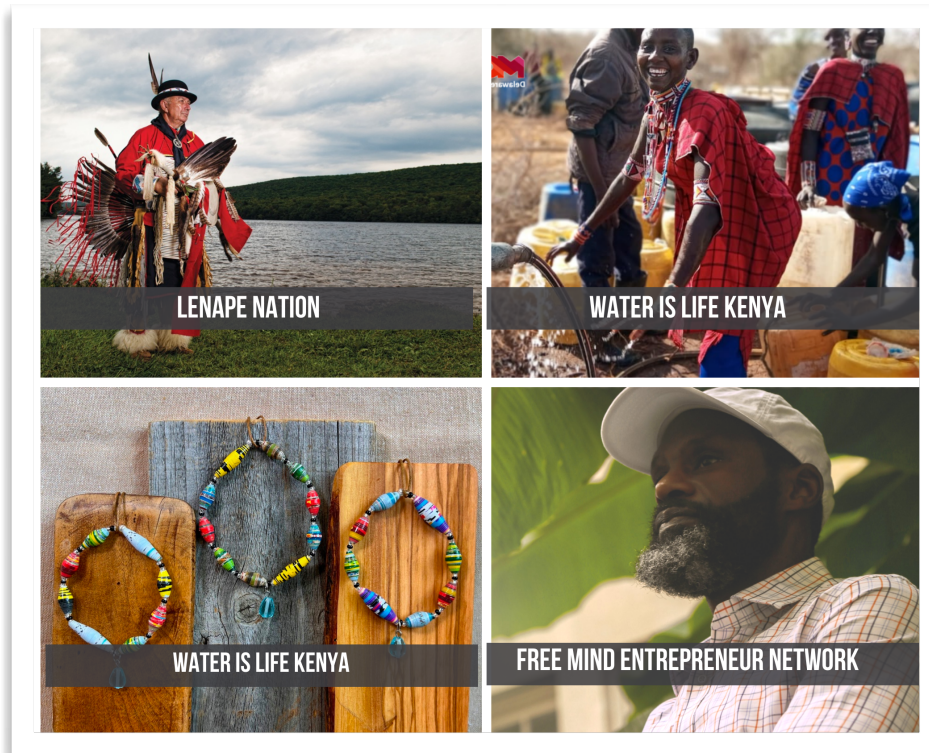


**COM 441 Media & Community Engagement
Fall 2025 | Aimée Knight, PhD**

Time TBD
Office hours T 1:00
- 3:00 |
aknight@sju.edu



Course description

Not-for-profit and community-based organizations rely on strategic digital communication to create social change. Students in this course gain in-depth knowledge of communication theories and practices while writing research projects with local organizations through the Beautiful Social Research Collaborative. Students in the course actively participate as a member of a project team to complete projects with a non-profit partner.

Course objectives

Community-Centric Digital Communication: Students will apply communication theories and practices to strategically utilize digital communication for positive social change strategically, prioritizing the community's vision and equity-focused collaboration.

Collaborative Research Skills: Through active participation in the Beautiful Social Research Collaborative, students will develop research projects with local organizations, demonstrating the ability to engage in collaborative partnerships that prioritize community assets and strengths.

Equity-Focused Media Expertise: Students will gain in-depth knowledge of writing and media studies theories and practices, with a focus on community-building approaches that pursue social justice, emphasizing asset mapping, amplifying voices, and fostering internal agency within communities.

Engaged Project Team Membership: Students will actively contribute as members of project teams, emphasizing a community-building process that values community co-creation, internal agency, and capacity-building, with a commitment to mutual benefit for both the university and the community.

Course readings - PDF excerpts provided on Canvas

- brown, adrienne maree. *Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation*. AK Press 2021.
- Constanza-Chock, Sasha. *Design Justice: Community-led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need*. 2020.
- Equity-Centered Community Design Field Guide. By Creative Reaction Lab
- Garner, Bryan A. *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2012.
- Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter In Academic Writing*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2021. Handley, Ann. *Everybody Writes: Your Go-to Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content*. Wiley, 2014.
- IDEO, editor. *The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design: Design Kit*. 1st. ed, IDEO, 2015.
- Knight, Aimée. *Community is the Way: Engaged Writing and Designing for Transformative Change*. University Press of Colorado. 2022.
- Lambert, Joe, and H.Brooke Hessler. *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*. Fifth edition, Revised and updated, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018. PDF in Canvas
- Lunsford, Andrea A., et al. *EasyWriter*. 2019.
- Meehan, William F., and Kim Starkey Jonker. *Engine of Impact: Essentials of Strategic Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector*.
- Stanford Business Books, an imprint of Stanford University Press, 2018.

	What we are up to	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week 1 Introduction to Community Engaged Writing	We begin this course with learning about community engaged research projects and starting to build a learning community in the classroom. We will lay the foundation for this semester-with an introduction to B:Social and how design can be a tool to amplify, support, and extend communities.	8/28 Welcome to the course	8/30 Reading: Chapter 1 and Positionality Activity; fellow presentations and voting;	9/1 Media activity due
Week 2 Getting Started; Power Dynamics in Community Engaged research	The week we will begin to discuss positionality, power, and privilege and ways it affects our work with community partners	9/4 Labor Day No class	9/6 Reading: "Roles on Teams" (PDFs in Week 1 folder); first group meeting	9/8 Media activity due
Week 3 The Community Partner Project; The Design Question	This week we begin to understand the issue or opportunity at hand and put it into question format with group members. We then meet our community partners and engage them in conversations about their needs, gaining valuable insight into all facets of our projects.	9/11 Chapter 2 and "Meeting with Partners". Response due.	9/13 <i>Meet in Merion Hall - Meet our Community Partner Aaron from Water is Life Kenya</i>	9/15 Groups Design question due Friday
Week 4 Comparative Media Analysis	A comparative media analysis allows groups to better identify with our community partners by locating "mentor accounts" or kindred spirits. A mentor account helps groups to explore potential strategies and possibilities for our community partners.	9/18 Reading Chapter 3 and 4	9/20 Meet @ Bronstein; Team meeting; Comparative Media Analysis; team meeting; project time	9/22 Media activity due

	What we are up to	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week 5 Ideation and Prototyping	We will discuss Equity-Centered Community Design. We will focus on ideation and prototyping - including activities for creative design solutions.	9/25 Reading: Equity-Centered Community Design Field Guide; Prototyping activity	9/27	9/29 Media activity due
Week 6 Golden Circle Analysis	The Golden Circle serves as an introduction to what our partners are trying to accomplish in the world and how their mission as a nonprofit or community organization translates to their social platforms.	10/2 Reading: Chapter 4 - Golden Circle	10/4 Meet @ Bronstein; Golden Circle Analysis; project time	10/6 Media activity due
Week 7 Storytelling Strategies	This week we focus on how to support individuals and organizations in using storytelling and participatory media for reflection, education, and social change.	10/9 Reading: Chapter 4 - Organizational Storytelling Arc; Video: Organizational Storytelling	10/11 Meet @ Bronstein; Team meeting; storytelling arc activity/project time	10/13 Activity and completed worksheets due
Week 8 Group Projects	This week we will have time to work on our community partner projects. No reading response or media activity due this week.	10/16 Fall Break	10/18 Meet @ Bronstein; Team meeting; Project time	10/20
Week 9	This week we will use class time to work on your partner projects	10/23	10/25	10/27

	What we are up to	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week 10 Media report	<p>The purpose of this report is to share with the community partner some of our more academic conversations around social media and storytelling.</p> <p>In this report, you will discuss some of the theories we have read and discussed in class, citing the authors throughout.</p>	<p>10/30</p> <p>Discussion: How to Be a Better Writer; Media report discussion</p>	<p>11/1</p> <p>Team meeting; report writing</p>	<p>11/3</p> <p>First draft due (Submit as a Google doc)</p>
Week 11 Peer editing session	<p>Peer editing; this week we learn strategies for how to be a good peer reviewer. We will learn how to comment on a peer's work so that your feedback is effective.</p>	<p>11/6</p> <p>Peer editing of reports in class (No reading response)</p>	<p>11/8</p> <p>Team meetings; revisions</p>	<p>11/10</p> <p>Report submitted</p>
Week 12 Media report (revision and design)	<p>This week we will design our reports</p>	<p>11/13</p> <p>Design reading discussion</p>	<p>11/15</p> <p>Team meeting: Design report. Post designed report as a PDF to Canvas</p>	<p>11/17</p>
Week 13 Community partner project	<p>This week we will have time to work on our community partner projects. No reading response or media activity due this week.</p>	<p>11/20</p>	<p>11/22</p> <p>Thanksgiving Break</p>	<p>11/24</p> <p>Thanksgiving Break</p>
Week 14 Case Studies	<p>By creating a case study when we finish a project, we get the chance to showcase that project and record its process. Case studies are a snapshot of our work with a partner and have a variety of purposes</p>	<p>11/27</p> <p>Reading: Case Studies; begin case study</p>	<p>11/29</p> <p>Team meeting</p>	<p>12/1</p> <p>Case study due; post to site</p>

Week 15 Presentation practice and final community partner meeting	Groups present their research deliverable and case study	12/4 Practice presentations; Evaluations, archiving media assets; share research findings	12/6 B:Social Community Partner Event Bronstein Hall	12/8
Week 16 Wrapping up; final reflection		12/11 Storing media assets in drive and dropbox	12/13 Reflection due at final exam time: TBD	12/15

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments	Due Date	Evaluation
Citizenship and Participation	Weeks 1 - 16	15%
Reading and Writing Responses	Weeks 1 - 14	25%
Media Activities (Group)	Week 1 - 13	25%
Community Partner Project (Group)	Weeks 2 - 15	25%
Final Exam, Reflections, Participation	Week 16	10%

Citizenship and Participation 15%

Individual evaluation. This class requires engaged listening and engaged speaking. Each member of our learning community needs to be active in the learning process. Each student is here to contribute to the exchange of ideas. Ask questions. Be curious. As a student in this course, you will create your own communal context for learning by engaging in conversations with others. As such, being prepared to participate in discussions and activities is paramount. This entails having read, annotated, and thought about the required materials carefully before class starts.

Tips for class discussion:

- Do the readings ahead of time
- Have the readings accessible during discussion
- Come prepared with your printed Reading Response (often we have discussion with closed laptops)
- Highlight passages that you believe are worthy of discussion
- Think of the major points or problems in the text
- What questions do you have about the readings? Bring them.
- Use relevant examples/cases in the text to illustrate your points
- Make a list of questions you think would be interesting discussion prompts

In this class, students help one another understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in a text through a group discussion format. Students are responsible for taking the lead in facilitating group discussion around the ideas in the text. Through discussion, students practice how to listen to one another, make meaning, and find common ground while participating in a conversation. During discussions, each student aims for two to three substantive comments or questions for every five-ten minutes of discussion.

Citizenship and participation can also be displayed through **collaboration**. Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from working groups, to team-based assignments and co-writing, to cooperative projects and research. Assessment of citizenship and participation will be ongoing and discussed with students in both group settings and in one-on-one meetings with the instructor.

Reading responses, writing activities, social media takeovers 25%

Individual evaluation. Reading responses are pre-class writing activities which demonstrate your engagement with the ideas in the assigned weekly course material. An effective response demonstrates that you have thoroughly read and understood the material (or that you ask and attempt to answer compelling questions that reveal careful reading). The responses will develop connections between the material and the themes of the course and demonstrate that you have considered the implications of the materials. Although these are not formal academic papers, they should be carefully written and *cited* nevertheless. Include direct quotes from the readings that support your integration of the material. Be specific about the works you're discussing, give details to back up any assertions you may make, include references, page numbers, when appropriate. Finally, pay attention to grammar and mechanics. Reading responses are short answers (typically between 200-300 words). These are due *before* class. Late work is deducted 20% per day.

Media activities, group-work, worksheets, group takeovers, peer reviews 25%

Group evaluation. To promote the integration of theory and practice, we will engage in various writing activities, some private, some public. Use vocabulary, concepts, and ideas from the reading material and any additional course material

to link theory with practice. Make it a habit to thoroughly relate your work with the readings. Assessment of writing activities is ongoing throughout the semester. Late work is deducted 20% per day.

Community partner project 25%

Group and individual evaluation. Throughout the semester, groups will work on a collaborative research project with a community partner. Mentoring by both fellows and professor will lead each groups through a series of revisions, resulting in a completed project which is acceptable to all. During the last weeks of the semester fellows and the instructor will review each group's portfolio of work from this course. Each group will create a Case Study to be posted online on the B:Social archive on the website. During the last weeks of class, groups will also present their final case study and research outcomes to their community partners and to the class.

Final reflection 10%

Individual evaluation. This final assignment asks you to record a 400-500 word piece that tells a story about your growth and development this semester, whether that be professionally, ethically, civically, morally, academically, psychologically, internally, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. Some prompts will be provided.

Weekly agenda

- By Mondays Have reading responses submitted to Canvas before class
- On Mondays: Meet in Merion Hall 174 for class discussion; media activity
- On Wednesdays: Meet in Bronstein Hall for group work and fellows (starting 2/1)
- By Friday: Submit group media activities; upload assignments;
- It is possible to use Common Hour for meetings with community partners (Common Hour is Fridays 12:20 - 1:30). Groups can schedule meetings in the Annex, Bronstein, and/or Merion 174 at this time to meet with community partners

Community Agreements

- Stay flexible and patient around any changes, cancellations or schedule shifts as we navigate the semester and community partners needs.
- Ask questions before assuming. The best way to understand the choices, actions, or intentions of one another is by asking.
- When offering critical feedback, do so with the belief that people can change; when receiving critical feedback, listen to others with a willingness to change.
- Learn about ableist and other harmful language
- This is an anonymous feedback link that goes to the professor and cannot be traced back to you.

Expectations Come to class fully prepared to engage in the exchange of ideas. It is your responsibility to be ready to discuss the materials each week. It is expected that you check and respond to messages in Canvas and email at least once

every 24 hours Monday-Friday for communication purposes with your instructor, fellow, team, and community partner. Save and backup all work in your team folder in Google Drive. Bring an SD card to class if working with digital media.

Attendance Each additional absence after two will result in a deduction of 10% of your final grade in the course; attendance and participation are essential. You are expected to attend class each day and be well prepared. We will often have discussions, work on projects, watch videos, conduct group work, and other activities during class time. There is no substitute for your presence during class. Please note, if you are absent, it is your responsibility to make up the work in a timely manner. Please check Canvas and speak with your fellow if you miss class. You have two absences before your absence begins to jeopardize your final grade.

Illness If you are unable to attend class due to illness, communicate directly with me through email. A doctor's note will be required if you would like this absence excused. If your absence is due to isolation or quarantine, it is your responsibility to contact me within 48 hours outlining both the date of your expected return to class and a plan to stay on pace with readings and assignments and group obligations during your physical absence.

Late Work Late work is deducted 20% for each late day. If an assignment or project is posted after a deadline (even if it is on the same day as the deadline), it will be deducted 20% automatically. If you are ill, please let me know.

Grading Scheme Please note that the exact grade in Canvas will be the grade you receive for the course. I do not "round up," as it can be a subjective practice. There are extra credit or revision opportunities in class, if you want to make sure you have done everything you can to improve your course grade.

Name:	Range:	
A	100 %	to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 %	to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 %	to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 %	to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 %	to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 %	to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 %	to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 %	to 70.0%
D+	< 70.0 %	to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 %	to 64.0%
D-	< 64.0 %	to 61.0%
F	< 61.0 %	to 0.0%

John Cardinal Foley Program for Media and Civic Engagement Fellows You will be working with a fellow who will manage your team and be the point of contact with the community partner. This is the first fellowship at SJU to combine research in emerging communication technologies with social justice. To understand more about the fellow's role and responsibilities please [follow this link](#).

Office Hours and After Hours My door is open. I hope you will take advantage of my office hours. I am available to offer extended feedback on your projects (beyond the written feedback you formally receive). You don't need to have a problem to schedule a visit, but if you do find yourself having some difficulty or questions (in class or even outside of class) then I certainly want to see you sooner rather than later. If you cannot make scheduled office hours, arrange to see me at another time. Office hours are Wednesdays on Zoom this semester and at other times by appointment.

Equipment to check out The COM Studies department has the equipment what you will need to complete course assignments. Everyone in the department, including faculty, use the gear for their work, so it's important that we all treat it kindly and return it on time. More [details here](#). If there is equipment you would like to complete your project but we do not have it, please let me know.

Writing Center The Saint Joseph's University Writing Center is free to all members of the SJU community. The undergraduate and graduate student writers who make up the staff can assist you in any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to organizing and developing your ideas, to citing sources to proofreading. They work with students from across the university on a variety of assignments and projects: lab reports, business policy papers, poems, essays, research papers, dissertations, resumes, and personal statements for graduate school applications, among many others. You name it; they've helped writers write it. Both appointments and drop-in sessions are available. The main Writing Center is located in 162 Merion Hall. The Center also has a satellite location in the Post Learning Commons (room 128). For more information, including hours of operation and instructions on how to make an appointment, please visit the SJU Writing Center website at sju.edu/writingcenter.

Academic honesty If you use ideas or information that are not common knowledge, you must cite a source. This rule applies to all the course activities and projects including reading responses, multimedia projects, and essays. How to cite a source will be discussed in class. St. Joseph's University's academic honesty policy can be found [here](#).

The penalty for plagiarism is an automatic Fail for this class and a letter of notification to the Committee on Discipline. If you are suspected of plagiarism or an act of dishonesty, action will be taken. In all courses, each student has the responsibility to submit work that is uniquely his or her own. All of this work must be done in accordance with established principles of academic integrity. Specific violations of this responsibility include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cheating, copying, or the offering or receiving of unauthorized assistance or information in examinations, tests, quizzes, reports, assigned papers, or special assignments, as in computer programming, studio work, and the like.
- The fabrication or falsification of data, results, or sources for papers or reports
- Any action which destroys or alters the work of another student; The multiple submission of the same paper or report for assignments more than one course without the prior written permission of each instructor;
- Plagiarism, the appropriation of information, ideas, or the language of other persons or writers and the submission of them as one's own to satisfy the requirements of a course.

- Plagiarism thus constitutes both theft and deceit. Compositions, term papers, or computer programs acquired, either in part or in whole, from commercial sources or from other students and submitted as one's own original work shall be considered plagiarism. All students are directed to the standard manuals of style or reference guides for discussions of plagiarism and the means by which sources are legitimately acknowledged, cited, quoted, paraphrased, and footnoted –whether presented in an oral report or in writing.

Rules regarding the use of information in this course 1) If you use the language of your source, you must quote it exactly, enclose it in quotation marks, and cite the source. If you use the language of your source, quote the wording exactly. This is called a direct quotation. A direct quotation is either enclosed in quotation marks or indented on the page. If you omit part of the wording, use an ellipsis (three periods, four if necessary for punctuation to indicate the omission).

2) A paraphrase employs source material by restating an idea in an entirely new form that is original in both sentence structure and word choice. Taking the basic structure from a source and substituting a few words is an unacceptable paraphrase and may be construed as plagiarism. Creating a new sentence by merging the wording of two or more sources is also plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities: Reasonable academic accommodations may be provided to students who submit appropriate documentation of their disability. If students have need of assistance or questions with this issue, they are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) at sds@sju.edu or by phone at 610.660.1774. The Office of SDS also provides an appeal/grievance procedure for complaints regarding requested or offered reasonable accommodations. More information can be found at: www.sju.edu/sds.

Health and wellness Saint Joseph's University recognizes that physical and mental health strongly impact one's ability to do well in school and in life. As a result, there are many helpful campus resources designed to help students to care for their physical, mental, and spiritual health. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle and challenges. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking assistance sooner rather than later is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. The resources below can help you to cope with stress and to achieve your academic and personal goals.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides free confidential mental health counseling for all Saint Joseph's University students. Currently, CAPS therapists are conducting tele-mental health counseling for students via a secure version of Zoom. In addition, counselors are available after office hours and over weekends to attend to urgent mental health concerns. To access 24/7 mental health counseling, students can call the CAPS office at 610-660-1090. <https://sites.sju.edu/counseling/>.

Additional Resources:

- Student Success: <https://sites.sju.edu/thesuccesscenter/student-success/>
- Fitness & Recreation: <https://www.sju.edu/health-well-being/fitness-recreation>
- Center for Inclusion and Diversity: <https://sites.sju.edu/oid/>

- Campus Ministry: <https://sites.sju.edu/campusministry/>

Bias, discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct/assault, Saint Joseph's is committed to providing a workplace and educational environment, as well as other benefits, programs, and activities, that are free from acts of bias, discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. We encourage anyone who has experienced this type of harm to seek help from the University by filing a report through the incident reporting form, or by calling 610-660-1145.

For information about the University's response to reports bias, harassment, and discrimination, including policies, incident definitions, and the role of the University's Bias Activity Review Group, please visit <https://www.sju.edu/offices/titleix-equity/equity> or contact bias@sju.edu.

For more information about University's response to reports of sexual misconduct, including incident definitions, information for confidential reporting options both on- and off-campus, and resources for support, please visit <https://www.sju.edu/offices/titleix> or contact titleix@sju.edu.

While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me for support, please know that I have some reporting requirements that are part of my job responsibilities at Saint Joseph's University. For example, if you inform me of an issue of sexual harassment, discrimination or sexual misconduct (Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, or Stalking) I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's Director Office of Title IX, Equity & Compliance.

Land Acknowledgment

We recognize and acknowledge that Saint Joseph's University stands on the Indigenous territory known as "Lenapehoking," the traditional homelands of the Lenape, also called Lenni-Lenape or Delaware Indians. Their descendants today include the Delaware Tribe and Delaware Nation of Oklahoma; the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape, Ramapough Lenape, and Powhatan Renape of New Jersey; and the Munsee Delaware of Ontario.