

MEJO 441.01W
DIVERSITY AND COMMUNICATION
FALL 2023

Remote – Mostly asynchronous

<https://go.unc.edu/x4EWn>



Meeting ID: 998 0306 2271

Passcode: 144254

Professor: Trevy A. McDonald, Ph.D.
Office: 329 Carroll Hall
Office Hours: Virtual Office Hours by Appointment
e-mail: trevy@email.unc.edu

“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 to.

American mainstream media has long been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes. Members of minoritized 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 assignments and the class project, you will dispel the prevalent myths and challenge the limiting stereotypes 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 focuses on diversity in U.S. mass media. It incorporates theoretical perspectives to explore and explain reasons for inequitable representations of minoritized communities as well

as the greater impact of these representations on our society. The communities we will study this semester include American Indians, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Arab Americans, Asian American, Multiracial Americans, Gender, and LGBTQ+. We will also examine disability, social class, and religion.

The teaching mode for this course is remote, mostly asynchronous. Beginning the second week of class, unless otherwise noted, we will only meet on Wednesdays from 3:30-4:45. I will post a module in Canvas each week that includes the reading assignments, PowerPoint lecture, and any additional materials (e.g., a video, podcast, etc.). Class discussions will be held on Wednesdays in our Zoom classroom.

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

Luther, C.A., Lepre, C.R., and Clark, N. (2018). *Diversity in US Mass Media*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

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 during class discussions and 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 Undergraduate 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	

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 (930-1000 points)

- P** Pass - Entirely Satisfactory Graduate Work (730-929 points)

- L** Low Pass - Inadequate Graduate Work (600-729 points)

- F** Fail (599 and below)

Grading Worksheet

Assignment/Exam	Grade Value	My Grade
• Autobiography	100 points	_____
• Class Project Phase 1	15 points	_____
• Class Project Phase 2	25 points	_____
• Class Project Phase 3	60 points	_____
• Midterm Exam (undergraduates)	150 points	_____
• Midterm Paper (grad students)	150 points	_____
• Assignment 2	100 points	_____
• Final Exam	200 points	_____
• Final Project	100 points	_____
• Final Presentation	100 points	_____
• Peer Evaluation	50 points	_____
• Class Exercises/Participation	100 points	_____

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](#), [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 Associate Dean Julie Dixon-Green, 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](#)

Use of an AI Generator such as ChatGPT, iA Writer, MidJourney, DALL-E, etc. is explicitly prohibited unless otherwise noted by the instructor. The information derived from these tools is based on previously published materials. Therefore, using these tools without proper citation constitutes plagiarism. Additionally, be aware that the information derived from these tools is often inaccurate or incomplete. It is imperative that all work submitted should be your own. Any assignment that is found to have been plagiarized or to have used unauthorized AI tools may receive a zero and/or be reported for academic misconduct.

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.

The Hussman School has an embedded CAPS counselor in Carroll Hall for MEJO majors; more details [here](#).

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 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 as an 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 Monday September 11, 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? What does 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 – 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 Wednesday, October 25, 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. *You may choose to analyze a text related to the topic of your podcast episode.* 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 Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Required Length: 12-15 pages.

Each graduate or professional student will 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.**

Final Project

The following assignments are designed for each group to get feedback on the final project's development, Season 5 of the Can You Hear Us Now: Inclusivity in the Media podcast. [Seasons 1-4](#) were produced by students during the Fall 2021-Spring 2023 semesters. For Season 5 (which your class will produce), a new episode will be published each Tuesday at 7:00 a.m. beginning in January 2024. There will be a team to redesign the website for the Podcast Series and a Social Media Team. I strongly encourage you to listen to previous episodes of the podcast series to get a better idea of the scope of this project.

In addition to the web design and social media teams, the remaining students will be divided into Production Teams of 2-3 to produce individual episodes of the podcast series. Undergraduate students will work in teams of 2-3. Graduate students will work in teams of 2. 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.

Here are the target dates for each phase. Phase 1 is worth 15 points, Phase 2 is worth 25 points, and Phase 3 is worth 60 points.

Podcast Production Teams

September 13	Podcast Topics are Due (15 points)
October 2	Names and Bios of Podcast guests as well as preliminary interview questions (25 points)
October 23	Finalize Guests/Schedule Interviews
October 30	Record Podcast
November 8	Edit Rough Cut (or first draft) of Podcast (60 points) Also provide a quote (in text and audio) from one of your guests, along with a photo to Social Media and web team so that they can create pull quotes/Audiograms, Questions for engagement. Please upload your materials to this folder.

Additionally, there is a [Google Folder](#) that includes materials for the production teams.

Web Design Team

October 2	DEI messaging through visuals and texts (15 points)
October 23	Content organization & engagement strategies (25 points)
November 15	Prototype of website (60 points)

Social Media Team

October 2	Build/Edit Profiles on each of the platforms (15 points)
October 23	Create Valuable Content/Social Media Calendar (25 points)
November 29	Pull Quotes/Audiograms/Engagement questions (60 points)

All Teams	Final Presentation on December 6
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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. Make sure that each student is visible on camera during presentation.

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.**

Class Participation (worth a total of 100 points) – ALL STUDENTS

Class participation includes your contributions to class discussions and completion of Canvas Discussion Exercises. Each week a new module is posted. Each module will contain a PowerPoint lecture on the topic(s), reading/viewing/listening assignments and some modules will include Canvas Discussion exercises. Each Canvas Discussion exercise has a deadline for submission. 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

The class will meet in the Zoom meeting room each Wednesday from 3:30-4:45 unless otherwise noted. Mondays are asynchronous lessons, and we will not meet as a class in real time. Opportunities may arise throughout the semester 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.

Module 1 August 21	<i>Identity and Theoretical Foundations</i> Class Meeting Introduction to the Course, Diversity Exercises
August 23	Class Meeting
Module 2 August 28	<i>Representations of American Indians</i> Asynchronous lesson
August 30	Class Meeting Guest Speaker – Heather Stevenson, Hussman Career Services
September 4	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
September 6	Group Meetings to discuss Final Project
Module 3 September 11	<i>Representations of African Americans</i> Asynchronous Lesson AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS DUE BY 10:00 P.M.
September 13	Class Meeting PRODUCTION TEAMS – PHASE 1 IS DUE BY 10:00 P.M. SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM – DEADLINE FOR SELECTING PLATFORMS
Module 4	<i>Representations of Hispanics/Hispanic Americans</i>

September 18	Asynchronous Lesson
September 20	Class Meeting
<i>Module 5</i> September 25	<i>Representations of Arabs/Arab Americans</i> WELLNESS DAY – NO CLASS
September 27	Class Meeting
<i>Module 6</i> October 2	<i>Representations of Asians/Asian Americans</i> Asynchronous Lesson PRODUCTION TEAMS – PHASE 2 IS DUE WEB TEAM – PHASE 1 IS DUE SOCIAL MEDIA TEAMS – PHASE 1 IS DUE
October 4	Class Meeting
<i>Module 7</i>	<i>Representations of Mixed Race Individuals and Relationships</i>
October 9	Asynchronous Lesson
October 11	Class Meeting
October 16	MIDTERM EXAM
<i>Module 8</i> October 18	<i>Representations of Gender in Mass Media</i> Group Meetings
October 23	Asynchronous Lesson PRODUCTION TEAMS SHOULD FINALIZE THEIR GUESTS WEB TEAM – PHASE 2 IS DUE SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM – PHASE 2 IS DUE
October 25	Class Meeting ASSIGNMENT 2 IS DUE
<i>Module 9</i>	<i>Representations of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People in the Media</i>
October 30	Asynchronous Lesson PRODUCTION TEAMS – RECORD PODCAST
November 1	Class Meeting
<i>Module 10</i> November 6	<i>Representations of Age</i> Asynchronous Lesson
November 8	Class Meeting PRODUCTION TEAMS – ROUGH CUT OF PODCAST IS DUE

Module 11	<i>Representations of People with Disabilities</i>
November 13	Asynchronous Lesson
November 15	Class Meeting WEB TEAM – PHASE 3 IS DUE
Module 12	<i>Representations of Class</i>
November 20	Asynchronous Lesson
November 22	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class
Module 13	<i>Representations of Religion and Faith in the Media</i>
November 27	Asynchronous Lesson
November 29	Class Meeting SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM – PHASE 3
Module 14	<i>Mass Media Industries Addressing Diversity</i>
December 4	Asynchronous Meeting
December 6	Final Presentations

FINAL EXAM – THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14 – 4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.