

MEJO 441.01W

DIVERSITY AND COMMUNICATION

SUMMER SESSION 1, 2023

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

This course focuses on cultural competency and is an asynchronous online course.

I have long been interested in how the media informs individuals about groups they have little experience or exposure with. How can journalists and strategic communicators cover diverse communities authentically and with excellence? Throughout this summer session you will learn the foundations of cultural competency, as well as practical applications in covering social class, gender, the LGBTQ+ community, religion, immigration, crime, disability, health disparities, and other topics.

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, Canvas Discussion Exercises, student assignments and streaming videos available through UNC Libraries. Students are expected to be prepared for class discussions (via Canvas 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
- 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.

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

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 Discussion in Canvas. 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	A- = 450-474	B+ = 435-449
B = 415-434	B- = 400-414	C+ = 385-399
C = 365-384	C- = 350-364	D+ = 335-349
D = 300-334	F = 299 and below	

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

Assignment/Exam	Grade Value	My Grade
• 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*.

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](#), [Violence Prevention and Advocacy Services](#), 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](#) and implemented a [DEI Action Plan in October 2022](#). 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 (gvsoc@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 Canvas.

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 Canvas (e.g., Feature, textual analysis).**

ASSIGNMENTS

Autobiography (100 points)

Word Count: 750-1,000 words

Due Date: Submit to Canvas by 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 31, 2023

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 Canvas by 10:00 p.m. on Monday, June 12, 2023

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 Canvas. 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: Submit to Canvas by 10:00 p.m. on Monday, June 12, 2023

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. Graduate students should meet with me to discuss the topic for the research paper. **Please use APA style.**

Class (Discussion) Exercises (worth a total 100 points) – ALL STUDENTS

Each lesson is posted to Canvas. Each lesson will contain a lecture in the form of a PowerPoint on the topic(s) or short video, as well as Canvas Discussion exercises. Each Canvas Discussion 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 Canvas Discussion 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 summer session for innovative activities. Some topics may require more exploration than anticipated. For those reasons, this schedule is tentative and changes to enhance your learning experience may be made. Check Canvas for updates to the schedule.

- Lesson 1** Introduction to the Course, Diversity Exercise
Diversity Exercises (Canvas Discussion Exercises)
Conceptual Grounding – Understanding
Read Chapter 1
- Lesson 2** Conceptual Grounding – Key Theoretical Concepts
Canvas Discussion 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?
Read: Course Reserves – Jenkins, “Newsroom Diversity and Representations of Race”
- Lesson 3** Application – Making Class Matter: Journalism and Social Class
Read Chapter 4
- Lesson 4** Application – Gender and the Media: Envisioning Equality
Read Chapter 5
Application – Mass Media and the LGBT Community
Read Chapter 6
Read: [See Jane 2021: Looking Back and Moving Forward](#)
- Lesson 5** Application – Reporting and Strategic Communication Across Borders
Read Chapter 8
Application – Immigrants and Immigration: Reporting the New America
Read Chapter 9
- Lesson 6** Application – Achieving Excellence in Crime Coverage
Read Chapter 10
Read: Course Reserves: Dixon, “Black Criminality 2.0”
- Lesson 7** Application – The Complexity of Disability
Read Chapter 11
Read: [“Is there a Healthy Place for Inspirational in Disability Culture”](#)
Application – Rx for Communicating About Health Inequalities
Read Chapter 12

Lesson 8 Application—Talkin’ ‘bout My Generation: Understanding Generational Differences

Read Chapter 13

Read [“Women Over 50: The Right to Be Seen on Screen”](#)

Lesson 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 23, 2023