

WINTER QUARTER 2025

COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT COURSES

LOWER DIVISION COURSES

COMM 10

Intro to Communication (Armenta)

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 (McKenna)

Media is part of our everyday lives, impacting us in our everyday lives and shaping how we understand the world around us. By introducing students to the basic vocabulary of 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. In this class, we will examine the formal properties and visual language of film, television, and social media. We will consider technique and style as it is expressed through cinematography, production design, editing, and narrative conventions and other representational strategies. Along with studying the visual grammar of media forms, we will contextualize our analysis thematically and ideologically in order to better understand the ways in which media can convey ideas about culture and social life. Concepts and methodologies covered will lay the groundwork for continued study in both scholarly communication areas and hands-on sound, film/video and/or social media production.

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.

COMM 50

Presentation & Public Speaking (Armenta)

This course covers the basics of communication in public and professional settings. Students will cultivate their own speaking style while developing skills in delivery, performance, and persuasion. They will learn how to create a slide deck as well as prepare for speeches, interviews, and Q&As.

COMM 80

Public Presentation & Persuasion - Speech and Debate (Campbell)

Throughout history, important advances in a democratic society have emerged most often from civil, rigorous discussion, debate, and persuasion. Students develop research, critical thinking, presentation, public speaking, and argumentation skills through in-class practice speeches and debates, along with participation in intercollegiate speech and debate tournaments. The COMM80 course grants credit towards graduation for members of UCSD's Speech & Debate Team.

PRODUCTION COURSES

COMM 101

Introduction to Audiovisual Media Practices (Ahn)

This course introduces you to the language and practice of media production. We read film and television as texts by considering history, theory, genre, and practical technique. Through readings, lectures, and activities, you will acquire extensive knowledge of the art and practice of video production, film aesthetics, pre-production planning, production management, and editing aesthetics and technique. The creative process, issues of representation, and genre are also emphasized. With film criticism and production language acquisition, you will learn to recognize the choices available to a media maker with valuable information for media producers and critics. More generally, knowledge of these choices improves your analytical abilities as a student of communication and as an interpreter of media culture and technology. In lab sections, you will be guided through the practice of hands-on media production, specifically digital videography, sound recording, image and sound editing with digital nonlinear editing equipment, and lighting. The course projects provide you with the opportunity to apply concepts of your other Communication courses to the production of single-channel video and sound work. You are strongly encouraged to apply ideas from other Communication Department courses to production practice. A passing grade in COMM 101 is required to take all other upper-division media production courses.

COMM 101D

Nonlinear/Digital Editing (Martinico)

This hands-on post-production seminar introduces students to the art and practice of editing. Approaches to montage will be analyzed, discussed, and critically applied. This course is project-intensive, and will prepare students to edit using Adobe Premiere.

COMM 101K

Documentary Sketchbook (Ahn)

This class functions as both a production workshop and a critical examination of the documentary form. Through screenings, readings, lectures, and discussions, we will examine various creative and technical approaches to documentary filmmaking that will serve to inform your own documentary practices throughout the quarter. Students will work to complete a series of hands-on exercises and a final project, all intended to help develop their unique voices as documentary media makers.

COMM 101N

Sound Production and Manipulation (Martinico)

This is 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. 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: Intro to Animation 2D (Halm)

A hands-on, introductory 2D animation course focusing on creating and studying the history, symbology, narrative structures, and practice of modern 2D animated shorts and series, while using Adobe After Effects as the primary production software. NO DRAWING SKILLS OR PREVIOUS ANIMATION EXPERIENCE REQUIRED.

COMM 101T

Topics in Production: AI and Generative Image Culture (Halm)

From generative imagery to motion media, Artificial Intelligence is transforming our visual experience at such an accelerated pace it threatens to upend the entire traditional digital media ecosystem, affecting everything from gaming and film production, to fashion and fine art. We will investigate the recent history of this trend in detail, as well as critically evaluate what it means to use AI-driven databases consisting of massive amounts of digital material produced by other creatives and cultures, while at the same time making our own AI-driven visual "products" (still imagery, short videos, etc) using platforms such as Midjourney and/or Gen2 by Runway.

COMM 101T

Topics in Production: "Living Chronically" Podcast (Dewey)

This service-learning course focuses on producing a podcast from concept to pilot episodes with the goal of creating an ongoing podcast program. Students will gain real-world experience creating a podcast that will be distributed to the public on popular streaming platforms. The podcast will focus on stories, relationships, and other issues that surround those who suffer from chronic illness.

COMM 102B**Audio Story and Podcasting Practicum (Peacher)**

This is a production-centric class where much of the work takes place during weekly studio sessions. Today, it's easier than ever to create and distribute audio stories to diverse audiences. The growth in podcasting has fostered unseen creativity, new opportunities and also new ethical challenges that push the boundaries of this medium. This course will provide a strong foundation for understanding, critically discussing and creating nonfiction audio media. You'll listen to a variety of audio media journalism, develop analytical and critical thinking skills, and you will also develop your own audio production, editing and storytelling skills to allow you to create in this space. You'll have access to your own audio recording equipment, and the professional-grade podcast studio. By the end of this class, you will have produced news reports, a podcast episode, an audio profile, and more.

COMM 102C**Practicum in New Media and Community Life (Campion)**

Practicum in New Media & Community Life is uniquely designed to help you learn and apply theories of human development, narrative, and community engagement to real-life collaborative experiences with our community partner, Town & Country Learning Center (TCLC). You will be introduced to these theories and asked to draw on them as you engage in participatory research and design (media) projects to be co-produced and shared with youth and adults at TCLC. Throughout quarter, we will focus on studying stories, community engagement and co-production. A key objective of the course is to teach you how to critically examine interactions with others facilitated through design-based and experiential learning practices. You will visit the after-school center to work, play, produce media, teach, and learn with resident youth and adults. It is through your participation at the center that you will be socialized into the culture of the center. As you do this you will also learn to carefully observe and document your own and others' participation in the ongoing activities at the center. The aim of this course is not only to teach you how to conduct social science field research in a skillful and ethical way, but also to connect you with the local community in a way that helps you realize that this community and the communities to which you belong are interdependent.

UPPER DIVISION COURSES**COMM 100C****Communication, Institutions, and Power (deWaard)**

Communication, Institutions, and Power is part of the three-course COMM 100 series. This course is a critical introduction to structures of communication formed at the intersection of the state, the economy, and civil society. It includes a historical survey of communication and media industries; legal and policy-based arenas; and civic, political, and social organizations. Students will learn to assess the movement of power through these institutions and its effect in shaping society, culture, and politics.

COMM 103D**Documentary History and Theory (Davis)**

This course examines some of the history and theories of nonfiction media. Through visual and written texts, we will survey the nonfiction film genre, considering technological innovations, ethical issues, and formal movements related to these representations of the "real." This course is not meant to be an exhaustive history of documentary filmmaking, but rather a survey of some of the main canon of documentaries that are mostly based in the English language. One of the themes of the course will be to expose you to representations of students and student activism in documentary media and also of documentaries made by or about college students such as yourselves. Our journey will involve many questions such as "What defines this genre or mode? Who defines documentary? What "truths" can documentary claim? How and when can these claims be made? In addressing these questions this course considers documentary media in relation to a wide variety of contexts—(historical, political and aesthetic.)

COMM 103E**History of Electronic Media (Dewey)**

This course explores the history of electronic media from early radio to cable television and the Internet. It also addresses how social, economic, and cultural contexts have affected and shaped the development of the ever evolving landscape of electronic media, which includes gaming platforms, mobile phone applications, and social media. We will investigate industry formations, regulatory practices, programs, and media genres while looking at their impacts on U.S. culture and perception. Underscoring this course is electronic media's relationship with race, gender, and political economy.

COMM 106**Intro to Media Industries (Kidman)**

This course is an introduction to the Media Industries & Communication major. We'll examine various industries, including film, TV, social media, music, gaming, and publishing, and discuss issues that impact all of them like globalization, copyright, creative labor, consolidation, and financialization. Students will read recent coverage in the trade press, discuss and write about current events, and learn to analyze contemporary media companies and systems.

COMM 106M**Advertising & Society (Whitworth-Smith)**

Advertising aims to convince us to buy stuff, but that's not all it does. Commercials pay for almost all our media content. Socio-technical advertising systems collect ever-increasing data about our behaviors. And advertising has long been deeply cultural: it reflects and influences 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, cultural meaning(s), and social significance.

COMM 106N**Journalism and the News Industry (Schmidt)**

What makes the news industry an industry? What's the legacy of journalism and is it still relevant? What role do social media play for news and information? And who controls the media infrastructure? These are some of the key questions that COMM 106N: Journalism and the News Industry explores as we look at the history, practice, and theory of news making from a pluralist and interdisciplinary perspective. The production of public information for news purposes always already reflects underlying societal fissures, tensions, and historical injustices. Therefore we will evaluate how media structures, economics, and legal systems contribute to and/or inhibit media's democratic potential, especially with regard to historically underrepresented groups.

COMM 107**Visual Culture (Serlin)**

Although many have called our era of phone cameras, social networking sites, and cloud storage for trillions of images a "revolution" in communication, the invention of photography in the 1830s was no less revolutionary. This course will examine the distinct history of photography as a pivot point between the worlds of analog media and digital media—what some scholars have called the transition between the pre-photographic era and the post-photographic era. The photograph changed how people understood the concept of "the real," while the camera, as a technology, changed how people understood the concept of representation by declaring the photograph an "objective" mirror of reality. In this course, we will assess what came before photography and what came (and continues to emerge) after photography in order to put photography's unprecedented effect on communication into perspective. It will also help us understand how and why so-called "dead" media continue to exert such a strong influence on the contemporary technological and cultural practices that dominate our lives.

COMM 111A**Communication and Cultural Production: Intro (Pavon Aramburu)**

This interdisciplinary course will explore the gendered nature of cultural notions around labor in our contemporary digital era and neoliberal economy. Students will learn to apply feminist, queer, neomarxist and intersectional theoretical frameworks. By centering concepts like dispossession, the feminization of labor and care we'll approach cultural production related, but not limited to: sex work, unpaid labor, indigenous and anti-patriarchal union movements in Europe, the US and Latin America. Throughout the quarter, students will engage in both individual and collective creative research projects.

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COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT COURSES

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. We will examine how the policies and practices of enforcing borders impinge on those seeking to cross borders, and in the everyday lives of people living on either side of borders. We will then consider the impact of these anthropocentric (human-centered) borders on non-human and more than human ecosystems of land, water, and animal and plant life. While the U.S.-Mexico border will serve as our primary site of consideration, we will expand our geographic and conceptual maps 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. NOTE: Students must participate in two field trips including a visit to the Hostile Terrain 94 exhibit at the Museum of Us in Balboa Park and a Trolley Ride from UCSD to the border (on the U.S. side).

COMM 111P

Performance and Cultural Studies (Ruskiewicz)

Performance studies is a multidisciplinary field that explores a broad spectrum of human expression. It encompasses traditional forms like theater, dance, music, and visual art, as well as everyday actions and behaviors. From storytelling and folklore to political speeches and rituals, performance studies broadly examines repeatable, embodied activities. This field uniquely combines theoretical inquiry with practical application, drawing from anthropology, psychology, linguistics and media studies. In this course, we delve into performance studies both theoretically and practically. We explore fundamental questions: What defines performance? How do we analyze and interpret it? Can anything be considered a performance? What commonalities exist between theater and everyday performance? In a media-saturated culture, how do people perform in non-live, mediated interactions? How does performance function as a mode of conveying and expressing a cultural identity? This course takes a hands-on approach to the field. Students will apply key theories of performance to various settings such as theaters, concerts, museums, sporting events, and community gatherings. They will observe everyday behaviors, like those in restaurants or on the street, through the lens of performance. We will analyze live and recorded performances as well as play scripts, adapting analytical techniques usually applied to texts for events in space and time.

COMM 113T

Topics: Drugs in America on Film (Abuelhiga)

Examine drug culture and cultural representations of substance abuse through film and other visual media.

COMM 113T

Topics: Action Cinema (McKenna)

Action films are a dominant force in contemporary Hollywood. This course traces the history of the genre with particular attention to its historical contexts, its social meanings, and its longstanding popularity with audiences. Topics to be covered will include: early cinema and serial queens; genre and the action film as hybrid; the aesthetics of action; the 1980s and the blockbuster; special effects and stunt work; action cinema and gender; the rise of the franchise and transnational cinema.

COMM 114I

Media Technologies and Social Movements (Leuning)

This course explores the roles of media technologies in activist campaigns, social movements. Blending theory, historical case studies, and project-based group work, students will investigate possibilities and limitations of attempts to enroll new and old media technologies in collective efforts to make social change.

COMM 114T

Science Communication (Walkover)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, science communication has become a central part of daily life. This course will examine science communication as a unique form of storytelling, and will identify who does science communication, how, why, and with what impacts. Through an exploration of the social construction of scientific knowledge, the course will highlight science communication's role in democracy, power, justice, public reason, technological trajectories, university-community relations, and health activism.

COMM 124A

Critical Design Practice/Advanced Studio (Irani)

This is a hands-on social design class that explores what design can learn from community organizing, and what community organizing can learn from design. We begin with an analysis of scripts: the ways that technology, the built environment, and the institutions that use them work to structure our behavior and our relationships. We will then explore how communities have worked to counter these scripts by creating alternative objects, systems, and organizations for living. We also go beyond the limits of design thinking methods by including how power and profit create a gap between what people want and what gets designed and built, and working to overcome the gap. You will practice imagining, proposing, soliciting feedback, and presenting visions for alternative things, environments, and organizations. You will work on ambiguous problems, take and give feedback, and make and stage prototypes and storyboards of possible futures. Your focus will be life related to campus.

COMM 134

Media Audiences (Kidman)

This course considers the complex relationship between media and the people it targets. How can we explain our personal attachments to media? What does our relationship with media and culture say about us, our backgrounds, and our values? How do different people consume media, and for what purposes? What do we know about the ways in which media effects people, as individuals and as a society? Does media manipulate us? Can audiences talk back to media? How are audiences measured? What makes an audience valuable? How has technology changed the nature of audiences? And who has the most power: audiences, media-makers, or the communication systems that connect them?

COMM 146

Adv Topics: Environmental Justice (Ybarra)

Students examine the how people disproportionately impacted by environmental harms mobilize across identities including race and immigration status for environmental justice where they live, work and play. Drawing on social movements, scientific studies and legal cases, we will explore how theories and practices of race, nature and climate change.

COMM 156

Media and Conflict Environment (Evans)

Environments of conflict, including war, generate enormous amounts of passion as well as controversy. This course examines how various forms of media represent violent conflicts, and the controversies that follow from these media representations. The aim of the course is to explore how the culture, political economy, and primary actors of media environments confront the challenge of covering various types of conflicts, and the types of stories and images that emerge in the process. The course also seeks to reveal how these media representations have often altered the course of conflicts themselves.

COMM 159

Tourism and Imperialism (Córdoba Azcárate)

Traveling for pleasure is a privilege. For some to be able to travel, others need to stay still, working to accommodate tourists' desires and consumption fantasies. This course studies tourism as a form of imperialism. It explores the 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 us think about the future of tourism in the face of contemporary crisis.

COMM 164**Behind the Internet (Domínguez Rubio)**

When we think about the Internet, we tend to imagine an unbounded virtual space of wireless networks and immaterial flows of data and information. However, there is very little that is wireless or immaterial about the Internet. Behind its surface, the Internet hides a vast and largely hidden world of massive infrastructures that silently shape how digital communication take place. The aim of this course is to unveil the hidden infrastructures of the Internet and to explore the kind of visible and invisible geographies they are helping to create.

COMM 177**Culture, Domination, and Resistance (Rojo Solis)**

COMM 177 is an advanced undergraduate seminar 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. Because of this design, there will not be a shared/required reading list for this course; students must be willing and able to work on their own initiative (both independently and in small groups).

JUNIOR SEMINARS**COMM 190****Junior Seminar: Telling Stories (Campion)**

Stories are everywhere. We read stories, we watch stories, we listen to stories, we tell stories; and reciprocally, stories tell us. We use stories to make sense of our lives and communicate knowledge. This seminar will explore practical and research uses of personal stories across a range of contexts and mediums. The course focuses on personal narratives, life stories, and life histories, and what they reveal about identity, community, and society. We will concentrate especially on personal narratives related to race, gender, and place. We will examine how we can use people's personal experiences to illuminate real and abstract issues. During the first half of class sessions, we will discuss readings. From the readings, students will learn various forms of narrative research and analysis, which they will be expected to apply to media examples presented during the latter part of class. In addition to academic texts, we will examine various representations of personal narratives across a range of (mainly) popular media, e.g., social media, films, music, podcasts, ethnographic interviews. In short, we will analyze both the what (i.e., content) and the how (i.e., structure, representation) of a variety of personal narratives.

COMM 190**Junior Seminar: Film, Television & New Media Criticism (Hassanpour)**

This course examines the role of visual storytelling in shaping ideological, social, and economic perspectives, moving beyond entertainment to highlight how film, television, and new media influence societal narratives. Through critical viewing, thinking, and acting, students will explore how creators embed and challenge societal values, analyzing cinematic styles and production modes that reveal broader cultural and intellectual frameworks. By engaging as students, viewers, and individuals within a larger collective, participants will gain a nuanced understanding of the dynamic relationship between media and society, refining their ability to discern and navigate the narratives that shape our collective consciousness.

COMM 190**Junior Seminar: Mediatization (Wiering)**

This junior seminar engages students in an in-depth examination of mediatization, considering it as both a concept as well as a theory, in order to critically analyze the interrelation between media and socio-cultural change. We will pay specific attention to the role of media in how we (are made to) understand and participate in the world around us. Course matter includes topics such as media logic, media power, everyday life media rituals, media practices as empirical objects, and the "anchoring" role of media in the enactment of public culture. Students will work with a topic of their choice to create a concrete final product in the form of either a research paper or a research poster.

COMM 190**Junior Seminar: Native Americans and Colonists (Fields)**

This course introduces students to themes from Native American Studies and is intended as a provocative engagement with both the history and contemporary cultural politics of indigenous Americans. Substantively, the course is a starting point for studying past and present encounters between Native Indians and the immigrant settlers to America and their descendants who dispossessed the indigenous and, willfully or not, 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. The course makes an effort to intervene into the meaning of these experiences in rendering Amerindians visible and their voices audible while conceding that many of these controversies remain unresolved. 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 people here in the U.S. and their encounters with the settlers who remade America into something far different.