

Spring 2026 SJMC Course List and Descriptions

100-Level Courses

JOURN 150: Introduction to Sports Communication

Instructor(s): Schrager

We explore the central activities and concepts related to various communication professions involved in the realm of sports. These activities sports journalism, sports broadcasting, sports marketing communications, and sports public relations. We also consider major social issues that impinge upon these professions including how sports and media intersect with concerns associated with race and gender. We conclude with an exploration of strategies that students can put into place now and in the future to build careers in sports communications and beyond. *Counts toward the Sports Communication Certificate.*

JOURN 162: Mass Media in Multicultural America

Instructor(s): Abishek

An introduction to the roles and functions of print, film, electronic and digital media in multicultural America. International comparisons highlight differences and commonalities in the social and cultural position of mass media in societies with racial and ethnically diverse populations. *Counts toward the Sports Communication Certificate (Social Impact course).*

JOURN 163: Gender & Sexuality in Mass Communication

Instructor(s): Palmer

This class focuses on issues of gender and sexuality, specifically in the news and entertainment media. We will look at women's roles in producing media content, how women are represented in writing and images, and how women are mobilizing via social media. We will also look at the representation of masculinity in the mass media, remembering the important point that masculinity is also gendered and sexualized. Finally, we will look at the representation of queer-identified and transgender subjects both on and off-screen, as well as tracing the intersections between race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

JOURN 175: Media Fluency & the Digital Age

Instructor(s): Dalrymple

The digital media landscape is rapidly evolving, and it has major ramifications on how we view and interact with political, social and economic landscapes. Become more fluent in digital media by examining current and emerging media and the issues and opportunities surrounding it, while producing and consuming digital media content. Being "digitally fluent" is considered a key 21st Century skill. So, what does it mean to be fluent in digital media? It goes way beyond putting a "snap" on your Story or posting to Facebook. It's a matter of knowing which medium is best given what you want to say - and who you want to converse with! Critically examine and engage with this media landscape. Analyze how digital media content is created and digested

by various audiences across social, political, and economic environments. *Counts toward the Digital Media Analytics Certificate.*

JOURN 176: Special Topics in Mass Communication: The History of Women in U.S. Media (Honors Only)

Instructor(s): McGarr

Why do we wear make-up? Why did women journalists have more freedom in the nineteenth century than the twentieth? Is Wonder Woman a feminist? How does Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" really fit into women's history? The History of Women in U.S. Media is a collaborative seminar designed to examine the historical relationship between women as consumers and as producers and media, including journalism and pop culture, with a focus on the twentieth century. Student participation is extremely important, and students are expected to attend all sessions and complete all readings.

200-Level Courses

JOURN 201: Introduction to Mass Communication

Instructor(s): Wang

This is an introduction to how the mass media are organized and how they function in modern society, their technological bases, economic and political foundations, and social implications. This combined lecture/discussion course introduces students to the interlinked entertainment, strategic communication, and journalism aspects of our mass media, and to the broad theoretical, historical, and critical perspectives that mass communication scholars use to understand and analyze these media processes. This course also fulfills the campus Communications-B requirement for refining your communication skills through written assignments, peer review, and revision. For those students considering careers in the media, this course should help you make informed decisions about your professional life and will serve as the prerequisite to entering the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. *Counts toward the Digital Media Analytics Certificate.*

JOURN 202: Mass Communication Practices

Instructor(s): Forster

JOURN 202 is designed to lay a foundation of basic communication skills, including writing, editing, gathering information, working with data, and presenting stories through varying media forms. Students develop an appreciation of how different media influence message design by communicators and reception by audiences. The course helps students build the beginnings of a toolkit of conceptual and practical skills for media work in journalism, strategic communication and hybrids. On their own and in teams, students spend the bulk of their time building writing skills and critical thinking abilities, as those are the two elements common to success in any field.

JOURN 203: Information for Communication

Instructor(s): Dalrymple

This course aims to develop knowledge of the various informational sources used by professional journalists and marketing professionals, develop the skills necessary to evaluate the validity of different forms of information, and to learn how to analyze and present information in forms that are useful to journalists and strategic communication professionals.

300-Level Courses

JOURN 335: Intermediate Reporting

Instructor(s): Hastings, Robinson

Following JOURN 202, this class will provide you with a platform to practice the tools of the trade. The readings, lectures, discussions and assignments are meant to make you a more sophisticated reporter and to improve your writing and journalism production skills while providing you with a sense of purpose in journalism practice. This class is all about smart reporting and writing *on deadline*. It is about honing your critical thinking abilities. You will be developing your skills in pattern recognition, in finding the behind-the-obvious story, and in going beyond the superficial report. Journalism legalities, ethics and multimedia/interactive considerations will thread the entire course. We will talk specifically about reporting news in the digital era, such as thinking about journalism as a *process* as opposed to a *product*. *JOURN 335 and JOURN 345 cannot be taken concurrently. Successful completion of JOURN 202 is required.*

JOURN 345: Principles of Strategic Communication

Instructor(s): Long

This course introduces strategic communication for students interested in advertising, public relations, health communication, social marketing and political campaigns. It is designed to provide students with grounding in the basic concepts that strategic communication practitioners use to do their jobs. This course blends theoretical and practical concerns and concepts that pose challenges for strategic communicators. In summary, the course provides students with a basic understanding of the following areas:

- The strategic communication industry, including advertising and public relations firms
- The ethics and regulation of strategic communication
- The role of strategic communication in marketing products, ideas and people
- Various components of strategic communication campaigns
- The different professional specialties within the field of strategic communication
- The class is centered on the semester-long development of a campaign plan in which student agencies compete with one another to “pitch” for an account.

JOURN 335 and JOURN 345 cannot be taken concurrently. Successful completion of JOURN 202 is required.

400-Level Reporting/Multimedia Journalism Courses

JOURN 415: Science & Environmental Journalism

Instructor(s): Dalrymple

As global events continue to shape our understanding of public health, climate change, technology, and conflict, it is impossible to ignore how deeply science intersects with everyday life. Science and environmental stories are everywhere, influencing policy, culture, and community action. This course introduces students to the art and practice of science and environmental journalism with an emphasis on community-centered storytelling. Students will learn to critically evaluate scientific information for accuracy, credibility, and timeliness while developing the skills to translate complex ideas into clear, engaging, and creative multimedia narratives.

Counts toward the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism concentration.

JOURN 420: Investigative Reporting

Instructor(s): Schrager

JOURN 420 students will create in-depth and original research and reporting with a focus on social justice and accountability. They can bring their own investigative idea to class or choose from an assortment of others to produce a substantive piece at the end of the semester. They will work collaboratively with each other as well as with professional staff from the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism and other media outlets on stories to be published or broadcast in Wisconsin. Students will learn higher-level reporting and writing/producing skills including identifying and interviewing sources, locating relevant records, summarizing reports, analyzing data and learning to write or broadcast long-form stories in a way that engages and informs but avoids sensationalism and editorializing. Successful completion of J335

Intermediate Reporting or an equivalent course is required. Open to graduate students. *Counts toward the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism concentration.*

JOURN 475: Special Topics in Advanced Concepts & Skills: Introduction to Open-Source Intelligence

Instructor(s): Dodds

Open-source intelligence (OSINT) is the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information gathered from publicly available sources to produce actionable intelligence. Recently, open-source investigations have emerged as a new practice in journalism, combining forensic skills with increasingly sophisticated public tools and widely available data. As a result, OSINT specialists have become some of the most sought-after professionals in contemporary journalism. In this course, we will review the fundamental techniques for conducting open-source investigations, including creative search methodologies for researching traceless, anonymous, or pseudonymous accounts. The curriculum covers intuitive reverse search techniques for digital investigations, as well as specialized skills in geolocation and chronolocation of visual materials. Students will gain hands-on experience using mapping and satellite services to corroborate information and track developments over time. The course also addresses critical practices for archiving digital materials to preserve evidence that may

disappear from the internet and teaches methods for tracking transportation services such as naval vessels and aircraft for investigative purposes. *Counts toward the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism concentration.*

400-Level Courses Counting Towards BOTH Reporting/Multimedia Journalism & Strategic Communication

JOURN 456: Long Form Video

Instructor(s): Schrager

The goal for the course is to produce long-form video stories. The long form, or documentary style, illuminates a person, event or issue. These story forms can move people to action or shine a light on an issue not known to many. In this course, students will produce projects that build on skills that eventually lead to creation of a long form video story. You will learn how to research, organize, record and edit for this form of journalism. Video experience helpful but not required. *Counts towards BOTH the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism & Strategic Communication concentrations.*

JOURN 457: Storytelling Through Sound

Instructor(s): Hermann

Have you ever listened to an audio story that takes you in your mind's eye to the subject? Have you ever wondered how sound can paint that picture, in ways different than video or print or other forms of storytelling? In this class we will produce audio rich storytelling. If you were a fan of "Serial" you will know that audio and podcasting are two of the hottest areas in journalism. Programs such as This American Life, StoryCorps and Radio Lab have added serial podcasts as a way of talking intimately to listeners. You'll research and capture your subject using only sound elements. The well-researched, yet intimate relationship possible with this kind of journalism gets in on the ground floor of media that people listen to on every device. *Counts towards BOTH the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism & Strategic Communication concentrations.*

JOURN 475: Special Topics in Advanced Concepts & Skills: A Community-Based Learning Course for Professional Communicators

Instructor(s): Robinson

Class application required. Due Oct. 24 at 11:59pm. <https://forms.gle/NXzjnewcrA9mcdnB6>

This is a unique, debut 4-credit J400-level skills class for Spring 2026 that counts for both journalism and strategic communication tracks in which you will learn how to: One, teach basic storytelling skills (journalism, persuasive writing, memoir/personal essay-- **I will train you!**); Two, work collaboratively on **solutions-based** storytelling project about housing insecurities and youth mental health with adult community members (this might include publishable content or even an event we plan and implement), and, Three, produce your own solutions-focused, community-based content in partnership with a local nonprofit or something that you come up with on your own that makes sense for your portfolio. Our 15 SJMC students will be paired with 15 students at the [UW Odyssey Project](#), which is a program for non-traditional

adults experiencing low income who are seeking college degrees. At the end of the class, in addition to the lived experience of working in community and learning how to teach, you will **have two pieces of content to put on your resume and the opportunity to earn freelance money** for publication in [Madison Commons](#), our School's community-based news and information site. For this class, we will be in **Vilas' Nafziger Conference Room on Monday nights 5:30-7:30**, and **at UW Odyssey Project at 2238 S. Park St. on Wednesdays 5:30-7:30 pm**. We will have free transportation to the Wednesday site as well as dinner and childcare available for the South Park location (and maybe we can figure out some kind of food for the Monday nights.) You must have taken either J335 or J345 to apply! (taking it this semester counts). This class is also partnered with the Morgridge Center for Public Service, which will pay for the Lyfts we will take Wednesday nights as well as to (most) any other community sites you choose to partner with. **The deadline to apply is Friday, October 24 at midnight!** If you want to get a sense of the kind of work we will be doing with the class, [check out this page on Madison Commons](#) where you can see what we did last year to prep for the class, including building trust with Odyssey: <https://madisoncommons.org/category/community-collaborations/>. [And here you can see some essays](#) that Odyssey students did for the prerequisite Odyssey class: <https://madisoncommons.org/category/your-own-stories-odyssey-project/>. *Counts towards BOTH the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism & Strategic Communication concentrations.*

400-Level Strategic Communication Courses

JOURN 464: Public Relations Strategies

Instructor(s): Pierce

This course explores public relations strategic management and planning, as part of an integrated strategic communications plan. Students will learn and explore how to develop PR and content strategies and learn about a wide range of PR tactics and methods: crisis communications, thought leadership, reputation management, community and government relations, media relations, digital PR (aka social media), and word-of-mouth/viral marketing. Includes exploration of PR ethics and PR industry regulations and organizational structures. Students will write key public relations communication pieces throughout the semester and develop and present a 'real' PR plan to an actual client. This course counts towards the Digital Studies Certificate. *Counts toward the Strategic Communication concentration.*

JOURN 465: Social Media Marketing

Instructor(s): Pierce

This course explores social media marketing communications as part of an integrated strategic communications plan. Students will learn and explore a variety of social media campaign elements in the class, including social media audits, social media strategy, social media policies, and content strategy for a wide variety of social mediums - from 'tried and true' campaigns on Facebook and Twitter, to Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn, to name a few. Includes exploration of ethical and legal considerations of social media within a campaign framework. Students develop and present a 'real' social media campaign for an actual client/business. This course counts towards the Digital Studies Certificate. *Counts toward the Strategic Communication concentration.*

500-Level Courses

JOURN 563: Law of Mass Communication

Instructor(s): Culver

JOURN 563 introduces students to legal principles and doctrines used to resolve conflicts involving freedom of expression generally and freedom of the press specifically. It is also designed to give students a fundamental working knowledge of how to solve common legal problems in media and public communication and how to use the law. Topics covered include First Amendment theory, censorship, compelled speech, regulation of political expression, telecommunication regulation, new technologies and regulation, libel, invasion of privacy, access to information, regulation of commercial speech, intellectual property, and journalist's privilege.

JOURN 565: Effects of Mass Communication

Instructor(s): Riddle

This course will provide students with an in-depth understanding of individual level media effects. Specifically, this course examines the processes through which mass media impact beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. The goal of this course is to give students an understanding of how academic scholars conceptualize and study media effects, the underlying mechanisms at work, key research findings and recognize the real-world applicability of research findings. This course will cover a wide array of mass media (e.g. television, movies, magazines, streaming platforms, video games, social media and more) and theories of media effects and processes (cultivation theory, 3rd person perception, framing, priming, edutainment) within a variety of content domains, including news, politics, violence, sex, advertising and communication campaigns.

JOURN 566: Communication and Public Opinion

Instructor(s): Rojas

This course is an examination of the concept of public opinion and provides an integrated approach to learning about (a) the philosophical and normative assumptions surrounding public opinion, (b) the theoretical approaches to studying public opinion formation and change, (c) the research processes involved in measuring public opinion, and (d) the reactions of the public to polling, news information and marketing communications. We will study public opinion as it intersects with the mass media, policymakers, and mass marketers. The goal is to provide students with a solid understanding of public opinion, as well as the knowledge of how to conduct research opinion polling to assemble knowledge. One major philosophical tenet of this class is that one of the most effective ways to learn is by being actively involved in the subject matter ("learning by doing"). In lectures and labs, we will address the logistics of public opinion survey research. In order to get hands-on experience understanding the connection between mass opinion and mass communication, students will participate in a group project that requires them to either highlight a trend in public opinion and link it to shifts in media content or conduct analysis of public opinion poll data and relate opinion to individual differences of respondents.

600-Level Courses

JOURN 601: Career Colloquium

Instructor(s): Long

This is a weekly, one-credit graduate undergraduate colloquium series, sponsored by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Students enrolled in the class get tips to improve key 'first job search' tools (LinkedIn profile, Badger Bridge, resume, interviews, etc.) and explore a wide variety of post-undergraduate communication career options. We will focus on opportunities and challenges in a wide variety of communication fields, from digital /social media, advertising and public relations to podcasting, online news and TV broadcasting. Each week, we'll hear from a different guest lecture or a panel discussion, focused on a particular communications career. *Counts toward the Sports Communication Certificate (Professional Enrichment requirement).*

JOURN 649: Brand Strategy in Advertising & Integrated Communications

Instructor(s): Long

Provides a comprehensive introduction to classical consumer packaged goods brand management by exploring the intersection of marketing, advertising, and strategy to grow sales profitably over time with winning products and effective campaigns. Illuminates the foundational concepts, frameworks, and tools brand management professionals use to drive awareness, consideration, trial and repeat of their offerings to increase market share and establish long-lasting brand equity with target consumer groups. Engages leadership and positioning principles to cultivate and communicate one's professional and personal brand in any career or life path.

JOURN 658: Communication Research Methods

Instructor(s): Rojas

This is a course in research methods for those with little or no experience in the conduct of communication research. The goal of this course is to provide you with a critical framework for evaluating communication research and some first-hand experience on the research process. For that experience, we'll split into small groups that will design and carry out an original research project. The class is open to undergraduate students who have been admitted to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and to graduate students in any major or field. No previous work in statistics is necessary. Communication research, like all rigorous science, involves a complex set of skills. There's a lot to learn. But if you ever wondered about something, like why people think what they think or do what they do, this is the way to find out. And the process of finding out can be interesting and fun.

Counts toward the Digital Media Analytics Certificate (Skills Requirement).

JOURN 669: Literary Aspects of Journalism

Instructor(s): McGarr

This class examines journalism as a form of literature. What makes for “good” (or bad) literary journalism? We’ll read a broad range of non-fiction genres, topics, and authors and develop the skills to analyze and discuss them. We’ll learn more about narrative non-fiction as a category as we read it in long-form (books) and short form (essays and articles). All of this will be done in consideration of developing critical thinking skills around storytelling as well as making ourselves better writers.

JOURN 675: Topics in Government and Mass Media: Misinformation in the Age of Digital Media

Instructor(s): Kim

This is a seminar designed for graduate students and advanced undergraduate students (juniors or seniors) who have an interest in learning about research on misinformation/disinformation. The course covers a wide range of forms of misinformation/disinformation (propaganda, [false/"fake"] news, conspiracies, rumors) in different contexts (e.g., election interference; political campaigns; influence campaigns, public health campaigns). *Counts toward the Digital Media Analytics Certificate (Social Impact Requirement).*

JOURN 677: Concepts and Tools for Data Analysis and Visualization

Instructor(s): Dahlke, Lecturer

Researchers, journalists, companies and organizations are now inundated with data, and rapidly innovating new ways to create, access and analyze those data. There is great need for people who are able to use digital information to investigate important questions, draw useful insights, and communicate those insights to others—while also being realistic and honest about what data can and cannot tell us. This course offers a combination of conceptual training, instruction in specific tools (e.g., the statistical programming language *R*) for data analysis and visualization, and the opportunity to put new skills to use in a final project. J677 is a hybrid concepts and skills course. Readings, lectures, discussions and assignments will deal with **concepts** related to data analysis and **software skills** involving data manipulation and visualization. The aim is to foster the ability not just to churn out visualizations, but to **think** meaningfully and creatively about the stories that lie within data. *Counts toward the Digital Media Analytics Certificate (Capstone).*

Sports Communication Certificate Courses

JOURN 350: Sports Marketing Communication

Instructor(s): Hermann

We explore various activities related to the promotion domain of sports marketing including marketing research, sports branding, image management, advertising promotion, event promotion, sports sponsorships, internationalization, and public relations. As we examine each of these activities, we will focus on the marketing communications associated with each of these activities.

JOURN 651: Covering Sports Controversies

Instructor(s): Hermann

Exploration of a number of prominent controversies that pervade the realm of sports and engage the activities of sports communication professionals (such as sports journalists, broadcasters, marketers and public relations specialists). Discuss the issues involved in these controversies and pay special attention to the way they impinge upon professional practices.