Department of Communication: Winter 2023 Courses

LOWER DIVISION COURSES

COMM 10
Intro to Communication (Alač)
This course seeks to answer five key questions: What is communication? Where does it occur? How does it occur? Why does it matter? How do we study it? In answering these questions, the course provides an introduction to major issues in the field of communication, and also to the main areas of focus in this department.

COMM 20
Analysis of Media Forms and Cultures (Halm)
Media is part of our everyday lives, impacting us in everything we do - from driving to class or watching movies on our laptops or figuring out where to eat. By introducing students to the basic vocabulary of audio and image based media, this course will help students develop the critical skills to understand, analyze, and interpret how media make meaning and how we make meaning out of media.

COMM 30
Digital Media Literacy: Analyzing Forms, Practices, and Infrastructures of Mediated Public Life (Schmidt)
This course focuses on the analysis of news media and its role in sustaining (or undermining) a democratic life and political culture. Particular attention will be paid to analyzing media practices and their embeddedness in social, economic and political conditions, highlighting how journalism portrays marginalized communities and social issues. More specifically, we'll explore how racial and ethnic identities are constructed, reified, or subverted by representations in mass media and the digital news environment. In addition, we'll consider the potential of the web as a democratizing force and the changing nature of what's considered news and how it provides opportunities for Black agency and activism in response to social injustice and historical biases. By exploring traditional journalistic norms in the context of today's communication dynamics (including technology, policy, politics, and culture), we will better understand the challenges, benefits, and limitations of mass media in representing, reifying, and transforming social reality, especially with regard to racialized and ethnic identities. As a result, students will have an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which media shape social experience, practices, discourses, and expectations as well as social groups, classes, and relations.

UPPER DIVISION CORE COURSES

COMM 100B
Communication, Culture, and Representation (Serlin)
In this course – one of the four "pillars" of the undergraduate curriculum in the Department of Communication at UC San Diego, along with COMM 10, COMM 100A, and COMM 100C – we will explore the ways in which culture can be understood as the interplay between what humans create and the social structures within which such creations are embedded. Using semiotics – "the science of signs" – as our critical framework, we will examine many forms of culture and communication: from the origins of spoken and written language to the contemporary world of emojis and memes. We will employ a variety of critical and interpretive tools drawn not only from communication but from philosophy, linguistics, cognitive science, political science, and cultural studies along the way. Students will learn how to de-naturalize, or to make strange, the familiar and the taken-for-granted.

COMM 190
Junior Seminar: Native Americans and Colonists: From Contact to the Dakota Pipeline (Fields)
This seminar introduces students to themes from Native American Studies and is intended as a provocative engagement with a range of issues covering both the history and contemporary cultural politics of indigenous Americans. Substantively, the course is designed to provide students with a starting point for studying past and present encounters between indigenous Americans and the immigrant settlers to America and their descendants who have dispossessed the indigenous and, willfully or not, have tried to bury native culture. These encounters, often racially charged, have generated enormous controversies while the voices and experiences of Native peoples have been too often concealed in these exchanges. This course makes a modest effort to intervene into the meaning of these experiences and render Amerindians visible and their voices audible while conceding that many of these controversies remain open and unresolved. Broadly speaking, the course is intended to be a theoretically rigorous, historically rich, and topically interesting engagement with what is often the sadly forgotten story of indigenous Americans and their encounters with the settlers who remade America into something far different.

COMM 190
Junior Seminar: Decolonial Theory (Córdoba Azcárate)
Are you interested in challenging contemporary cultural stereotypes based on gender and race? Are you willing to refuse extractive futures where nature and culture are put to work for the privileged classes? Do you want to learn how to refuse the violence inscribed in colonial representations of culture and the environment? And, do you want to learn what refusal is all about and how to enact it? This is a new and experimental class on Decolonial Theory. It aims to provide a space to rethink the colonial structures of power that dominate mainstream ways to think, talk, write, communicate about and consume cultural differences and the environment. The course offers alternative ways of listening to other stories about the world beyond Western science and workshops ways to incorporate them in our everyday practices.

COMM 190
Junior Seminar: The Self and the "Other" in Science Fiction (Hill)
In "A Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway states that 20th century technology has blurred crucial boundaries such that, "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism," calling for a reconstruction of identity based not on physical or social boundaries, but on "otherness, difference, and specificity." And yet, popular science fiction stories typically fixate on those boundaries, expressing fears of the unknown "other," whether in the form of a cyborg, an alien invader, or a derelict ship in a strange solar system. This course examines notions of the self, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other axes of identity through the lens of popular sci-fi and fantasy media, encompassing a range of topics, from Afrofuturist dreams to dystopian gender nightmares, and from colonial terraform tropes to immigration allegories. While film, TV and short fiction representations are of primary interest, the seminar will also consider the reception context, particularly the fan communities that have formed around science fiction franchises since the 1970s as sites of connection, resistance, and cultural production.

COMM 196B
Honors Seminar in Communication (Schmidt)
Preparation of an honors thesis, which can be either a research paper or a media production project. Open to students who have been admitted to the honors program. Grades will be awarded upon completion of the two-quarter sequence. *Prerequisite: Admission to the honors program*

PRODUCTION COURSES

COMM 101
Introduction to Audiovisual Media Practices (Martinico)
This course introduces students to the language and practice of media production by analyzing film within the context of history, theory, genre and practical technique. Through readings, screenings, and lectures, students will explore and critically examine the art and practice of video production, film aesthetics, sound design, and editing – which will serve as inspiration for their own media-making practice. In lab sections students will engage in hands on techniques of production, including digital cinematography, sound recording, and nonlinear digital editing. The lab provides students the opportunity to apply concepts from lecture and readings, as well as other Communication courses, to the production of single channel video and sound work.

COMM 101K
Documentary Sketchbook (Davis)
This class functions as both a production workshop and critical study of the documentary form. This quarter, you will examine a variety of creative and historical approaches to the genre, learning about different aesthetic frameworks, critical concepts, political debates, and historical movements that have given life to one of cinema's most enduring and ill-defined forms of storytelling. As you engage in a series of creative projects and written reflection exercises over the ten-week term, you will be asked to build upon these ideas to develop your own approach and voice as a documentary filmmaker and reflect on what role and ethical responsibilities you wish to uphold as an artist, storyteller, and so-called arbiter of "truth."

COMM 101N
Sound Production and Manipulation (Martinico)
A hands-on production course designed to serve as an introduction to basic audio production and post-production, with a focus on sound as a tool for creative storytelling in both fiction and documentary contexts. Through listening, readings, screenings, lecture and discussion we will examine various approaches to working with sound that will serve to inform your own practice throughout the quarter. Course topics include: engaged listening, skillful recording and editing, audio documentary, narrative construction, and sound design for film and visual media. This course is project-intensive, and will prepare students to work with the Media Center's Adobe Audition audio software.

COMM 101T
Topics in Production: The Advertising Art Director in Society (Halm)
From the early advertising days of print, to the 20th century explosion of radio media and television, to the 21st century obsession with viral and mobile media, we will investigate how the professional Art Director has been at the center of many of the most important moments in media and communication history over the past hundred years. We will also practically explore how an Art Director goes about communicating their client's and society's wants, needs, and desires by executing small-scale advertising plans by using industry specific software such as Adobe's InDesign (print media), XD (interactive), Premiere (video), and Photoshop (everything) to push a singular message or idea across multiple media types at the same time.

COMM 102B
Audio Story and Podcasting Practicum (Peacher)
Production-oriented course involving diverse audio media forms. Critically analyze journalistic podcasts, features, documentaries, diaries, place-casts, and news shorts to evaluate what makes for compelling and effective audio as a contemporary storytelling form. Students will gain technical and production skills to facilitate their own creativity in the audio sphere.

INTERMEDIATE ELECTIVE COURSES

COMM 104G
Latin America and the Caribbean (Hallin)
Latin America is a diverse region with complicated politics and big, powerful media and cultural industries. It is among other things a region with a long tradition of populist politics, where a lot of the kinds of media/politics connections we see now in the US, Europe and other places have been part of the landscape for years. This class looks at media and cultural industries in Latin America, including populism and the political role of media, media reform movements and issues of violence against journalists. We also consider issues of cultural and media imperialism; the telenovela as a distinct Latin American form and center of a powerful cultural industry; racial representations in Latin American media; and Latinx media in the United States as a key part of the wider Latin American media industries.

COMM 106C
History Through Comics - Japan (Tanaka)
Pasts have been conveyed through various media for millennia. This course will use comics to explore how this medium impacts how we might learn and understand Japanese history. Topics discussed include memory, storytelling, perspective, and visuality.

COMM 106D
Data and Culture (Geiger)
Today's culture industries are some of the biggest producers and consumers of data. This course takes a cultural lens to issues around data science, both as it is applied to the culture industries, and as a culture in and of itself. What are the implications of ordering our social media feeds by what will keep us clicking and swiping the most? How do technologies like personalized microtargeting and machine learning recommendations actually work? How do data scientists working at streaming video or social media platforms think about their roles and responsibilities? This is a non-traditional course in which students will learn both cultural and technical aspects. On Mondays we will discuss more Communication-style topics, on Wednesdays we will learn how these systems work, and Fridays are a "lab" working hands-on with data science tools related to that week's topic. This course is designed for Communication and related majors who have no experience with programming, statistics, or data science, but who want to gain some familiarity with these ways of knowing in a safe and welcoming space.

COMM 106I
Internet Industry (Irani)
Amazing possibilities, big bumps. Data leaks. TikTok rabbit holes. Fake news. Futures of work. Internet companies — Apple, Google, and Amazon, for example — transform how we get products, how we get the news, and how we relate to one another. This class examines how the internet and its data, as technology and as industry practices, transform work, politics, and everyday social life. We will understand this by looking at data, interfaces, and services. In this class you'll learn to sift through the hope, the hype, and the dystopia of the internet, making the connections between business models and user experience. Learn about different pathways to change the future of technology: design, policy and law, ethics work, and community and labor organizing.

COMM 106T
Television Culture and the Public (deWaard)
This course examines US television with a focus on style and form, industry and politics, and issues of representation. In our first unit, we will learn how to analyze television programs from a formal perspective, considering visual, aural, and narrative properties, as well as notions of realism, liveness, and reflexivity. In our second unit, we will learn about the history and contemporary context of the television industry, considering issues of labor, political economy, advertising, neoliberalism, and politics. In our third unit, we will learn how to analyze television programs with a focus on issues of representation and identity, considering race, gender, sexuality, and class. Ultimately, we aim to improve our understanding of how the television industry operates, how television programs generate meaning, and how we can interpret television from various analytical frameworks.

COMM 108D
Disability (Serlin)
Cultural and historical ways of defining and understanding disability relative to communication and assistive technologies, including the impact of digital technologies and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Course use of audiovisual texts and writings from fields including science and technology studies, and cultural studies

COMM 109D
Advertising and Society (Jack)
Advertising aims to persuade us to buy, but that's not all it does. Commercials subsidize almost all of our news and entertainment media, web browsing, social media, podcasts, and YouTube videos. Socio-technical advertising systems collect ever-increasing data about our online behaviors, building sophisticated models of consumer preferences and choices. And advertising is deeply cultural, in the sense that it reflects and even remakes our understandings of humor, art, personal expression, aesthetics, and social norms. This course examines advertising as the intersection of the commercial and the social. You will learn different ways of understanding advertising's presence in--and influences upon--your everyday life, and you will practice critically assessing and communicating about advertising's history, political economy, and social significance.

COMM 111B
Global Borders: Communication and Conflict (Zilberg)
This course focuses on geopolitical borders as charged sites of cross-cultural communication and conflict. By exploring the border between the U.S. and Mexico within a historical and global perspective, students will become mindful of how borders come into being and serve as much more than just fixed physical demarcations between nation-states. Students will learn to interrogate borders as dynamic multi-dimensional spaces where complex forces -- political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, and ecological -- converge and diverge. While the U.S.-Mexico border will serve as our primary site of investigation, we will expand our geographic reach to examine other borders between the "global north" and "global south," and to consider how borders extend into the territory of the nation-state itself. Students will emerge from the course with a new critical awareness of their own position within the geography of Southern California and of the multiple borders crossed by its diverse residents from across the globe. We will hear directly from community-based groups, activists, artists and scholars working in this and other border regions. Students will also participate in on-site activities on the U.S. side of the border with the option to do the same on the Mexican side of the border.

COMM 113T
Intermediate Topics in Communication: Art and Communication (Domínguez Rubio)
This course explores how art and communication interact with each other. This will entail two tasks. First exploring art as communication. Second exploring communication as art. Studying art as communication will involve exploring how art has been historically deployed to communicate and propagate political, religious, or philosophical ideas. In communication as art, we will explore how different modes of communication, like advertising, propaganda or social media, have adopted art for its purposes.

ADVANCED ELECTIVE COURSES

COMM 124B
Critical Design Practice/Topic Studio (Sims)
This course delves into the relationship between design, media technologies, and bottom-up efforts to make institutional and political change. The entire course is organized around the design and deployment of a single critical design intervention. All students will work with each other and the instructor to define, research, design, and stage an interactive campaign centered on an issue of importance to the students. We will decide on a topic for our campaign during the first week.

COMM 138
Black Women, Feminism, and Media (Boateng)
This course is aimed at reaching a better understanding of theories of race, gender and sexuality in relation to the lives of Black women in Africa and the United States. It also examines the media and popular culture as arenas of Black feminist struggle. For example, the course considers whether and how artists like Cardi B, Megan Thee Stallion, and Latto are feminists. Course materials therefore include scholarly, literary and cultural texts including novels, feature films, and music.

COMM 142
Film Authorship (deWaard)
This course serves as an introduction to the concept of film authorship with a focus on Hollywood filmmaking in the last thirty years, as seen through two case studies: Spike Lee and Kathryn Bigelow. We begin with the tradition of "auteur theory" -- the idea that the director, not the screenwriter, is the true "artist" and "author" in filmmaking -- before moving to the broader contemporary conception of the filmmaker as a site of encounter for many elements: collaboration, identity, industry, intertext, reception, and context. Spike Lee is our first case study, and through the films Do the Right Thing, 4 Little Girls, Clockers, Inside Man, BlacKkKlansman, and Da 5 Bloods, we will analyze traditional authorial elements, such as a formal "signature," as well as recurring themes and motifs. We will also consider how authorship intersects with issues of race, class, violence, and representation. Kathryn Bigelow will be our second case study, and Near Dark, Blue Steel, Point Break, The Hurt Locker, Zero Dark Thirty, and Detroit will allow us to consider issues of gender, genre, and authorial responsibility, in this case the depiction of war.

COMM 146
Advanced Topics in Cultural Production: K Pop (Ahn)
Specialized advanced study in cultural production with an emphasis on Korean popular music AKA K Pop.

COMM 146
Advanced Topics in Cultural Production: CGI, Special Effects, and Contemporary Media (Halm)
From the spectacular visual effects in blockbuster films and video games, to the filters we use everyday on Instagram and TikTok, to the future of Augmented Reality overlays and Virtual Reality avatars, we will explore the history and communicative styles of various "special effects" in order to trace the common formal and intellectual threads shared between classical special effects, and those available through newer media platforms.

COMM 158
Representations of the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict (Fields)
The conflict between the state of Israel and the people in and outside of Israel known as Palestinians is arguably the most intractable conflict in the world today. At the core of this conflict lie contrasting visions about the identity of the territory in the region, and competing ideas about who rightfully belongs to the land. Such differences about territorial belonging have created divergent narratives about the causes of the conflict, and intense debates regarding its perpetrators and victims. At issue in these debates are different interpretations of both past and present, and different understandings of responsibility for the conflict. This course is a critical engagement with these debates, and how these competing discourses reflect different representations of the conflict. At the same time, this course seeks to provide students with a rigorous immersion into the nature of argument and issues of "objectivity" and "point of view." It is intended to give voice to a range of perspectives on this conflict, many of which are unpopular or too often silenced, while challenging students to understand the structure of the arguments at the core of one of the most impassioned issues of our time. Arguably the most intractable conflict in the world today. At the core of this conflict lie contrasting visions about the identity of the territory in the region, and competing ideas about who rightfully belongs to the land. Such differences about territorial belonging have created divergent narratives about the causes of the conflict, and intense debates regarding its perpetrators and victims. At issue in these debates are different interpretations of both past and present, and different understandings of responsibility for the conflict. This course is a critical engagement with these debates, and how these competing discourses reflect different representations of the conflict. At the same time, this course seeks to provide students with a rigorous immersion into the nature of argument and issues of "objectivity" and "point of view." It is intended to give voice to a range of perspectives on this conflict, many of which are unpopular or too often silenced, while challenging students to understand the structure of the arguments at the core of one of the most impassioned issues of our time.

COMM 159
Tourism, Power, and Place (Córdoba Azcárate)
Tourism has been described as a modern form of imperialism: an industry that expands the power and influence of colonial and Western rule through travelling. This course explores the tourism industry's role in reproducing race, gender, labor, ecological and geographical inequalities by looking at real case scenarios from around the world. The course offers critical tools to help students think about the future of tourism in the face of contemporary ecological, financial and health crisis.

COMM 171
Environmental Communication (Sims)
This course explores how humans, environments, and communication (broadly construed) co-construct each other. Topics will include: how different actors – from activists, artists, and scientists to corporations, consultancies, and governments – attempt to shape knowledge, debates, policies, and practices related to 'nature,' climate change, and other human-environment relations; how environmental hazards and benefits are unevenly distributed and experienced; how legacies of environmental racism, exploitation, extraction, and degradation might be repaired, dismantled, exacerbated, or sustained in the decades to come.

COMM 177
Culture, Domination, Resistance (Anderson)
This course is focused on cultural and social institutions invested with various kinds of power to control, discipline, and/or subordinate people. This year's version of the seminar will be project-based, focused on developing specific research skills. Students will work independently and in small groups to study every aspect of a specific institution – for example, a police department, school district, university, city government, health system – and then will develop strategies and proposals devised to make major changes to how that institution functions.