

MEJO 441.01W  
DIVERSITY AND COMMUNICATION  
SUMMER SESSION 1, 2020

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“Commit to your dream  
and the desired resources  
are provided now.”  
--Trevy A. McDonald, 2003

**Diversity and Media: Dispelling Myths, Challenging Stereotypes** is the theme for the course this semester. I have long been interested in how the media informs individuals about groups they have little experience or exposure with.

American mainstream media has long been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes. Members of marginalized groups have particularly been concerned about their representation because it is not as balanced as representations of the majority group. During this summer session through your individual assignments and group exercises you will dispel the prevalent myths and challenge the limiting stereotypes that are so pervasive in our society.

### **Course Objectives**

This syllabus covers expectations of you as a student in MEJO 441, “Diversity and Communication.” It also describes the general types of assignments, exams, and provides guidelines to evaluate and grade your work.

This course examines diversity and storytelling in journalism and strategic communication. Course topics will be explored through lectures, discussions, guest speakers, student assignments and streaming videos available through UNC Libraries. Students are expected to be prepared for class discussions and to submit papers on assigned dates.

If you miss an exam, be prepared to provide me with a physician’s verification of illness to avoid an assignment of ‘F’ for the exam. Students are responsible for any and all material covered in class (lectures, discussions, presentations, videos) and for all reading assignments.

## Course Goals

- Critically analyze a media text
- Critically examine and explain how media portrayals of marginalized communities shape our society
- Explain the complexities of the relationships between race, class, culture, mass media and media management/ownership
- Build networks with experts on various issues of diversity, inclusion, media, and society
- Master project-based learning skills including communication and presentation skills, research and inquiry skills and group-participation and leadership skills

## Professional Values and Competencies

Individual professions in journalism and mass communication may require specialized values and competencies. Irrespective of their particular specialization, all students should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- 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 creatively and independently.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communication 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.

## Required Text and Readings

Len-Rios, M. and Perry, E. (2019). *Cross-cultural journalism and Strategic Communication: Storytelling and diversity*. New York: Routledge

Reserve readings are listed as noted on the syllabus.

Sakai Readings: Additional related readings will be posted on Sakai.

## Participation

All students are expected to actively participate in class. This means that you ask questions, share opinions, challenge and critique in a respectful manner in the appropriate forum in Sakai. I'm sure you will find that the more you contribute to class and online discussions, the more knowledgeable we all become.

## Grades

### Definitions of Undergraduate Grades

These definitions were adopted by the Faculty Council in 1976. The Council reiterated that the purpose of grades is to identify **degrees of mastery of subject matter**. Moreover, those grades have specific meaning with respect to mastery of the material.

**A** Outstanding mastery of course material. Students earning an "A" have performed far above that required for credit in the course and far above that usually seen in the course. The "A" grade should be awarded sparingly and should identify student performance that is relatively unusual in the course. The "A" grade states clearly that the student has shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study that he or she may be strongly encouraged to continue.

**B** Superior mastery of course material. Students earning a "B" have exhibited mastery clearly above that required for credit in the course. The "B" grade should represent student performance that is strong and very clearly above performance that is generally held to be satisfactory. The "B" grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.

**C** Satisfactory mastery of course material. The "C" grade should reflect performance that is satisfactory on all counts and that clearly deserves full credit for the course. The "C" grade states that, while not yet showing an unusual promise, the student may continue to study in the discipline with reasonable hope of intellectual development.

**D** Mastery of course material that is unsatisfactory or poor along one or more dimensions. Students achieving a "D" have exhibited incomplete mastery of course material but have achieved enough to earn credit for the course. The "D" grade states that the student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of "D" grades should mean that the student would be well advised not to continue in that academic field.

**F** Unsatisfactory mastery of course material. Students earning a "F" have not demonstrated sufficient mastery of course material to earn credit for the course. The "F" grade indicates that the student's performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content. A grade of "F" should warrant an adviser's questioning whether the student may suitably register for further study in the discipline before remedial work is undertaken.

### Breakdown of Grades

A = 475-500  
B = 415-434  
C = 365-384  
D = 300-334

A- = 450-474  
B- = 400-414  
C- = 350-364  
F = 299 and below

B+ = 435-449  
C+ = 385-399  
D+ = 335-349

**Grading for Graduate and Professional Students – From the UNC Graduate Handbook**

All master's and doctoral programs administered through The Graduate School operate under the same grading system. The graduate grading scale in use at UNC-Chapel Hill is unique in that it cannot be converted to the more traditional ABC grading scale. Graduate students do not carry a numerical GPA.

**Grade Scale**

Grading at the graduate level is intended to offer feedback to students on their performance in a given course, including once students reach the thesis and dissertation stage. Faculty are encouraged to specify course requirements and grading expectations for students. Students enrolled in courses numbered 400 and above must receive one of the following grades.

**Graduate Permanent Grades**

- H** High Pass - Clear Excellence (465-500 points)
  
- P** Pass - Entirely Satisfactory Graduate Work (365-464 points)
  
- L** Low Pass - Inadequate Graduate Work (300-364 points)
  
- F** Fail (299 and below)

**Grading Worksheet**

<b>Assignment/Exam</b>	<b>Grade Value</b>	<b>My Grade</b>
• Autobiography	100 points	_____
• Assignment 2	100 points	_____
• Final Exam	200 points	_____
• Class Exercises/Participation	100 points	_____

- Your grade for a specific assignment will be lowered if it is turned in late (see Assignments section).
- Your grade for the papers will be limited to a C if it contains ten or more spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors.

**Grading Disputes**

My goal is to be fair, consistent, and objective in grading each student based on the established grading rubric criteria. If you have any questions about your grade you must make an appointment with me to discuss it within a week after the assignment was returned. However, if you feel that an error has been made in grading it is your right to appeal the grade using the procedure outlined on page 384 of the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.

## Honor Code

It is the responsibility of each student to abide by the UNC Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating or plagiarism. The Honor Code, which has governed the performance of all academic work at UNC for more than 120 years, will be enforced in this class. All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

For a refresher visit <http://honor.unc.edu/students/index.html>

## Getting Assistance from Me

You can contact me outside of class by e-mail. I will try to respond to all emails within 24 hours. Feel free to schedule a virtual office hour to discuss any problems you may be having with the course. It is imperative that you address problems as they arise rather than waiting until the end of the semester.

## Diversity

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. 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.

## Special Accommodations

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can help ensure that your needs are met. I prefer to know about any special circumstances within the first two weeks of the semester.

If you need information about disabilities, you can contact the Department of Accessibility Services at 962-8300 or visit the Department's website at: <http://accessibility.unc.edu>

## Assignments

- A tentative course schedule of readings and assignments is attached to this syllabus. Please be aware that the course schedule is subject to change – you will be notified in advance of any changes.
- Instructions for specific assignments can be found under the "Assignments" section of Sakai.

All assignments are due by 10:00 p.m. of class on the day they are due. You will lose 20% of your grade for each day your assignment is turned in late. Please submit your work in the form of a MS Word File. Include your last name and the name of the assignment in the file name (e.g. McDonald Autobiography). **Assignments must be submitted under the appropriate assignment in Sakai (e.g. Feature, textual analysis).**

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Autobiography (100 points)**

**Word Count: 750-1,000 words**

**Due Date: Submit to Sakai by 10:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26, 2020**

Your autobiography should explore your biological, anthropological, sociological, and psychological identities and how they, along with media have shaped your perspective of diversity in America. Explore the following: What is the race and ethnicity of your parents and grandparents? (biological); What cultural expressions and experiences are part of your life? (anthropological); How do others see you and treat you? (sociological); What does all of this mean and how do you see yourself? (psychological). How is any of this influenced by the media you consume? Make sure you hook your reader with the introduction.

### **Assignment 2 – Textual Analysis – UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY**

#### **Textual Analysis (100 points)**

**Word count: 1,000-1,200 words**

**Due Date: Submit to Sakai by 10:00 p.m. on Monday, June 8, 2020**

For this assignment, each student will examine a specific media text (e.g., an **episode** of a TV show, a film, a magazine ad, etc.) that explores one of the topics covered in the course (social class, gender, LGBT community, immigration, communicating across borders, disability, health inequalities, generational difference) and write a textual analysis. An analysis of a television series (as opposed to a single episode), or the films of a particular actress or director (as opposed to a single film) are beyond the scope of this assignment and course. **All papers require bibliographies using APA style. Guidelines for citing Audio/Visual sources in APA are posted in Sakai. There will be an automatic 10-point deduction on all papers that do not include a bibliography.**

### **FOR GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS**

#### **Media Analysis Research Paper (worth 100 points)**

**Due Date, Monday, June 8, 2020 at 10:00 p.m.**

**Required Length: 12-15 pages.**

Each graduate or professional student write a media analysis research paper. This assignment should include an introduction, review of relevant literature, and a theoretical framework. You will compare and contrast content from two media products of the same or different media formats (it may be a combination of radio and TV programs, print and online newspapers, magazines, etc.). The media products must not be parodies/spoofs/comedy as these genres will not give you relevant material to evaluate. Watch/read one week (for dailies) or two weeks (for weeklies) of content for the analysis. Your job is to evaluate the content using a diversity perspective and examine the role and significance of race/class/gender in them. Your paper may also address the roles of disability and sexuality. **Please use APA style.**

### **Class (Forum) Exercises (worth a total 100 points) – ALL STUDENTS**

Each modules are posted to Sakai. Each module will contain a lecture in the form of a PowerPoint on the topic(s) or short video, as well as forum exercises. Each forum exercise has a deadline for submission. In some instances, I will ask you to respond to postings from other students by a specific deadline. Failure to submit your forum exercises by the due date will result in a zero for that exercise. There will be many exercises throughout the term.

## **Tentative Course Schedule**

Opportunities may arise throughout the semester for innovative activities as we progress through the semester. Some topics may require more discussion than anticipated. For those reasons, this schedule is tentative and changes to enhance your learning experience may be made. Check Sakai for updates to the schedule.

- Module 1** Introduction to the Course, Diversity Exercise  
Diversity Exercises (Sakai Forum Exercises)  
Conceptual Grounding – Understanding  
**Read Chapter 1**
- Module 2** Conceptual Grounding – Key Theoretical Concepts  
Sakai Forum Exercise – Framing  
Conceptual Grounding--Talking Across Difference  
**Read Chapter 2**  
Conceptual Grounding – Examining Difference  
Conceptual Grounding--Who is American?  
**Read Chapter 3**  
Conceptual Grounding – What is Diversity?
- Module 3** Application – Making Class Matter: Journalism and Social Class  
**Read Chapter 4**
- Module 4** Application – Gender and the Media: Envisioning Equality  
**Read Chapter 5**  
Application – Mass Media and the LGBT Community  
**Read Chapter 6**
- Module 5** Application – Reporting and Strategic Communication Across Borders  
**Read Chapter 8**  
Application – Immigrants and Immigration: Reporting the New America  
**Read Chapter 9**
- Module 6** Application – Achieving Excellence in Crime Coverage  
**Read Chapter 10**
- Module 7** Application – The Complexity of Disability  
**Read Chapter 11**  
Application – Rx for Communicating About Health Inequalities  
**Read Chapter 12**
- Module 8** Application – Talkin’ ‘bout My Generation: Understanding Generational Differences  
**Read Chapter 13**

**Module 9** Application – Telling – and Erasing – Diverse Stories in Sports Media

**Read Chapter 14**

Application – Next: Where do We Go from Here?

**Read Chapter 15**

**Final Exam (online) June 18, 2020**