GRCon '24 A Modern, **Two-Course** Undergraduate Communications Sequence

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY



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# Make Undergrad Comms Great Again

Rogers and Dudevoir GRCon24



## **Build Spectrum-Aware Tech Leaders**

Rogers and Dudevoir GRCon24



Generate Renewed Interest

# **Build Spectrum-Aware Tech Leaders**



Generate Renewed Interest Modernize Course Curriculum

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## **Build Spectrum-Aware Tech Leaders**

Improve Course Pedagogy



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## **Build Spectrum-Aware Tech Leaders**

Improve Course Pedagogy Maintain Strong Theoretical Foundation



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## **Build Spectrum-Aware Tech Leaders**

Improve Course Pedagogy Maintain Strong Theoretical Foundation

#### Hands-On Learning

Rogers and Dudevoir



## A HUGE CAVEAT





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- Not a typical 4-year school
- Cadet academics
- Military training
- Athletics
- Semesters consist of 40 lessons
- 53-minute lessons
- Block schedule
- Two Comms Courses





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#### ECE 447: Comms Systems

An introduction to modern electrical communications. The performance of various modulation and detection methods for both analog and digital systems are analyzed. Software Defined Radios (SDRs) are introduced as a practical application of communications systems. Coverage includes theory of operation, effects of random noise, bandwidth and other communication design constraints.



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#### ECE 448: Applied SDRs

A course in practical telecommunications using software-defined radios (SDRs). Building on the introduction to SDRs provided in ECE 447, students will gain familiarity with applications of modern communications techniques, including topics such as: modulation, filtering, encoding/decoding, sampling, analog-to-digital conversion, multipath, channel noise, and antenna selection. Students will use contemporary software tools, such as Python and GNU Radio Companion to implement complete transmitting and receiving systems using SDRs.



## PREVIOUS SITUATION

#### ECE 447: Theory of Comms

- 1. Signals
- 2. Analog AM
- 3. Analog Angle Mod
- 4. Noise
- 5. Digital Modulation
- 6. System Design
- 7. Final Exam

#### ECE 448: SDR Applications

- 1. SDR Intro
- 2. GNURadio Intro
- 3. FSK
- 4. PAM
- 5. RF Remote Hacking
- 6. Custom Blocks
- 7. mPSK
- 8. Final Project

Note: Red text indicates a hands-on component.

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- Only 2 hands-on activities
- Very few applications
- Minimal connection w/ ECE 448
- Little interest in further study



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End result: graduates with gaps in education & experience



- Majority of the time = introducing HW/SW
- Little time to study real-world signals
- Students struggle w/ final projects

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Improve Course Pedagogy Maintain Strong Theoretical Foundation

#### Hands-On Learning:

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Improve Course Pedagogy Best Practices Maintain Strong Theoretical Foundation Identify Core Material

## Hands-On Learning:

Every class interactive



Generate Renewed Interest SDRs earlier in sequence Modernize Course Curriculum Study real-world signals

# Make Undergrad Comms Great Again

Improve Course Pedagogy Best Practices Maintain Strong Theoretical Foundation Identify Core Material

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Every class interactive

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## LET'S MAKE IT BETTER...

#### ECE 447: Theory of Comms

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### ECE 448: SDR Applications

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#### Note: Red text indicates a hands-on component.



## THAT'S **Better...**

#### ECE 447: Theory of Comms

- 1. Signals
- 2. Intro to SDRs
- 3. Analog AM
- 4. Analog AM in GR
- 5. Analog Angle Modulation
- 6. FM in GR
- 7. Noise
- 8. Digital Modulation
- 9. FSK in GNURadio
- 10. Final Exam

### ECE 448: SDR Applications

- 1. Advanced Comms Theory
- 2. GR PAM
- 3. GR OOT Modules
- 4. Common Signals
- 5. mPSK
- 6. **FHSS**
- 7. RF Remote Hacking
- 8. Special Topics
- 9. Final Project

Note: Red text indicates a hands-on component. Bold text indicates reorg'd/new material. Rogers and Dudevoir GRCon24


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- 9. FSK in GNURadio
- 10. Final Exam

• Power & Energy

- Fourier Analysis
- Convolution & Correlation





#### ECE 447: Theory of Comms

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- 4. Analog AM in GR
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- 6. FM in GR
- 7. Noise
- 8. Digital Modulation
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- 10. Final Exam

- SDR hardware/software
- IQ Sampling & Data
- Intro to GR
- GR Data types, sampling rate, filters
- ZMQ, data files





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- AM Theory & Mixing
- DSB-LC
- SSB

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- Pulse Modulation
- Analog AM Lab\*





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- 10. Final Exam

• AM Simulation

• AM Receiver



#### Rogers and Dudevoir



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- FM Modulation
- FM Demodulation
- FM Lab\*



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- 9. FSK in GNURadio
- 10. Final Exam

• FM Receiver

• Dual FM Receiver





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- Random Signals
- Noise in Digital Systems
- Probability of Error



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10. Final Exam

• ASK

- FSK
- PSK
- Digital Modulation Lab\*







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- 9. FSK in GNURadio

10. Final Exam

- FSK Tutorial
- FSK Project
  - End-to-end tutorial from Wiki
  - Students provided modulated file data
  - Must build decoder
  - Must be resilient to (low) sample errors



#### ECE 447: Theory of Comms

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10. Final Exam

- Institutionally required
- Comprehensive
- Includes sample flowgraphs w/ errors
- Includes questions to test GR literacy





#### ECE 448: PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF...

- Can't start the course without the syllabus...
- syllabus.sigmf → syllabus.pdf
- Provided Modulated data of PDF bytes
- Must demodulate to PDF document

Merce acadebry DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING ECE 448 Syldaws - Syring 2023

#### Course description

How you ever though about the shore number of wireless signals surrounding you in the modern world? From ellphons to Wir's lobatosh. wireless communications realised by a generated, transmitted, and review BEC ket 4C communications. This is course, many of the fundamental principles of many methods of communication. This is course many of the fundamental principles of many methods of communication. This is course the state of the

#### Instructors

Lt Col Rogers (Course Director) 2E38 neil.rogers@afacademy.edu

#### Course Goals

Cadets enrolled in the course shall develop the ability to interact with SDRs, select the best SDR and software package for a certain application, and develop software to transmit/receive wireless signals. Cadets will also

#### Course Objectives

- Make use of modern software applications to simulate, receive, and transmit signals using modern modulation and encoding techniques.
- Describe the principles of basic signal processing techniques, such as filtering, interpolation, decimation, and matched filtering.
- Implement basic signal processing techniques, such as filtering, interpolation, decimation, and matched filtering in the presence of noise and other non-idealities.

Course Prerequistes by Topic

- ECE 215/315: Modulation and demodulation techniques for analog and digital systems.
- CompSci 206/210/211/212: Basic programming skills.



- Course Intro & Motivation
- Link Budgets & Comms Systems
- Signal Space



- 1. Advanced Comms Theory
- 2. GR PAM
- 3. GR OOT Modules
- 4. Common Signals
- 5. mPSK
- 6. FHSS
- 7. RF Remote Hacking
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# 

## ECE 448 TOPIC DETAILS

- PAM Tutorial (Mathys, 2016)
- Hier blocks
- Matched filter project
  - Build new MF hier block
  - Must incorporate multiple pulse shapes

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- OOT Module Usage
- Common OOT Modules
- Custom blocks
- Custom block project
  - Build non-trivial block
  - C++ or Python

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- CW generator (@duggabe)
- Build CW decoder



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• HD Radio (thanks @Vlad!)



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- ADS-B
  - Mode S message breakdown
  - Pymodes, gr-air-modes
  - Mobile device receiving
- AIS
  - NMEA Message structure
  - AIVDM generator, NRZI encoding, GMSK mod
  - AIS Simulator
  - @vtmichael?!

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- DTMF generator
- DTMF receiver



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- mPSK Overview
- mPSK Tutorial



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- FHSS (Medium @Solomon)
- Modify FHSS generator to be random



#### Rogers and Dudevoir

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- URH Intro
- PPM
- Remote Reverse Engineering
- Build flowgraph to Tx remote signal



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- FMCW
- GRCon CTF fun
- Other interesting topics



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- Starts around midterm
- Milestones drive work
- FPV Decoder (mod gr-ntsc)
- GR RC Control
- NOAA Image Decoding



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NOAA Image Decoding

Project Proposal

Background Research

Design Description

Prototype Description

Final report & demo



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NOAA Image Decoding



- General feedback was very good
- Instructor perception is good
- Observed high levels of engagement
- Observed high level of effort on final projects



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"My new boss is very impressed with my knowledge and experience with SDRs" -Graduate



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- Observed high levels of engagement
- Observed high level of effort on final projects

"My new boss is very impressed with my knowledge and experience with SDRs" -Graduate

"The best assignment I've done at USAFA" - After 448 midterm



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- Student Laptops
- OS trouble
- Organization
- Accreditation





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## 0x54 0x68 0x61 0x6E 0x6B 0x73 0x21 Any Questions?