

**The syllabus is subject to revision up to the start of classes on 7 January 2015. Any major revisions after this date will be announced.**

**JOMC 714, Spring 2015  
Database and Web Research  
UNC School of Journalism and Mass  
Communication**

Online @ <https://www.unc.edu/sakai/>  
(Sign in with your ONYEN and password)

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Hours: 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.; or by appointment. Please note that I am not on campus. Meetings will be by phone or e-mail.

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#### Course Description

This course introduces free and commercial online tools for conducting research. It examines current search engine and database technologies, the process of conducting research and evaluating results, techniques and commands for conducting advanced searching, tools for finding multimedia, book content, and online conversations as well as information that has been modified or removed, and ways in which to capture information as it is created. It further provides an opportunity for experimenting with various software and online tools for managing research or emerging information. The

course ends with an introduction to the highly-specialized area of public records research.

### Objectives

- Conduct research methodically to find an answer that is complete, accurate and authoritative.
- Evaluate online resources for accuracy, completeness, objectivity and timeliness.
- Find and use specialized databases for information not accessible via popular Web searching.
- Use a variety of techniques to capture and monitor newly published or real-time information.
- Experiment with several applications or online tools for managing research or information.
- Develop advanced strategies for conducting more complex Web searching.

### Textbooks

- Wayne C. Booth, et al., *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., The University of Chicago Press, 2008, ISBN 9780226065663 (also available as a Kindle ebook) Required. Needed to complete Week 2 assignment.
- William Badke, *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way through the Information Fog*, 5th ed., iUniverse, Inc., 2014, ISBN 978-1491722336 (or 1491722339). Available as a Kindle ebook or in paperback. Updates to the text available at <https://sites.google.com/site/researchstrategiesweb/home/updates>. Required.
- Tara Calishain, *Information Trapping: Real-Time Research on the Web*, New Riders Press, 2006, ISBN 0321491718 (available at Amazon). Optional. Please note the year of publication. Because of the rapid pace of technological change, some of the techniques and resources mentioned in the book will be out of date. However, the way Calishain thinks about information and how to find it will never grow old. Students in past classes have found much use for some of the chapters. If you decide to buy it, try to find it at a reduced priced.

### Software Requirements

- Text editor or printer driver that allows saving or converting to PDF. (For more information, see Expectations, Written Assignments.)
- Some course exercises require the downloading and installation of free software. Some free software may be available only for a PC. MAC users will be provided alternatives, although they may not always have the same level of functionality.

### Course Access

Go to <https://www.unc.edu/sakai/>. Login with your ONYEN and password.

Course Menu: The course menu appears to the left once you sign in. Make sure you select the JOMC 714 tab if you are taking more than one course.

Home: Contains introductory information about the course. If you get lost roaming around the site, go home.

Announcements: Click this link for all course announcements. New announcements appear on the course home page.

Course Materials: Find all the information you need to work through each week of the course. This information includes the instructor's overview, sample or model documents, select readings and external links. You will also find information about the final project here.

Discussions: Go here to participate in online discussions. You may also use the private messaging (PM) tool to send me or other participants a private message.

Assignments: Submit all written assignments here.

Grades: Keep track of your performance. Grading in Sakai is a little funky; the grading key is as follows:

3 = H

2 = P

1 = L

0 = F

Please note: the official gradebook for the course is not available electronically.

Library/Reserves: Start here to find all databases you are required to use in this class. Also find reserved reading material.

Messages: Access any email you send or receive via Sakai.

Search: Search course content.

Help: Find help documentation for using Sakai.

### **Online Course Statement**

1. By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the Acceptable Use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy (<http://help.unc.edu/1672>) on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette and privacy protection.

2. As part of this course you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC Chapel Hill Information Security Policies ([http://its.unc.edu/ITS/about\\_its/policies/index.htm](http://its.unc.edu/ITS/about_its/policies/index.htm)) when participating in online classes.

3. When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC Chapel Hill, such as Google or Youtube, please note that the Terms and Conditions of these companies and not the University's Terms and Conditions apply. These third parties may

offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC Chapel Hill.

4. When links to sites outside of the unc.edu domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

5. Online courses may at times require Web-based assignments that are public in nature and may be viewed by third parties online. This is especially true in social media and blogging platforms. Be mindful of the information you choose to share publicly as part of your assignments. Under the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and UNC's FERPA regulation ([http://registrar.unc.edu/AcademicServices/PoliciesProcedures/StudentRights/CCM1\\_042762](http://registrar.unc.edu/AcademicServices/PoliciesProcedures/StudentRights/CCM1_042762)), a student's education records are protected from disclosure to third parties. However, FERPA protection does not extend to material shared publicly by students.

### **AEJMC Core Values**

JOMC 714 is aligned with the core values and competencies of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). Students completing this class are able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work;
- Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

### **Expectations**

***Absences and Late Assignments.*** Late work will be penalized unless excused. Work turned in more than one week late for an unexcused reason will not be accepted.

Online classes depend on participation for success; therefore, missed discussion or group project time generally cannot be made up.

***Time Commitment.*** The amount of time you spend each week will vary, but it should

average about 3 hours per week, not including assigned readings or individual written assignments. Weeks 3 and 4 are particularly busy because of the team research project, and you may find the group project on developing a Netvibes site more labor intensive than some other weeks.

Previous students generally say they spent 10-12 hours per week working on the course, including group activities, reading, doing homework and preparing the final project.

**Spelling and Grammar.** Informality makes the online discussions more fun for everyone. You'll see me use common texting abbreviations, such as LOL, IMO, BTW or YMMV. If you don't understand the lingo, just ask. Someone will be happy to respond. By the same token, feel free to use shortcuts and IM-speak. It's encouraged.

Just the opposite is true, however, for written assignments. Spelling and grammar count. CUOL!

**Participation.** Participation comprises your level of involvement in all course activities (e.g., online discussions, group projects, individual written assignments). Participation requirements will vary, depending on the issues, tools and activities for the week. You will be evaluated weekly on commitment, leadership and the substance of your contributions (quality over quantity).

*Online Discussion Forums.* To meet expectations (to receive a "pass"), forum postings must pertain to the issues presented in the week's lecture, the week's readings, the tools highlighted or the group activity, if relevant. Pay attention to the instructions in the lecture post as the requirements may change from week to week.

Tips for writing pass-level posts: Quantity isn't the goal, so take the time you need to read the lecture and the assignments. When you do post, follow these guidelines for a passing grade:

- **Relevancy.** Is the comment about an issue up for discussion? Or is it relevant to a tool or activity highlighted for the week?
- **Quality.** Is there evidence that you've given the subject some thought? Do your comments challenge others to think?
- **Interaction.** Have you taken into account what other students have already said? Do you hold a conversation with other students rather than posting solitary comments outside the class discussion?
- **Frequency.** The number of posts doesn't count; substance does. Therefore, "me-too" comments and the like don't count toward the participation grade.

*Individual Written Assignments.* Individual written assignments help you accomplish the final project. Instructions for weeks where these are required appear in the Assignments menu in Sakai.

Individual written assignments must be uploaded through the Assignments menu by midnight ET on the due date. Look for the link at the bottom of the assignment description. Written assignments submitted by e-mail will not be accepted.

**All written assignments should be submitted in PDF.** Several free and commercial software packages let you convert documents to PDF. For instance, if you are using Word 2007, press the Microsoft Office button (upper left corner). Select "Save As" and then "PDF or XPS." Make sure PDF appears as the "save as type" in the dialog box.

If your word-processing software does not have a feature for saving as PDF, you will need to use a PDF printer driver. I use the free version of [PDF Fill](http://www.pdffill.com) (www.pdffill.com). Note that installation requires [Ghostscript](http://www.pdffill.com/gs_download.html) (www.pdffill.com/gs\_download.html). The software will prompt you to install Ghostscript if it does not detect it on your PC.

If you use PDF Fill or another PDF printer driver, you save your document to PDF through the print function. Look for PDF Fill (or other PDF driver) amongst the list of printers, when you are ready to print the document.

Mac OS X users will find a PDF option in the Print Window of any text editor. Select Save as PDF.

I generally comment on written assignments. **My feedback will be embedded in the PDF file you submit and returned to you via the Assignments menu.** To find my comments, go back into Assignments about one week after the due date. Look for an attached PDF file from me.

*Group Activities.* Group activities help you experience the tools or strategies up for discussion. Instructions for group activities appear in the instructor's overview.

Participation is mandatory. Your level of activity in group projects will count toward your participation grade as outlined above.

For instance, the team research assignment (weeks 3 and 4) places you in a workplace-like situation. Your team will be asked to answer a question that is too big for any one person to tackle in the time allotted. Your success depends on the team, and the team's success depends on you. You will receive guidance on chunking the project into manageable pieces, but you will have to work together to make it a success. This hands-on experience will help you understand and appreciate the multi-step research process.

*Communication.* All students are expected to check their UNC e-mail regularly. Important communications will be sent via e-mail. They may also appear as announcements.

### **UNC Honor Code**

It shall be the responsibility of every student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obey and to support the enforcement of the Honor Code (<http://instrument.unc.edu>), which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University, student, or academic personnel acting in an official capacity.

### **Grades and Grading**

High Pass (H)  
Pass (P)  
Low Pass (L)  
Fail (F)

A P(ass) means you are meeting the expectations of the course. H(igh)'s are reserved for those students who exceed the expectations the faculty has for the course. They signify truly outstanding performance. Thus, traditionally a low percentage of students receive Hs.

L(ow) means the performance falls below the expectations for the course. F(ail) means the work does not meet the minimum expectations for the course.

You will receive a weekly grade for your level of participation as defined under Expectations above. The participation grade will comprise 60 percent of the final grade. The final research project makes up the other 40 percent.

Grading in Sakai is a little funky; the grading key is as follows:

3 = H  
2 = P  
1 = L  
0 = F

**Please note:** the official gradebook for the course is not available electronically.

### **Weekly Schedule**

**With the exception of the first week and holiday adjustments, this course runs Tuesday to Monday.** For grading purposes, discussions generally end on Monday each week at midnight.

#### **Week 1: Basics of Online Research (7-12 Jan)**

- The Information Cycle
- Visible vs. Invisible Web
- Search or Research?
- Tools: Evernote, Zotero, Send to Kindle

#### **Week 2: Thinking Critically (13-18 Jan)**

- Evaluating and Validating Information
- Identifying Expert Sources
- On Being a Critical Thinker
- Using Evernote and Zotero
- Assignment: Research Statement (Step 1 of the Final Project), Finish the *Craft* text

#### **Weeks 3 & 4: The Research Process (20 Jan-2 Feb)**

- The 7-Step Research Process
- Assignment: Partner Research Exercise

#### **Week 5: Introduction to Database Research (3-9 Feb)**

- Database vs Search Engine Technology
- Controlled Vocabulary
- Boolean Logic
- Proximity Connectors
- UNC Library Databases
- Assignment: Research Assessment (Step 2 of the Final Project)

### **Week 6: Research Using Databases (10-16 Feb)**

- Delving into Databases for Research
- Assignment: Partner Database Experience Report

### **Week 7: Your Research Project (17-23 Feb)**

- Receive Guidance on Your Final Project
- Discussion of Week 6 Database Experience Reports
- Assignment: Source List (Step 3 of the Final Project)

### **Week 8: Information Trapping (24 Feb-5 Mar)**

- Tracking Information with RSS and Web Page Monitors
- Monitoring Emerging Information (Twitter and Real-Time Searching)
- Controlling Information Overload
- Tools: Choose from several RSS Aggregators, Web Page Monitoring tools and Tweet Management Tools
- Assignment: Partner Information Trapping Experience Report

### **Week 9: Break (6-16 Mar)**

### **Weeks 10 & 11: Advanced Web Searching (17-30 Mar)**

- Field Searching and Qualifiers
- Date Searching on the Web
- Specialized Databases
- The Internet Archive
- Tools: Choose from several specialized databases, FeedSifter, IFTTT, SpecificFeeds, Yahoo Pipes
- Assignment: Annotated Source List (Step 4 of the Final Project)
- Assignment: Partner Advanced Searching Experience Report

### **Week 12: Social Media in Research (31 Mar-7 Apr)\***

- Using a Social Media Dashboard
- Tools: Netvibes
- Assignment: Partner Netvibes Development Project

### **Week 13: Public Records Research (7-13 Apr)**

- What Is Public Record? How Does It Differ from Public Information?
- Select Sources of Public Records
- Overview of Public Record Research Strategy
- Discussion of Week 12 Netvibes Sites

### **Week 14 & 15: Wrap-Up and Reading Week (14-24 Apr)**



- Summary and Questions (optional participation)
- Work on the Final Project
- Assignment: Final Project

\*Course week extended because of the holiday.