# Spring 2027 SJMC Course List and Descriptions

## 100-Level Courses

**JOURN 162: Mass Media in Multicultural America**
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 Sports Communication Certificate and Ethnic Studies degree requirement.***

**JOURN 163: Gender & Sexuality in Mass Communication**
Instructor: 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**
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 towards the Digital Media Analytics Certificate.***

## 200-Level Courses

**JOURN 201: Introduction to Mass Communication**
Instructor: 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. ***Required to apply to the School of Journalism & Mass Communication.***

**JOURN 202: Mass Communication Practices**
Instructor: 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: Cascio
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: Principles and Practices of Reporting**
Instructor: Hastings & Kushner
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 345: Principles of Strategic Communication**
Instructor: Rivera
This course introduces strategic communication—the core concepts and frameworks used by advertising professionals, public relations practitioners, social marketers, and influencer communicators to solve real problems. In this course, you will learn both the theory and the practice: conceptual models alongside applied decision-making in a real-world, simulated campaign environment.
**What you will learn:**

- Strategic communication strategy development and the integrated campaign planning process
- Research methods and account planning: how to gather and synthesize consumer insights, market analysis, and competitive intelligence
- Ethics and regulatory environment shaping advertising, public relations, and related fields
- How strategic communication functions in marketing products, ideas, and people
- Campaign components and tactical execution across traditional and digital channels
- The range of professional specialties within strategic communications
- How to develop and pitch a campaign strategy to a prospective client

## 400-Level Journalism Concentration Courses

**JOURN 420: Investigative Reporting**
Instructor: Schrager
JOURN 420 students will create in-depth and original research and reporting throughout the semester. They can bring their own investigative idea to class or choose from an assortment of others to produce a substantive piece by the end of our time. We will work collaboratively with professional journalists from Wisconsin Watch and other media outlets to ensure our stories are published or broadcast in Wisconsin if we choose to pursue that path. Students will learn higher-level reporting and writing/producing skills including identifying and interviewing sources, locating relevant public records, summarizing reports, analyzing data, searching social media channels, and learning to write or broadcast long-form stories in a way that engages and informs but avoids sensationalism and editorializing. Successful completion of JOURN 335 Intermediate Reporting or an equivalent course is required.

**JOURN 475: Special Topics in Advanced Concepts & Skills: Open-Source Investigations (OSINT)**
Instructor: 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.

**JOURN 475: Special Topics in Advanced Concepts & Skills: International Reporting**
Instructor: Jacob Kushner
The job of an international journalist isn't just to relay global events to one's home country. It's to help readers, viewers or listeners become engaged, global citizens. To explain how events in far off places affect life at home, and to investigate how their own country's actions can harm people abroad.

In this course, students will learn how international news is produced; to generate story ideas that are important to domestic audiences; to critique international news coverage; and to

grapple with ethical dilemmas inherent to foreign correspondence. Through practical assignments, students will learn how to report on global events from near and from far. Correspondents from around the world will join us as guest speakers to discuss their reporting, ethical dilemmas they encounter, and strategies for how to start reporting abroad. Students will hone key journalistic skills including problem solving, pitching, peer reviewing. They will learn how to report ethically on vulnerable populations by building trust and doing no harm. Finally, students will have a chance to pitch stories to our international publishing partner, News Decoder, where they can work with a professional editor to achieve a polished and published clip.

# 400-Level Journalism & Strategic Communication Courses (Double-Tracking)

**JOURN 456: Long Form Video**
Instructor: Schrager
We will produce long-form video stories or mini-documentaries in this class. This style illuminates a person, event or issue in detail. These story forms can move people to action or shine a light on an issue not known to many. Students can bring their own idea to class or choose from an assortment of others to produce a substantive piece by the end of our semester. We will learn how to research, organize, record and edit for this form of journalism. Video experience helpful but not required as we will practice in class.

**JOURN 457: Storytelling Through Sound**
Instructor: 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.

**JOURN 475: A Community-Based Learning Course for Professional Communicators**
Instructor: Robinson
Class application required. Due Wed. Oct. 14 at 10 am. https://forms.gle/F96ch27S6gquev2Q8
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: work collaboratively with community members on solutions-based storytelling project about topics like housing insecurities and mental health, plan and implement two events (a listening session in February and an event that makes sense for our topics in April); and 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, you will have a showcase piece 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. This is a short bus ride from Vilas. Food will be served both nights. You must have taken either J335 or J345 to apply! (taking it this semester counts). The deadline to apply is Wed, Oct. 14 at 10 am! 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: https://madisoncommons.org/category/community-collaborations/collaborative-storytelling-what-we-did/

**JOURN 475: Special Topics in Advanced Concepts & Skills - Covering Immigration**
Instructor: Kushner
Americans believe immigration is the single most important problem facing the United States today (Gallup, 2024), more so than the economy or climate change. Already, U.S. news media give more coverage to migration than almost any other issue (Pew, 2021), and this will likely increase as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act infuses $170 billion to immigration enforcement—more money than to any federal law enforcement agency in U.S. history, and more than the FBI, DEA, ATF, Bureau of Prisons, and U.S. Marshals Service combined.

This course will equip students to report and communicate about the biggest domestic story of our time. Students will meet and interview immigrants and asylum seekers, immigration attorneys, and may even have a chance to observe asylum hearings live. Students will learn key communication skills, analyzing and fact-checking ICE, DHS and White House press statements as well as those by anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant advocacy groups. Guest speakers from the latter will offer insights into how they strategically communicate to journalists and the public. Readings will help students understand how immigration shapes Wisconsin and the nation. Students will critically examine existing immigration reporting to identify mistakes and learn to avoid misleading narratives or assumptions.

This course will include investigative elements. In addition to individual journalistic assignments, students will work in pairs or teams to examine data and research trends in immigration that are of interest to our potential publishing partners, The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Wisconsin Watch. Students will hone key journalistic skills including problem solving, pitching, and peer reviewing. They will learn how to report ethically on vulnerable populations by building trust and doing no harm.

# 400-Level Strategic Communication Courses

**JOURN 445: Creative Campaign Messages**
Instructor: Long & Boersma
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 a majority 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.

**JOURN 463: Digital Media Strategies**
Instructor: Rivera
This course takes the strategic communication foundations from JOURN 345 and focuses them on digital channels—social media, content, SEO, SEM, email, and emerging platforms. You will work with a real client through a complete digital media planning process: research and situation analysis, tactical strategy development, and a final casebook and presentation. This is applied work designed to produce a portfolio piece that demonstrates your ability to think strategically about digital while executing across multiple channels and platforms.
**What you will learn:**

- Digital media strategy development: how to set objectives and craft strategies that integrate with overall communication goals
- Audience research and analysis using professional tools: social listening, consumer databases, and search trends
- Content strategy and message strategy: how to develop and distribute content across channels
- Technical and tactical digital skills: SEO, SEM, social media management, and platform-specific strategies
- How to evaluate, recommend, and optimize digital channels in an integrated campaign
- Crisis communications in a digital context—speed, stakeholder management, and cross-platform coordination
- How to build, present, and defend strategic recommendations to clients

**JOURN 464: Public Relations Strategies**
Instructor: Rivera
This course takes strategic communication deeper, focusing on public relations. You will develop a comprehensive PR campaign for a real client, moving from research and strategy through tactical execution. PR shapes how organizations are understood by the people who matter most: media, employees, customers, communities, regulators. You will learn how to build and protect reputation, navigate complex stakeholder relationships, respond to issues before they escalate, and produce the communications that drive action. This is applied work

designed as a portfolio piece that demonstrates both strategic thinking and tactical execution in PR. This course counts towards the Digital Studies Certificate.

**What you will learn:**

- Strategic public relations planning: how to research, set objectives, and craft strategies aligned with organizational goals
- Media relations and earned media strategy in traditional and digital channels
- Stakeholder analysis and relationship management across multiple audiences
- Content strategy and message development for PR audiences and channels
- Issue management and crisis preparation: frameworks for anticipating problems and responding decisively
- The range of PR specialties: corporate communications, employee communications, purpose-driven PR, brand and consumer PR, and more
- Professional PR tools and databases for research, media relations, and monitoring
- How to build, present, and defend strategic PR recommendations to clients

**JOURN 475: Special Topics in Advanced Concepts & Skills: AI for Strat Comm**

Instructor: Tom Beckman

AI is rapidly reinventing how communicators research, create, strategize, and connect with audiences, and this course puts you at the center of that transformation. Through hands-on projects, real-world challenges, collaboration, and insights from industry professionals, you will experiment with emerging AI tools across content creation, audience engagement, media relations, reputation management, and campaign measurement. You will finish the semester ready to work faster, think bigger, and bring the creativity, judgment, and ethical leadership that organizations need in an AI-powered workplace.

## 500-Level Courses

**JOURN 561: Mass Communication and Society**
Instructor: Palmer
Considers the changing role of mass communication today through the lens of major historical shifts in the media system: the written alphabet, the print revolution, telegraph and radio, the Internet, and social media. How do new media technologies shape — and how are they shaped by — our social and cultural worlds? How has the quality of democratic life been altered by various media "revolutions"? These are the questions and themes we will explore over the course of a semester that begins with fables and folklore and ends with a look at the future of the digital networks that are so basic to our lives today.

**JOURN 562: Racial Diversity in the Media**
Instructor: Williams Fayne
This course delves deeply into the concepts and theories related to mass media and racial diversity. It provides analysis of race, ethnicity, stereotypes, and white privilege in the news, digital media, and social media. This course examines mainstream news along with African American, Native American, Asian American, Latinx Americans, and Arab American media outlets.

**JOURN 563: Law of Mass Communication**
Instructor: 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.

## 600-Level Courses

**JOURN 601: Career Colloquium**
Instructor: 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.

**JOURN 618: Mass Communication and Political Behavior**
Instructor: Kim
Interrelationships of news media, political campaigning, and the electorate. Impact of media coverage and persuasive appeals on image and issue voting, political participation and socialization.

**JOURN 622: The Impact of Emerging Media**
Instructor: Lee
This course provides an introduction to research on emerging communication technologies - like social media, smartphones, videogames, personalized algorithms, and AI chatbots - on individual and societal well-being. Drawing on classical communication theory and recent research, we will examine questions about the interplay between technology, individuals, and society like 1) "How does smartphone use affect psychological well-being?", 2) "What is the relationship between dating app use and self-esteem?", 3) "How does social media use relate to people's belief in misinformation?", 4) "How does using AI chatbots affect individual creativity and critical thinking?", and 5) "How do algorithms shape our political behavior?" This course emphasizes empirical approaches to understanding these relationships and strengthening awareness of the different methods used to study emerging media. Throughout, we will discuss the real-world stakes of emerging media effects. Students will gain research-based approaches to develop healthier relationships to their own technology use, and learn about the interventions that can be implemented by families, journalists, policymakers, and technologists to reduce online harms.

**JOURN 649: Brand Strategy in Advertising & Integrated Communications**
Instructor: 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 669: Literary Aspects of Journalism**
Instructor: McGarr
This class examines journalism as a form of literature. We'll read broadly in American non-fiction to gain an understanding of approaches to reporting and writing literary journalism, including stories that rely on immersive reporting, on reconstructing historical narrative, and on memory and memoir. 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 & Mass Media: Misinformation in the Age of Digital Media**
Instructor: Kim
Discusses misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation in the current algorithmic information environment, an ecosystem driven by data, algorithms, and artificial intelligence (AI) systems. Examines how and why misinformation becomes a systemic problem in the current algorithmic information environment and what we should do to mitigate it, with an emphasis on the roles of emerging technologies and media platforms. Covers various forms of misinformation, including false news, conspiracies, strategic campaigns, and covert influences, in different contexts (e.g., elections, public health, and public understanding of science). Analyses the production (supply), diffusion (demand), and consequences of misinformation in terms of (uneven) vulnerabilities, collective knowledge, public confidence, and democratic representation; and discusses policy solutions.

**JOURN 676: Women in Media**
Instructor: 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 readings seminar designed to examine the historical relationship between women—as consumers and as producers—and "media," including journalism and pop culture. Student participation is extremely important, and students are expected to attend all sessions and complete all readings.

**JOURN 677: Concepts and Tools for Data Analysis and Visualization**
Instructor: Yang
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. JOURN 677 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.

# Sports Communication Certificate Courses (Does Not Count Towards Major Requirements)

**JOURN 150: Introduction to Sports Communication**
Instructor: Schrager
We explore the central activities and concepts related to various sports communication professions. We'll talk about journalism, broadcasting, marketing communications, public relations, and social media through the lens of sports. We also consider the historical importance of sports in our society. We conclude with 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 350: Sports Marketing Communication**
Instructor: McLeod
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 450: Sports Reporting & Writing**
Instructor: 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 651: Covering Sports Controversies**
Instructor: 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.