

MMC 2604 Media, Cultures, and Identity Fall 2025 Syllabus

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Office Hours: Mon. 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm, 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm, or by appointment.

Course Meeting Times: Mon. (3:00 pm - 3:50 pm) and Wed. (3:00 pm - 4:55 pm)

Course Dates: August 25 – December 3, 2025

Course Location: [Matherly Hall \(MAT\)](#)
[Room 0005 \(Mondays\) and Room 0003 \(Wednesdays\)](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine social scientific theories in mass communication and media studies scholarship to analyze how the media represent various groups, identities, and issues, and how these representations can shape audience attitudes and behaviors. We will analyze media representations of issues related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, racialization, class, nationality, culture, religion, and ability from a global perspective. These issues will be examined in various media contexts, including journalism, entertainment, advertising, and sports, focusing on traditional and digital media. Students will apply concepts and theories to analyze contemporary media examples of their choice in group class activities and individual assignments.

COURSE LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the semester, you will learn:

- To use theoretical concepts for analyzing media representations of different groups and social and political issues.
- To develop analytical skills that foster cultural sensitivity and responsible media consumption and practice, considering market dynamics and audience demographics.
- To understand social scientific findings on the impact of media representations on public and individual opinions, sentiments, and behaviors.
- To engage in reflective thinking about ethical issues in the media's portrayal of societal problems.

COMMUNITY VALUES & PRACTICES

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along many dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class, and religion. We expect each of our

journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

It is crucial that together, we create an inclusive learning environment where everyone feels comfortable and welcome. Many times, learning something new entails feeling uncomfortable and challenging preconceived ideas. This is a desired outcome of any learning environment because it encourages us to exercise rigor, fairness, and creativity.

The goal is never to agree on issues or find consensus as a class but to educate each other rigorously and respectfully, adhering to the principles of social scientific knowledge. I expect everyone to engage in civil discussions about different topics. Thus, curiosity and respect for other viewpoints and experiences are essential for success in this class and personal and intellectual growth. For this, we all must exercise respect, courtesy, civil dialogue, and empathy toward one another.

Remember that many of the readings, documentaries, examples, etc., in the syllabus, were created by specific individuals with unique viewpoints. I want everyone to feel comfortable sharing their observations and critiques about the material. Your ability to analyze those aspects is a primary goal of the class.

I will foster an environment in which each class member can hear and respect each other. Each class member must show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions — please be respectful of others' feelings and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom by either myself or other students is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to harm or offend, the impact of what happens throughout the course must not be ignored, and it is something that I consider very important and attention-worthy.

Please get in touch with me if there is anything you want to share about our learning process or if you have any suggestions on new topics or how to build this communal space for all of us to grow together. I am eager to collaborate with all of you to achieve these goals.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Materials:

- There is one required textbook, cited below. A physical copy is available on reserve at the library (2 hours + overnight).
Len-Ríos, M. E., & Perry, E. L. (Eds.). (2019). *Cross-cultural journalism and strategic communication* (Second Edition). Routledge.
- Additional required and supplemental material will be available through Canvas, either linked or attached as a PDF.

- To access the material through the provided links, you must be connected to UF Wi-Fi or the UF network via our **VPN software** if you are off campus. Refer to this [video for instructions on how to connect to the VPN](#).
- We will use textbook chapters, academic journal articles, book chapters, and nonacademic sources (news articles, videos, documentaries, etc.).
- Students must complete assigned readings or materials before the class in which they are discussed. They must also be prepared to participate in full-class and small-group discussions and interactive activities.
- When there is more than one reading per class, I encourage you to read/watch the material in the order it is listed.
- Due to the nature of the course subject, reading assignments are likely to change during the semester. **Please refer to Canvas every week to see what's required for the following week.**

In-Class Activities / Class Participation:

- In this course, we will apply "active learning" in-class activities.
- Students should come to class having read/listened/watched all class material for that class and be prepared to engage in individual or group activities.
- Students do not know when in-class activities will occur, but they will likely happen every other class/week.
- Participation in these activities will be graded, and attendance will be taken.
- Missing in-class activities:
 - For any missed in-class activity, students will get a 0.
 - Students will obtain an "Excuse" on Canvas for a missed in-class activity if they email me an official medical note or other proof of a justified absence, including religious holidays. Please always review [UF attendance policies](#).
 - Students are allowed to miss 1 class due to a non-medical reason a semester and receive an "Excuse" on Canvas. This is your personal emergency absence. Exceptions include unexpected traveling back home, needing to take your pet to the vet, needing a mental health day, traveling to visit friends/family, caring for a relative, participating in a non-UF activity, etc. **You only have one personal absence a semester, so manage it properly.**
- Students are responsible for keeping track of their absences on Canvas.
- In-class activities are only done in class and cannot be done afterward.

Quizzes:

- **Weekly quizzes** will be given at the beginning of every Wednesday class session to assess reading and comprehension progress.
- Quiz questions will relate to key points in the course materials (text and video).
- Quizzes will be administered on class meeting days and must be taken on the set date, except for proof of illness, etc.

Midterm Exam:

- A mixed-format (multiple choice, true-false, short answer) in-class exam given at midterm will test students' knowledge of the subject's foundations in the middle of the semester. This exam assesses students' understanding of fundamental concepts covered in weeks one through four. It will also require a basic demonstration of applying concepts to issues covered before the exam date.
- Students who require accommodations should contact me early in the semester. The accommodations section below provides information about them.
- Students must take the exam on the set date unless they can present official proof of illness. In this scenario, a makeup date and exam location will be assigned.

Final Critical Essay:

- The final assignment for this course is a **critical essay**. This assignment tests students' ability to demonstrate how foundational concepts introduced in this class can be used to develop and articulate a coherent critique of societal issues mediated by mass communication technologies and practices.
- After the midterm exam period, detailed guidelines, expectations, and formatting examples regarding this final assignment will be provided.
- Students must submit a **1–2-page topic proposal** and a **detailed outline** before submitting their final essay.
- Late submissions will get a percentage daily deduction. *Remember, it is always better to submit a late assignment than nothing.*

ASSESSMENT

Class Participation:	30 points
Quizzes:	60 points (5 points each)
Midterm Exam:	40 points
Topic Proposal:	10 points
Essay Outline:	10 points
Final Essay:	50 points
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TOTAL:	200 points

IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

Holidays:	Thanksgiving Break, November 24 – 28 (class will not meet)
Midterm Exam:	Wednesday, October 15 (in-class written exam)
Topic Proposal:	Wednesday, November 12, 4:00 pm
Essay Outline:	Wednesday, November 19, 4:00 pm
Final Essay Due:	Wednesday, December 10, 11:59 pm

GRADING SCALE

Letter Grade	Percent						
		B+	89-87%	C+	79-77%	D+	69-67%
A	100-94%	B	86-83%	C	76-73%	D	66-63%
A-	93-90%	B-	82-80%	C-	72-70%	D-	62-60%

Scores are rounded to the nearest whole point—for example, 89.4% rounds down to 89%, 89.5% rounds up to 90%. We will stick to this rule even when it impacts the letter grade obtained. Students can also review [UF grades and grading policies](#).

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). Students must share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

ACADEMIC POLICIES & RESOURCES

Students can visit the [Academic Policies & Resources site](#) to learn more about UF's academic policies and resources, including course evaluation protocols, campus health, and student wellness services.

REACH OUT

Please don't hesitate to talk to me about any difficulties or challenges in this class. You can sign up for office hours, email me, or knock on my door ☺

**MMC 2604 FALL 2025
COURSE SCHEDULE**

PART I - FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Week 1: (Aug. 25 & 27) Course Introductions

- Get familiar with the course syllabus.
- Learn who you are learning with.
- Forge community agreements.
- Introductory discussion about journalism excellence.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Perry, E. L. & Len-Ríos, M. E. "Chapter 1: Conceptual Understanding" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 3 – 19.
- ["The Danger of a Single Story"](#) Ted Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on YouTube.
- Ruggles, H. (2021). ["From Paradise to Punchline: How the Media Has Shaped Public Perception of Florida."](#)

Week 2: (Sept. 1 & 3) Conceptual Grounding

- Continue discussing journalism excellence.
- Introductory discussion about identity formation, culture, and media effects.
- Understanding Human Rights and best practices for communicating across cultural differences.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Woods, K. "Chapter 2: Talking Across Difference" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 21 – 41.
- ["What are the Basic Human Rights?"](#) Ted-Ed video by Benedetta Berti.
- Kimberlé Crenshaw on ["Intersectionality"](#) on YouTube.

Week 3: (Sept. 8 & 10) Conceptual Grounding

- Intersecting social differences.
- The importance and impact of representation on the self and society.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Alhabash, S., Cunningham, C. & Kononova, A. "Chapter 3: Who is American?" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 43 – 73.
- "I Learn America – Abridged Version" on Kanopy (access via library VPN).

Week 4: (Sept. 15 & 17) Conceptual Grounding

- Agenda-setting theory.
- Framing and frame analysis.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Sparks, G. G. (2006). "Agenda-setting theory," "Framing the news." In "Chapter 9: The effects of news and political content." In *Media effects research. A basic overview*, Second Edition.
 - Baran, S., & Davis, D. (2015). "Framing and frame analysis," "The development of theories of frames and framing," "Effects of frames on news audiences," Pages 316 – 327 in Section 2, Chapter 10. In *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future*. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.
 - [Max McCombs interview](#) "Agenda Setting Theory" on YouTube.
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PART II - CRITICAL APPLICATIONS

Week 5 (Sept. 22 & 24): Social Class Perceptions

- Media representation of social class.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Thomas, R. J. and Hendricks, M. A. "Chapter 4: Making Class Matter: Journalism and Social Class" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 77 – 100.
- Kendall, D. Chapter 5. *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*.
- "Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class" on Kanopy (access via library VPN).

Week 6 (Sept. 29 & Oct. 1): Health Inequalities

- Media representation of health inequalities.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Hinnant, A. and Len-Ríos, M. E. "Chapter 12: Rx for Communicating About Health Inequalities" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 297 – 322.
- Chen, S., & Roburn, S. (2023). When Pandemic Stories Become Personal Stories: Community Journalism and the Coverage of Health Inequalities. *Journalism Practice*, 1-19.
- Hinnant, A., Subramanian, R., Ashley, R. R., Perreault, M., Young, R., & Thomas, R. J. (2019). How journalists characterize health inequalities and redefine solutions for Native American audiences. *Health Communication*, 34(4), 383-391.
- "Unnatural Causes: Place Matters" on Kanopy (access via library VPN).

Week 7 (Oct. 6 & Oct. 8): Dis-Labeled Disabilities

- The representation of disability in the media.
- Thinking of trauma through the lens of disability.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Painter, C. "Chapter 11: The Complexity of Disability" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 275 – 296.
- Rajabi, S. (2019). "Living with Herbert: Mediating Survival and Resilience." *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 8(4), 136-155.
- *Patrice: The Movie* on Hulu

Week 8 (Oct. 13 & Oct. 15): Gender, Body Image, and Sexuality

- The construction and representation of gender.
- Gender in the industry: news and marketing.
- The representation of LGBTQ+ communities and rights in the media.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Volz, Y. and Len-Ríos, M.E. "Chapter 5: Gender and the Media: Envisioning Equality" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 101 – 138.
- Cohen, R., Slater, A., & Fardouly, J. (March 17, 2019) "Women can build positive body image by controlling what they view on social media" in *The Conversation*.
- "[The Codes of Gender](#)" ([abridged version](#)) on Kanopy (access via library VPN).
- "[Gendered Marketing](#)" on YouTube.

Week 9 (Oct. 20 & 22): Mediated Queerness

- Media effects on body image.
- Buffering the negative effects of social media use on body image.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Hicks, G. R. "Chapter 6: Mass Media and the LGBT Community" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 139 – 164.
- Moscovitz, L. M., Billings, A. C., Ejaz, K., & O'Boyle, J. (2019). Outside the sports closet: News discourses of professional gay male athletes in the mainstream. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 43(3), 249-271.
- "[LGBTQ Vocabulary](#)" by Sara Fraser, 2022. [Suggested reading for reference.]
- "[Further Off the Straight and Narrow](#)" on YouTube.
- "[How much representation is 'Enough'?](#)" on YouTube.

Week 10 (Oct. 27 & 29): Generational Differences and Trauma

- Defining and representing generations in media.
- Understanding how trauma is transferred across generations.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Finneman, T. "Chapter 13: Talkin' 'Bout My Generation: Understanding Generational Differences" in Len-Ríos & Perry.
- [Generations throughout History](#) on YouTube.
- [What is Generational Trauma? #DeepDive Health](#) video on YouTube.
- ["Breaking the Cycle of Generational Trauma"](#) by Dr. Candice Jones on YouTube.
- [We Owe Gen Z an Apology](#) by Nathan Turner on YouTube.

Week 11 (Nov. 3 & Nov. 5): Nation and Immigration

- The representation of immigration and the boundaries of citizenship.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Garza, M. M. "Chapter 9: Immigrants and Immigration: Reporting the New America," in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 219 – 254.
- ["What does it mean to be a refugee?"](#) TED-ED video on YouTube.
- ["Why Americans Love/Hated the Irish?"](#) video on YouTube.
- ["History Professor: Southern Italians Used to Be Treated the Same as Central Americans"](#) video on YouTube.
- ["Ugly History: Japanese American incarceration camps"](#) video on YouTube.

Week 12 (Nov. 10 & 12): Race and Ethnicity

- The construction and representation of race and ethnicity in mass media.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Mastro, Dana. *Effects of Racial and Ethnic Stereotyping*. Pages 325-329 (from the beginning until the end of "Native Americans") and Pages 332-337 (from "Effects of media on racial..." until the end).
- Senft, T. and Noble, S. (2012). "Race and Social Media."
- Race – The Power of Illusion on Kanopy (access via library VPN).
- White Like Me on Kanopy (access via library VPN).

Week 13 (Nov. 17 & 19): Spirituality and Religion

- The representation of religion in the media.
- Using social media to express religious identity.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Mason, D. "Chapter 7: Missing in Action: Religion in Mass Media and News" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 165 – 192.
- ["Does the Media Portray Evangelicals Fairly?"](#) (2012) The National Association of Evangelicals.
- [How Religion is Booming on TikTok](#) BBC video on YouTube

NO CLASS NOV. 24 & 26 – THANKSGIVING BREAK

PART III – WRAP UP**Week 14 (Dec. 1 & 3): Conclusion**

- Discussion on future directions for journalism and communication excellence.
- In-class group reflection exercise.

STUDY MATERIALS:

- [Socolow, M. \(2024\) What should journalists do when the facts don't matter? The Conversation.](#)
- [Adler, S. \(2024\) Getting Past Newsroom Myopia. Columbia Journalism Review.](#)
- [Holliday, D. \(2021\). "Journalism is a Public Good. Let the Public Make it. Columbia Journalism Review.](#)
- [Radcliffe, D. \(2023\) Reimagining Journalism: taking a community-centered approach.](#)
- [Advancing Community-Centered Journalism Report](#) by the Agora Journalism Center at the University of Oregon.

Final Essay Due on Wednesday, December 3rd, 11:59 pm ET