COMM Variable Topic Classes Spring 2023

Below is the Spring 2023 course information for the COMM department’s variable topic courses: COMM 315, COMM 336, and COMM 410. Use this list to decide which course options best fit your interests, skills, and aspirations. If you have questions about a course, reach out to its professor. For questions about degree progress and requirements, reach out to your COMM advisor.

**COMM 315: Ethical Communication**

Section 02 (20645): Communication Ethics Through Popular Culture
- Elena Strauman
- In Person TR 9:25-10:40 AM
- Have you ever considered the ethics of social media? Have you wondered if *House of the Dragon* goes too far with portrayals of violence? Was *Jeopardy* right to hire producer Mike Richards as host? Was it a good idea for Harry and Megan to do the infamous Oprah interview? All of these questions have ethical implications so the job of this class will be to give you an “ethical toolkit” to help you answer the questions you have about popular culture. This class will use classical and contemporary ethical theory to examine the kinds of popular culture texts you engage every day.

SECTION 03 (20740): Crisis Communication Ethics
- Julie Davis
- In Person MWF 9:00-9:50 AM
- Ethical issues are an important cause of crisis and ethical concerns should, and often do, play a vital role in how organizations plan for, respond to, and recover from crises. You will learn important ethical principles and strategies, along with how to apply them to help prevent, manage, and recover from organizational crises.

Section 04 (20741): Crisis Communication Ethics
- Julie Davis
- In Person MWF 10:00-10:50 AM
- Ethical issues are an important cause of crisis and ethical concerns should, and often do, play a vital role in how organizations plan for, respond to, and recover from crises. You will learn important ethical principles and strategies, along with how to apply them to help prevent, manage, and recover from organizational crises.

Section 05 (21615): Communication Ethics Through Popular Culture
- Elena Strauman
- Asynchronous Online
- Have you ever considered the ethics of social media? Have you wondered if *House of the Dragon* goes too far with portrayals of violence? Was *Jeopardy* right to hire producer Mike Richards as host? Was it a good idea for Harry and Megan to do the infamous Oprah interview? All of these questions have ethical implications so the job of this class will be to give you an “ethical toolkit” to help you answer the questions you have about popular culture. This class will use classical and contemporary ethical theory to examine the kinds of popular culture texts you engage every day.
COMM 336: Addressing Problems in Context

Section 01 (21050): Communication Matters in Sex, Love, and Relationships
- Deb McGee
- Synchronous Online T 3:05-4:20 PM
- Because love is a central—if not the essential—part of human experience, it is an important phenomenon to study. Our relationships enrich and define our lives, and the quality of our communication in relationships is what primarily defines the quality of our relationships. Communication is the primary means by which we create, accelerate, maintain, decelerate, and terminate relationships. In this course, we will focus on how an understanding of contemporary research and theory associated with communication in a variety of close relationships can help us transform the communication in our own relationships. Each student will develop a semester-long, research-informed, relationship improvement plan, enact the plan, and evaluate its success. Past students have worked on topics such as managing conflict productively, increasing assertiveness, and listening effectively.

Section 02 (21265): Environmental Communication
- Kathy DeHaan
- In Person TR 12:15-1:30 PM
- This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary and timely field of environmental communication, including historical events, key concepts, legal landmarks, technological developments, and public controversies at the intersection of the environment, economics, and social justice. We will focus on persuasive communication in the public sphere from the past and present, as well as the constitutive power of communication to name and redefine what has been and might become possible in our environmental imaginations.

Section 03 (21611): Environmental Communication
- Kathy DeHaan
- In Person TR 1:40-2:55 PM
- This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary and timely field of environmental communication, including historical events, key concepts, legal landmarks, technological developments, and public controversies at the intersection of the environment, economics, and social justice. We will focus on persuasive communication in the public sphere from the past and present, as well as the constitutive power of communication to name and redefine what has been and might become possible in our environmental imaginations.

Section 04 (23609): Sport and Society
- Vince Benigni
- Asynchronous Online
- This course focuses on the societal impact of sport, oftentimes through a case-study/issue-based approach. Through an analytical lens, we will broach fan culture, sport economics, race and gender implications, power structures of teams and players, and social issues. A variety of readings will provide context, and prominent guest speakers will address issues that permeate the sports culture. Students will learn from both a historical perspective, as well as by regular exposure to popular/current mainstream media outlets.
Section 05 (21961): The Martin Scholars
- Tom Martin
- In Person M 10:00 AM-12:30 PM
- This course is reserved for students selected for the Martin Scholars program

Section 07 (21051): Communication and Public Opinion
- Namjin Lee
- In Person MW 2:00-3:15 PM
- This course is about the link between communication and public opinion. We will study what public opinion is, how it is formed, expressed, and modified, and how it influences our democratic institutions and processes. In particular, this course highlights that opinions are formed, refined, reinforced, and expressed primarily through communication processes. As those communication processes increasingly converge in the media (both mass and social) in our society, we focus our attention on the question of how various forms of media communication shape and represent public opinion. Communication professionals regularly create media messages that are intended to influence public opinion and often work in professional environments where they make use of public opinion poll data. Students who prepare their futures in these fields will find this course particularly helpful as it introduces them to the nature of public opinion and the ways of assessing it as well as to cutting-edge analytic tools and databases that will enable students to utilize vast amounts of existing opinion poll data.

COMM 410: Analysis of Communication Practice

Section 01 (20743): Digital Media and Dystopia in Science Fiction Film and Television
- Dave Parisi
- In Person TR 12:15-1:30 PM
- This course uses science fiction film and television to examine social and cultural attitudes toward technology, with an emphasis on dystopian (or negative) portrayals of digital media. Embracing the perspective that science fiction does not make offer about the future, but rather, provides a running commentary on the present, we will use sci fi to engage with issues such as media surveillance, virtual and augmented reality, algorithmic recommendation systems in social media and streaming platforms, the technological enhancement of humans through implantable and wearable technologies, and technology’s role in constructing ideas of race, class, gender, and sexuality. We will analyze a range of films and shows that includes Black Mirror, Network, Blade Runner, The Matrix, Black Panther, Ex Machina, and Her.

Section 02 (21426): Communicating Science
- Kathy DeHaan
- In Person TR 9:25-10:40 AM
- Strong science communication is critical across various platforms: broadcast and print media, technical journals, public health blogs, social media, etc. This class offers students the opportunity to develop advanced communication skills through an exploration of issues in science (health, technology, and the environment). With an emphasis on advanced research and writing abilities, we will study talented science communicators, focus on noteworthy topics, and develop portfolios that demonstrate mastery of subject matter and communication theory. Possible topics include: genetic engineering, climate change, viral
epidemics, or cyber-security. Possible assignments include: advocacy briefings, science blogs, op-ed articles, video projects, or public health programs. Along the way, we will political, ethical, and social implications of communicating science.

Section 03 (20744): Examining Hollywood Film
- Caroline Guthrie
- In Person MWF 1:00-1:50 PM; M 2:00-2:50 PM
- This is an advanced writing course designed to provide students with a thorough understanding of film as an art form, “Hollywood” as a cultural institution and commercial enterprise, and of the ideological frameworks within and around cinema. Students will examine a variety of theoretical frameworks of film criticism and be exposed to films from throughout the 20th century. In addition to broader questions of film as a form, the course will equip students to analyze films in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and genre.

Section 04 (21152): Literary Journalism
- Melissa Delaney
- In Person TR 1:40-2:55 PM
- This course will examine the elements, evolution and influence of literary journalism, a powerful format that melds storytelling and reportage to bring cultural issues to life by presenting them through the eyes of those living them. Rather than provide the traditional “who, what, where, when, why” bird’s-eye view of a news article (more than 100 were killed after Hurricane Ian ravaged the Southeast last week), literary journalism zooms in on a widowed, homeless mother of three as she struggles to access relief funds after the storm. We will analyze classic and contemporary examples of multimedia narrative nonfiction from journalists such as Joseph Mitchell, Truman Capote, Joan Didion, Rick Bragg and Jack Hitt and discuss their techniques and the impacts of their works on society. Students will learn about reporting techniques, including interviewing, observing and researching, and they will report and write own literary journalism feature stories.

Section 05 (20745): Rhetoric and Sport
- Julie Davis
- In Person MWF 11:00-11:50 AM
- This course will use rhetorical methods to explore the relationship between communication and sport. Focusing on sports and sporting events in the United States, this course will examine some of the myriad texts surrounding the industry and performance of sports and sporting events. By the end of the course, students will have written an original research paper using rhetorical methods to examine a text produced by a sports organization or individual and gained a greater understanding of the social issues influenced and reflected through the communication surrounding sports.