COMM Graduate Seminars  
Fall 2018

COMM 615: Interpretive Methods (W: 6-9:00)  
Dr. Cara Wallis  

This course offers an introduction to and overview of qualitative, interpretive methods in communication research. We will cover a wide range of methods, including (but not limited to) ethnography, interviewing, focus groups, narrative, discourse analysis, and case studies, discussing key terms, underlying epistemologies, and design issues along the way. We will pay particular attention to the types of research questions that lead to particular methods as well as limitations of particular methods. We will also consider research ethics, positionality of the researcher, and self-reflexivity. Students will be given short assignments to experiment with various methods and will also be expected to develop their own qualitative research project in the form of a research proposal or seminar paper that engages with a field-based method.

COMM 632: Communication & Conflict (TR: 12:45-2:00)  
Dr. J. Kevin Barge  

Issues of difference and conflict pervade contemporary society. 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. This course will specifically focus on the way that dialogue can help manage conflict within organizations and communities. We will read original texts from three of the leading dialogue theorists—Mikhail Bakhtin, David Bohm, and Martin Buber—and explore how different approach to dialogue approach 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 658: Media & Identity (R: 6-9:00)  
Dr. Srivi Ramasubramanian  

This graduate seminar focuses on representations of identity in media and popular culture. The readings and discussions will center on how media and technology use shape and are shaped by identity. Media will be analyzed as sites for negotiation and construction of identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, physical/mental ability, nationality, and religion. The course will examine the impacts and effects of media stereotypes on both dominant and marginalized groups. It will also delve into positive storytelling, counter-narratives, and media initiatives that resist mainstream portrayals through activism and media justice. Students will have the opportunity to apply the concepts and theories from the course to develop an original final research paper relating to media and identity.
COMM 652/WGST 689/AFST 689: Gender & Black Freedom Movements (M: 6-9:00)
Dr. Kristan Poirot

This seminar examines the intersection of race and gender in rhetorics of and about black resistance (broadly) and black freedom movements (specifically) in the United States from the early nineteenth century onward. The course explores histories and analyses of gender/racial structures of power, as well as the specific traditions of black resistance in an effort to understand and practice intersectional analysis. The course seeks to enable critical and historical dexterity as readings will traverse a number of time periods, come from a variety of disciplines, and engage a variety of texts and sites (e.g., museums, speeches, images, performances, manifestoes, protests, etc.). This approach will offer students less of an exhaustive survey and more of a series of in-depth portraiture of resistance and the contexts through which protests and movements emerge(d) over time.

COMM 659: Citizenship and the Public Sphere (R: 6-9:00)
Dr. Nathan Crick

This course will explore the communicative and rhetorical foundations of the public sphere in democratic societies. Drawing from the discourses of philosophy, sociology, media ecology and rhetorical theory, it examines how speech, persuasion, propaganda, and deliberation create the cognitive and emotional unities that make possible collective decision and action. Theorists will include Kenneth Burke, Jurgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, John Dewey, Walter Lippmann, Walter Benjamin and Bruno Latour.

COMM 662: Survey of Media Studies (Critical Media Studies)
Dr. Patrick Burkart (M: 6-9:00)

The course focuses on critical media studies, but of necessity, also reviews non-critical approaches to media and telecommunications. Topics include culture, ideology, and hegemony; social life and cultural studies; political economy; the politics of representation; the postmodern turn, new media, and social networking; and globalization and social movements. Representative readings from media effects, information law and policy, and labor studies will also be covered.
COMM 669: Survey of Health Communication  
Dr. Richard Street (T: 4-6:30)

This course covers health communication theories and research in various contexts, including the clinical encounter, health care organizations, social networks, public health campaigns, and social media. While this is a survey course, we will focus on two themes across all the contexts—(a) pathways through which communication can contribute to improved health outcomes, healthier behavior and healthier communities and (b) the role of communication and information technologies to support these pathways. The final product from this course will be a research paper, either a research proposal or a stand-alone conceptual paper based on a literature review, that students can further develop for data collection or submission as a conference paper (and ultimately, a publication). This course is designed for students interested in in health communication, health education, organizational well-being, public health, and health-related uses of new media.

COMM 689: Political Communication  
Dr. Kirby Goidel (T: 6-9:00)

Politics has been famously described as “who gets what, when, and how in a society” and “the authoritative allocation of values for a society.” Even in authoritarian societies communication is critical to the functioning of the political system. Force alone is rarely enough. In democratic societies, persuasive communication is the currency of politics as political actors, media, and mass publics interact to form governments, craft policy, and select representatives. In this course, we explore this interaction beginning with an examination of democratic theory and how communication should occur in a democratic political system. We then consider empirical literature on public engagement, elite opinion leadership, the role of civic dialogue and discourse in a democratic society, and the responsibility of the news media to inform the public and facilitate communication between elites. Throughout the course, we will raise questions about the quality of civic discourse, the competency of the mass public, and the willingness of political elites to manipulate public opinion.