

MEJO 441.001

DIVERSITY AND COMMUNICATION

SPRING 2021

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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. This semester through your individual and group assignments you will dispel the prevalent myths and challenge the limiting stereotypes that are so pervasive in our society. It is my goal that these assignments can be posted to a class website in order to inform and educate others beyond the confines of our classroom, university, and local community.

Very early in the semester you will each be assigned to a group based on your skill set (research, storytelling, social media, branding, etc.) for the class project.

IAAR-SLATE

Along with many other courses across UNC, this course is participating in an important initiative by the Institute of African American Research called [Student Learning to Advance Truth and Equity](#). IAAR-SLATE seeks to increase undergraduates' understanding of race, racism and racial equity. All courses, like ours, in the program will include at least **six required** activities that explore this topic. By enrolling in this course, you are also committing to joining in all of the assigned activities for the program, some of which are in-class and some of which take place outside of our class time. We will discuss some material together in our class, but we will also have opportunities to meet and learn from people whose work or lives help us understand race, racism and racial equity better. In some of the activities, you will also be able to dialogue with students in other courses who are also participating in the same required activities.

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. 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 groups shape our society
- Explain the complexities of the relationships between race, culture, class, mass media and media management/ownership
- Build networks with experts on various issues of 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

IAAR-SLATE Readings

- **IAAR-SLATE Reading 1:** Michelle Lanier, "An Open Letter for These Times: Black Lives and Historic Sites," North Carolina Historic Sites, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. <https://historicsites.nc.gov/resources/open-letter-these-times-black-lives-and-historic-sites>
- **IAAR-SLATE Reading 2:** Sonny Kelly, "The Talk," <https://www.sonnykelly.com/the-talk> This "reading" is an 80-minute performance video which will become available for a limited time just prior to Mr. Kelly's lecture. I will keep you posted.)
- **IAAR-SLATE Reading 3:** Divya Chhabra, "How to Continue Activism in a Racist Country," *Teen Vogue*, November 13, 2020. https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-to-continue-activism-in-a-racist-country#intcid=teen-vogue-amp-bottom-recirc_96aa2702-8dae-40ee-828f-d11c53d8bfaf_text2vec1

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.

Grading Worksheet

Assignment/Exam	Grade Value	My Grade
• Reflection Paper – IAAR-SLATE Reading	50 points	_____
• Reflection Paper – IAAR-SLATE Event	50 points	_____
• Autobiography	100 points	_____
• Assignment 2	100 points	_____
• Midterm Exam	150 points	_____
• Final Exam	200 points	_____
• Final Project	200 points	_____
• Peer Evaluation	50 points	_____
• Class Exercises/Participation	100 points	_____

Breakdown of Grades

A = 950-1000	A- = 900-949	B+ = 870-899
B = 830-869	B- = 800-829	C+ = 770-799
C = 730-769	C- = 700-729	D+ = 670-699
D = 600-669	F = 599 and below	

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- Your grade will be lowered for unexcused absences (see Attendance section).
- Your grade for a specific assignment will be lowered if it is turned in late (see Assignments section).
- Your grade for the papers and final project 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 <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/about/policies>

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 visit me during office hours 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 2020-2021 Undergraduate Bulletin. 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: <https://ars.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. **Assignments must be submitted under the appropriate assignment in Sakai (e.g. Feature, textual analysis).**

ASSIGNMENTS

Reflection Papers (350-500 words)

Reflection papers explore personal insights on a topic or issue and how it does or does not affect you. This semester you will write two reflection papers. Choose **one** of the IAAR-SLATE “readings” to reflection on and choose **one** of the IAAR-SLATE events for reflection. The paper should include the following:

- Description of center or event
- Any assumptions you had prior to the experience (visit or event).
- What did you learn as a result of visiting the center or attending the event?
- Changes in perception, beliefs, etc. as a result of visiting the center or attending the event.
- Arguments on the issue raised by the speaker or film (event).
- Relevant points not explored by the speaker or film.
- Any questions you may have about the center, or issue explored in the event.
- Your overall feeling and interpretation.

IAAR-SLATE READINGS

Word Count: 350-500 words

IAAR-SLATE Reading 1 – Due by February 22, 2021

Michelle Lanier, “An Open Letter for These Times: Black Lives and Historic Sites,” North Carolina Historic Sites, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

<https://historicsites.nc.gov/resources/open-letter-these-times-black-lives-and-historic-sites>

IAAR-SLATE Reading 2 – Due by March 24, 2021

Sonny Kelly, “The Talk,” <https://www.sonnykelly.com/the-talk> This “reading” is an 80-minute performance video which will become available for a limited time just prior to Mr. Kelly’s lecture. I will keep you posted.)

IAAR-SLATE Reading 3 – Due by May 5, 2021

Divya Chhabra, “How to Continue Activism in a Racist Country,” *Teen Vogue*, November 13, 2020. https://www.teenvogue.com/story/how-to-continue-activism-in-a-racist-country#intcid=teen-vogue-amp-bottom-recirc_96aa2702-8dae-40ee-828f-d11c53d8bfaf_text2vec1

IAAR-SLATE Event (50 points)

Word count: 350-500 words

IAAR-SLATE Event 1 – Due by February 22, 2021

“A Conversation with Henry Louis Gates,” February 9, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.

IAAR-SLATE Event 2 – Due by March 24, 2021

“Sonny Kelly: The Talk,” March 18, 2021 (time to be announced)

IAAR-SLATE Event 3 – Due by May 5, 2021

“An Hour of Action,” Dates and Times to Be Announced.

Autobiography (100 points)

Word Count: 750-1,000 words

Due Date: Submit to Sakai by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 3, 2021

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 – Diversity Feature or Textual Analysis – your choice

Diversity Feature (100 points)

Word count: 1,000-1,200 words

Due Date: Submit to Sakai by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 10, 2021

The feature story is a human-interest story that relates to the class project topic. It must be about a person, event, organization, or situation. This is not a research paper. It should be written like a story you might read in a magazine using AP style. You may also pitch a video feature with B-roll and natural sound or an audio diversity feature with natural sound. Must be 3-5 minutes in length.

OR

Textual Analysis (100 points)

Word count: 1,000-1,200 words

Due Date: Submit to Sakai by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 10, 2021

For this assignment, you may choose to write a textual analysis specific media text (e.g., an **episode** of a TV show, a film, a magazine ad, etc) that relates to the class project topic. 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 STUDENTS

Media Analysis Research Paper (worth 100 points)

Due Date, Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 10:00 p.m.

Required Length: 12-15 pages.

Each graduate student will 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 week a new module is posted. Each module will contain a lecture in the form of a PowerPoint on the topic(s), 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.

Final Project/Presentation/Peer Evaluation (250 points)

Final Project (200 points) – group grade

Peer Evaluation (50 points)

ALL PEER EVALUTIONS ARE REQUIRED AND CONFIDENTIAL

Presentations

The presentation is an opportunity for you to sell your project to the class. **Students should dress professionally for the presentation (no T-shirts, jeans, athletic shoes).** Presentations will be graded individually. Presentations are recorded via Zoom and submitted to Sakai.

Peer Evaluation

Students will evaluate each of their group members' performance and participation in the final project. Evaluation forms will be available in April and must be submitted by the last day of class. **If you do not submit a peer evaluation for your group members, you will receive a grade of zero for your peer evaluation.**

Tentative Course Schedule

Opportunities may arise throughout the semester for special projects, guest speakers, and other 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
Autobiography is due by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 3

Module 4 Application—Gender and the Media: Envisioning Equality
Read Chapter 5

Module 5 Application—Mass Media and the LGBT Community
Read Chapter 6
Reflection Papers for IAAR-SLATE Reading 1 and IAAR-SLATE Event 1 are due by 10:00 p.m. on Monday, February 22, 2021.

Midterm Exam

Module 6 Application—Missing in Action: Religion in Mass Media Markets and News
Read Chapter 7

Module 7 Application—Reporting and Strategic Communication Across Borders
Read Chapter 8

Module 8 Application—Immigrants and Immigration: Reporting the New America
Read Chapter 9
Assignment 2 is Due by 10:00 pm. On Wednesday, March 10

Module 9 Application—Achieving Excellence in Crime Coverage
Read Chapter 10

Module 10 Application—The Complexity of Disability
Read Chapter 11
Reflection Papers for IAAR-SLATE Reading 2 and IAAR-SLATE Event 2 are due by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, 2021.

Module 11 Application—Rx for Communicating About Health Inequalities
Read Chapter 12

Module 12 Application—Talkin’ ‘bout My Generation: Understanding Generational Differences
Read Chapter 13

Module 13 Application—Telling—and Erasing—Diverse Stories in Sports Media
Read Chapter 14

Module 14 Application—Next: Where do We Go from Here?
Read Chapter 15

Reflection Papers for IAAR-SLATE Reading 3 and IAAR-SLATE Event 3 are due by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.

Final Projects are due by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.

Final Exam (online) on Friday, May 14, 2021.