

welcome

to Visual Journalism

JOU3220C

4:05 p.m. Mondays on Zoom

SPRING 2026

Instructor:

Renee Martin-Kratzer, Ph.d.
ReneeMK@ufl.edu
573.356.2346

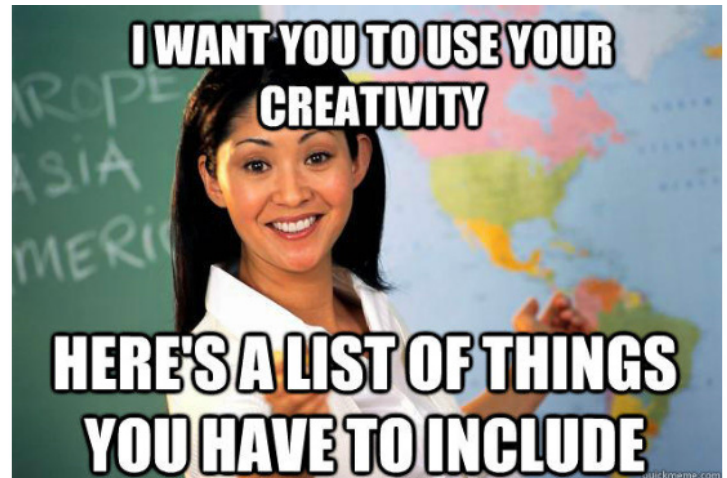
Office hours:

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.. Mondays
You can text me simple or urgent questions.
Please 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 photography and design. The course will provide an overview of the basic principles of color and typography, too. 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.

For issues with technical difficulties for eLearning, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk.

The phone number is (352) 392-HELP.

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues **MUST** be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You **MUST** email your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.



This Visual Journalism course explains why visuals are an important part of storytelling. We will talk about different forms of visuals, including photographs, infographics and illustrations. We will spend time on typography and color because these are important elements of every design. You will learn the principles of design and practice using these principles by creating your own two-page magazine design. This course uses the Adobe software, so you will have small assignments to help you master the InDesign and Photoshop. The larger assignments will require you to use this software. There will be a midterm exam to assess your knowledge. Instead of a final exam, you will turn in a final project that consists of a print resume, a website and a video resume. These three elements should work together to create a cohesive personal brand for yourself. 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.**

Course Objectives

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

1. Create photographs using the principles of composition
2. Design a magazine layout based on the principles of design
3. Apply knowledge of color theory and typography fundamentals to enhance the meaning of a message
4. Creatively solve design problems independently
5. Use critical thinking skills to evaluate visual messages based on ethical guidelines and strong storytelling
6. Apply the tools and technology appropriate for creating different elements of visual communication
7. Pitch a newsworthy feature story idea and write, film and edit it with your team members

Grading Policies (Meet all deadlines)

Discussion posts must be submitted by the deadline to count. For other assignments (except the final news story), I will accept late submissions within 24 hours of the original deadline. A 10% late penalty will apply. If you submit an assignment after this extra 24-hour window, then your assignment will not be graded. So, if an assignment is due at 11:55 p.m. Friday, then you can turn it in before 11:55 p.m. Saturday for a 10% penalty. If you turn it in any time after that, then you would receive a zero. Please do not wait until the last minute to start or submit your assignment because learning the Adobe software takes time.

If you have a legitimate excuse as to why your assignment is late or missing, please submit your documentation to the Dean of Students Office. If you have a grading concern when you receive feedback, you must submit this request within 1 week of receiving your grade on the assignment. Requests after one week will not be accepted.

Make-up assignments or extended deadlines will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Reach out to me directly **BEFORE THE POSTED DEADLINE** if you have an unexpected situation that arises that you want me to consider. I do understand that things happen, but it is important to meet deadlines both in college and in the real world.

Etiquette and Netiquette

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions, and chats. UF has provided a netiquette guide:

<https://ufonline.ufl.edu/resources/computer-requirements/>

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!
- **Social media:** For this assignment, you will learn to use Adobe Express. You will create a social media graphic using appropriate colors, typography and visuals.
- **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! 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. Some of these assignments will be shared on the discussion board.

Discussion Posts

You will have 10 graded discussion posts due. The topics include the following:

- Introduction:** Post a little about yourself.
- How many visuals?:** Discuss how often you see images daily.
- Gif:** Use Photoshop to create a gif out of your own images.
- Photo Illustrations:** Use Photoshop to create photo illustrations.
- Typography scavenger hunt:** Find and photograph type examples.
- Website:** Find and share an example an attractive website.
- Create a social media design:** Use Adobe Express for this.
- Pitch your newsworthy story ideas:** This is a group post.
- Create an AI image:** Share and discuss your Adobe Firefly creation. Consider if this technology is helpful or harmful.
- Wrap-up post:** Share your reflections about the course.

Grading

Major assignments: 300 points

Photo composition: 30 points

Personality design: 50 points

Video Team Project: 150 points

Practice your skills: 20 points

Class participation: 50 points

Midterm: 100 points

Discussion posts: 100 points

Total: 500 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 page 3 in this syllabus for more grading info.

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

Class Attendance

You are expected to log in several times a week to Canvas and to read all class announcements. You will not do well in the course if you don't participate fully. 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>. **To succeed in the class, please check announcements every Monday and do not skip the live class. You are graded on your participation on Zoom.**

Quiz Policy

The orientation quiz does not count towards your final average, but it must be completed at a score of 100% before the rest of the course will open.

Midterm Exam

The midterm is a test that you will take on Canvas using Honorlock. You will follow the instructions for Honorlock that are posted on Canvas. You will download the Honorlock extension and take the midterm during an allotted time. Once you begin the midterm, then you must complete it. You are not allowed to take the midterm past the due date.

Final Exam

The final assignment is a team video project. You will work in a small group of 3-5 team members to complete a news video. You will conduct your interviews and take B-roll as a team. You will be assigned a specific role to complete, and team members will evaluate each other to ensure that everyone participates. The projects often turn out quite well!

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/>

Diversity Statement

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 a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can email her at jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu.
- If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.

Cheating, Plagiarism & AI

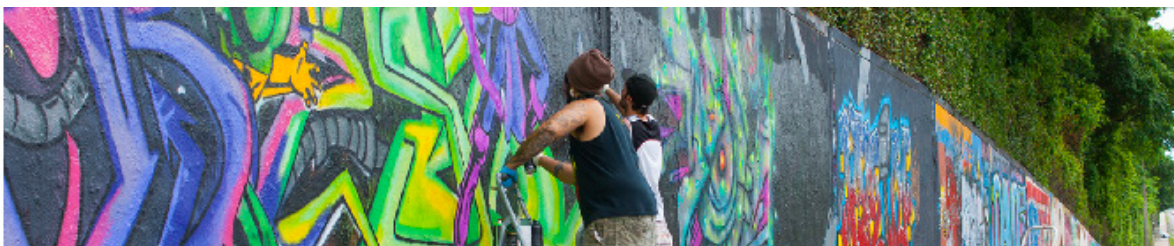
While students are encouraged to study together, you can't take quizzes together. **There have been instances of college cheating taking place over Group Me and text chats. Some people cheat by getting material from Quizlet, Course Hero and other online sites. None of this is allowed. Cheating is not tolerated, so please be honest. Do your own work.**

Students are further expected to observe intellectual property rights and to comply with copyright laws. **Do not take any class material, including videos and transcripts, and upload it to study websites, including Quizlet, Course Hero, etc.** Also, you should not plagiarize the words, designs, concepts or ideas of others.

Again, you must do all of your own work. Do not use AI for your assignments unless its mentioned in the instructions. You are also required to use the Adobe programs for the assignments. Do not use Canva when you are supposed to use In-Design or Illustrator, for example. **For the midterm, you must follow the rules given for Honorlock before the exam.**

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. What if you aren't in Gainesville? No problem! I will offer some extra credit that you can complete on your own from wherever you are located.



Course Website

<https://elearning.ufl.edu>

Additional Resources

The Society of Publication Design offers good examples of design.
<https://www.spd.org/>

The Behance website includes many designers' portfolios.
<https://www.behance.net/>

If you have questions about any of the Adobe programs, then use this help tool for tutorials.
<https://helpx.adobe.com/support.html>

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills

This is a beginning class, so you aren't expected to have prior knowledge about design or any of the Adobe programs. If you enjoy what you learn, then you can take more advanced classes in each of the areas we cover.

Minimum Technology Requirements

The University of Florida expects students entering an online program to acquire computer hardware and software appropriate to their degree program. A student's computer configuration should include webcam, microphone, broadband access, and Microsoft office suite. Individual colleges may have additional requirements or recommendations, which students should review before starting their program. More information on technical requirements is available at the UF Online website: <https://ufonline.ufl.edu/resources/computer-requirements/>

Minimum Technical Skills

You will need a basic understanding of operating a computer and a willingness to learn the Adobe software.

Privacy: Online Recordings

This is an asynchronous course, but if there are any live meetings, then 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.

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lec-

tures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, August 5th, 2021, Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Tips for Success

You will do well in this course if you log into Canvas several times a week to read class announcements, watch videos and work on the assignments. Meet all deadlines and do your own work. Study for the mid-term. Practice using the software. Seek help when you are confused. I'm here to support you.

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 appreciate you taking the time to give feedback and will send out an announcement with the evaluations are open. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at the GatorEvals results page.

Spring 2026 Course Schedule

Modules	Topics	What's Due
Week 1 Jan. 12	Course orientation The importance of visual communication Watch Module 1 videos	Post your introduction 11:55 p.m. Jan. 13 Reply to peers 11:55 p.m. Jan. 16
Week 2 Jan. 19	Monday is a holiday. Log into Canvas to complete an assignment this week	Discussion board 11:55 p.m. Jan. 20 & 23
Week 3 Jan. 26	Fundamentals of photography: What makes a good photo?	Create and share a gif
Week 4 Feb. 2	Photo composition	Discussion post (Photoshop manipulation) 11:55 p.m. Feb. 2 & Feb. 6 <i>Start photo story assignment</i>
Week 5 Feb. 9	Typography	Typography scavenger hunt 11:55 p.m. Feb. 11 & Feb. 13
Week 6 Feb. 16	Color theory	Create a color palette Photo assignment due 11:55 p.m. Feb. 22
Week 7 Feb. 23	Principles of design	InDesign practice page <i>Start personality design</i>
Week 8 March 2	Infographics Review for midterm	Discussion post 11:55 p.m. March 4 & 6 Personality design due 11:55 p.m. March 8
Week 9 March 9	Share personality designs Class midterm	Midterm Complete during Zoom class <i>Work on podcast</i>
Week 10 March 16	<i>Spring break</i>	
Week 11 March 23	What is a newsworthy story? Assign video teams	Discussion post (story pitch) 11:55 p.m. March 25 & 27
Week 12 March 30	No live class - Meet with your teams in person	Work as a team to plan and complete interviews & B-roll

Course Schedule, continued

Week	Modules	What's Due
Week 13 April 6	Video Newscasts How to write a script	Work with your team on your project
Week 14 April 13	\AI's impact on visual journalism	Finish editing Discussion post (AI) 11:55 p.m. April 15 & 17
Week 15 April 20	<i>Let's celebrate your final projects!</i>	1 p.m. April 20 Final project due, team review Discussion post (wrap-up)

