welcome

(to) Visual Journalism

JOU3220C

Synchronous online class over Zoom
4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays

FALL 2025

Instructor:
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Office hours:
11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Mondays and by appointment
It's fine to text me simple or urgent questions.
Send emails through Canvas.

Every day, we are bombarded with visuals before we even get out of bed. Perhaps you wake up and immediately grab your phone to begin doomscrolling. Maybe you start streaming the latest episode of "Outer Banks." If you are like me, then you go online to catch up on the news and to view photo stories. No matter what content you are consuming, the visuals that we see can shape our perceptions of the world. In this class, you will learn why visual communication matters. You'll master the basics of photography, color, typography and the principles of design. You'll also create a visually engaging and newsworthy video. Better yet, you'll leave the class knowing to avoid *Comic Sans*.

Course purpose

The objective of this course is to inspire you to create compelling visuals. You will be introduced to the basics of multimedia journalism. During this course, you will have the opportunity to learn journalism skills in audio, photography, video and design. The course will provide an overview of the basic principles of these four areas. You will also explore the software in the Adobe Creative Cloud that allows you to create visual projects. You will learn to collaborate with others as you work on your final video project in a team. By the end of this course you, should be comfortable in your use of visual journalism terminology. You will learn why visuals are an important element to stories.
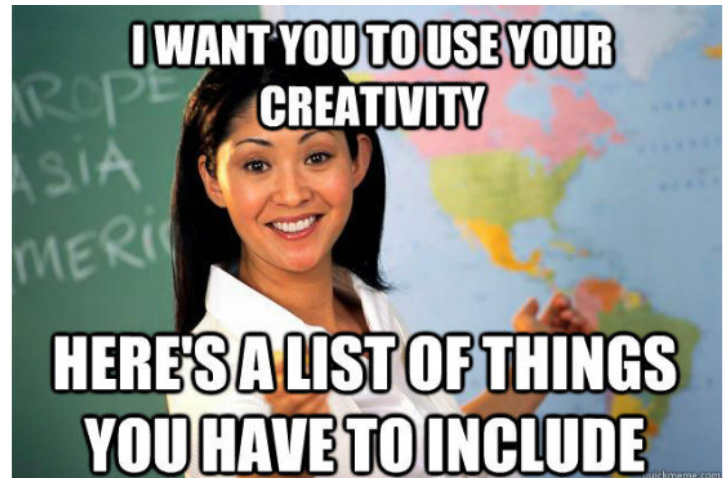
Required Software and Materials

• You are not required to purchase a textbook for this course. I will provide the **weekly readings on Canvas.**

• You must purchase the **Adobe Creative Cloud** in order to complete the assignments. You can buy a six-month or 12-month subscription. You can learn more here: https://software.ufl.edu/adobe-offering/

• **The Associated Press Stylebook**, updated annually. It can be purchased as a book, a subscription website or an app for the iPhone and iPad. The punctuation guide at the end of the book is especially helpful. (Recommended — not required)

Computer equipment

Because this course is an online course, you must have a computer that has internet access. You also need a webcam and microphone. Your computer should also have enough memory to be able to run the Adobe Creative Cloud programs.

You do not need a camera for this course as long as your phone includes a quality camera.

This is an synchronous online class, so that means that we meet LIVE every Monday. You should plan on being in a quiet place where you can participate in class. This is a three-hour course, but don't worry - I am not going to drone on and on and ignore you. I want the class to be as interactive as if we were in person, so be ready to have your cameras on so that you can participate fully.

The class will usually begin with a quick poll or participation question, and then we'll move on to talking about any important examples of visuals from that week's news. There will be a lecture every week, but I have plenty of examples where you can chime in with your critiques. We will take a 10-minute break after the first hour, and then we'll dive back in. You will be completing assignments, so we'll have time to view some of the best work. We will typically stay connected for the first two class hours, and then I will send you off in the final hour to complete a short assignment. The assignments range from answering a discussion post to practicing a skill in one of the Adobe Creative Cloud programs. My hope is that we'll have so much fun chatting about visuals that the time will fly by! You can help make this an interesting class by being prepared, adhering to deadlines and bringing your positive energy to our discussions. Pets are always welcome to make an appearance, too.

There will be times when I have so much content to share that we just won't be able to fit it all in. Some weeks, the live lectures will be supplemented with additional content provided on video lectures. As you learn each new software program, I will provide some video tutorials to help. That way, you'll have a resource that you can revisit as often as you want.

The course includes a mix of discussion posts, short assignments that allow you to practice the software as well as major assignments that allow you to focus on content. There will be a midterm exam. Instead of a final exam, you will turn in a final video project.

You are expected to read the announcements each Monday and to check into class several times a week to make sure that you don't miss anything.

Deadlines: Meet them

Consult the course schedule at the end of this syallabus for the due dates. These will also be listed in Canvas. All deadlines are firm because I want you to get into the mindset that in journalism, deadlines are important. If you miss a deadline, then you have 24 hours after the assignment's due date to turn it in. There will be a 10-point late penalty. After 24 hours, your assignment won't be accepted. Please work ahead to avoid last-minute issues that often arise. Reach out to me if you have an emergency that prevents you from meeting the deadlines so that I can help. Texting me for emergencies is fine.

Major Assignments

• Photography assignment: You will apply what you've learned about capturing strong images. Refer to the photo composition techniques that we cover in class so that you can take images that show what you've learned. Each photograph will need a caption.

• Personality Design: You will learn about typography, color and photography and then put these three elements together to tell a story using your own words and a self-portrait. You will apply the principles of design as you create a two-page magazine design about yourself using InDesign. I have plenty of examples to share to help inspire you, so don't be intimidated. This is fun!s

• Social media : For this assignment, you will learn to use Adobe Express. You will create a social media graphic using appropriate colors and typography. Your visual must help support the written message. You should also use an appropriate photograph that helps with the storytelling.

 • Final Video Project: You won't have to tackle this major assignment alone. That's right — this is everyone's favorite type of assignment — a group project! I can feel your excitement! In this case, you have so many duties to tackle that you'll be glad to have your colleagues pitch in. You'll need to find a newsworthy story, write a script, add in narration, shoot the video, capture the audio and edit the final version. This video will be less than three minutes long, but you will spend hours on it. You'll need to have your story idea approved before you start, and you will fill out group evaluations to make sure that all group members contribute and earn their grades.

Practice Assignments

These weekly assignments are meant to introduce you to the Adobe software and allow you to practice your skills before the major assignments are due. These should take only about an hour to complete, but you can put more time into them if you want. You will post these assignments to the discussion board. You will be given time in class to get started on these, and most will be due after class. These assignments include:

Introduce yourself: Post your introduction on the board
Gif: Use Photoshop to create a gif out of your own images
Photo Illustrations: Use Photoshop to create photo illustrations
Color palette: Use InDesign and select a color palette
Typography scavenger hunt: Find and photograph examples
InDesign: Design a page to practice your InDesign skills
Critique an infographic: Share a podcost intro that you like
Story ideas: Each team will post two newsworthy story ideas
Create an AI image: Experiment with prompts and images
Team member review: Grade your team members (anonymously)

Grading

Major assignments: 260 points
Photography: 30 points
Personality design: 50 points
Social media design: 30 points
Final video project: 150 points

Practice your skills/discussion post assignments: 100

Midterm: 100 points

Lecture participation: 50 points

Total: 510 points

Grading Scale
A: 94-100%
A-: 90-93%
B+: 87-89%
B: 84-86%
B-: 80-83%
C+: 77-79%
C: 70-76%
D+: 67-69%
D: 60-66%
F: 59% and below

Scores are rounded to the nearest whole point: 89.49 rounds down to 89 (B+) while 89.5 rounds up to 90 (A). I only look at the tenth spot for rounding.

UF Grading Policy
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

See the **course schedule** on the last page for deadlines.

Class attendance

You will earn participation points for attending class and sharing your thoughts. **I prefer that you turn your video cameras on so that I'm not staring at a bunch of black boxes.** That's not a pleasing visual. There will be some virtual background theme weeks related to visual communication, so you don't have to show anyone your surroundings. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx.

Accommodations

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.

Seek help if needed

College is stressful. This never-ending pandemic is incredibly stressful. Please take care of yourselves. You have counseling help available to you, and I hope you will use it if needed. Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, 392-1575.

Honor code

When you enrolled at the University of Florida, you agreed to the following honor code:
"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

On all work submitted for credit, the following pledge is either required or implied:
"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

Review UF's academic honesty guidelines at:
https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/

Cheating & plagiarism

While students are encouraged to study together, you can't take quizzes together. There have been instances of college cheating taking place over Group Me and text chats. Some people cheat by getting material from Quizlet, Course Hero and other online sites. None of this is allowed. Cheating is not tolerated, so please be honest. Do your own work. You are not allowed to use AI or Chat-GTP in your work. All work must be original and created by you without AI assistance.
Students are further expected to observe intellectual property rights and to comply with copyright laws. Do not take any class material and upload it to study websites, including Quizlet, Course Hero, etc.. That's not allowed. Also, you should not plagiarize the words, designs, concepts or ideas of others.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or accidental, has become easier to commit since the advent of the internet. Plagiarism is defined as "...taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own." Source: Dictionary.com.
That means you cannot take even a single sentence from another Web site without attribution. It means you cannot take someone else's design and replace the words and pictures with your own. It means that if you use even a few of someone else's words verbatim, you must put quotation marks around them and cite the source.

Course evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. I value your feedback, and I hope you will take the time to complete the evaluation form. I will let you know when it's available, but it's typically open during the last two weeks of the course.

Privacy: Online recordings

Our live class sessions may be recorded by the instructor at times. Students who participate with their camera engaged or use a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who unmute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

The most frequent question that I get from students: "Do you offer extra credit?"

Yes! You will have the opportunity to meet up with other students from this class and paint the 34th Street Wall. I think this is a unique Gainesville activity that all Gator students should participate in. You should use the skills that you learned in class to capture a video of this or shoot a photo story. We'll chat more about the details in class.
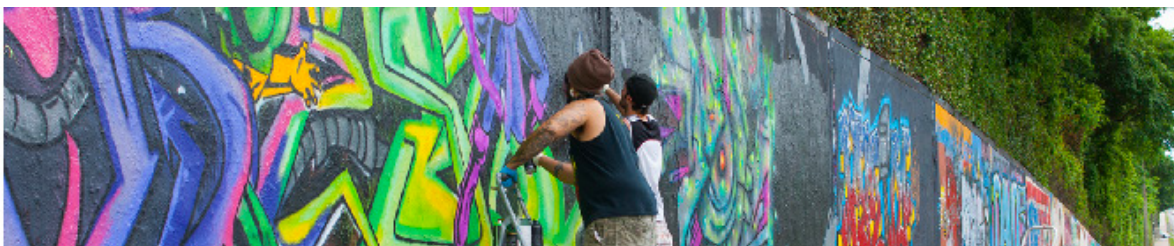
Technical Resources

UF Licensed Software Students can access software programs like Office 365 and Adobe at free or reduced rates.

UF All Access The University of Florida's digital course materials program. Selected courses are available through UF All Access to provide students with the lowest prices on their eBooks and courseware products.

UF Apps Provides access to software applications from any computing device--laptops, tablets, desktops, and smart-phones—from any location, at any time.

VPN The Gatorlink VPN service provides secure remote access to the University of Florida network and makes it appear as if your computer were physically attached to the campus network. By using the Gatorlink VPN client, you may access resources on the UF network that are not typically available over an Internet path.

Canvas Quickstart Guide This short guide will get you started with using Canvas.

Training and Safety UFIT offers free software and other technical training sessions for students, teachers, and staff.

Safe Computing Practices Learn how to protect your computer from threats regardless of brand, model, and operating system.

Zoom is an easy-to-use video conferencing service available to all UF students, faculty, and staff that allows for meetings of up to 100 participants.

Health and Wellness

If you or someone you know is in distress, please visit the U Matter, We Care website or call 352-392-1575 to refer or report a concern. A team member will reach out.

Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services and non-crisis services.

Visit the Student Health Care Center website or call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information on finding the care you need.

For safety and support, visit the University Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

For immediate medical care, call 352-733-0111 or go to the UF Health/Shands Emergency Room and Trauma Center at 1515 SW Archer Road.

For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including wellness coaching for academic success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

COVID-19
In response to COVID-19, UF has established practices to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

UF COVID Information and UF Guidance on Health and Wellness

Academic Resources

CAREER CONNECTIONS CENTER: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Distance student resources are also available.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment, 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints and Grievances Information is available in the Student Honor Code and Conduct Code.

University Registrar Find information on records, data, and enrollment.

Academic Deadlines and Calendar Consult for all important upcoming events.

Fall 2025 Course Schedule

Week	Topics	What's Due
Module 1 Aug. 21	No live class this week because we meet on Mondays. Explore Canvas and read the syllabus.	Post your introduction on the discussion board **11:55 p.m. Aug. 22** Reply to peers **11:55 p.m. Aug. 25**
Module 2 Aug. 25	Course overview Fundamentals of photography: What makes a good photo?	Explore Photoshop Create a GIF
Sept. 1	No class Labor Day	*Enjoy your day off!*
Module 3 Sept. 8	How to plan and execute a photo story	Create two photo illustrations
Module 4 Sept. 15	Typography: anatomy and terminology	Typography scavenger hunt *Start working on photo assignment*
Module 5 Sept. 22	Color: structure & system; meaning & emotion	Create a color palette Photo assignment due **11:55 p.m. Sept. 23**
Module 6 Sept. 29	Principles of design	InDesign Practice page *Start personality design*
Module 7 Oct. 6	Share best photos Review for midterm	Personality design due **11:55 p.m. Oct. 12**
Module 8 Oct. 13	Share personality designs Class midterm	Midterm during class **Oct. 13**
Module 9 Oct. 20	Intro to infographics What is a newsworthy story? Assign video teams	Critique an infographic *Brainstorm story ideas* Team story pitches due **11:55 p.m. Oct. 22**
Module 10 Oct. 27	Fundamentals of video	Meet with team to plan interviews and video
Module 11 Nov. 3	How to write a script	Work with your team Social media post **11:55 p.m. Nov. 9**

Course Schedule, continued

Week	Modules	What's Due
Module 12 **Nov. 10**	No live class - Meet with groups to work on video project.	Complete storyboard
Module 13 **Nov. 17**	Ethics and mistakes to avoid on final project	AI creation
Holiday break **Nov. 24**	*Enjoy Thanksgiving break! Take time to relax.*	
Last class **Dec. 1**	Present your final projects!	Final video project & team member review due **Dec. 1**
	Congrats on completing the course!	