

LOCKDOWN ACTIVITY PACK

Media and Communication



Prifysgol
Abertawe
Swansea
University

Binged-out on boxsets? Tired of YouTube? Twitter getting tiresome? TikTok getting tedious? We hear you. So as you're getting ready to join us to study Media and Communications at Swansea in September, our lecturers thought you might be interested in giving your media-saturated brain a bit of a work-out.

Think of it as an academic care-package if you like. Split into different sections such as journalism, public relations, digital media, media practice, film and media theory, it mirrors the way we undertake a critical analysis of the media in the department.

So sit back, have a read, and give yourself the mental equivalent of a Joe Wickes workout...

And remember, if you have any questions about any aspects of studying Media and Communications at Swansea University, please get in touch - I'd enjoy hearing from you.

Iwan Williams

Lecturer in Media and Public Relations and
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Journalism - A level playing field? (Journalism)



When news editors decide what story to publish, they do so with a commitment to their audience and their craft. Craft is important in the research and writing of news stories because news organisations abide by different rules depending on who they are and where they publish.

Take the BBC for example - it is the UK's main public service broadcaster, so it has a duty to inform and educate its audience. This has an impact on the type of news it produces because stories have to be free from political and commercial influence. The BBC also have to abide by the rules of due impartiality that are set out by the UK's communication regulator Ofcom. This means that the journalism they produce must provide a balance of different viewpoints and that journalists should refrain from adding their own personal opinionz.

This issue was highlighted recently when the BBC presenter Emily Maitlis expressed an opinion about Dominic Cummings' breaking of the lockdown on Newsnight. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-52824508>

However, UK newspapers are **not** restricted by the same rules of public service broadcasting, so their stories can include journalistic opinion, commercial and political bias and sensationalism.

Please click on and read both of the stories below and remember to keep in mind that the BBC has to abide by the rules outlined above while newspaper organisations do not.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-52867140>

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8372697/Air-ambulances-land-Durdle-Door-three-people-hurt-jumping-cliff.html>

Once you have read the stories consider the following:

Does the BBC article abide by the rules of public service broadcasting by informing its audience but in a neutral way without including any personal opinions?

Which story is more informative, useful and entertaining for the reader?

Do you think that regulating the news is good or bad for citizens?

Dr Allaina Kilby, Lecturer in Journalism

Corona-Zombies! (Film)

Film theorists have long written about the horror genre's function as a reflection of our society, political climate and culture. George A. Romero's original zombie trilogy of *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *Day of the Dead* (1985) used zombie narratives to provide social commentary on race relations, consumerism and militarism respectively...they also scared the collective pants off us! Zombies are interwoven through the history of horror, shambling (or controversially, running, gasp!) amongst the other horror iconography of slashers, ghosts and a suitably macabre array of creatures that go bump in the night.

Zombies were firmly back on the cultural agenda last month when Charles Band's *Corona Zombies* (2020) was released just weeks after much of the world went into lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. You can watch the trailer here (warning: contains scenes of violence, horror and very bad acting!) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JptgwQNg480>

The hour-long epic (yes, ironic), tells the tale of Santa Monica trailer park resident Barbie in her fight against a marauding horde of coronavirus-infected undead assailants. It was shot in just 28 days, and released for streaming on Charles Band's Full Moon Features website <https://www.fullmoonfeatures.com/> on 10th April.

Band and his production company Full Moon Features are notorious for producing horror films which fall into the exploitation sub genre, a genre notorious for its lurid content, manipulation of cultural anxiety, and willingness to provoke controversy. No surprise then, that the deadly virus sweeping the world should come under his focus: and the controversial (and speedy) release secured them media coverage all over the world, such as this piece in The Guardian here in the UK

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/apr/13/corona-zombies-film-full-moon-features>

While it may be a horror comedy which wears its exploitation credentials as a badge of honour, rather than a cinematic masterpiece akin to Romero's original zombie trilogy, *Corona Zombies* does remind us that horror is a genre which reflects society's anxieties. The message may not be subtle in this instance, but the presence of social commentary and anxiety is consistent and has been for many decades in the much-derided horror genre.

So, do you think the release of *Corona Zombies* is too soon as the world is still in the grip of the pandemic? Is it in 'bad taste' (again, often regarded a unique charm of low budget genre filmmaking)? And when you really think about it, what have the horror films you have seen have reflected about society? When you look beneath the surface, is the zombie sub genre more than just bloodbaths and gore?

If you want to watch some zombie films with a bit more bite, try the films listed below & consider what social commentary might be on offer amongst the flying limbs and brain-munching (which is also good, of course!):

Colin (2008) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRtQGo5BlaY>

Fido (2006) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDvIcCoXpMk>

Land of the Dead (2005) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Wfj5Jc10ZI>

The *Homecoming* episode of *Masters of Horror* (2005) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93jdPg5xNY0>

28 Days Later (2002) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7ynwAgQIDQ>

Zombies man, they creep me out!

Sarah Crowther, Lecturer in Media



Public relations is the professional discipline of managing an organisation's communications and reputation. This often means promoting and protecting the brand of the organisation and its products, and seeking opportunities to gain publicity in traditional and social media. A recent article in the public relations industry magazine, PR Week, found that 'When asked whether "brands should just be brands and not speak out on major issues", 55 per cent of respondents told the survey brands should keep silent, while 28 per cent said that they should comment' (prweek.com, 5 June 2020). 42% of the respondents specifically said that brands should not comment on the Black Lives Matter protests in America, but the statistics are different when you look at the different ethnic background of the respondents, with those who identified as black keener that brands should take a stand. This highlights a fundamental concept of good public relations which is that organisations should understand and respond to the different attitudes and beliefs of different stakeholder groups and not assume that everyone will respond to brand messages in the same way.

<https://www.prweek.com/article/1685335/dont-talk-us-black-lives-matter-uk-public-tells-brands-%E2%80%93-mention-coronavirus>

Brands like Nike and Ben & Jerry's ice cream have been quick to speak out about the issues surrounding the recent death of George Floyd in Minneapolis who was killed by a police officer, but both these brands have been active campaigners on the issue of racism for some time. Ben & Jerry's have associated themselves with the Black Lives Matter campaign for the past six years and Nike won the award for outstanding commercial at the Creative Art Emmys in 2019 for its Dream Crazy advert which featured NFL star Colin Kaepernick who gained publicity for kneeling for the pre-game national anthem in protest at racial injustice in the United States.



<https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/nike-adidas-netflix-ben-jerrys-show-support-black-lives-matter/1684753>

Read the two articles provided in the links and consider the following questions:

1. Do you think brands should engage with topical issues?
2. At what point does brand 'activism' seem to be inauthentic?
3. Are there brands whose activism you respect? What kind of content do those brands use on social media?

Dr Sian Rees, Associate Professor, Public Relations

Theorizing the COVID-19 disinformation (Media Theory)



Twitter and other public-facing social networking services enable users to post, live stream, and interact with messages in real-time through website interface or mobile-device application software, in multiple languages.

Such features make them an ideal emergency communication system, while at the same time being a breeding ground for the propagation of disinformation. As the reports from the BBC, WHO and the UK Parliament show, COVID-19 disinformation has led to consequences such as the public receiving conflicting information about the epidemic; public anxiety and panic resulting from disinformation; racism and xenophobia towards certain minority groups and possible harm to public health from fake cures and so on.

Health disinformation on digital media platforms has been researched and documented during the outbreak of SARS, MERS, Ebola and so on. However, there is still more to do in terms of an investigation into where epidemic disinformation comes from, how it is spread, and what impact it has. It also raises questions about the responsibilities of social media companies.



Take a few minutes to read these stories about COVID-19:

Read related stories here:

- The BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-52731624> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52903680>
- The WHO: <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/countering-misinformation-about-covid-19>
- The UK Parliament: <https://post.parliament.uk/analysis/covid-19-misinformation/>

Once you've done so, consider the following questions.

Q1 How does the internet help or hinder the spread of incorrect information ?

Q2 What is the impact of COVID-19 social media disinformation on public health, online trust, and mainstream journalism?

Q3 How would you feel if governments intervened and established new rules to try to prevent disinformation online ? Do you think the internet should be censored in this way?

Dr Yan Wu, Associate Professor

Putting Practice into Practice (Employability)



An important part of our work as teaching staff is ensuring that graduates are well prepared for the world of work, and to that end we have a team of nine industry representatives to help us. We meet twice a year to discuss the curriculum, the demands of the creative and PR industries and the skills they require as employers. Our portfolio of modules is intended to nurture these skills progressively from the first to the third year, so employability isn't something you panic about when you are about to graduate.

But you don't have to wait to enrol on our courses to begin this journey, you can prepare beforehand. So here are five top tips to get you going...



1. SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE: check your settings on all your social media platforms and ensure that they reveal what you want to the people who have access to your account. Prospective employers will certainly take a look at your social media profile.

2. WHO IS WHO? Do some online research to find out who are the main companies involved in the media and PR industry. This can range from small enterprises in your area to national and international companies. Familiarise yourself with the work and productions of the companies that interest you.

3. CV The curriculum vitae remains one of the first points of contact between you and a prospective employer. You may think that you haven't had enough experiences in life as yet to create a CV but I'm sure once you begin to list your qualifications and experiences you will realise that even now you have valuable skills to offer. Take a look at this resource to assist you: <https://myuni.swansea.ac.uk/sea/recruitment/cv/>

4. SOCIAL MEDIA SAVVY You must have your favourite online platforms that you engage with endlessly, but what about those you may consider more appropriate for your parents or even grandparents? An important aspect of media and PR work is working beyond your personal interests and engaging with channels of communication that you wouldn't necessarily use day to day. Now is the time to familiarise yourself with the unfamiliar.

5. PURSUE A HOBBY The current period we find ourselves in has provided something quite unique for busy students, which is time. Take advantage of the time on your hands to pursue a new hobby or to rekindle your interest in an old pursuit. Having an interest in something provides a point of conversation or a font for new ideas, and it may well make you stand out from the crowd.

You may be thinking.... What is the point? There is no work out there at the moment and things are difficult for those seeking employment. We are living in challenging times, but as our industry panel members recently commented, there is a great appetite at the moment for information and entertainment. Recent events have led to an increase in engagement with online news platforms with users turning to sources they trust, which has a bearing upon public service broadcasting. As flexible and agile industries they have responded to the crisis by finding new ways of working and creating innovative content. So what are you waiting for? Begin your journey...

Non Vaughan Williams, Senior Lecturer

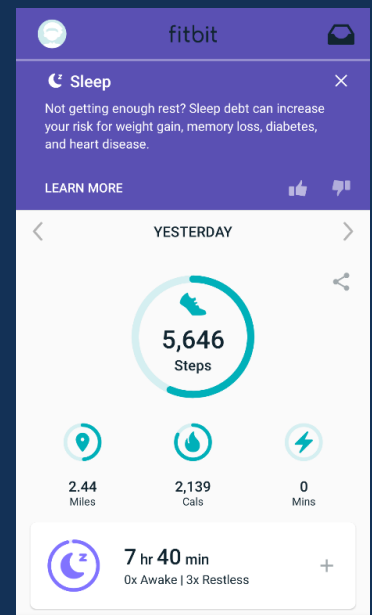
A lecturer's morning (Digital Media)



I wake up to an email on my phone. 'Hi there, your battery level is low.' I snap the watch into its charging cradle and open the app. For the sake of my health, it looks like I should be sleeping and exercising more. I'm dimly aware of the article I read a few months ago about [Google now owning all this information](#), but I put that to the back of my mind and blearily go downstairs to the kitchen.

I ask the downstairs smart speaker for some music. It obliges, and in doing so [a server owned by Amazon](#) records another entry to my name. It knows my tastes and preferences, and the minutiae of my and my family's life. I really need to get someone to sort out that ceiling light.

1.701Z	computer play songs by r. e. m.	6afe0c
6.909Z	computer recommend me an electrician	47584
1.068Z	computer what's this	ad3b1
7.319Z	computer play the album a quiet eye by june tabor	4d873
5.955Z	computer read my notifications	33113



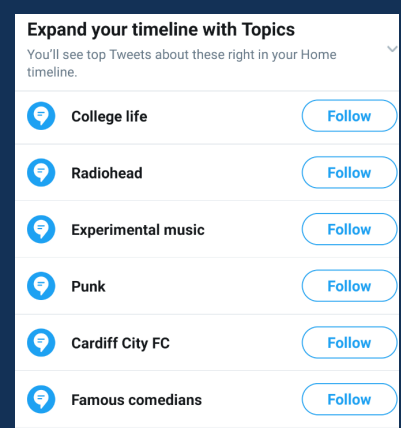
Cereal and milk poured into a bowl. Surely in eating breakfast nobody has their eye on me? My supermarket does. Last February, I asked it what it knew about me: turned out it was quite a lot. Its computers store all the things I bought, how I paid for them, and all the times I forgot to take a plastic bag with me and had to buy one. I decide to munch on a banana: it knows I bought that too.

```
{
  "name": "Tesco Malt Wheats Cereal 750G",
  "quantity": "1",
  "channel": "instore",
  "weightInGrams": "NA",
  "price": "1.3",
  "volumeInLitres": "NA"
}, {
  "name": "Tesco Small Ripe Bananas 6 Pack",
  "quantity": "1",
  "channel": "instore",
  "weightInGrams": "NA"
}
```

You've probably worked out that we create a huge volume of data with every swipe, press and step of our lives. But [as theorist Shoshana Zuboff points out](#), it goes deeper. We also help digital corporations create a 'shadow text' – a digital picture of the sort of people we are now, helping companies predict and even shape what we might like to be in the future.

It might not always be accurate – can't see myself buying a Cardiff season ticket, despite what Twitter thinks – but it's a symptom, a part of an unequal relationship. Facebook, Google and others know everything about us, but we know very little about what they do with our data. This is even more critical today; smartphone apps have been rapidly developed and deployed in order to aid the containment of the coronavirus and mitigate against second and third waves of infections. These technologies will be used for contact tracing, quarantine enforcement, movement permission, social distancing/movement monitoring, and symptom tracking. The rollout of these pervasive surveillance solutions has been justified by the argument that the virus can only be effectively tackled through their use, and civil liberties have to be sacrificed for public health.

Now if you excuse me, I need to put my Fitbit on again...



Topics to think about

1. In your morning routine, how many applications do you use that you think are collecting data for a 'shadow text' of you?
2. Do you think the potential risks to civil liberties are worth it if apps can help track Covid-19?
3. Do the benefits to our personal lives of using applications and digital devices outweigh the fact that companies can know so much about us?

Dr Rhys Jones and Dr Leighton Evans

De-constructing Visual Media



'The universe is perfused with signs' declared early theorist of semiotics Charles Pierce (1849 -1914). 150 years later, this has never been more significant. When you come to study media and communication at Swansea you will have the opportunity to learn how to critically and creatively apply communication design theories.

Successful media messages are designed, intentional. Using dynamic, skilful and creative use of often emergent design theories to build content which will evoke a calculated response from a precisely defined audience.

To become a successful media communicator or influencer you will have to develop the theory, and critical application of de-constructing and decoding existing content. This will develop your ability to use these theories to inform and enrich your own media design practice.



Under Investigation



These, now familiar, graphics, have, for those of us living in the UK, a strong and potent meaning. There are many aspects of communication design and contextual theory to consider when decoding them, cultural, historic, economic. However, even more fundamentally, we can de-construct the design's building blocks behind this message In order to better understand it's impact.

SHAPES

Artist and theorist , Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1914) proposed that these basic shapes were fundamental to design theory. Evoking diverse response ...



= Stable, rigid



= Passive, friendly



= Dynamic, pace, direction

COLOUR

Investigating and decoding the skilful use of colour theory is another fundamental building block in communication design theory, but again, cultural context is a vital consideration.



Using the colour wheel is a useful tool in coding and decoding meaning in visual communication. Neighbouring colours can give a sense of harmony. Those opposite (complementary) offer more impact.

TYPOGRAPHY

The choice of typeface, and the context in which it is used powerfully effects meaning in design. Would you write your thesis in comic sans? What responses could it induce in your examiner? How about messaging a friend using all caps? Might it elicit a different response when used on a direction sign?

LAYOUT

The visual layout of a communication design has a profound effect on the meaning. A conveyed hierarchy can be achieved using size, position, colour and a host of other attributes.

Your Task (should you wish to accept it)

Using these four design elements, take a careful look at the two signs above and Question; what are the motives of the message creator in choosing to design it the way they have. How are they hoping to be seen; What emotions and feelings are they hoping to evoke; Does the colour use signify something?

Using your phone, harvest images which use similar design techniques. How successful are they in conveying their message? Take photos of similar design approaches in the world about you, consider their context. What about the use of similar designs in different cultural context?



Mostyn Jones, Senior Lecturer



Nature often does a very good job of using shapes and colour as signals of warning.



We are consuming more media across more platforms than ever before. At Swansea University's department of Media and Communications, we use certain research techniques to critically analyse and study the media. Here's a quick overview of how we go about it.

There are three things we can look at when researching the media. First, we can look at the **TEXT**. We use this word in a much more general way than meaning just words, and in media and communications research terms it means the "thing" that's doing the communicating. It could be an article, a Tweet, or a film for example. Then we can look at the **PROCESS** of creating the text – that could be the way that a newsroom selects its news stories, what a film director sets out to achieve, or the dynamic between a group of people who communicate through WhatsApp. Or we can look at **RECEPTION**, which is how people feel about a TV programme, or how they respond to corporate messages about a new product for example.

Research Method		What does it examine?	How?
Content Analysis		TEXTS	We count the elements within a number of different texts to understand the patterns and trends within them.
Discourse Analysis		TEXTS	We look at how things are described, presented and explained to discover the meanings behind words and phrases.
Interviews and focus groups		RECEPTION and PROCESS	We ask, for example, journalists about why they produced a story in a particular way, or audiences about what they thought about an advertising message, perhaps.
Multimodal and Semiotic Analysis		TEXTS	We look at things like pictures, videos, captions, fonts and so on to determine the meanings embedded within them.
Ethnography		PROCESS and RECEPTION	Instead of meeting people to interview them, we spend an extended period talking to them and watching them go about their usual routines. Could be a busy newsroom, or a family watching television and reacting to what's on screen
Netnography		PROCESS and RECEPTION	A bit like Ethnography, but the online version. We can discover for example, how people interact online, and how they build and use networks to make sense of the world.
Surveys		PROCESS and RECEPTION	Interviews, but directed towards a much bigger sample of people.
Data Mining		All of the above and possibly more	Looking at archives, ancient and modern. There is so much information everywhere. Nowadays, for example, journalists and researchers can tap into large datasets to discover hidden truths and the human stories behind numerical data.

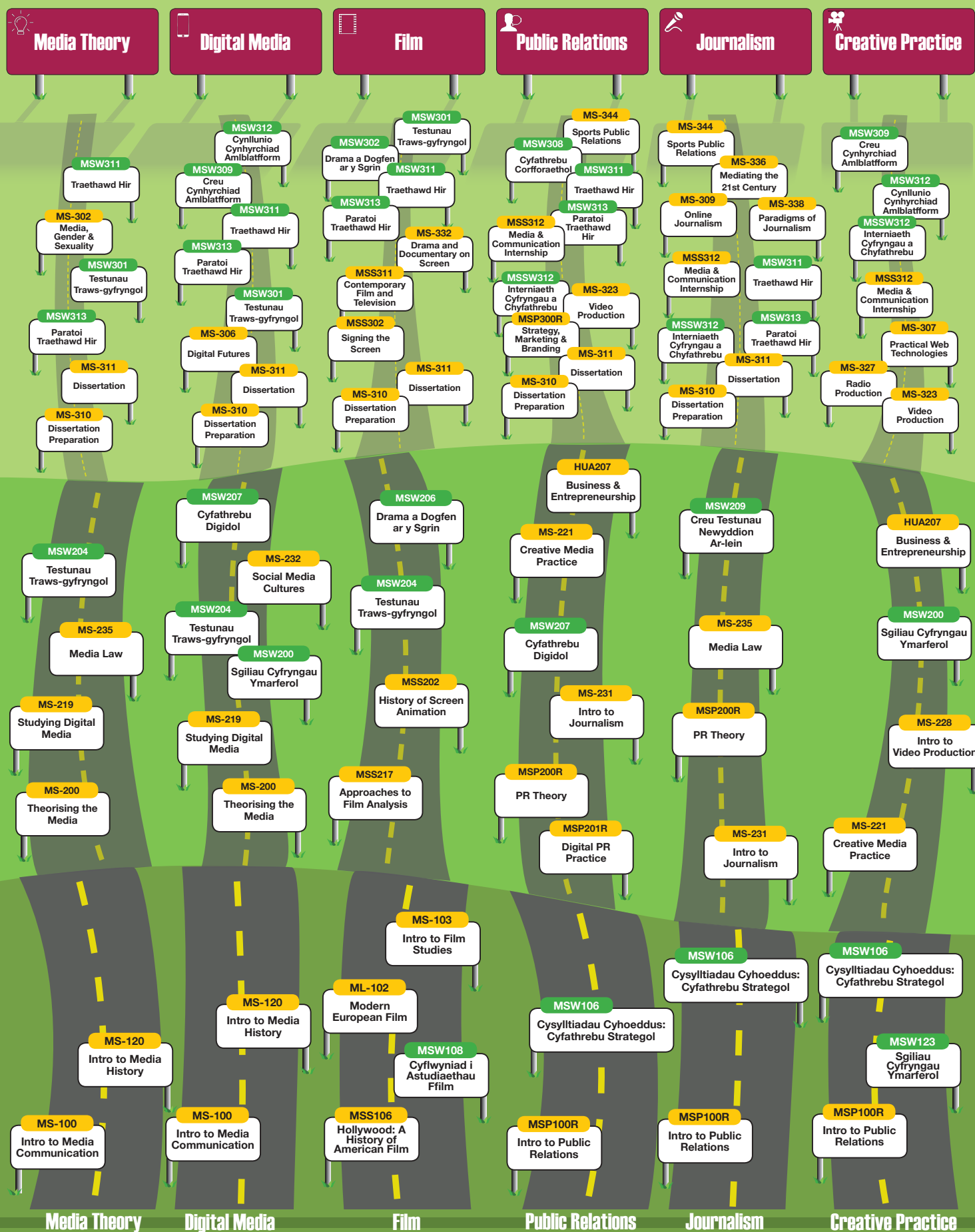
MEDIA STUDY PATHWAYS



Year 3

Year 2

Year 1



BA Media & Communication / BA Public Relations and Media Study Pathways

Pathways are recommended for students who are interested in a particular area; many students choose a mixture across all.

All students take MS-100 and MS-200.

Disclaimer: Please note that this list is not definitive and that modules may change due to staff changes / sabbaticals.

We look forward to teaching you all



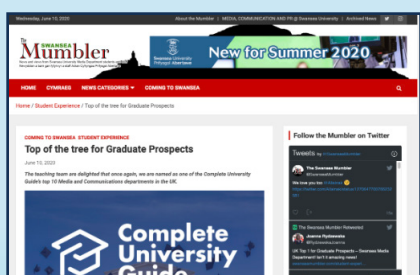
Media @ Swansea University



www.swansea.ac.uk/mediastudies/



[@SUMediaComm](https://twitter.com/SUMediaComm)



The **SWANSEA** Mumbler



swanseamumbler.com



[@SwanseaMumbler](https://twitter.com/SwanseaMumbler)

The Swansea Mumbler is a community website for all those connected to the Media, Communications and PR Department within Swansea University

