

COMM Graduate Courses

Fall 2021

COMM 601: Foundations of Comm Inquiry (Blanton & Poirot) **Tuesdays and Thursdays @ 8:00 am / Bolton 213**

This course explores critical, humanist, and social scientific epistemologies and research traditions in Communication Studies. The purpose of the course is to foster appreciation and understanding of the distinctions among various modes of inquiry so that students will develop research literacy in Communication as a multi-method discipline. To accomplish these goals, students will engage readings and guest lectures that focus on theories and principles of research design and practices. And from these various engagements, students will be asked to articulate the differences among Communication research traditions as those differences and similarities inform the development of their own research programs.

COMM 610: Social Science Methods (Scherr) **Thursdays @ 3:55 pm / Bolton 018 - stacked with undergraduate (UG) honors seminar**

The class builds upon general science literacy classes previously taken and is geared towards students who already gained knowledge about scientific methods and statistics. We will start reactivating pre-existing knowledge and will share and discuss our experiences with quantitative social science methods, data collection, data structures, and its statistical analysis. We will then recap different empirical methods relevant for conducting up-to-date communication research and discuss past, current and future research experiences. We will use concrete examples of how data can be collected, yielding in different, possible data structures, and how such data can be analyzed using different statistical software packages.

The class is designed to avoid 'statistics anxiety' and perceptions of statistics being a slippery slope. In order to do so, the class offers different slopes that everybody can choose for themselves: the green circle slope (●) is the basic path, a slower beginner slope for the least experienced, the blue square slope (■) is a medium-level path for those who want to try out more advanced analyses, and the black diamond slope (◆) is the most advanced course trajectory. The slopes can be individually chosen and can be switched throughout the semester following your individual learning curve. The class can be successfully finished within each of the three slopes. Within each slope, we will discuss the most recent theoretical conceptualizations in communication research, derive relevant research questions, and identify multiple (= ● ■ ◆) ways to find satisfying empirical answers. Thereby, we will gain experience about how research design and data analysis operate together. We will work hands-on and practical with all exercises. We will analyze data together so that, after the class, everybody will have had their own methodological and data analytical experience and being equipped with marketable skills for careers within academia and outside.

Class assignments will cover the operationalization of concepts, the creation of research designs, and the statistical analysis of quantitative data using different forms of evaluation (e.g., class commitment, short quizzes, exams, papers, oral presentations).

COMM 632: Communication & Conflict (Barge) **Tuesdays and Thursdays @ 9:35 am / Bolton 018 - stacked with UG honors seminar**

Issues of difference and conflict pervade contemporary society. We have witnessed and participated in intense conversations regarding racial injustice, COVID-19, and political ideology over the last year. This course addresses the relationship between communication and conflict—how

communication shapes our understanding of conflict situations and how communication creates resources for managing conflict—with an eye on developing practices and intervention to create better social worlds. This course will specifically focus on the way that dialogue can help manage conflict within organizations and communities. We will read original texts from leading dialogue theorists—Mikhail Bakhtin, David Bohm, Martin Buber, and Paolo Freire—and explore how different approaches to dialogue engage conflict management. We will also focus on specific conflict management processes such as negotiation, mediation, and the design of conflict management systems within organizations and communities.

COMM 645: Rhetorical & Textual Methods (Dubriwny)
Tuesdays @ 12:45 pm / Bolton 213

This course will introduce you to the art of rhetorical criticism (a method of humanistic inquiry), broadening your scholarly, historical, political, and cultural knowledge and providing you with the opportunity to hone your critical capacities. What we learn will not only help you produce academic work worthy of convention presentation, it also should enrich your cultural perspective and deepen your political judgment. Together we will become rhetorical critics and critical rhetoricians—both assessing and participating in rhetorical engagement. Tackling textual analysis from a rhetorical perspective, we will approach a variety of rhetorical artifacts—speeches, films, advertisements, memoirs, photographs, memorials, etc.—using all of the critical tools and theories (anti-racist, feminist, queer, and more) we have at our disposal. Our goal is to work towards this description (from Bryan McCann) of critical practice: “The best rhetorical critics are those who illuminate what a text or set of discourses may reveal about strategies, interests, and power dynamics at play in public culture; as well as how rhetoric itself functions as a social force.”

COMM 653: Race/Racism & Public Culture (Wanzer-Serrano)
Thursdays @ 12:45 pm / Bolton 213

What is race? What is racialization? What is the relationship between race/racialization/racism and communication? As recent history has shown us, far too often these questions are never asked. Between #CommunicationSoWhite, #RhetoricSoWhite, #BlackInTheIvory, and more, it is finally becoming clear to those exercising power in our disciplines that the status quo must change. Of course, BIPOC scholars have known this for decades; but our calls were often ignored or co-opted. This graduate seminar will introduce students to key theoretical literatures on race/racialization and racism, and key critical engagements of public discourse centered on race and/or racism. Over the course of the semester, students will be exposed to a variety of perspectives on race and racialization, their manifestation in public culture, and their intersections with gender, sexuality, class, and more. Special emphasis will be placed on scholarship from critical Black Studies and critical Latinx/a/o Studies. Students will be evaluated on three main items: (1) active and productive participation in class discussion; (2) completion of a proposal that makes a prima facie case for a final paper that fits the class; and (3) a final paper that explores some dimension of race/racism in public culture and demonstrates an awareness of the semester’s readings/discussions.

COMM 655/ENGL 655: Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric - Cybernetics, Systems, and Semiotics (DiCaglio)
Wednesdays @ 12:40 pm / Liberal Arts and Humanities Building

Over the course the twentieth century, language, communication, and persuasion became scaled so that molecules and electromagnetic waves themselves contain the capacity to function as forms of rhetoric. The words that gather around this new mode of thinking about language are familiar to us:

data, information, code, and sign (as understood by semiotics) all imply an embedding of communicative and rhetorical possibility within matter itself. But the scalar nature of this shift has not consigned communication to the molecular, mechanical operation--it also extends to the global and ecological modes of in-forming that are already presupposed by propaganda and are developed in theories of communication based in systems theory. When combined with cybernetics, this mode of information also places interpretation front-and-center not as a function of meaning but as a function of effect looped back on itself. Information also makes it possible to consider mechanistic philosophy's standard notion of action/reaction in terms of informatic exchange, semiotic process, or communicative effect. These three phrases are strangely reminiscent of the fundamental concern of rhetoric: how do symbolic systems create effects (i.e. persuasion). What then is rhetoric after information theory renders communication as physical as matter itself? What is the flow of rhetoric conceptualized from this basis of information at multiple scales? Does it provide a new means of articulating the general rhetoricity of the Cosmos? This course will use these questions as an entry point for contemporary theories of rhetoric, starting with semiotics and information theory and then tracing how these basic informatic frameworks run through related entangled theoretical developments in cybernetics, speech-act theory, systems theory, biosemiotics, cultural studies, feminist theory, and science studies.

COMM 662: Survey of Media Studies (Burkart)

Mondays @ 4:10 pm / Bolton 213

This graduate seminar is a survey of research and theory in media studies and telecommunication. It prepares students for research, writing, and reflection on media and communication theories informed by critical media studies. It compares primary texts of prominent theorists of Marxism, post-Marxism, postmodernism, feminism, and global media studies. Major topic areas analyzed are culture, ideology and hegemony; social life and cultural studies; political economy; postmodernism; new media and social networking; and globalization and new social movements.

The specific goals of this course are to:

- Survey the intellectual history of critical media studies in Marxism, cultural studies, political economy, postmodernism, and globalization
- Develop an understanding of major debates and areas of shared concern among these approaches to critical media studies
- Compare affinities and tensions among these areas of critical media studies, and
- Improve analytical and argumentative academic writing skills

COMM 670: Seminar in Health Communication (Tang)

Wednesdays @ 4:10 pm / Bolton 213

The rise of globalization and multicultural society calls for more in-depth understanding of the role of culture in health communication. This seminar will provide an extensive discussion of both cultural sensitive approach and cultural-centered approach to health communication. The former generally examines how differences in the cultures of different nations, regions, or demographic groups affect people's health beliefs and behaviors and how it can be incorporated in creating more effective health messages. The latter focuses how the discourses of health and illnesses are socially and culturally constructed and how such discourses reflect and reinforce the power inequality in terms of race, gender and sexual orientation.