



**MEJO 691H**  
**Introductory Honors Course**  
Fall 2018  
MW 3:30-4:45 p.m., CA 338

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Office hours: Mondays 9:30-11 a.m., & by appointment (email to schedule)

## Welcome!

J691H starts you on the path to completing a Senior Honors Thesis in the School of Media and Journalism. Working on this project stands to be one of the most intellectually and personally rewarding experiences of your undergraduate education at the University. Be prepared, though: The process is demanding and, at times, exasperating. You will be called upon to combine creative thinking, original research and substantive writing over a long and intense period. Fulfilling the requirements of the honors program is a mark of exceptional undergraduate academic achievement.

Your honors thesis will be a polished, formal piece of writing that relies heavily on research to make a point relevant to journalism and communication. Subject matter and format have varied in the past, and that's fine. The primary requirement is that the topic should be something relevant to media studies. Remember, you'll be spending an entire academic year on this project, so it should be a topic about which you are deeply interested *and* enthusiastic.

This semester you will produce a thesis proposal that includes the first two chapters: (1) introduction and review of previous research/scholarship about the topic (a "literature review"), and relevant research question(s); and (2) methods/procedures (how you will study your topic, investigate and design your project, and/or test hypotheses) (see attached detailed description). You may begin collecting and analyzing data this semester, but the bulk of that will be done in early spring semester. You will revise the first two chapters and write the remaining chapters of the thesis by the end of March and defend the completed thesis by mid-April 2019. Then – imagine a drumroll here – you'll graduate with honors or highest honors in May 2019!

In addition to the above objectives and goals listed above, 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://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

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 the following values and competencies:

- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- 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 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](mailto: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 classes. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources [here](#).

**Textbooks.** The course has one required textbook, available in UNC Student Stores – Zina O'Leary, *The Essential Guide to Doing Your Research Project*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017).

### 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 media law faculty 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 final grade will reflect the quality of your writing, as well as your attendance and participation throughout the semester. I will solicit feedback from your adviser about your progress. Be sure to carefully read over the requirements (below) for this fall semester's Honors class to understand my expectations of you during this course. 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.

The following grade scale is used:

A =94-100	A- =90-93	B+ =87-89	B = 84-86	B- =80-83	C+ =77-79
C =73-76	C- =70-72	D+ =67-69	D =63-66	F = 0-63	

UNC's [Policy/Procedures on Grading, Attendance and Examination](#) provide further clarification of grades.

In planning your spring semester, please keep in mind that honors projects take significant 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 your GPA

To remain in the Honors program, you must maintain an overall GPA of 3.3 and a minimum GPA 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 should 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 (required)**

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. In addition to achieving a suitable grade in MEJO 691H, *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 strongly encourage you to *keep a research log starting day one* that will help you keep track of your thought process and productivity and aid your in-class discussion of your progress.

Detailed guidelines for preparing the proposal are available on our Sakai site.

### **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 (required for all) 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 you 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 MJ-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 ("reader") for your thesis**

Your honors adviser will work with you for part of the fall semester and for all of the spring semester. The adviser will be your direct supervisor for the completion of the project. In addition, you will need one other 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, 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 that individual abreast of your progress. Presumably, you've chosen the adviser for topic and/or method expertise, so you should feel free to reach out to the adviser as needed during the fall semester (respectful of their schedules, of course).

### **Participate in the School's Research Participant Pool (required)**

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 (everyone, always)**

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 (everyone, always)**

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.

## **WEEK-BY WEEK SCHEDULE**

**Note:** *This schedule is tentative. You should anticipate some modifications as your thesis topics take shape, so be sure to check Sakai for changes. Throughout the semester, students will take responsibility for leading discussions of the reading and of their work in progress.*

### **Week 1 - Aug. 22**

#### **Introduction and course overview – the joy of research!**

Read syllabus

Be prepared to talk about your research/project ideas

### **Week 2 - Aug 27, 29**

#### **Getting started, asking questions**

O'Leary, chaps. 1-3

#### **Undertaking Credible & Ethical Research**

O'Leary, chap. 4, and skim three honors theses @ Park Library

### **NO CLASSES MONDAY, SEPT. 3 (LABOR DAY)**

### **Week 3 – Sept. 5**

#### **Crafting a Thesis Proposal**

O'Leary, chap. 5 and Sakai readings

➤ **Due:** Research statement due to Sakai

- Week 4 – Sept. 10, 12**      **Standing on Whose Shoulders?**  
O’Leary, chap. 6 & Sakai readings
- Library Resources (Stephanie Brown, Park Library Director)**
- **Due:** Introduction to Sakai Sept. 19
- Week 5 – Sept. 17, 19**      **The Role of IRB in Research (Dr. Joe Bob Hester)**  
Readings on Sakai
- Designing a Research Plan**  
O’Leary, chap. 7 & Sakai
- Week 6 – Sept. 24, 26**      **Designing a Research Plan, cont.**  
See readings on Sakai
- Individual meetings w/ instructor (Wednesday, Sakai sign-up)**
- Week 7 – Oct. 1, 3**      **Understanding Methods & Traditions**  
O’Leary, chap. 8 & Sakai
- **Due:** 5-10 pages literature review to Sakai Oct. 3
- Week 8 – Oct. 8, 10**      **Research That Drives Change**  
O’Leary, chap. 10 & Sakai
- Week 9 – Oct. 15**      **Optional meetings with instructor (Sakai sign-up)**
- FALL BREAK BEGINS 5 p.m. WEDNESDAY, OCT. 17**  
**CLASSES RESUME 8 a.m. MONDAY, OCT 22**
- Week 10 – Oct. 22, 24**      **Methods/Approaches**  
Sakai readings
- Week 11 – Oct. 29, 31**      **Surveys, Interviews & Observations**  
O’Leary, chap. 12 & Sakai
- Week 12 – Nov. 5, 7**      **Existing Data, Online Data & Previous Studies**  
O’Leary, chap. 13 & Sakai
- **Due:** Methods section (Nov. 7 to Sakai)
- Week 13 – Nov. 12, 14**      **Workshop Your Writing**
- Week 14 – Nov. 19, 21**      **Responding to Feedback**

- **Due:** Revised intro, literature review & methods to Sakai  
AND to adviser

**THANKSGIVING RECESS WEDNESDAY, NOV. 21 - FRIDAY, NOV. 23**

**Week 15 – Nov. 26, 28**      **Revise & Polish**  
Sakai readings

**Week 16 – Dec. 3, 5**      **How to Prepare for the Spring**  
Sakai readings  
**Student presentations**

**Saturday, Dec. 8, 4 p.m. – Final Exam/Presentations**

- **Due:** Thesis Proposals to Sakai