

MEJO 441.002
DIVERSITY AND COMMUNICATION
FALL 2021
Fully asynchronous

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Office Hours: MW 2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. or by appointment. Also, by appointment on MW 12:30-1:45

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

I have long been interested in how the media informs individuals about groups with which they have little experience or exposure.

American mainstream media perpetuates stereotypes. Members of marginalized groups have mainly 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 learn to dispel the prevalent myths and challenge the limiting stereotypes so pervasive in our society based on race, class, gender, identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, disability, and age.

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' grasp of race, racism, and racial equity. All courses in the program include three required readings and three required activities that explore this topic. **By enrolling in this course, you are committing to joining in all of the assigned elements 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 better understand race, racism, and racial equity. 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 course examines diversity and storytelling in journalism and strategic communication and will be taught asynchronously. Course topics will be explored through lessons, lectures, discussions, guest speakers, films, podcasts, and student assignments. Each week a Lesson will post to Sakai. Some of the lessons will have Forum Exercises which you will complete in Sakai. Students are expected to submit papers on assigned dates and are responsible for 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 ethnic portrayals in the media shape our society.
- To write about and communicate with people of different backgrounds through a lens of cultural competence.
- To identify and mitigate bias.
- Build networks with experts on various issues of diversity, 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 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 Texts and Readings

Gonzalez, J. and Torres, J. (2012). *News for all the People: The epic story of race and the American media*. New York: Verso.

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

IAAR-SLATE readings are listed as noted on the syllabus.

Participation

All students are expected to participate in class actively. This means that you ask questions, share opinions, challenge, and critique respectfully 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

The Faculty Council adopted these definitions 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 they 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 a 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	

- 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*.

Attendance

University Policy:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

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 [Honor Code](#)

Getting Assistance from Me

You can contact me outside of class by e-mail. I will try to respond to all e-mails within 24 hours. Feel free to visit me during office hours to discuss any problems you may be having with the course. You must address problems as they arise rather than waiting until the end of the semester.

Diversity

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion [mission and vision statements](#) with accompanying goals. These complement the University's policy on [prohibiting harassment and discrimination](#). In summary, 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 based on age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's non-discrimination policies.

Accessibility Resources and Services

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs, and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or e-mail ars@unc.edu

(Source: <https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement>)

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Title IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim - titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvscc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

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. **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 reflect on and choose one of the IAAR-SLATE events for reflection. The paper should include the following:

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

IAAR-SLATE Readings (50 points)

Word Count: 350-500 words

The IAAR-SLATE readings this semester will center around race, racism, and racial equity. You will choose one of the readings for your reflection paper. The paper will be due on the dates listed below.

Reading 1: Demby, Gene, Shereen Marisol Meraji, and Angela Saini (2019) Is 'Race Science' Making A Comeback? An episode of the podcast *Code Switch*, 10 July 2019. Listen here:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2019/07/10/416496218/is-race-science-making-a-comeback>

Discussion: September 1, 2021.

Reflection paper due by 10:00 p.m. on September 29, 2021.

Reading 2: Rothman, Adam, curator (2017) Glimpses of Slavery at Georgetown College, an online exhibit: <https://www.library.georgetown.edu/exhibition/glimpses-slavery-georgetown-college>

(read the summaries as well as the text of the original archival documents)

Discussion: October 6, 2021

Reflection paper due by 10:00 p.m. on October 27, 2021.

Reading 3: George, Janel (2021) A Lesson on Critical Race Theory. In *Human Rights Magazine* 46(2) https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights

magazine_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/a-lesson-on-critical-race-theory/

Discussion: November 3, 2021

Reflection paper due by 10:00 p.m. on November 29, 2021

IAAR-SLATE Events (50 points)

Word count: 350-500 words

You may choose one of the three required IAAR-SLATE events for your reflection paper. Event notices and due dates for reflection papers will be shared by e-mail and posted to the calendar in Sakai.

Autobiography (100 points)

Word Count: 750-1,000 words

Due Date: Submit to Sakai by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 1, 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

Assignment 2 is designed for each group to get feedback on the development of the final project. Here are the target dates for each phase.

Podcast Production Teams

September 15	Podcast Topics are Due (15 points)
October 6	Names and Bios of Podcast guests as well as preliminary interview questions (25 points)
October 27	Finalize Guests/Schedule Interviews
November 1	Record Podcast
November 8	Edit Rough Cut of Podcast (60 points)
	Also provide a quote from one of your guests, along with a photo to Social Media team so that they can create pull quotes/Audiograms, Questions for engagement

Web Design Team

October 6	DEI messaging through visuals and texts (15 points)
October 27	Content organization & engagement strategies (25 points)
November 8	Prototype of website (60 points)

Social Media Team

September 15	Choose Platforms for Social Media Campaign
October 6	Build Profiles on each of the platforms (15 points)

October 27 Create Valuable Content/Social Media Calendar (25 points)
November 22 Pull Quotes/Audiograms/Engagement questions (60 points)

Branding Team

September 22 Define Mission & Vision (15 points)
October 6 Style guide (colors, fonts, slogan, logo) (25 points)
October 27 Write and produce Intro and Outro for the series (including slogan and embracing mission and vision). The intro and outro will be shared with production teams so that the branding is consistent in each episode of the podcast. (60 points)

Class (Forum) Exercises (worth a total of 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) and forum exercises. Each forum exercise has a deadline for submission. 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 Projects:

The class will work in teams to develop a podcast series. There will be a team to design the website for the Podcast Series, a Social Media Team, and a Branding Team. These three teams will include students from each section of MEJO 441.

In addition to the web design, social media, and branding teams, the remaining students will be divided into Production Teams of 3-4 to produce individual episodes of the podcast series. The topics for each episode must relate to diversity, equity, and inclusion and may include any of the issues we will explore this semester. Each team will select the topic for their podcast episode, secure guests, produce and edit the episode. Each podcast should be between 15-20 minutes in length.

All Teams

November 29 Record Group Presentation
December 1 Final Projects and Presentations are due

Final Project/Presentation/Peer Evaluation (250 points)

Final Presentation (100 points) – individual grade
Final Project (100 points) – group grade
Peer Evaluation (50 points)

ALL PEER EVALUATIONS ARE REQUIRED AND CONFIDENTIAL

Presentations

Students should dress professionally for the presentation (no T-shirts or tank tops).

Presentations will be graded individually. You may use an asynchronous class session to record your presentation as a group.

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.

August

18 Introduction to the Course, Introductions, Develop Rules of Engagement

Lesson 1 Conceptual Grounding – Understanding
Reading Assignments:
Chapter 1 in Len-Rios & Perry
Introduction in González and Torres

Lesson 2 Conceptual Grounding – Key Theoretical Concepts, Talking Across and Examining Difference, and What is Diversity?
Reading Assignments:
Chapters 2 and 3 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 1 in González and Torres
IAAR SLATE Reading 1 [Code Switch podcast, July 10, 2019](#)

September

1 **Discussion (via Forum): IAAR-SLATE Reading 1 (Code Switch Podcast)**
Autobiography is due by 10:00 p.m.

Lesson 3 Application – Making Class Matter: Journalism and Social Class
Reading Assignments:
Chapter 4 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 2 in González and Torres

Lesson 4 Application – Gender and the Media: Envisioning Equality
Reading Assignments
Chapter 5 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 3 in González and Torres

15 **Production Teams: Podcast Topics are Due (15 points)**
Social Media Team: Choose Platforms for Social Media Campaign

- Lesson 5** Application—Mass Media and the LGBT Community
Reading Assignments
Chapter 6 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 4 in González and Torres
 Includes Study Guide for Midterm
- 22 **Branding Team: Define Mission & Vision (15 points)**
- 27 **Midterm Exam (online)**
- 29 *Reflection Papers for IAAR-SLATE Reading 1 and Event 1 are due by 10:00 p.m.*
- Lesson 6** Application—Missing in Action: Religion in Mass Media Markets and News
Reading Assignments
Chapter 7 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 5 in González and Torres
 Forum Discussion for IAAR-SLATE [Reading 2](#)
- October
- 6 **Production Team:**
 Secure guests for Podcasts, Develop Preliminary Interview Questions (25 points)
Web Team:
 DEI messaging through visuals and texts (15 points)
Social Media Team:
 Build Profiles on each of the platforms (15 points)
Branding Team:
 Style guide (colors, fonts, slogan, logo) (25 points)
- Lesson 7** Application—Reporting and Strategic Communication Across Borders
Reading Assignments
Chapter 8 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 6 in González and Torres
- Lesson 8** Application—Immigrants and Immigration: Reporting the New America
Reading Assignments
Chapter 9 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 7 in González and Torres
- Lesson 9** Application—Achieving Excellence in Crime Coverage
Reading Assignments:
Chapter 10 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 8 in González and Torres
- 27 **Production Team: Finalize Guests/Schedule Interviews**
Web Design Team: Content organization & engagement strategies (25 points)

Social Media Team: Create Valuable Content/Social Media Calendar (25 points)

Branding Team:

Write and produce Intro and Outro for the series (including slogan and embracing mission and vision). The intro and outro will be shared with production teams so that the branding is consistent in each episode of the podcast. (60 points)

Lesson 10 Application – The Complexity of Disability

Reading Assignments:

Chapter 11 in Len-Rios & Perry

Chapter 9 in González and Torres

Forum Exercise: IAAR-SLATE [Reading 3](#)

Reflection Papers on IAAR-SLATE Reading 2 and Event 2 are due by 10:00 p.m.

November

1 **Production Team: Record Podcast**

Lesson 11 Application – Rx for Communicating About Health Inequalities

Reading Assignments:

Chapter 12 in Len-Rios & Perry

Chapter 10 in González and Torres

8 **Production Team: Edit and Submit Rough Cut of Podcast (60 points)**
Also provide a quote from one of your guests, along with a photo to Social Media team so that they can create pull quotes/Audiograms, Questions for engagement

Web Design Team: Prototype of website (60 points)

Lesson 12 Application – Talkin' 'bout My Generation: Understanding Generational Differences

Reading Assignments:

Chapter 13 in Len-Rios & Perry

Chapter 11 in González and Torres

Lesson 13 Application – Telling – and Erasing – Diverse Stories in Sports Media

Reading Assignments:

Chapter 14 in Len-Rios & Perry

Chapter 12 in González and Torres

22 *Reflection Papers for IAAR-SLATE Reading 3 and Event 3 are due by 10:00 p.m.*
Social Media Team: Pull Quotes/Audiograms/Engagement Questions (60 points)

Lesson 14 Application – Next: Where do We Go from Here?

Reading Assignments:

Chapter 15 in Len-Rios & Perry
Chapter 13 in González and Torres

29 Record Group Presentations

December

**1 Final Projects and Presentations are Due
Review for Final Exam**

Final Exam (online) – Monday, December 6.