



**MEJO 490.003
Media Literacy**

**Fall 2019
MW 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Carroll Hall 11 (Reese News Lab)**

**Dr. Barbara Friedman
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Office/Hours: CA 357/Th 10-11:30 a.m., and
by appointment**

Course Overview: Media, broadly construed, are a primary source of information about the world, contributing to the formation of knowledge about important issues, and about ourselves and others. Media messages can shape our attitudes and behaviors for good and ill, can bring people together and drive them apart. And while the routine consumption of media content has become ‘natural’, media messages are cultural products informed by technological apparatus, norms, practices, values, experiences of the organizations and individuals from which they originate—thus, they are deserving of close interrogation. As the media landscape becomes more complex—constituting an “economy of attention” (Hess, 2018)—new forms of literacy become vital aids to acknowledge and negotiate this complexity, which includes concentrated ownership and influence—in fact, our democracy depends on engaged and enlightened media consumers and contributors/producers.

Learning Outcomes: Media and digital literacy represents a process or set of skills based on critical thinking. Simply, it “challenges the power of the media to present messages as non-problematic and transparent” (Kellner & Share, 2005). The habits of mind you cultivate in this MEJO course will be widely applicable. Adopting a range of perspectives, you will:

- develop an informed and critical understanding of the how media organize and function;
- recognize and analyze the techniques media use to produce meaning and construct reality;
- reflect on the impacts of media messages and technology tools on individuals (including ourselves) and communities;
- work collaboratively to identify and address a current issue/problem related to media.

AEJMC Values & Competencies: The School of Media & Journalism’s accrediting body outlines a number of values that our majors should be aware of, and competencies our majors should be able to demonstrate by the time they graduate from our program. You can learn more about them [here](#).

No single course can give you all of the AEJMC values and competencies (but this one imparts quite a few), but MEJO classes are designed to collectively and incrementally build your abilities in these areas. In this class, we will address many of the values and competencies and, in particular:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- 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.

Readings: There is no required text for this course. Rather, the material you'll consume this semester represents a combination of, primarily, scholarly works (~15-30 pages each), popular media (short reads), and audio and video. Readings will be available via Sakai, and video/audio will be indicated by URL.

Remember, all assigned material is to be read/viewed/listened to *before* you arrive to class. If you don't understand something about the reading, that's cool – pose your questions in class so that we can all benefit from clarification. If you don't do the reading, on the other hand - that's a problem. I reserve the right to administer quizzes if it appears students are not preparing adequately for class. Quiz grades are calculated this way: 100% (answered the question correctly); 50% (did the reading, answered the question incorrectly); 10% (you were present for the quiz); 0% (you were absent for the quiz). Grades will be counted toward your participation/attendance grade.

Assignments and Evaluation

Attendance/Participation (15%): We will spend much of our time together discussing the assigned readings and analyzing media together and in small groups. You are expected to make substantive contributions to this upper-level course which can only be done via attendance and participation. Thus, in addition to showing up to class, you must come prepared -- that means completing assigned readings before you arrive to class and coming with relevant questions to deepen our understanding of the material.

Participation will be evaluated using these criteria:

- a) Content and understanding: Do you follow the class discussion and build on others' ideas? When you don't understand something, do you ask questions?
- b) Creativity: Do you generate your own insights and examples and share them with the class?

c) Curiosity and interest: Do you bring enthusiasm to the classroom? Do you contribute consistently? Do you share ideas or issues you've come across in outside reading, other coursework, current events, or through personal experience?

Media, what the ...? (2x) (counts toward participation/attendance): You will bring to class two examples of media content that challenges you in some way and is deserving of closer scrutiny (it's up to you to explain your choices – is the content audacious, confusing, inaccurate, mistargeted ...). You will present once to the class and once to a small group explaining briefly what tools you used to interpret the message's meaning and reach your conclusions. A sign-up sheet will be circulated for your in-class presentation. Your small-group presentation will be indicated on the syllabus.

Analyze This (8x) (20%): Throughout the semester, you will be asked to apply the media literacy techniques we've talked about and demonstrate your understanding via *short* writing assignments (~ 500-1,000 words). Deadlines will be indicated on the syllabus. Note: Although 10 "Analyze This" deadlines are listed, you need only turn in 8 analyses – be attentive to deadlines and figure out which assignments work best with your interests and schedule.

Your analyses will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- a) In executing the analysis, have you followed the instructions correctly and thoroughly?
- b) Understanding: Does the analysis demonstrate understanding of the concepts associated with the particular media literacy tool/strategy, and justify what it is effective on a particular media message?
- c) Application: Does the analysis indicate proper application of the technique or strategy?
- d) Interpretation: Are the results of the analysis clearly explained and do they flow logically from the method and content used?
- e) Self-reflection: Has the author reflected on the implications of the analysis for their own role/responsibility as a media consumer/producer?
- f) Grammar and usage (for essays): Does the analysis reflect proper grammar and usage?

Wiki Edit-a-thon (1x) (15%): We will contribute to a joint project between MEJO and Wilson Library's North Carolina Collection by editing current and historic NC newspaper entries in Wikipedia, focusing on smaller-circulation papers and African American papers. More details to come, but **mark your calendar for an Edit-a-thon October 24 (Thursday), 6-9 p.m. at the Park Library.**

Action Project (1x) (25%): The course will conclude with small-group action projects based on current media issues. Details and evaluative criteria provided in class, but you should start thinking about the media issues that pique your curiosity and/or ire.

Final Exam (1x) (25%): The final exam is cumulative, and will likely be comprised of multiple choice, true/false, identifications, short answers and essays. Please note the timing of the final exam, as it is different from our regular class meeting time.

Grade Scale

A = 95.0 and above	B+ = 87.0-89.99	C+ = 77.0-79.99	D = 66.0-69.99
A- = 90.0-94.99	B = 84.0-86.99	C = 74.0-76.99	F = 65.99 and below
	B- = 80.0-83.99	C- = 70.0-73.99	

Note: Grades are assigned according to criteria established by a UNC-CH Committee on Grading. For example, an “A” grade indicates superior work, whereas a “C” grade indicates sufficient performance and an “F” indicates an unacceptable performance. For an understanding of what the various grades mean, see the UNC Registrar’s page [here](#).

Grades are not negotiable, but I will discuss with you any substantive concerns you have about them, and you can check Sakai or ask me any time how you’re doing in the class if you’re unsure. If you want to discuss an assignment grade, I strongly suggest you take 24 hours to reflect upon the work before coming to office hours or contacting me for an appointment. You must contact me with your concerns within (1) one week of receiving the grade.

Our Policies

Attendance: You have a vital role to play in the success of this course. Attendance at every class session is expected; roll will be taken. I understand that some class absences are unavoidable – following the custom of other MEJO courses, more than three absences for reasons other than religious observances (illness, university-related activities or other obligations) will result in a one-letter-grade drop in your final grade. More than five absences will result in a two-letter-grade drop in your final grade; more than seven, a three-letter-grade drop in your final grade. If you have more than nine absences, you will earn an F.

There is no such thing as “fashionably late.” Excessive tardiness will not be tolerated. Late arrivals will result in an absence unless you can provide a compelling reason (after class, of course) why you were late.

Signing the roll sheet for someone else constitutes a violation of the honor code and will result in disciplinary action.

Participation: See details in “Assignments/Evaluation”

And About Technology... We’re in this together. My focus, when I am in class, is on the class. Yours should be, too. Cell phones must be muted or powered off and out of sight. You may have your laptop with you in class, but notes are to be taken by hand whenever possible. This policy might seem to run counter to media literacy’s focus, but is a response to research and testimonials indicating technology is distracting and disruptive to *everyone* in the class. Further, taking notes on computer turns students into stenographers and denies them the opportunity to critically engage with the material. As one [professor](#) put it: “Effective note taking is not a one-step process where classroom content travels directly into your laptop via your hands ... Instead, it is a two-step process where the material must first travel through your mind, to be inspected and rewrapped, and only then recorded via your hands.” In addition, instant-messaging, the most-common use of technology by students, has been [correlated](#) with poor performance on assignments. So don’t do it.

Of course in some instances, we will want to use technologies in the classroom and laptop use will be permitted – I'll let you know when that is. Additionally, exceptions to the laptop policy will be made for ARS-acknowledged disabilities.



A Note on Civility: The classroom is a particular environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that we maintain respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, for the professionalism of the instructor, and for the general goals of academic freedom. The content reflects a range of perspectives and I anticipate our responses will vary, as well. I expect us all to express ourselves with **reason, clarity and compassion**. For example:

- refrain from judging individuals by the collective groups of which they are members (e.g., gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability status, etc.);
- assess intellectual ideas and arguments by the evidence supporting them, and not based on the identities of the individuals who create or espouse them.

Student conduct that disrupts the learning process will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class.

University Policies

Special Needs: If you have any disability or other special situation that may make it difficult to meet the requirements described in the syllabus, 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).

Safe@UNC: The University's [Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Other 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, including confidential options, [here](#).

Diversity: UNC-Chapel Hill is obligated by law and mission to equality of educational opportunity. The University does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. The Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (214 W. Cameron Ave., Chapel Hill, NC 27599 or 919-966-3576) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's non-discrimination policies. You may also/instead contact the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) (919-966-4042/711 NC RELAY).

The School of Media and Journalism's mission and vision statements related to diversity and inclusion are [here](#).

Honor Code: Students must adhere to the letter and spirit of the [University honor system](#). Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated – this includes plagiarism, cheating or any false means

of obtaining a grade – and may result in failure of the course, and suspension or expulsion from the university. All academic work in this course is to be your own work, unless otherwise specifically provided. It is your responsibility if you have any doubt to confirm whether or not collaboration is permitted. If I suspect academic dishonesty, I have a duty to report it to the School’s Associate Dean, the Student Attorney General, or the judicial programs officer in the Dean of Students’ office for further action.

The Honor Code includes provisions for plagiarism, defined as “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” If you have any questions about the way you are using source materials, consult UNC Libraries’ “Identifying Plagiarism” [tutorial](#) and/or see me. Should your work reflect inappropriate use of source materials, I reserve the right to adjust assignment/course grades downward and to report suspected violations to the Office of Student Conduct.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Topics and readings may change so that we can respond to news events and current media issues. While I will do my best to signal changes well ahead of a session, it is your responsibility to check Sakai regularly for content and readings.

<i>Week 1 – Introduction to course</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 8/21	Syllabus	

<i>Week 2 – Critical Media Literacy</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 8/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkle, “Growing Up Tethered” • Duck & McMahan, “Technology and Media in Everyday Life” 	
Wed., 8/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kellner, “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism and Media Culture” • Gillmor, “Principles for a New Media Literacy • Burton, “Media Texts” 	Analyze This #1 (media diary) due

<i>Week 3 – Media and Reality</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 9/2	<i>LABOR DAY – NO CLASSES HELD</i>	
Wed., 9/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smith, “What is Realism, Really?” 	

<i>Week 4 – Thinking About Audiences</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 9/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorham, “The Social Psychology of Stereotypes” 	Analyze This #2 (realism) due

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collins, “Controlling Images” • McRaney, <i>You Are Not So Smart</i> (selections) 	
Wed., 9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hall, “Encoding/Decoding” 	

<i>Week 5 – Developing Historical Consciousness</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 9/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soll, “The Long and Brutal History of Fake News” (Sakai or https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/12/fake-news-history-long-violent-214535) • Listen (43:47): “Man of the People,” Reply All (podcast, episode #86) https://gimletmedia.com/shows/reply-all/dvhexl/86-man-of-the-people 	Analyze This #3 (encoding/decoding) due
Wed., 9/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noble, “A Society, Searching” 	

Please Notice This



Sept. 22-28 – Banned Books Week
Sept. 24 – First Amendment Day

<i>Week 6 – News & Disinformation</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 9/23 Guest: Dr. Alice Marwick, Knight Center for Information, Technology & Public Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marwick & Lewis, “Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online,” pp. 1-32 	Analyze This #4 (internet) due
Wed., 9/25 Guest: Stephanie Brown, Park Library Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBA 	

<i>Week 7 – News as Narrative</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 9/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnston & Friedman, “Boyfriends and Romeo Pimps” • Garber, “The Myth of the ‘Underage Woman’” 	Analyze This #5 (validating news) due

Wed., 10/2 <i>Note:</i> Oct. 1 is News Engagement Day!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abernathy, “The Expanding News Desert,” pp. 7-57. • Listen (3:46): Benshoff, “Digital Startups See Opportunity in Local Journalism,” Marketplace, NPR https://www.marketplace.org/2019/07/24/digital-startups-see-opportunity-in-local-journalism/ 	
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<i>Week 8 – Representation and Genre</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 10/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capuzza, “US News Coverage of Transgender Lives” • Scafidi, “When Native American Appropriation is Appropriate” • Smith, “The Transcontinental Disability Choir” 	Analyze This #6 (local news) due
Wed., 10/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stokes, “Genre Study” • Bolin, “The Oldest Story” 	

<i>Week 9 – Media Control</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 10/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potter, “Ownership of Mass Media Businesses” • Vaidhyanathan, “Regulating Facebook Will Be One of the Greatest Challenges in Human History,” https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/apr/28/regulating-facebook-will-be-one-of-the-greatest-challenges-in-human-history 	Analyze This #7 (representation) due
Wed., 10/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group presentations, “Media, What The..?” 	Media, What The ...? Due Group 1



The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Food

I used every pumpkin spice product I could find for a week. Now my armpits smell like nutmeg.

Fall Break
Oct. 17-18
No classes held!

<i>Week 10 – Digital Citizenship</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 10/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen (40 mins): How Tech Companies Track Your Every Move and Sell Your Data,” WHYY Fresh Air, https://www.npr.org/2019/07/31/746970018/how-tech-companies-track-your-every-move-sell-your-data Fuchs, “The Political Economy of Privacy on Facebook” 	Analyze This #8 (ownership) due
Wed., 10/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No class meeting <p><i>(Attend: NC News Edit-a-Thon, Thurs., 10/24, 6-9 p.m., Park Library)</i></p>	

<i>Week 11 – Reading/Tweeting the Visual</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 10/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Painter, “Truth in Photographs” Lewis, “The Racial Bias Built Into Photography” 	Analyze This #9 (digital citizenship) due
Wed., 10/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marwick & boyd, “To See and Be Seen” 	

<i>Week 12 – Invisible/Visible Labor</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 11/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duffy, “The Romance of Work” Garcia, “One More Job That Robots are Taking Away from Humans,” https://www.marketwatch.com/story/one-more-job-that-robots-are-taking-away-from-humans-social-media-influencer-2018-03-20 	Analyze This #10 (images) due
Wed., 11/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small group presentations of “Media, What The...” 	“Media, What The ...?” due, Group 2

<i>Week 13 – Talking Back to Media</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 11/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tanksley, “Education, Representation, and Resistance” 	
Wed., 11/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check Sakai 	

<i>Week 14 – Talking Back to Media</i>		
Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 11/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class group meetings and work on action project 	

Wed., 11/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class group meetings and work on action project 	
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Week 15 – Talking Back to Media

Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 11/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-class group meetings and work on action project 	
Wed., 11/27	THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS	

Week 16 – Talking Back to Media

Day/Date	Reading	Assignment due
Mon., 12/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Action Projects – Groups 1-4 	Action projects due (all groups)
Wed., 12/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Action Projects – Groups 5-8 (LDOC) 	

Please Notice This



FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, DEC. 10
CARROLL 11, 12-3 P.M.