COMM 610: Social Science Methods in Communication Research - Dr. Srividya “Srivi” Ramasubramanian

This course aims to introduce graduate students to social scientific approaches of inquiry as conducted in the field of communication. It will cover critical topics and issues, including foundations of social science, research questions and hypotheses, research design, data collection, and the basics of data analysis. By the end of the course, students will be able to (1) critically evaluate social science research; (2) understand when to use specific social science research methodologies; and (3) design and implement an original research project using social science research methodologies.

COMM 637: Crisis Communication & Risk - Dr. Tim Coombs

The focus is on crisis communication theory and research as it applies to organizations. Part of understanding crisis communication is understanding how it interrelates with risk communication. There will be some discussion of public health crises as they exemplify the risk crisis connection. The primary outcomes are:

- To differentiate between the various crisis communication theories
- To apply various crisis communication to crisis cases
- To understand the relationship between crisis and risk communication
- To identify the key aspects and research methods associated with crisis communication theory
- To create original research that contributes to the growing body of crisis communication literature.

COMM 645: Rhetorical & Textual Methods - Dr. Tasha Dubriwny

This course introduces students to the “method” or art of rhetorical criticism. The course has two primary goals: 1) to create scholars who understand and appreciate rhetorical research, and 2) to create rhetorical critics who are equipped to undertake research centered on persuasive discourse ranging from public address to music videos, blogs, memorials, photographs and more. We will spend time considering how rhetorical criticism overlaps with and differs from other forms of textual analysis, and students will be introduced to a variety of critical perspectives (narrative, dramatism, feminist, and so on) that are important tools in any critic’s toolbox. Students will hone their own critical skills and complete a full piece of criticism suitable for future publication and/or conference submission.

COMM 654/ENGL 654: Classical Rhetoric - Dr. Josh DiCaglio (ENGL)

Origins of rhetoric in classical Greece and Rome; exploration of the relationship between philosophy, rhetoric, and democratic political culture; the contemporary relevance of classical thought to contemporary problems.
COMM 655: Rhetoric & Power - Dr. Nathan Crick

Rhetoric is about the social struggle over meaning, and hence, over power. It is about how people use language and symbols to replace one thing with another, and hence transform the way a society or community thinks, feels, and behaves. To understand this process, we must know what society is, what makes it possible, what obstacles it faces, what it fears and desires, what it acknowledges and ignores. Rhetoric is ultimately about how people act as agents of social change, using whatever symbolic power they can harness to move people from this place to that place. “Rhetorical theory” thus studies rhetoric as a cultural phenomenon rather than a merely persuasive one. It addresses broader questions concerning the function of rhetoric in the public sphere, the situational character of discourse, the role and character of audience, and the relationship between rhetoric and truth, the impact of the media and technology on message dissemination and interpretation, and the psychological and sociological structures that enable rhetorical persuasion. This course will include readings from Kenneth Burke, Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Marshall McLuhan, Jurgen Habermas, Manuel Castells, among others.

COMM 663: Information Processing & Media Effects - Dr. Johanna Dunaway

Survey of research and theory in media studies and telecommunication; review of literature on mass communication, media, culture, and society, media audiences, texts, industries and technologies; provides students an overview of the literature and theoretical orientation.

COMM 670: Message Design Strategies - Dr. Hart Blanton

A common aphorism is that “it’s not what you say but how you say it,” and this course will explore that thesis in depth. Its focus is on the decisions one faces in constructing messages designed to persuade or influence targets and the consequences those decisions might generate. Examples include the decision to try to persuade by appealing to emotions rather than to rational beliefs, to highlight the positive consequences of actions rather than negative consequences of inaction, to appeal to abstract principles rather than concrete consequences, and so on. The course will have a particular focus on persuasive messages designed to promote healthy decisions and behaviors, but it also has relevance to political, crisis, and strategic communication, as well as consumer and social marketing.

COMM 689: Communication, Intervention, and Change - Dr. Kevin Barge & Dr. Rick Street

This course addresses issues related to communication, intervention, and change. Too much of communication study focuses on the identification of social problems and does not give sufficient attention to designing interventions aimed at improving quality of life for people. This course identifies, explains, and designs communication interventions aimed at processes promoting positive change among individuals, relationships, organizations, and communities. Possible topics include Stage of Change Model, community-based action research, and large group interventions. It is for students who are interested in how communication can make a difference in the lives of human beings. Course assignments will focus on helping students develop an understanding of different possibilities for intervention and to align the selection of a particular strategy for intervention with the social problem it is intended to address and the dynamics of the local context.