

# Department of Communication

## Spring 2025 Graduate Course Descriptions

### **COM 6121 - Organizational Communication**

**Dr. Peter Jensen**

This course provides an overview of extant research and theorizing in organizational communication. Over the course of the semester, we will explore organizational phenomena from a variety of perspectives as students become familiar with some of the key topics and theories that currently guide organizational communication scholarship. As we explore these various areas of scholarship, we will collectively interrogate the notion of what “counts” within the organizational communication canon.

While the purpose of this class is to introduce students to a broad spectrum of topics and theories in organizational communication, students will have the opportunity to follow particular questions and threads of research that resonate with their areas of interest. Building on the brief explorations of topics provided by course readings and discussions, students will be encouraged to build a more robust and nuanced understanding of the questions that drive their own study of organizations through their individual research projects.

### **COM 7345 - Critical Methods (Maldonado)**

**Dr. José Ángel Maldonado**

This course intersects critical methods and contemporary criticism in their mutual origin: the verb *krinein*, meaning “to discern” or “to judge.” From their common foundation, critical methods and contemporary criticism attend to varied crises (also from the verb *krinein*) with an eye toward the liberation of others and the expansion (and explosion) of humanism. Critical readers assume all forms of communication are context-specific and, therefore, imbued with the values of their time, place, and author(s). This course will survey the theoretical roots, contemporary sites, and types of analyses adopted by critics who identify, unveil, diagnose, and challenge the power relations underpinning society. Criticism—quintessential among critical methods—originates with dissatisfaction, disappointment, and frustration toward everyday life, social order, economic crises, political systems, and more. Therefore, demystifying the grand narratives of modernity becomes a critic’s lifelong journey. It is not surprising that those encountering cultural criticism will at times label it pessimistic. Confronted with the term, some critics have defended their stances as constructive or misunderstood, and therefore optimistic. Others, however, champion the label, stating that the condemnation of pessimism further evinces the destructive biases sustaining quotidian life.

Pessimistic criticism, the topic beneath the mantle of this course, becomes a first step beyond dissatisfaction and toward how we imagine an alternative world. Students will read and develop research archives, immerse themselves in participatory fieldwork, creatively perform critique, and draft representations, transcriptions, and/or translations attentive to complex social relations.

Readings include: Cabrera, Benjamin, Berlant, Dienstag, Edelman, Emmerling, Fanon, Gabara, Gramsci, Hall, Hasian, Leopardi, Nietzsche, Paz, Smilges, Taylor, Thacker, Schopenhauer, Spivak, & Wilderson, among others.

### **SPC 6934 - The Politics of Mental Health (Bartesaghi)**

**Dr. Mariaelena Bartesaghi**

This seminar approaches the inner world of mind and brain communicatively. By understanding mental health as political, we will consider how it is constituted in an assemblage of professional vision, first person narratives, economic forces, institutional arrangements, and cultural tropes throughout history. We will read work in ethnography, anthropology, psychoanalysis and cultural critique and engage in a variety of

empirical, theoretical and narrative writing that furthers your academic career. Because we are ourselves participants in the discourses of mind and brain, this class will offer a space for interrogation, and perhaps, reconstruction.

### **SPC 6934 - Applied Communication Research (Dean Kruzel)**

#### **Dr. Marleah Dean Kruzel**

This course explores how communication theory and research can address practical concerns and problems with the goal of providing implications for practice. Specifically, we will explore the history and current status of applied communication scholarship—including the controversies and dilemmas that applied communication scholars face, the common issues that confront them, the methods they employ, and the communication contexts they examine. Throughout the semester, we will be joined by prominent guest speakers in this field and integrate timely, socially relevant examples. Students will be assessed through a variety of assignments including a full scholarly research paper (e.g., proposal, data collection, analysis, write-up), a co-written, translational paper (e.g., white paper, blog, op-ed, etc.), a learning choices assignment (tailored to the student's interest area), reading reflections, and class participation.

### **SPC 6934 - Latinx & Popular Culture (Leon-Boys)**

#### **Dr. Diana Leon-Boys**

Through a Feminist Media Studies lens, Latinx and Popular Culture pursues an intersectional and transnational study of the history, production, representation, audience, and interpretation of Latinx popular culture. This interdisciplinary course sets out to answer some of the following questions: How do Latinxs construct identity (and have their identities constructed for them) via popular culture? How can we best understand the complex relationship between producer, consumer, and media text? How are Latinx stereotypes constructed, circulated, and contested in popular culture? In what ways does popular culture impact our understanding of ethnoracial identity, gender, sexuality, class, language, citizenship, and nation? To answer these questions, we will analyze contemporary material and view contemporary media. The final project for this class will be a research paper exploring Latinx popular culture.

### **SPC 6934 - Family Communication (Pollino)**

#### **Dr. Madison Pollino**

This graduate course will survey current research and theory of Family Communication from social-scientific, interpretive, and critical perspectives. Readings will cover topics like the various types of families that exist in modern society; communication among family members (e.g., parent-child, siblings, spouses); and several issues that affect families such as conflict, violence, trauma, illness, and loss. This course will also explore how issues like gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status intersect with these topics. This course has two primary goals: (1) to provide students with an introduction to current family communication research; and (2) to provide students with research experience commensurate with their level of expertise. To achieve these goals, students will engage in discussions of course readings, complete brief weekly papers that synthesize and critique assigned readings, and create a research proposal.

### **SPC 6934 - Communication, Media, & Democracy (Scacco)**

#### **Dr. Joshua Scacco**

This course provides an in-depth examination of the creation, use, and effects of mediated communication through various frameworks of democracy (e.g. deliberative, participatory, pluralistic). Particularly focusing on American democratic processes, the class assesses an evolving media environment and content sources as well as the role of publics in (re)shaping

foundational democratic processes and norms. Topics include models of and normative frameworks of democracy, public leadership, news, social/digital media platforms, and publics as well as counterpublics.