

UMASS DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

home > courses >

Current Undergraduate Courses

Spring 2008

All courses carry 3 credits unless otherwise specified.

118: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

Cronen 304 Machmer

Lecture. Our focus will be on acquiring a principled understanding of everyday, person-to-person interaction conceived as the process by which we create, maintain, and manage social experience. (Course capacity is LEC 1 (COMM)= 100, LEC 2 (Freshmen & Sophomores)=200/Total=300--Lecture 1 and Lecture 2 meet at the same time in the same room.

Course Eligibility*: LEC 1=Students who are already COMM majors, LEC 2=Freshmen & Sophomores.

Course Notes: COMM 118 is one of the 2 COMM courses that are prerequisites for applying to the COMM major. (The other prerequisite courses are COMM 121 and any "R2" course.)

121: Introduction to Media and Culture

Hanson 301 Machmer

Lecture. This course is an introduction to the social and cultural roles of mass media in advanced, industrial Western societies (primarily in the U.S.), focusing on how media and their surrounding economic framework affect cultural, political, and ideological processes. We will examine a range of media forms in social historical context (including print, telegraphy, cinema, broadcasting, cable, and computing), and will also consider different theoretical approaches to the study of media influence, the formation of meaning, and cultural power. (Course capacity is LEC 1 (COMM)= 100, LEC 2 (Freshmen & Sophomores)=200/ Total= (Course capacity is LEC 1 (COMM)= 100, LEC 2 (Freshmen & Sophomores)=200/ Total= 300—Lecture 1 and Lecture 2 meet at the same time in the same room.

Course Eligibility*: LEC 1=Students who are already COMM majors, LEC 2=Freshmen & Sophomores.

Course Notes: COMM 121 is one of the 2 COMM courses that are prerequisites for applying to the COMM major. (The other prerequisite courses are COMM 118 and any "R2" course.)

212: Cultural Codes in Communication

Bailey 307A Machmer

Lecture, Discussion. Communication as it creates, maintains, and transforms cultural identities, and, in turn, culture as it creates, maintains and transforms communication. Grounded in the substantive patterns of communication from areas such as Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, Polynesia, and the Far East. (Course Capacity is 150 total/ 6 discussions @25)

Course Eligibility*: Freshman and sophomores

Course Notes: Formerly numbered 312. If you have taken COMM 312: Cultural Codes in Communication, you cannot take COMM 212.

222: Media Programming and Institutions**Morgan 401 Machmer**

Lecture. An introduction to the entire media programming process, with a special focus on the institutional structures and constraints that shape the content of the electronic media. We will consider a variety of historical, technological, cultural, legal, political, economic, ethical, and other factors that influence programming, especially in terms of how they are playing out on the currently unfolding media scene. We will explore dynamic interactions among communications institutions and industries, new technologies, and governmental and other regulatory bodies, all in terms of their impact on the production, distribution, and consumption of electronic media content. (Course capacity is 229)

Course Eligibility*: COMM & Undeclared majors or students who have already taken COMM 118 or 121.

250: Interpersonal Communication (For Non-Majors Only!)**(SB) Staff**

Lecture, discussion. Focus on acquiring a principled understanding of person-to-person interaction conceived as the process by which we create, maintain, and manage social reality. Beginning from this perspective the course will provide the vocabulary and concepts that will enable the student to account for, analyze, and evaluate current interpersonal communication practice. (Course capacity is 50 Total/2 sections @ 25)

Course Eligibility*: For Non-majors.

Course Notes: Students who are planning to apply to the COMM major should take COMM 118, not COMM 250.

260: Public Speaking**Staff**

Lecture, lab. Theory of speech composition, presentation, and evaluation, and its relation to public discourse. Application of theory through the presentation of several speeches. Requirements include frequent in-class speaking assignments and related practices. (Course capacity is 100 Total/4 sections @ 25)

Course Eligibility*: COMM majors & Senior Non-majors

287: Advertising as Social Communication**Jhally 302 Machmer**

ON-LINE. This course will be taught "On-Line" with IN-CLASS exams. This course looks at advertising from the viewpoint of SOCIAL THEORY, that is, of how we can understand advertising's broad political, economic, social, and cultural role in modern society. The course will broadly examine the social role of advertising in consumer societies with a central focus on advertising's mediation of the modern person/object relationship, the satisfaction of needs, the constitution of popular culture, and the process of socialization. A wide-ranging theory locating advertising as a crucial institution at the intersection of media, popular culture, and the industry will be developed. This course is NOT a course in HOW to advertise. It does not approach advertising from a practitioner's viewpoint. (Course Capacity is 500)

Course Eligibility*: Any student

Course Notes: This course is being taught principally in an on-line format. All lectures will be available as streaming video on the internet. A high-speed connection is required. there will be two in-class exams, a mid-term exam and a final exam that students have to attend on the UMass-Amherst campus. Go to "www.comm287.com" at the start of the spring semester for instructions on how the course will proceed. All relevant information will be provided to students via their UMass email addresses (@student.umass.edu). Students will have the responsibility of regularly checking mail at this address.

297P: ST-Career Workshop**Joyner Career Services/Goodell Bldg.**

This is a 1-credit Mandatory Pass/Fail course

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior College of Social & Behavioral Science majors**297V: ST-Visual Communication****West 303 Machmer**

We live in a visually saturated media environment, and this course will introduce students to tools- of knowledge, theory, and vocabulary - to help make sense of the images that we are exposed to everyday. The course will consider images and their social contexts across genres, across time, and across cultures. Topics to be discussed in the class include but are not limited to: the relationship between real-life vision and looking at images, persuasive images, images as evidence, how people interpret images, and images in the context of war. In addition to regular reading, students are expected to attend class and participate in in-class discussions. (Course Capacity 229).

Course Eligibility*: Communication majors**297X: ST-Gender, Sex, and Representation****Jhally 302 Machmer**

Lecture. This course will examine the relationship between commercialized systems of representation and the way that gender and sexuality are thought of and organized in the culture. In particular, we will look at how commercial imagery impacts upon gender identity and the process of gender socialization. Central to this discussion will be the related issues of sexuality and sexual representation(and the key role played by advertising)

Course Eligibility*: Communication Majors Only**297Z: Special Topic Performance and Social Theory****Gencarella (Olbrys) 414 Machmer**

Lecture. This class surveys the relationship between performance studies, communication, and critical social theory from the Nineteenth Century to today. it introduces students to key concepts and ideas surrounding the concept of performance as they have evolved throughout the past century. Nineteenth Century theorists discussed include Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Raymond Williams. Topics include the politics of performance; the performance of gender, race, and class; the role of the body in performance; and the relationship between performance, language, and social reality. The main assignments are in class-exams.

Course Eligibility*: Communication Majors Only**318: Comparative Communication Theory****Chang 310 Machmer**

Lecture, discussion. Current approaches to communication theory. Emphasis on a comparative approach to

communication problems, and on a critical analysis of theoretical foundations. Theories considered include: systems theory, 20th-century rhetorics, reductionism, ethnographic studies, critical indicators, and critical cultural studies. (Course capacity is 25)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors

331: Program Process in Television

Staff

Course Director: David Maxcy, 120 South College

Lecture, studio. Introduction to concepts and techniques of television production, through lectures, lab exercises, and guided production projects. All 3 sections will meet together once a week for a 50-minute lecture with the course director. Each section will then meet once a week for a 3-hour lab session. (Course capacity is 36)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior, Junior & Sophomore Communication majors

342: History of Film II

Norden 409 Machmer

Lecture, lab (screening), discussions. A survey of key events and representative films that mark the history of worldwide cinema since 1950. In addition to identifying and providing access to major works, the course is designed to facilitate the study of the various influences (industrial, technological, aesthetic, social, cultural, and political) that have shaped the evolution of the medium.(Course capacity is 125 Total/5 sections @25)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors

375: Writing as Communication

Staff

Lecture, discussion, lab. Development and improvement of the student's writing, research, and critical-thinking skills. Frequent writing/editing assignments. Writing/discussion will focus on contemporary issues in communication and their larger cultural contexts. Fulfills COMM writing requirement. Double majors may fulfill their COMM writing requirement by fulfilling the requirement in their other major. (Course capacity is 120 Total/6 sections @ 20)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors

Course Notes: Restricted to Communication Seniors and Juniors only.

397II: Special Topic - Sexuality and Film

Ades 406 Machmer

Lecture, discussion. Since the inception of the moving picture, the most controversial, titillating and complex subject on film has been sex. From Mae West style to innuendo to the sexual liberation of the sixties to ever more graphic sexuality on film today, we have been shocked and mesmerized by sex in the movies for more than a century. This course will explore the problems and possibilities of depicting sex in the cinema. From the earliest depiction of sexuality in motion pictures to the latest trend of unsimulated sex in mainstream film, this course will ask: do we learn anything from sex on screen? Who controls what we see and why? And is there such a thing as going to far? We will look at a variety of genres that have treated sex and sexuality in the cinema including horroe films, sexploitation, queer cinema, youth films and European Films. In addition, we will examine the history of the ratings system and censorship in the United States,

the depiction of sex in Hollywood vs, the independent film world, the difference between art and pornography, the male and female gaze, and how shifting social and political climates influence what we see on screen. Film selections range from Elia Kazan's *Splendor in the Grass* to Catherine Breillat's *Fat Girl* to Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain*.

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors only.

397JJ: Special Topic - Risk Communication

Romantan 412 Machmer

Lecture, discussion. This course looks at media as global institutions concerned with the production and communication of knowledge about risks. Drawing on scholarship on media, risk and globalization, we will examine topics such as: globalization and the diffuse governance of risks by states, media, corporations, and civil society; risk representations in mainstream and alternative media; "lay" assessments of harm and uncertainty; the dynamics of blame allocation-individual vs. collective responsibility. Case studies include environmental and technological disasters, epidemics (e.g. AIDS, bird flu), moral risk (e.g. the Danish cartoons), and social risks associated with economic globalization (e.g. welfare, labor rights). Students will carry out individual and group projects during the semester. (Course Capacity 43).

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors only.

397M: Special Topic - New Media Technologies and Social Change

Fuentes (New Faculty beginning in the Fall 2007) 308 Machmer

Lecture, discussion. This course addresses main debates and perspectives on the economic and social transformation associated with the spread of new media technologies, from various forms of collaborative and social software, to mobile phones and wireless broadband delivery systems. Assuming a social shaping of technology approach, we will examine topics such as: peer to peer networks and emerging forms of social production; mobile phones, social networks and social protest; and broadband delivery systems, social inequalities and the digital divide. The course will provide participants with tools to critically assess and engage these debates, identifying their implications for social research and public policy. Grading will be based on class participation, individual short assignments, and a group project and presentation. (Course capacity is 43)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors only.

397LL: Special Topic - Health Communication

Suopis

Lecture, discussion. This course addresses health issues from interpersonal, mass media and critical communication perspectives. Communication theories will be applied to a variety of health issues including the physician-patient relationship, the design of health media campaigns, the pharmaceutical industry, and the influence of health promotion on human behavior. Intercultural and organizational health communication will also be discussed. (Course Capacity 43)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior COMM majors

397MM: Special Topic - Culture and the News

Miezan

Lecture, discussion. Culture and the news examines the social, political, economic, legal, ethical, moral, and cultural elements that comprise what is routinely called "news" in the U.S. the course asks questions about the news gathering process, historical ideas and attitudes about news, and whether news maintains or questions the status quo, forwards specific agendas, or functions as a neutral arbiter of "facts," "truth," and "information." (Course capacity is 30)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior COMM majors

397NN: Special Topic - Race, Gender, and the Sitcom

Shabazz (New Faculty beginning in the Fall 2007)

Lecture, discussion. This course examines the situation comedy from sociological and artistic perspectives. We will seek, first of all, to understand how situation-comedy is a rich and dynamic meaning-producing genre within the medium of television. Secondly we will work to dissect narrative structures, and the genre's uses of mise-en-scene, cinematography/videography, editing, and sound to create specific images of the family through social constructions of race, class, and gender. In addition we will use various critical methods such as semiotics, genre study, ideological criticism, cultural studies, and so on to interrogate why the sitcom form since its inception in the 1950s has remained one of the most popular genres for audiences and industry personnel alike and assess what the genre might offer us in terms of a larger commentary on notions of difference and identity in the US and beyond. (Course capacity is 43)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors only.

397SS: Special Topic - Youth, Democracy and the Entertainment Industries

Saxe

Lecture, discussion. The entertainment industries are inordinately focused on young people as they represent a tremendous market force. Yet how do the imperatives of this market-driven media culture correspond with principles of democracy? As an action research course, the mapping of key features of this terrain --- youth socialization, advertising and consumption; media oligopoly and cross-marketing; cultural appropriation and hip hop; cable, the internet and government regulation -- will guide applied research around particular sites of power we've identified. This may include an assessment of youth aggregate purchasing power in Massachusetts, Comcast costs and profits, university investments

in the entertainment industries, and a survey of political initiatives for media democracy. (Course capacity is 30)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior COMM majors

397T: Special Topic - Contemporary World Cinema

Ciecko 306 Machmer

Lecture. this course offers an overview of recent filmmaking from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and indigenous/ diasporic cinemas. (Course Capacity 43)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors or permission of instructor.

397VV: Special Topic - Women in Cinemas of the African Diaspora

Shabazz 408 Machmer

Lecture, discussion. What is an Afrocentric vision of woman and what does a woman's vision of Africa say about being African and Black around the world? These are some of the questions explored in this course on women, identity, and Afrocentric film practices. An objective of the course is to introduce students to the evolution of African women in all aspects of the cinema as image and as image makers. This course not only explores depictions of women, but especially women of color who direct, produce, and write films within the African Diasporic world. Specifically we look at discourses about women and works by filmmakers on and off the continent of Africa that take both an historical and global approach, in terms of issues of representation and film practice. We will study the different and parallel ways these filmmakers write their own sense of identity into their works about who they are as filmmakers speaking for and about issues that may be

important to women of African descent. We will look at the various political, social and cultural roles of African women in the visual media of film, video, and television and engage in critical perspectives that examine how Black and African women explore subjectivity, the body, and positionality within the Diaspora. Some of the films we will study include films from Nigeria, Algeria, France, Great Britain, and the U.S. such as Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Everyone's Child*; *These Hands* by Flora Mbugu-Schelling; Ngozi Onwurah's *Monday's Girls*; [Euzhan Palcy's Rue cases nègres](#) or *Sugar Cane Alley*; *Daughters of the Dust* by Julie Dash; *Compensation* by Zeinabu irene Davis. This course includes an evening lab and some of the films will be screened during the Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival as a part of the Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies at the University of Massachusetts. (Course capacity is 43).

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors, or permission of instructor

397ZZ: Special Topic - Television Criticism

CYousman E34C Machmer

Lecture, discussion. At the beginning of the 21st century television is still the most widely-used and influential communication medium. This course takes a comprehensive approach to television criticism including the economics of television, television genres, television codes and conventions, the narratives and imagery of television, and the ideological and cultural importance of television. The central focus of the course is on conducting critical analysis of television programs. (Course capacity is 30)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors.

426: Media Violence

Scharrer 309 Machmer

Lecture, discussion, optional service learning project. The concerns, controversies, theoretical perspectives, and body of knowledge on the issue of violence in television and video games are examined. All students will work in groups to conceptualize and carry out an original research project on the topic. Students will also be given the option to participate in a service learning project which involves the design, delivery, and evaluation of a media literacy program on the topic of media violence for local elementary school students. (Course capacity is 25)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior Communication majors

Class Notes : Formerly numbered and titled COMM 497S. If you have taken COMM 497S: ST-Television Violence, you cannot take COMM 426

433: Advanced Television Production/Direction

Maxcy 120 South College

Lecture, Studio. Intensive workshop course in advanced concepts and techniques of studio-based television production, with a focus on the direction of live programs. Under the supervision of the instructor, each student will produce and direct 2 studio projects the second of which will be a 3-act drama aired live on HSCN Channel 15 and Channel 19. (Course capacity is 10)

Course Eligibility*: Any Student

Course Prerequisites: COMM 331

441: Principles and Techniques of Film-Style Production

Geisler 411 Machmer

Lecture, studio. A hands-on introduction to single-camera filmmaking using digital video camcorders (electronic field production) or 16mm cameras and non-linear (computer-based) editing. Students will learn concepts of pre-production, shot composition, lighting, visual storytelling, continuity editing, and production & post production audio as they plan, shoot and edit exercises and complete projects. A "real world" editing project (scenes from an episode of "Highlander") will also be included. (Course capacity is 12)

Course Eligibility*: Open to Senior & Junior Communication majors

Course Prerequisites: COMM 297D or COMM 331 or permission of instructor.

Course Notes: Junior and Senior COMM majors who have completed either COMM 231 (formerly COMM 297D) or COMM 331 may add this course through Spire. Others may add only by permission of the instructor.

491A: Seminar - Media and Construction of Gender

Phillips 406 Machmer

Seminar. This course draws on research and theory in psychology, sociology, gender and cultural studies, and related fields to examine how various forms of media shape our understandings of ourselves and others as gendered beings. We will discuss how media messages not only influence our behaviors, but also permeate our very senses of who we are from early childhood. Through a critical examination of fairy tales, text books, advertisements, magazines, television, movies, and music, students will explore the meanings and impacts of gendered messages as they weave with cultural discourses about race, class, sexuality, disability, age, and culture. (Course capacity is 20)

Course Eligibility*: Senior Communication majors

491C: Seminar - Media & Children's Culture

Phillips 406 Machmer

Seminar. In this seminar, we will consider how children make meaning of and navigate through their complex relationships with media and consumer culture, as well as the implications of those relationships for children's individual and collective well-being. We will draw on social and cultural theory and research to examine a wide range of topics, including: the nature and politics of children's programming; gendered toys and games; the sexualization and commodification of children in advertising; psychological, social, and familial impacts of marketing strategies aimed at children; media portrayals of childhood disorders; depictions of race, class, gender, and sexuality in ads, programming, fairy tales, and classroom materials; cultural, environmental, and health consequences of childhood consumerism; the roles of various media in the construction of adolescent identity; the possibilities of early media literacy; and the lived realities of children around the world whose labor creates the products promoted to children in Western cultures. Throughout the course, we will ask ourselves: What is child culture? How have our cultural constructions of childhood shaped our sense of who children are, what they need, and what type of developmental environments we, as a society, should provide for them?

Course Eligibility*: Senior Communication majors

491S: Seminar - Introduction to Semiotics

Chang 310 Machmer

Lecture, Discussion. Semiotics is the study of meaning within society. It deepens our understanding of culture, communication and philosophy, and provides us with a theoretical and practical framework for analyzing the world. The

course will introduce and develop the semiotic approach, using literature, politics, film, TV, music, and our everyday surroundings and conversations. (Course capacity is 20)

Course Eligibility*: Senior Communication majors

493E: Seminar - Screenwriting

Norden 409 Machmer

Lecture, discussion. An examination of the art, craft, and business of screenwriting from theoretical and practical perspectives. Topics include screenplay format and structure, story, plot and character development, dialog and scene description, visual storytelling, pace and rhythm, analysis of professional and student scripts and films, and more. Written work includes three screenwriting projects. The focus is on writing for narrative films and, to a limited extent, TV programs. (Course capacity is 20)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior Communication majors

497F: Special Topic - Film Documentary

Geisler 411 Machmer

Lecture, discussion. This course combines critical analysis with a hands-on introduction to producing a documentary. Students will view, analyze, and critique all or part of fifteen works by filmmakers from Robert Flaherty ("Nanook of the North") to Morgan Spurlock ("Supersize Me"), to further their understanding of the documentarian's craft and art. Students will also do pre-production (research and scripting) on their own short documentary, along with shorter hands-on exercises in writing narration, interview techniques, use of archival sources, etc. (Course capacity is 20)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior Communication majors only.

Course prerequisite: COMM 240 or COMM 297D/231 or COMM 340 or COMM 342 or COMM 493E or consent of instructor

497WW: Special Topic - Global Culture Industries

Geddes 307B Machmer

Lecture, discussion. This course takes an in-depth look at the economic, technological and symbolic logic of global cultural industries and their implications for worldwide audiences. These industries include film, television, sound recording, publishing, the Internet and tourism. They will be studied within the wider context of 'globalization', governance, digital convergence and social movements. Students will be able to focus on one of the culture industries as a topic of choice. (Course capacity is 25)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior COMM majors

Course Notes: The following courses are highly recommended before taking COMM 497WW: Introduction to Global Communication, Social Impact of the Media, or the equivalent by way of courses like Advertising as Social Communication, Popular Culture, Political Economy of the Media.

497XX: Special Topic - Mass Communication Theories and Research Methods

Miezan Machmer

Lecture, discussion and practice. Survey of methods used in communication research including quantitative and qualitative methods; formulating research questions, determining the appropriate method, planning and designing the research, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation. Class will embark upon a practical research project that will embrace various research methods. (Course capacity is 25)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior COMM majors

497ZZ: Special Topic - Media Literacy**Bergstrom**

Lecture, discussion. This course will provide an overview of the theories, tensions, and debates within the study of media literacy/media education as they apply to K-12 classrooms and community endeavors. Current research studies in this area will be examined, and students will have the opportunity to design their own media literacy curricula. (Course capacity is 25)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior COMM majors

593D: Seminar - Advanced Screenwriting**Geisler 411 Machmer**

Lecture, discussion. Building upon the concepts learned in the introductory course (COMM 493E - Screenwriting Seminar), this class will involve an intensive workshop environment where students receive continuing, in-depth feedback on their work in progress, as they strive for professional competence in feature-length theatrical screenwriting or writing for episodic television. Two professional screenplays and the films or TV shows produced from them will also be analyzed as students delve deeper into the writer's art and craft. Students will complete either 60 pages of a feature length motion picture screenplay or a complete episode for an existing dramatic TV show, or two episodes for a current sitcom. (Course capacity is 20)

Course Eligibility*: Senior & Junior Communication majors

Course prerequisite: COMM 493E or another college-level screenwriting course or permission from instructor