

Fall 2026 SJMC Course List and Descriptions

Undergraduate Courses

JOURN 150: Introduction to Sports Communication

Instructor: TBD

Explore the central activities and concepts related to various communication professions involved in the realm of sports. These activities include sports journalism, sports broadcasting, sports marketing communications, and sports public relations. Consider major social issues that impinge upon these professions including how sports and media intersect with concerns associated with race and gender. Explore strategies to build careers in sports communications and beyond.

- *Required for the Sports Communication certificate.*

JOURN 162: Mass Media in Multicultural America

Instructor: Jing Wang

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 racially and ethnically diverse populations.

- *Counts towards the Ethnic Studies requirement.*

JOURN 176-014: Children & Media (FIG)

Instructor(s): Karyn Riddle

This course will cover the development of multiple forms of communication technologies, including print media, advertising, recorded sound, photography, film, etc. The reciprocal relationship between society and technology will be emphasized.

JOURN 176-016: Social Impact Storytelling

Instructor: Adam Schrager

This one-of-a-kind class, taught nowhere else in the country for undergraduate students, highlights what social impact storytelling is, why this work matters, and how this type of storytelling can lead to positive change. We will explore social impact storytelling as an expanding communication method for both for-profit companies and nonprofit organizations as they seek to reach Gen Zers nationwide. Students will be introduced to audio, video, and written forms of storytelling. We will talk about current social impact stories from around the country through in-lecture case studies and industry-leading guest speakers. If you want to learn how to make a difference in the world today, this is the course for you.

JOURN 201: Introduction to Mass Communication

Instructor: Mike Wagner

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 towards the Digital Media Analytics certificate.*

JOURN 202: Mass Communication Practices

Instructor(s): Pete Long

Build increasingly sophisticated communication skills, including writing, editing, gathering information, working with data and presenting stories through varying media forms. Develop an appreciation of how different media influence message design by communicators and reception by audiences. Develop a complex toolkit of conceptual and practical skills for media work in journalism, strategic communication, and hybrids. Build writing skills and critical thinking abilities, two elements common to success in any field.

JOURN 203: Information for Communication

Instructor(s): Tomas Dodds

This course will familiarize students with information literacy skills to interpret and present data-driven information for the purpose of disseminating findings to targeted audiences in journalism and strategic communication. Students will learn practical techniques to develop basic skills related to the collection, evaluation, analysis, and presentation of information. In addition, the course will introduce useful tools such as the Google Suite, MRI-Simmons, Qualtrics, and Infegy Atlas. These skills and tools provide a foundation for the major and prepare students for a successful career in communication.

JOURN 335: Principles & Practices of Reporting

Instructors: Lindsay Palmer, Matt Hermann, Adam Schragger (Pro-Track Section)

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 deadlines*. It is about honing your critical thinking abilities. You will develop 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 345: Principles & Practices of Strategic Communication

Instructor: Dhavan Shah

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 a 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 350: Sports Marketing Communication

Instructor: Matt Hermann

Explore various activities related to the promotion domain of sports marketing including marketing research, sports branding, image management, advertising promotion, event promotion, sports sponsorships, and public relations. Examine each of these activities and focus on the marketing communications associated with each of these activities.

- *Counts towards the Sports Communication certificate.*

JOURN 401: In-Depth Reporting

Instructor: Stacy Forster

Explore various activities related to the promotion domain of sports marketing including marketing research, sports branding, image management, advertising promotion, event promotion, sports sponsorships, and public relations. Examine each of these activities and focus on the marketing communications associated with each of these activities.

- *Counts towards the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism concentration.*

JOURN 405: Creative Non-Fiction

Instructor: Sue Robinson

Creative elements of nonfiction storytelling to develop skills necessary for writing across the journalistic spectrum, from newspapers to magazines to books.

- *Counts towards the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism concentration.*

JOURN 417: Magazine Publishing

Instructor: Stacy Forster

JOURN 417 takes an integrated, in-depth approach to magazine management, writing, editing, and design. It brings together journalism and strategic communication students and covers both the editorial and business sides of the magazine industry. Participants in the course should be prepared to take an open-minded approach, as they are expected to understand all facets of the industry but also apply extra focus and effort in the area they're assigned to work. Students in the course produce CURB magazine in print, online, and mobile formats. Admission to JOURN 417 is by application only; please contact the instructor for more information at stacy.forster@wisc.edu.

****Instructor Consent Required****

- *Counts towards both the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism and Strategic Communication concentrations.*

JOURN 425: Video Journalism

Instructor: Adam Schragar

Video journalism is widespread, thanks to online news and sources such as YouTube. Create news stories using the techniques of videography, digital editing, writing and producing. Video journalism is unique in its language, requiring engaging material, a fast start, sharp focus, short narrative and natural voices. Focus on capturing stories with strong visuals and ambient sound of the people affected by issues and events.

- *Counts towards the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism concentration.*

JOURN 445: Creative Campaign Messages

Instructors: Doug McLeod, Pete Long

JOURN 445 will instruct you on how to develop creative strategies and how to execute those strategies by preparing messages for various media and strategic communications. We will explore what is meant by creativity and persuasion in the context of strategic communication campaigns. We will be addressing basic principles and techniques of creative messaging. We will spend most of the semester putting these ideas into practice through various assignments and a group project that involves producing a creative plan, including creative messages for various communication media.

- *Counts towards the Strategic Communication concentration.*

JOURN 449: Account Planning and Strategy

Instructor: Deb Pierce

Introduction to account planning, for students interested in a career in strategic planning or account management in advertising, public relations, or marketing communications. Working for a real client, students identify key insights from conducting secondary and primary research and then develop an overall communication strategy. This is a "must-have" course for students who want to better understand how to segment target audiences, uncover insights, translate

insights into positioning, and develop message strategy. Students will present to the instructor and client team at various times throughout the semester. This course counts for the Digital Studies Certificate.

- *Counts towards the Strategic Communication concentration.*

JOURN 450: Sports Reporting & Writing

Instructor: Matt Hermann

Sports Writing & Reporting aims to give students grounding in the core skills and issues of communicating about sports to a mass audience in a changing media landscape, as well as advice and support in starting a sports communication career including access to professionals in the field. The course will employ professional, historical, and theoretical perspectives in helping participants gain proficiency in disseminating information about sports-related events and topics for informative and strategic purposes while developing a sense of the role of sports in contemporary society.

- *Counts towards the Sports Communication certificate.*
- *Does not count as a Reporting or Strategic Communication concentration course. Elective course.*

JOURN 463: Digital Media Strategies

Instructor: Deb Pierce

Digital Media Strategies explores a variety of digital and interactive mediums, including social media marketing, online display advertising, SEM/SEO, streaming audio and video, mobile, apps, and digital out-of-home. Students will work in agency teams on a digital media campaign for a real client; the campaign planning process is 'real world', from strategy development to media mix selection. Students will present to the instructor and client team at various times throughout the semester. This course counts for the Digital Studies Certificate.

- *Counts towards the Strategic Communication concentration.*

JOURN 475-049: Anatomy of Message Strategies

Instructor: TBA

Marketing messages shape the perceptions and actions of key audiences by creating emotional and logical connections between consumers and our people, products, services, and/or organizations. In this course, we will assess, evaluate, and dissect the impact of marketing messages in real-world applications and how they translate into digital channels. Students learn strategies and tools to create stories that resonate with key audiences across digital channels and business situations.

- *Counts towards both the Reporting/Multimedia Journalism and Strategic Communication concentrations.*

JOURN 560: History of US Media

Instructor: Kathryn McGarr

How did we get to our current media environment? Is the country the most divided it's ever been? (Spoiler: no! Civil War, Week 4.) This course traces significant changes in the U.S. news media—from religious sermons in the 1600s to the Internet in the 2000s—as well as the role of the press at important moments in history. How did social and political movements affect communication, and vice versa? What were the journalism practices in any given era, and how did those practices influence the spread of information and opinion? Who owns the means of communication, and why? We'll also pay attention to the evolution of modern advertising and public relations and the interplay between media and consumer culture.

JOURN 564: Media & the Consumer

Instructor: Doug McLeod

This course examines the relationship between citizens as consumers and the mass media from several different perspectives. Particular attention is paid to the role of mass media as a conduit for advertising messages targeted at the American consumer. We will consider both the positive (“functional”) aspects of the media-advertising-consumer relationships, as well as the negative (“dysfunctional”) aspects. The course begins with an examination of the historical development of the relationship between the media, advertising, and the consumer. From there, we discuss Market Theory, which provides a framework for conceptualizing the impact of advertising based on the assumptions that underpin market-based economies. In the third module, the discussion turns to the economic aspects of advertising's effects on society. In module 4, we examine the social and psychological impact of advertising. In the final module, we discuss the social mechanisms that protect consumers from potentially harmful advertising effects, including regulation, ethics, consumer journalism, consumer activism, and other consumer activities that address consumption and use it as a force for positive social change.

JOURN 567: Mass Media and Global Communication

Instructor: Jing Wang

In our mediated society, how do we understand and study mass media and communication from global perspectives? How can global communication studies help us better address the challenges we face today, both globally and locally? This course is an invitation to deepen students' understanding of communication and media industries in different regions of the world, various historical periods, and various global crises and opportunities facing humanity, from digital activism to diasporic networks, from neoliberal expansion to climate change, from digital platforms to big data. Students will learn various theoretical and methodological approaches to study global communication standpoints, global media flows, media industries, and digital platforms across different world regions. Throughout the course, students will engage with essential literature, participate in group discussions, and undertake course projects, all while actively contributing to a collective learning experience in the classroom and beyond. The class also encourages students to draw connections between global changes, local issues, and their personal lives.

JOURN 601: Colloquium in Professional Communication Careers

Instructor: Deb Pierce

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 towards the Sports Communication certificate.*

JOURN 605: Digital Brand Building

Instructor: Rob Master

Digital Brand Building provides an overview of the rapidly changing digital landscape and its role, and importance on the marketing mix. This class explores how to build brands in today's digital-first environment. You will leave this course with a strong understanding of today's marketing ecosystem, a practical understanding of how the digital landscape operates, and insight into how business, marketing, and our culture have changed forever.

JOURN 617: Health Communication in the Information Age

Instructor: Chris Cascio

This course will examine the role of communication in health, how the revolution in information technology has affected health communication, and the assumptions about health information and communication that drive current efforts to use technologies.

JOURN 618: Mass Communication & Political Behavior

Instructor: Young Mie Kim

This seminar explores the shifting relationship between the media and political institutions that make up the public sphere in the United States, both today and in previous eras. What can a democratic public expect of its news media? How has the character of political life changed with new forms and technologies of journalism? What is the link between our media habits and levels of public understanding or engagement? We will investigate these questions using a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches.

JOURN 620: International Communication

Instructor: Lindsay Palmer

In this class, we will investigate an increasingly visible phenomenon: the global (and usually, 24-hour) news network. Since some of these networks often propagate perspectives on global politics that differ from the US/Anglo-centric view, we will consider the unique ways in which networks like Al Jazeera help to diversify the global public sphere. Of special interest will be those networks that choose to at least partially report the news in English, in an effort at broadening their audience and speaking to people who might have an impoverished view of "other" geopolitical regions. I will encourage you to think critically about the hegemony of English as a global lingua franca, while also exploring the productive ways in which that language is being appropriated.

JOURN 658: Communication Research Methods

Instructor: Karyn Riddle

This is a basic 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 in 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. There are no prerequisites. 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. Of all the things to learn, that's most important.

- *Counts towards the Digital Media Analytics certificate.*

JOURN 669: Literary Aspects of Journalism

Instructor: Sue Robinson

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 676: Innovations in Journalism

Instructor: Tomas Dodds

Introducing new technologies inside newsrooms creates new professional cultures, organizational structures, and business models. Although a recent uptick in the literature addresses innovation in journalism, the speed with which new technologies develop has left journalists and media scholars playing catch-up. In this course, we will pay attention to different areas of news production, from how journalists gather and analyze data to how they distribute new information using evolving digital platforms and news assistants. During our sessions, we will draw from theories of innovation in journalism to identify and understand the current challenges journalists face today: How do platforms like Facebook and Google impact newsrooms' autonomy? How can journalists discern between fake news and essential information in big data? How are algorithmic news recommenders and audience metrics changing how reporters imagine their audiences? Is artificial intelligence a threat to the democratic role of journalism?

JOURN 677: Concepts & Tools for Data Analysis & Visualization

Instructors: Sijia Yang, second instructor TBD

Researchers, journalists, companies, and organizations are now inundated with data, and rapidly innovating new ways to create, access, and analyze those data. There is a great need for people who can use digital information to investigate important questions, draw useful insights, and communicate those insights to others—while 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.

- *Required capstone course for the Digital Media Analytics certificate.*

