

Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences  
**College in High School**

2024-2025

**Mass Communication and Society**  
COMMRC 0320--3 Credits

**Description:** This course is an introduction to mass communication, exploring the cultural, technological, and economic history of the media from newspapers to the Internet, the changing relationships between media industries, audiences, and cultures, and the theoretical underpinnings of mass communication research. By combining histories of specific communication forms, and traditional and contemporary theories of communication, the course places contemporary perspectives and issues in conversation with the history of media development and use in order to help students become more critical consumers of the media they experience daily.

**Prerequisites:** None.

**Grading:** Students typically complete one midterm and one final exam that show their mastery of the materials of the course. They also complete one essay that shows their ability to engage and apply some selection of course concepts and demonstrates their ability to incorporate research into their writing.

**Textbook:** There are a number of introductory media and mass communication textbooks available for purchase, which can be used in combination with selected essays or other readings. We recommend in particular Campbell, R., Martin, C., & Fabos, B. (2017). *Media & Culture: Mass Communication in a Digital Age (11<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. Instructors can use alternative textbooks with prior approval.

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**Students enrolled in the University of Pittsburgh COMMRC 0320 course pursue the following learning outcomes:**

1. Gain an understanding of the basic technological, economic, legal, and cultural histories of the major forms of mass communication within the United States
2. Come to understand the basic institutional structures and practices of the major contemporary forms of mass communication within the United States
3. Develop tools useful for the critical analysis of a wide range of media forms
4. Learn to identify and explain the major humanistic and social scientific approaches to mass communication research

**Course Topics:**

1. Theories of media effects; cultural approaches to Mass Communication; gender, race, and class in the media
2. Mainstream media: history, contemporary practices, and present-day issues
  - a. Advertising
  - b. Newspapers

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- c. Magazines
  - d. Radio
  - e. Popular Music and Recording
  - f. Movies
  - g. Television and Cable
  - h. The Internet and social media
  - i. Video games
  - j. Book publishing
  - k. Public Relations
3. Journalism ethics
  4. Legal issues in the Freedom of Expression
  5. Media convergence

**Academic Integrity:** All College in High School teachers, students, and their parents/guardians are required to review and be familiar with the University of Pittsburgh's Academic Integrity Policy located online at <https://www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policies-and-procedures/academic-integrity-code>.

**Grades:** Grade criteria in the high school course may differ slightly from University of Pittsburgh standards. A CHS student could receive two course grades: one for high school and one for the University transcript. In most cases the grades are the same. These grading standards are explained at the beginning of each course.

**Transfer Credit:** University of Pittsburgh grades earned in CHS courses appear on an official University of Pittsburgh transcript, and the course credits are likely to be eligible for transfer to other colleges and universities. Students are encouraged to contact potential colleges and universities in advance to ensure their CHS credits would be accepted. If students decide to attend any University of Pittsburgh campuses, the University of Pittsburgh grade earned in the course will count toward the student grade point average at the University. At the University of Pittsburgh, the CHS course supersedes any equivalent AP credit.

**Drops and Withdrawals:** Students should monitor progress in a course. CHS teacher can obtain a Course Drop/Withdrawal Request form from the CHS office or Aspire. The form must be completed by the student, teacher and parent/guardian and returned to teacher by deadlines listed. Dropping and withdrawing from the CHS course has no effect on enrollment in the high school credits for the course.