

JOU3220C Visual Journalism

University of Florida

Fall 2025 Syllabus

WEIM 2052

M 1:55-3:50p & W 1:55-2:45p

Instructor: Dr. Matthew Barnidge

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Office: TBD | Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

Students in this course will learn how words and visuals work together to tell a story. They will develop the skills to interpret and evaluate photographs, maps, charts, interactive graphics, websites, and motion graphics. They will learn and apply basic design principles and gain proficiency in the Adobe Creative Suite and other applications/software. **Prerequisite:** Journalism and Communications sophomore or higher.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to ...

1. Identify and assess principles of design and composition
2. Apply principles of design and composition to their own work
3. Create compelling visuals, including magazine layouts, photos, videos, and infographics
4. Arrange their work into a visual portfolio
5. Appraise and evaluate their own work and the work of their peers
6. Revise their work in response to peer and teacher feedback
7. Manage tradeoffs involved with visual journalism and justify their decisions

Required Software and Materials

- The course will rely on three textbooks, and the relevant chapters will be provided for students on Canvas. The three texts are:
 - Lester, Paul Martin. *Visual Communication: Images with Messages*.
 - Hagen, Rebecca and Golombisky, Kim. *White Space is Not Your Enemy: A Beginner's Guide to Communicating Visually Through Graphic, Web, and Multimedia Design*.
 - Yau, Nathan. *Visualize This: The FlowingData Guide to Design, Visualization, and Statistics*.
- Access to the Adobe Creative Cloud suite: <https://software.ufl.edu/adobe-offering/>
- Access to a computer capable of running the Adobe Create Cloud suite
- Access to a mobile phone with a camera capable of producing high-quality images

- (recommended) The Associated Press Stylebook, updated annually. It can be purchased as a book, a subscription website or an app for the iPhone and iPad.
- (recommended) A decent digital camera, which are available for free, 24-hour checkout from the equipment room in the basement of Weimer Hall.

Assignments and Grading

In-Class Response Paper: Students will write 350-500 words responding to the assigned reading in class using paper and pen. The paper should synthesize ideas from the reading with ideas from lecture (~¾ to 1 page), and then offer original commentary (i.e., your view of the ideas you synthesized in the first section; ~½ to ¾ page). AI tools are not allowed for this assignment.

Theory & Principles Exam: The theories and principles we discuss in the first module of the course will be applied to our subsequent work in the class. As such, we need to do a quick check-in at the end of the first module to ensure that students have learned its key concepts and ideas. The exam will be given in class and completed with paper and pen. The format will be multi-modal, and include multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.

Magazine Layout: Students will use InDesign to create a magazine layout featuring a personality profile of themselves. The layout should include (1) text and (2) images of themselves and their lives (it is fine to use pre-existing images for this assignment). Using Adobe's native AI tools (e.g., Firefly) to assist with InDesign is perfectly acceptable. AI tools such as NaviGator, ChatGPT, or Claude can be used for this assignment. However, using them to wholly generate the layout (given text and images) will likely produce lower quality work and deprive you of the learning experience of using InDesign. As such, AI tools are best used as (1) content strategists (i.e., to get ideas about the content), (2) design assistants (i.e, to give you input on color, font, structure, etc.), and (3) editors (i.e, to enhance a file you have already created in InDesign).

Photo Story: Students will take a series of photographs (3-5) that work together to tell a news story, edit them in Lightroom and/or Photoshop, and then tie them together with text in a Medium or Substack post. The images should be original: No pre-existing images from the web or AI-generated images are allowed for this assignment. Using Adobe's native AI tools (e.g., Firefly) to assist with Lightroom and/or Photoshop is perfectly acceptable. AI tools such as NaviGator, ChatGPT, or Claude can be used as (1) content strategists and (2) editing assistants. However, they should not take the place of Lightroom or Photoshop.

Video Story: Students will produce a short news video suitable for social media (e.g., TikTok or Instagram), and then edit them in Premier Pro. Students may also choose to annotate the video with text or to use animated clips and motion graphics produced in After Effects. Using Adobe's native AI tools (e.g., Firefly) to assist with Lightroom and/or Photoshop is perfectly acceptable. AI tools such as NaviGator, ChatGPT, or Claude can be used as (1) content strategists and (2) editing assistants. However, they should not take the place of Premier Pro or After Effects.

Infographic: Students will use public data to produce an infographic using Infogram or Datawrapper. The infographic will then be integrated into a news story and posted on Medium or Substack. AI tools such as NaviGator, ChatGPT, or Claude can be used as (1) content strategists

and (2) editing assistants. However, they should not take the place of Infogram or Datawrapper.

Final Portfolio Project: Students will produce a single, long-form story containing multiple visual elements (photo, video, infographic) accompanied by text and arranged in an online magazine layout. Students should play to their strengths and interests. Adobe's native AI tools are acceptable for this assignment. AI tools such as NaviGator, ChatGPT, or Claude can be used as (1) content strategists, (2) design assistants, and (3) editors/editing assistants.

Evaluations: After the presentations, students will evaluate (1) their own project in light of what they saw from their peers and (2) one of their peers' projects in light of what they saw from the rest of the class.

List of Assignments

Major Assignments	50 points (see below)
Module 1: Theory & Principles Exam	10
Module 2: Magazine Layout	10
Module 3: Photo Story	10
Module 4: Video Story	10
Module 5: Infographic	10
Response Paper (Module 1)	5 points
Final Portfolio Project	20 points
Evaluations (Peer and Self)	5 points
Weekly Assignments	10 points (1 point x 10 assignments)
Participation	10 points
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Total	100 points

Grading Scale

A	94 and above
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	59 and below
I	Incomplete
W	Withdrawn

Note: See the following website for University grading policies:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Note: Grades will be rounded to the nearest point (e.g., 89.5 rounds to 90, but 89.4 rounds to 89)

Course Policies

Attendance: There is no official attendance requirement for the course. However, excessive absence will affect your participation grade, and it also could (but not necessarily) diminish the quality of your work.

Participation: The participation grade is not merely an attendance grade. Rather, students must earn the grade through active participation in course activities. Regular attendance is necessary to achieve this goal, but not sufficient.

Late and Missing Coursework: There is no official policy limiting the timeframe in which students can turn in or complete late and missed coursework. Rather, late and missing coursework will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Please notify me as soon as possible if you know you will be late or miss coursework.

Electronic Devices: There is no official prohibition on the use of electronic devices for personal reasons during class. However, I reserve the right to prohibit the use of devices on a case-by-case basis.

Disability: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Religious Accommodations: The University mandates reasonable accommodations for the religious observances, practices, and beliefs of individual students in regard to class attendance and the scheduling of examinations and work assignments. Please notify me as soon as possible if you know you will seek accommodation. The official university policy can be found here: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-052/>

Mental Health and Wellness: The University has robust resources for student mental health and wellness. Please contact the Counseling and Wellness Center to seek help when needed: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575.

Honor Code: All students enrolled at the University have tacitly agreed to follow the university's honor code. You can review UF's academic honesty guidelines at: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code>

Cheating and Plagiarism: Students are expected to complete coursework on their own and not in collaboration with others inside or outside of the class unless explicitly authorized to do so by the

instructor. Students are also expected to observe intellectual property rights and to comply with copyright laws. Finally, students should not plagiarize the words, designs, concepts or ideas of others. Plagiarism is defined as “...taking someone’s words or ideas as if they were your own.”

Artificial Intelligence: The use of AI in this course is permissible, particularly as a study aid and/or strategy assistant. However, students should use caution when turning in work that is wholly generated by AI. If they do use AI tools to generate coursework, students are strongly encouraged to take an *active role* in shaping both the input and output of AI prompting.

Non-Discrimination/Harassment: The University is committed to nondiscrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act. It is the policy of the University that each employee and student be allowed to work and study in an environment free from any form of discrimination or harassment as defined in University regulations or law. You can review the University’s policy on non-discrimination and harassment at <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/1-006/>.

Outline of Topics

Dates	Module	Topic	Assignments
M Aug 25	Pre-Module	Class Introduction	n/a
W Aug 27 thru W Sep 10	Module 1	Theories and Principles	Exam Response paper
M Sep 15 thru W Oct 1	Module 2	Layout & Design	Magazine Layout In-Design Exercises
M Oct 6 thru W Oct 15	Module 3	Photo	Photo Story Lightroom/Photoshop Exercises
M Oct 27 thru W Nov 5	Module 4	Infographics	Infographic Data Viz Exercises
M Nov 10 thru W Nov 19	Module 5	Video	Video Story Premier Pro/ After Effects Exercises
M Dec 1 thru W Dec 3	Post-Module	Final Project Presentations	Final Portfolio Project