction, indicator development, and measurement. In the final half of the semester, we will examine several alternative research designs, including those based on survey research, lab experiments, field experiments, quasi-experimental designs, content analysis and more.

COMM 620: Communication Theory (Dr. Richard Street)

Monday, TBA

There are scores of communication theories that have been developed over the course of decades. Some are seminal works, and some are forgotten. This course will selectively examine theories within various communication contexts (e.g., interpersonal, group, organizational, media effects, media and society, social media) by considering two theories a week, one classic and one 'non-traditional' (broadly defined). The course will be structured as follows—(a) understanding the ontological and epistemological foundations of 'theorizing,' (b) a review of selected theories within contexts listed above, and conclude with (c) theories more specific to communicative contexts of interest to students in the class (and as such will be selected after the first day of class).

COMM 636: Seminar in ORG: Corporate Social Responsibility & Sustainability (Dr. Sherry Holladay)

MWF, TBA (stacked with an undergraduate seminar)

This course takes a communication-oriented approach to understanding and critiquing organizational efforts to plan, implement, and evaluate socially responsible and sustainable business practices. Research on CSR/Sustainability reflects a continuum from descriptive (What are innovations in CSR programs? How can organizations use CSR to benefit themselves and the public good?) to critical (How can we interrogate the hypocrisy of "ethical capitalism" and CSR discourse? How could CSR offer transformative potential?). Discussions of "best practices" as well as "greenwashing" demonstrate the need to interrogate "socially responsible" practices that may address numerous societal/environmental/economic ills.

COMM 654: Classical Rhetoric (Dr. Nathan Crick)

Monday, TBA

This course will focus on the relationship amongst rhetoric, power, truth, and justice as it was theorized and narrated within the works of classical Greek literature and philosophy. The aim of the course is not to provide a history of philosophy or Greek culture, although we will touch on the context of ancient Greece to help interpret the works. Rather, the aim is to use these works to frame discussions about the concepts and values that are central to our understanding of the role of rhetoric and propaganda in the present day. Plato's dialogues will constitute the core of the course, with time also dedicated to the works of Homer, the Sophists, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Aeschylus, and Aristotle.

COMM 662: Survey in Media Studies (Dr. Cara Wallis)

Tuesday, TBA

This course will provide graduate students with a broad overview of the field of media studies – the key literature, concepts, questions, topics, and debates – beginning with early foundational texts on mass media and ending with inquiries into the recent explosion of social media, big data, and algorithmic culture. During the semester, a range of theoretical frameworks and methodologies that fall primarily within qualitative, critical-cultural traditions will be covered. The class will follow a historical and thematic trajectory by first becoming acquainted with US mass communication research and related Anglo-European contributions through reading primary documents considered foundational to the field. We will then trace various extensions and critiques of these frameworks as well as new theoretical paradigms. In the process we will consider interventions by intersectional and marginalized voices that have reconfigured and reinvigorated the field. We will also look at traditional notions of audiences, industries, and texts and how these are being rethought in an era of big data, artificial intelligence, participatory surveillance, and the quantified self. There are no class prerequisites for this course.

COMM 661: Media, Culture, Identity (Dr. Srivi Ramasubramanian)

Thursday, TBA

This graduate seminar focuses on representations of identity in media and popular culture. The readings and discussions will center on how media affect users' identities and in turn how identities shape media. We will learn about and critically evaluate prominent theories relating to intersectional identities, difference/diversity, and media studies. Media will be analyzed as sites for negotiation and construction of intersectional identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, sexual orientation, social class, (dis)ability, nationality, citizen status, and religion. The course will examine the impacts and effects of media stereotypes on both dominant and marginalized groups. We will reflect on the role of media in reinforcing and challenging power, privilege, oppression, bias, discrimination, and inequities. It will also delve into positive storytelling, counter-narratives, and media initiatives that resist mainstream portrayals through activism and media justice. Students will have the opportunity to design and develop a research project on a media topic of their choice that advances the theories and concepts learned in this course in meaningful ways. This course counts towards the Digital Humanities, Women's & Gender Studies, and Africana Studies graduate certificates. Students from all backgrounds and methodological orientations are welcome to enroll.

COMM 664: Media Processes & Effects (Dr. Jennifer Lueck)

Tuesday, TBA

This seminar takes a social-scientific approach and builds on knowledge about seminal mass media concepts. It extends this knowledge by systematically exploring cognitive and affective processes that form the explanatory mechanisms underlying media effects.

Mass media have been alternately feared, bemoaned, used, and dismissed as tools to change beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. These rival views are informed in part by findings that media appear to affect some people but not others. To understand how and why media might have attitudinal and behavioral effects it is useful and necessary to explore how people psychologically engage with media information. This seminar takes a social-scientific approach and focuses on psychological concepts and theories concerning individual cognitive and affective processing of the content of both traditional and new electronic media. In this connection, the focus is on how individuals respond to media content. Inevitably, however, the discussion will place individual behavior in the social context of groups (literal and virtual), organizations, and the larger milieu of society and changing technologies.