

- 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 your own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;

Important UNC policies and procedures:

The Honor Code. The Honor Code is, as always, in effect at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. You are expected to uphold all aspects of the [Honor Code](#). For more specifics, see the [Instrument of Student Judicial Governance](#).

Special Needs. If you have any disability or other special situation that may make it difficult to meet the requirements for this class, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. If you have not done so already, you should also contact the Department of Accessibility Resources & Service (AR&S) at 919-962-8300 or accessibility@unc.edu.

Diversity. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The School of Media and Journalism adopted [diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements](#) in spring 2016 with accompanying goals.

Safe@UNC. The University's [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct](#) states that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject by federal law to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other [protected categories](#). If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources [here](#).

Textbooks. The following books are on reserve in the Park Library. I may put other books of interest on reserve as the semester progresses.

- **Pan, M.L.** (2008). *Preparing Literature Reviews: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (3rd Ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing.

This is a good step-by-step how to prepare a literature review regardless of methodological perspective. You might want to own a copy of this book.

- **Rosenberry, J., & Vicker, L.** (2008). *Applied Mass Communication Theory: A Guide for Media Practitioners*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. (Note: I refer to this as R&V in the course schedule.)
- **Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R.** (2014). *Mass Media Research* (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. This book may also be available online at: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B8pig2KdTaoBMVZPMEVYZGNzTDg/edit?pref=2&pli=1> (Note: I refer to this as W&D in the course schedule.)

This is an excellent and readable overview of the various methods available for studying research questions in journalism and mass communication primarily from a social scientific perspective. Part 1 is helpful for understanding how theory can guide research and how to get to a good research question and testable hypotheses. Part 4 may help stimulate your research ideas depending on your sequence home (e.g., reporting, electronic, advertising, public relations). It has an excellent chapter on how to conduct content analysis.

- **Brennen, B. S.** (2013) *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- **Creswell, J. W.** (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (3rd ed). London: Sage.

These two books provide excellent coverage of qualitative methods, including historical research. You'll find general discussion about differences between qualitative and quantitative research as well as information about designing a qualitative study, analyzing data and interpreting your findings. In addition, there are chapters on specific qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, ethnographies, focus groups, textual analysis and such.

Other Readings:

- Depending upon the interests of the class, I may put other books, chapters, or articles on reserve or on the course Sakai site.
- You will need to become familiar with an **academic style manual** that you will use throughout your Honors thesis. You need to pick a style and apply it to all the writing you do for this class. The specific reference style you choose will depend on the kind of research you are doing (history scholars typically use Chicago Style; behavioral scientists typically use the American Psychological Association's [APA] style manual). If you are doing legal research, you will need a copy of the *Blue Book* and will probably want to work with one of our law professors (Drs. Packer, Ekstrand, or Hoefges) or a graduate student to learn it. Individual style guides are available in UNC libraries and in addition, the [Purdue Online Writing Lab](#) has basic guidelines for APA, Chicago, and MLA.

Grades. Your grade at the end of this fall semester will reflect your work throughout the semester. I will assign your grade after consultation with your adviser and reader. Your grade will be evaluated in relation to your attendance and participation in the class as well as the work and effort of all students in the course. Be sure to carefully read over the requirements for this fall semester's Honors class to understand my expectations of you during this course. An "A" will indicate that all parties believe that your participation, effort and completed work in the courses have been outstanding. A "B" indicates that your participation, effort and completed work in the courses have been good. A "C" indicates that your participation, effort and completed work in the courses have been average. You *must* receive a positive evaluation on your work from your adviser, reader and me before continuing into the second semester. Students who complete the first semester of the program but do not continue in the spring will receive course credit for MEJO 691H.

In planning your spring semester, please keep in mind that honors projects take a lot of time to complete. For your own peace of mind and physical well-being, do not schedule other classes in the spring that require an extraordinary amount of out-of-class work.

Requirements:

Maintain a minimum overall grade point average of 3.3 and a minimum grade point average of 3.5 in your School major.

Decide on a research study or project

The project must be original research study or an original project (series of articles, marketing plan, website, a branding campaign, etc.) that results in a thesis of four to five chapters, or 50 to 80 pages total. It should be a topic in which you are interested and enthusiastic. Also important to consider is: resources, geography and finances. For a look at what your predecessors have studied see <http://search.lib.unc.edu/search?Ntt=STP-hon&Ntk=Call%20Number&Nty=1>. This is a searchable list of all the previous J-School honors theses that are available to see in the Park Library. They also are in the Wilson Library and you may be able to check them out there. For the past two years, honors theses have been collected electronically (only) by the university. You are strongly encouraged to find and familiarize yourself with a thesis/project from a previous year to better understand the work you'll be doing in 691H.

Consult with librarian

The resources of the UNC library system and the expertise of UNC librarians (most specifically, Park Library Director Stephanie Brown), will be indispensable as you develop your thesis. Ms. Brown will visit our class, but you are also required to meet independently with her to advance your project. Contact information is [here](#).

Attend a research-enrichment workshop (strongly recommended)

The University and the School offer enrichment opportunities related to research throughout the year, including workshops on using citation software and a range of analytical programs, such as SPSS and MaxQDA. These typically occur via (but are not limited to) the Park Library, [UNC libraries](#) programming, [Research Hub](#) or the [Odum Institute](#). You might also find it helpful to attend a research colloquium presentation that dovetails with your topic – many departments on campus host these. Your adviser can be helpful in recommending relevant campus events. I'll share information as it comes to me, but you should be alert to such opportunities, and make plans to attend one for extra credit. Come spring, you'll be glad you did this.

Conduct a review of previous research and writing

By mid-October, you will have located and summarized previous studies and writing on your topic. This review of the literature will comprise the bulk of Chapter 1 of your thesis. You also will map out exactly how you will conduct your study – what data/evidence will be gathered and how; this will be the bulk of Chapter 2 – the Methods/Procedures chapter. For students doing the more professional-oriented project, your proposal should include a literature review of the conceptual area that will guide your project and an outline of the procedures (and availability of resources) for your project.

These two pieces and a short introduction and schedule for the rest of your work will form your thesis proposal. *Your committee members must approve the proposal* so you may proceed with gathering and analyzing data. The proposal is important, because it will serve as your guide in

conducting the research and carrying out your project or study. These chapters may be rewritten later in light of additional research conducted during the second semester, but the initial version will define the scope of your study. Honors theses also often include appendices that include coding guides, questionnaires, or lists of interviewees or samples of evidence. Please keep track of such details as you go along. I encourage you to *keep a research log starting day one* that will help you keep track of your thought process and productivity.

Check the website for the Office of Undergraduate Research

The [Office of Undergraduate Research](#) is an excellent source of encouragement and support as you work on your project. In addition to examples of undergraduate research across disciplines, a helpful blog and range of programming, OUR has sometimes offered funding for undergraduate research from this office. In addition, you will find information at the OUR website about the [Celebration of Undergraduate Research](#), an annual event (held in April) to showcase and award original research.

Complete ethics training (everyone) and, if needed, obtain IRB approval

Everyone in the class will need to complete the Institutional Review Board's certification process. This means you will do the [CITI Online Course](#) (CITI = Collaborative IRB Training Initiative) on the web. You will need to first Register/Create an Account, then indicate the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as your affiliation. The registration will take you through several screens. When you choose which one you want to complete, be sure to select the *Social and Behavioral Research: Basic Course*. Send me an email when you've completed the training. One caution: This certification may take some time, so I recommend you try to do this in stages.

If will be doing scholarly research that involves observing, interviewing, or measuring human beings in any way, your research design and procedures may have to be approved by the J-School (first) and then the Behavioral Institutional Review Board. You must do this before you can obtain approval for conducting your research. Go to <http://research.unc.edu/ohre/> to see information about submitting your application online.

Stay in touch with your adviser and work with that person to choose a second committee member for your thesis

Your honors adviser will work with you for part of the fall semester and all of the spring semester. He or she will be your direct supervisor for the completion of the project. In addition to your adviser, you will need one additional member (and may have two additional members) on your committee. Your adviser will be the chair of the committee and "must have a permanent or adjunct appointment in the unit in which their advisees' senior honors thesis coursework is scheduled" (excerpted from [Senior Honors Thesis Guidelines for Academic Units, Faculty Advisors, and Students](#)). Your other committee member, sometimes called a "reader," should also be a faculty member. Your reader can be from the School or from another department, or from outside the school, and preferably should be someone who has an interest in your research area and/or someone with whom you have had a class. If you decide to have a third member of your committee, that committee member may be a person from the profession who has expertise in your research area.

Schedule and meet with your committee members

Don't wait for your adviser or reader to come looking for you – take the initiative and keep them abreast of your progress. Presumably, you've chosen them for their topic and/or method expertise, so you should feel free to reach out to them as needed (respectful of their schedules, of course).

Participate in the School's Research Participant Pool

Since some members of the class will be using the JOMC Research Pool, we will give back by having every student participate for at least **two** hours in the Participant Pool this semester. You will be able to sign up online to participate in research studies being conducted by faculty and students in the School. If you'd rather not be in a study, you can satisfy this requirement by writing 2 two-page summaries and critiques of academic research articles. Each review counts for one hour of research participation, so you can combine participation in the studies with article reviews to fulfill the requirement. You may summarize any article published in the past two years in the following journals: *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Mass Communication & Society*, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Journalism History*, or *American Journalism*.

Participate in class

The class combines the dynamics of a seminar, in which we discuss as a group the reading in depth, and a workshop, in which we help each other develop student work in progress. The class works best when we all show interest in all the projects. We may pair up so you can benefit from more feedback. You are expected to arrive to class prepared, having read the assigned work. In addition, each of you will be assigned to serve as a discussion leader for the readings. In that case, you will detail the 5-10 most important points from the readings, prepare questions for the class and facilitate our discussion.

Communicate

Your classmates and/or your committee members and I cannot help you unless you let us know what is going on for you. If you find yourself up against the wall with writing block, a dead-end literature search or confronting another kind of obstacle, let me know so we can figure out what's going to help. Honors projects require ongoing effort – leaving your work (that includes assigned reading) for the last minute is a recipe for failure. So, let us know if you are having trouble staying on schedule. It is most important that your adviser is comfortable with your schedule. Many of the deadlines in the syllabus are negotiable except the final submission dates.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Dates	Topics and Readings	Due
Aug. 24	<i>Introduction to the course and discussion of preliminary research ideas.</i>	Be prepared to discuss your research/project topic ideas
Aug. 31	<p><i>Introduction to the research process: How do I develop my topic, problem statement, purpose and research questions?</i></p> <p>Read: Entire syllabus; R&V Unit 1 (Chs. 1-4) Skim: three honors theses (see list on web)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students will serve as discussion leaders for the chapters. You should be prepared to lead class discussion on 5-10 important points from the chapters. Students should be prepared to discuss one honors thesis most relevant to his/her topic. <p>DUE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> All students will submit (by 2pm via Sakai) 1-2 typed pages about their own research/project ideas.
Sept. 7	<p><i>The importance of the literature review: Building on what others have done.</i></p> <p>Read materials on Sakai re: literature review, and consult Pan (on reserve).</p>	<p>BRING TO CLASS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 pages (outline): issues to be explored; problem statements and (maybe) research questions list of faculty members who might serve as readers Please bring laptops to class
Sept. 14	<p><i>The indispensability of the library.</i></p> <p>Guest: Stephanie Brown, Park Library Director</p>	Please bring your laptops to class.
Sept. 21	<p><i>Individual meetings</i> <i>Meet with me to discuss ideas</i></p>	<p>DUE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction (by 5pm via Sakai) <p>Bring to meeting:</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Preliminary (annotated) bibliography (5-10 key academic sources) 3. During meeting we will discuss your research/project ideas. Be prepared to talk about possible RQs or overall questions you hope to investigate.
Sept. 28	<p><i>Guiding your study with theory/conceptual foundations</i></p> <p>Read: R&V Unit 2 (Chs. 5-11) Check out the material in the other books on reserve for related theories/conceptual issues</p>	<p>Be prepared to discuss (in pairs)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What conceptual foundation or theory might guide your project? 2. What conceptual areas do you need to review? 3. (tentatively) what might be your RQs? Your procedure or method?
Oct. 5	<p><i>Working on the literature review:</i> <i>Meet with me individually during class time if you have last-minute questions about your literature review submission.</i></p> <p>Be sure to consult Pan (on reserve) and familiarize yourself with material re: lit reviews on Sakai.</p>	<p>DUE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5-10 pages of lit. review by 5pm. Submit via Sakai.
Oct. 12	<p><i>Using Quantitative Methods</i></p> <p>Read W&D Chs. 6, 7 & 9</p> <p>Check out the material in the other books on reserve that have information about quantitative methods</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare an outline of the steps in your method (if you are using quantitative methods.) You may need to investigate other books and journal articles that discuss your method. Be prepared to discuss this. 2. Identify your thesis committee members.
Oct. 19	<p><i>Using Qualitative Methods</i></p> <p>Read Brennen Chs. 1-2 AND choose one additional chapter from 3-8 regarding a specific method.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare an outline of the steps in your method (if you are using qualitative

	Consult material in the other books on reserve that have information about qualitative methods.	<p>methods.) You may need to investigate other books and journal articles that discuss your method. Be prepared to discuss this.</p> <p>DUE by Friday, 10/21, 5pm (via Sakai):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your revised 5-10 pages of literature review to me and to your adviser.
Oct. 26	<i>Workshop in pairs on chapters 1 and 2 of your honors theses. Individual meetings optional.</i>	<p>DUE (by 5pm via Sakai):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any revision to literature review <u>and</u> a draft of Chapter 2 (methods) to me, adviser (via email) and other committee member (via email if they wish to be included)
Nov. 2	<i>Individual committee meetings: All students will need to set up meetings with committee members during this week. I am happy to meet as a group if your adviser would like to do that or you may meet individually with each committee member.</i>	Meet with your committee
Nov. 9	<i>Workshop: Doing revisions Working on IRB submissions for those working with human subjects</i>	Be prepared to discuss how you'll revise your proposals
Nov. 16	<i>Finalizing proposals</i>	<p>DUE (by 5pm via Sakai):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revised thesis proposal to me and to adviser 2. Draft of the IRB proposal to me via email (and/or adviser if requested) by 5pm.
Nov. 23	<i>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY</i>	
Nov. 30	<i>Individual meetings with me and with your adviser</i>	Report/Update on meetings
Dec. 7	<i>Discuss feedback about your proposal. What's next? How to prepare for Spring semester</i>	<p>DUE (by 2pm via Sakai):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revised thesis proposal to me, adviser, and committee member with notes re: revisions you've made.



Honors Thesis Proposal Guidelines

Your thesis proposal is the next step toward conceptualizing your project and it provides a foundation for your work in the spring semester. It provides committee and readers with a roadmap of what you want to study, how, and what contribution it makes to our understanding of the media field.

A helpful way to learn the *form(s)* of media research is to immerse yourself in the journals in our field that publish media scholarship, but generally speaking, a paper proposal should include the following:

I. Tentative title.

A good title will help you, as a writer, organize your material and discourage wandering afield of your topic. The title must tell the reader what your study is about. You should include keywords in your title that will help readers decide whether they want to read the study or not. Think about whether you want to put dates in your title to indicate a beginning and end point to your research. Titles may have two levels that are separated by a colon. In this case, the top line generally is snappier than the bottom line. The last line should be as descriptive of your study as possible. Try to keep the whole title less than 10-15 words. Titles may change if the nature of the study changes, but they must reflect the contents. Look at scholarly journals and conference programs in our field for inspiration.

II. Chapter 1: Introduction, Literature Review & Justification

Introduction (2-3 pages).

This is the set-up for the entire study. An introduction provides a brief overview of the topic to be addressed in the paper and include a description of the problem or issue leading to the study. It needs an explicit statement of purpose – “The purpose of this research/project is . . . ,” or “This study examines” The introduction may also include any background information the reader needs to understand the problem or issue, or you may need a separate background section if significant background information is necessary, as in a historical study.

Literature review (10-15 pages).

The literature review is a critical component that demonstrates for your readers that you have command of your topic and deep knowledge of the field. It is designed to:

- 1) familiarize the reader (and you) with what has already been written on the topic you have chosen to study;
- 2) demonstrate that the research you intend to undertake is original -- that it has not already been done; for a professional project, the literature review will provide the foundation to support the project you want to do.

- 3) show where the study you will fit in or fill a gap in the relevant body of knowledge. Often literature reviews begin by reading pertinent chapters from textbooks on your subject and proceed from there by looking at other scholarly studies that might be found from footnotes and bibliographies.

Important to know: A literature review is not an annotated bibliography. I've provided material on the Sakai site about writing literature reviews, and we will talk about this in class. In addition, you can also look at the text by Pan: *Preparing Literature Reviews* (on reserve). A literature review is not a series of disjointed paragraphs summarizing each article. Rather, it is a *synthesis*. Thus, the literature must be read, summarized, discussed and analyzed. It will probably be necessary for you to categorize the literature you survey to make sense of it for yourself and your readers. Statements such as "Several scholars have argued . . ." or "Previous studies have shown..." often introduce segments of literature reviews. Then, within that paragraph you would pull out what John Smith, Helen Brown and Susan Jones have said on your topic. Don't ignore the research that offers a contrary view. You might introduce it this way: "Barbie Zelizer, in her study of media and memory, offered another perspective..." You may find it necessary to bring up the same author's work under different subject headings.

A literature review should cover scholarly literature -- books and articles found in scholarly or academic journals. For some topics, articles in trade journals or more popular publications may be useful. Remember, however, you are still going to have to use hardbound volumes for less recent materials, and computerized searching finds only a small percentage of the relevant materials. Be thorough or, as one professor has said, "Read everything." Your thesis will benefit from it.

In searching for materials relevant to your subject, do not forget to read the footnotes and bibliographies in items you find. These often prove to be treasure troves of relevant work, and it is perfectly legitimate to borrow from others' bibliographies. You still have to go read the work yourself, of course (always return to the original source – don't cite someone citing someone else), but at least you have some leads of where to go to find it. If we do not have articles or books relevant to your subject in our libraries, Inter-Library Loan can obtain this information for you, but that often takes some time, so order early.

If you are unable to find scholarly articles or books that pertain directly to your topic, you must locate literature on related topics. (Incidentally, a lack of research sometimes suggests the area is ripe for research. It also could mean it's not a very fruitful or important area. We'll help sort that out.)

Justification (Why is this study/project important) (1-2 pages).

The literature review is the lead-in to the next section of the proposal in which you justify the importance of and the need for your research project. Why is the project worth doing? Why is this problem important? What remains to be done in the area? Have there been new developments here? Is there a current conflict about the subject that your research might help to settle? Would your study help to fill in the gaps in our understanding of a particular issue?

For research theses you will want: Research question(s), and hypotheses or expectations (1-2 pages).

For project-based theses: what overall question do you hope to answer with your study?

In the first portion of the proposal, you provided a brief statement of purpose. Here you elaborate, listing and, if necessary, explaining the specific questions you will seek to answer. If you are conducting a scientific study this is where you state your hypotheses and rationale for them. Remember that you must answer your questions and test your hypotheses in the course of your study. For those of you doing project-based theses, you want to ask yourself: what do you hope to learn or want others to know once the project is done?

III. Chapter 2: Methods or Procedures (5-15 pages).

In this section of your proposal, you must tell your readers how you will answer the questions you have identified, with some justification for your choices. Specifically, what will you be studying to reach your conclusions? Are you limiting yourself to a particular time period? If so, why? Are you limiting yourself to particular resources? If so, why? You want to provide a complete explication of any of the procedures you will use to carry out the research or project. For the proposal, you will write this section in future tense (and change to past tense when you write up the actual thesis).

This is the place to define terms and concepts. You might also want to explain the limitations of your study here -- what exactly will you not include that a reader might expect to find, and why are you excluding it? What are the drawbacks of the database that you have chosen to draw upon? What resources are not available that might be relevant?

Legal and historical papers seldom contain much of a discussion of methods since how you go about doing this research usually is obvious: a critical evaluation of primary sources -- laws, court cases, congressional debates and hearings, newspaper articles, archival materials, etc. Refer to the books we have on reserve, as well as examples of this kind of research, to see how the method section is typically handled.

Other research approaches require considerably more explanation of how you intend to investigate your subject. Any research method (qualitative or quantitative) will have a set of steps that you will need to describe. You'll want to look at the textbooks provided on reserve for the class as well as work closely with your adviser on what those steps are.

If you are doing a project-based thesis, you will need to talk explicitly about what you plan to have at the end of your research or investigation. Do you want to design a web site? Will you be writing a series of news articles? Do you plan to develop a marketing or branding campaign?

Availability of resources (1-2 pages).

Are the sources you need accessible? Can you obtain the information you need? If you are planning to interview people (whether for a research thesis or project-based thesis), this is the place to detail who these sources are and how you plan to get in touch with them. (Remember, for most research theses, you will need to submit a proposal to the IRB and get approval before approaching these interviewees.)

IV. Chapter breakdown and schedule for submission

How do you see this material fitting together into chapters? Think this through because it will help you organize your research. You may, of course, alter your organizational scheme as you learn more from your research. The typical organization is as specified above, but for historical and legal or ethnographic work the “results” may be organized into different chapters.

For project-based theses, talk with your adviser about possible ways to organize your news articles, or website screen grabs, or campaign materials.

Remember that these long projects are to be submitted chapter by chapter so your adviser/ reader and I can give you feedback as you continue working. Make allowances for revision in your schedule. Establish a timetable and try to stick to it.

V. Bibliography/References.

If you are doing legal or historical research, you will divide this into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include interviews, contemporaneous (‘of the period’) newspaper and magazine articles and editorials, collections of letters, archival materials. Secondary sources would include books and articles commenting on your topic. These should be in proper style and each reference cited in your text must be in the reference list.

VI. Appendices.

These are supplementary materials that have guided your project or provide illustrations. Here you would include your human subjects proposal and consent forms; preliminary coding guide and sheet if you are doing content analysis; list of cases to be analyzed if you are doing legal research; preliminary questionnaire if you are doing a survey; stimulus materials and questionnaire if conducting an experiment, in-depth interview guide, focus group questionnaire guide and list of materials, artifacts or transcripts if you are doing a historical study, or any materials that you have developed to help you investigate/gather materials for your project.

Note: You are encouraged to consult (but obviously not duplicate) previous theses for guidance. Your project is unique, like you, but others before you have relied on similar formats to execute their theses. Sometimes it helps to see how others handled thesis requirements.