

# MEJO 712: Visual Communication and Multimedia

## Spring 2018

**Section:** 966

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### Course Overview

This course is designed to help you develop your literacy in visual communication and multimedia, their role in journalism and mass communication, and their basic principles and best practices.

In this course, you will:

- develop an understanding and appreciation for visual communication theories and principles,
- gain experience putting those theories and principles into practice, and
- learn to analyze and critique works of visual communication.

The end goal is to give you the knowledge to speak the language of design, confidently evaluate works of visual communication, and collaborate effectively with designers, photographers, and other viz comm practitioners.

### What This Course Is Not

This is not a course that will turn you into a professional designer if you aren't one already. It will teach you the basic principles, but true mastery takes many more hours than this course can provide.

This course is also not about teaching software. You should be able to complete your assignments in relatively basic programs, such as PowerPoint and iMovie. If you wish to learn a more advanced program, you are certainly encouraged to do so. I am happy to help answer specific questions about a piece of software if I am familiar with it. However, providing extensive software training is beyond the context of this course.

A couple resources from UNC if you are interested in learning software:

- [Free access to Lynda self-guided software tutorials](#)
- [Free access to Adobe Creative Cloud](#)

### Required Text

*The Non-Designer's Design Book*, by Robin Williams

The full text of the third edition of this book is available for free online [through UNC Libraries](#) (sign in with your Onyen), though the reading interface is a little clunky.

The [fourth edition](#) is available as an eBook (\$15) or paperback (\$23). The two editions are similar enough that you can choose either one.

## Course Materials

All course materials will be available on the class Sakai site at <http://sakai.unc.edu>. Look in the Lessons and Course Materials tab for each week's instructions and materials.

Your weekly materials will include the following:

- Required readings: Exactly what it sounds like
- Influential and Interesting: Profiles about and interviews with influential figures in the field. These are meant to fill out your understanding about the history of visual communication, as well as provide perspectives from some of the masters of the craft. You should at least skim these. Occasionally, you may have a discussion question related to one of these.
- Diving Deeper: Additional material related to that week's topic. This is optional.

## Grading

UNC's graduate school grading system is different from the traditional A/B/C/D +/- system you are probably familiar with. Per the UNC Graduate School handbook, the grade scale used for graduate-level courses is:

H for High Pass  
P for Pass  
L for Low Pass  
F for Fail  
IN for work incomplete

This scale does not map to the A/B/C/D scale. An H is not the same as an A, and a P is not the same as a B or C. H's are rare throughout UNC's graduate-level programs, and P's in no way communicate deficiency. When I started my master's program at UNC, the program director told us, "There are more P's than H's in 'Happy'." That's good advice to live by.

## Grade Breakdown

1. Weekly discussions: 35% of your final grade
2. Three assignments: 45% (15% each)
3. Final project: 20%

Each component is explained below.

### **Note: You will not earn a final course grade higher than a Low Pass if:**

- You receive 4 Low Pass grades in the course, whether it's for weekly discussions, the assignments, or the final project; OR
- You receive 2 F's in the course, either for failing to submit an assignment or for not participating at all in discussions during a particular week.

Don't panic about the note above. Just meet the weekly discussion requirements, follow directions on the assignments, and demonstrate that you are trying, and you'll be ok. Also, life happens and we are all bound to have a crazy week or two. In those situations, let me know and we can try to make accommodations.

### **Weekly Discussions (35%)**

In an online course, the discussion forums are where we "hold class," so participation in the forums is important. The forums are also where we will work on one of the main goals of this course—getting practice in evaluating and critiquing works of visual communication.

Here's how the discussion forums will work: Each week, typically by Monday night, I will post discussion topics under the Forums tab in Sakai. The discussions for each week will close at midnight on Sunday night.

The questions will be related to your weekly readings. In some weeks, there will also be discussion prompts related to your assignments, such as being asked to offer constructive feedback on your classmates' work on the most recent assignment. Most weeks will likely have at least one thread where you are required to post.

### **To earn a P for discussions in a particular week, students MUST**

- have at least 5 meaningful posts per week (see below), AND
- post in at least 3 discussion threads that week, AND
- post in all the discussion threads where participation is required (these will be noted in the titles of the threads)

Look in the Lessons and Course Materials tab on Sakai for discussion guidelines, including examples of what "meaningful posts" look like. In short, a "meaningful" post is:

- Substantive: One-line posts don't count.
- On time: Great posts that come in at 12:01 a.m. Sunday night don't count.
- On topic: Discussions will take off in various directions, and most of the time that's ok. Just make sure you have at least five posts that actually speak to the original discussion questions. Your post could be replying to or riffing off another person's post, just as long as it's still relevant to the question.

**Having fewer than 5 meaningful posts will result in a Low Pass for the week. Having zero posts in a week will result in an F.**

Finally, please do not use the forums for anything other than class-related discussions.

## **Assignments (45%)**

You will have three assignments in the first 12 weeks of this 15-week course:

1. Creating a PowerPoint presentation
2. Creating an interactive timeline
3. Creating a multimedia explainer

Details are posted in Sakai under Lessons and Course Materials.

## **Final Project (20%)**

Over the last three weeks of the class, you will create a final project where you pull together what you have learned over the previous weeks. Details about the final project are posted in Sakai under Lessons and Course Materials.

## **Technical Issues**

The [ITS Response Center](#) provides 24/7 assistance with Sakai requests.

- Phone: 962-HELP(4357)
- [Submit a Help Request](#)
- [Live Chat](#) (M-F, 9 a.m.–6 p.m.)

You can also get help with Sakai from Rachel Lillis, director for e-learning at the journalism school. Contact her at [lillis@email.unc.edu](mailto:lillis@email.unc.edu).

## **Honor Code**

The UNC honor system and code are in effect for MEJO 712. They are available in full at <http://honor.unc.edu>.

In brief, the Honor Code is the heart of integrity at UNC-Chapel Hill. It says that all students shall “Refrain from lying, cheating, or stealing,” but the Honor Code means much more. It is the guiding force behind the students’ responsible exercise of freedom, the foundation of student self-governance at UNC, which subscribes to the view that members of the UNC community should be responsible for upholding the values that have been agreed upon by the entire community.

## **Diversity**

The university’s policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is found at <http://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>. UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community, and the university 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.

## **Need Help?**

If you have any disability or other special situation that might make it difficult to meet the course requirements, 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](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu). Visit <https://accessibility.unc.edu> for more information.

## **Members of A Community**

Students in this course should recognize their membership in a learning community. We are partners exploring issues in a digital environment.

In this course, we do not have the benefit of body language or face-to-face contact, so we have to work a bit harder at understanding and at being understood. We perceive only what is typed on the screen.

## **Plagiarism and Digital Media**

We all use the internet for research. With a wealth of information available, including everything from pre-written essays to ready-made graphics, the potential for plagiarism is enormous. Keep in mind that as easy as it is for students to find and copy information from the internet, it is just as easy for instructors to find the same information.

To avoid plagiarizing, remember that the same rules apply to information found on the internet as to information found in print sources:

- When you take ideas or quote from a source, you must paraphrase accurately and give credit by appropriately citing to the original source.
- If you take a sentence or phrase directly from a source, you must indicate it by using quotation marks around the direct quote and citing the original source.
- Citing digital sources can be confusing. For more information on how to cite Web-based sources, see the Citing Information tutorial (<http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/>) or contact a reference librarian (<http://www.lib.unc.edu/ask.html>).

## **Academic Integrity**

Because academic integrity is the foundation of college life, academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure on the assignment in question. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, fabrication, submitting the same work in multiple courses and aiding and abetting.

## **Online Class Statement**

1. By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by UNC-Chapel Hill policies related to the Acceptable Use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy (<http://its.unc.edu/about-us/how-we-operate>) on topics such as copyright and privacy protection.

2. 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 apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to digital content. You should be aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC-Chapel Hill.

3. When links to sites outside of the [unc.edu](http://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.

4. 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) a student's education records are protected from disclosure to third parties. However, FERPA protection does not extend to material shared publicly by students.

### **Accreditation**

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://journalism.ku.edu/acejmc-professionalvalues-competencies>.

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, including:

- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- 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.

## Course schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Assignments Due
1	1/10-1/14	Introduction to Visual Communication	
2	1/16-1/21	History of Visual Communication	
3	1/22-1/28	Theory & Research	PowerPoint assignment, Part A (1/28)
4	1/29-2/4	Layout	
5	2/5-2/11	Typography	
6	2/12-2/18	Color	PPT assignment, Part B (2/18)
7	2/19-2/25	Photography	PPT assignment, Part C (2/25)
8	2/26-3/4	Infographics	
9	3/5-3/9	Logos & Branding	Interactive timeline (3/11)
<b>SPRING BREAK 3/10-3/18</b>			
10	3/19-3/25	Multimedia	
11	3/26-4/1	Storytelling	
12	4/2-4/8	Web, mobile, usability	Multimedia explainer (4/8)
13	4/9-4/15	Laws and Ethics	
14	4/16-4/22	Innovation	
15	4/23-4/27	Final Project (short week)	Final project (4/27)