

Syllabus

JOU 4214 Design
Spring 2026, 3 Credits

Time & Location

Tuesdays, 1:55 - 4:55 PM
Class Online: TK LINK

Office Hours

Wednesdays & Thursdays
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Instructor

David Kofahl
davidkofahl@jou.ufl.edu

You may also email me to make an appointment outside of normal office hours. I am available in person, zoom, or over the phone. Please allow me 48 hours to respond.

Course Description

Students will gain the confidence and competence to independently develop and execute design concepts for editorial stories. Students will be able to effectively communicate through the application of design knowledge and tools. This course focuses on the advanced principles of design and digital storytelling along with learning how to conduct research, apply analytical processes to creative thinking, hone technical skills, communicate with design language, and identify strategies in visual problem solving.

The primary objective of this course is to produce portfolio-quality design work with a heavy emphasis on editorial and digital news design. Students will acquire a comprehensive understanding of user-experience (UX) and usability, typography, multimedia, color theory, information hierarchy, responsive web design, and the processes of project workflows for editorial production.

Classes provide an equal balance between theory and application, and are divided between lectures, tutorials, and production time. In lectures, students learn advanced topics of design within the contexts of both digital communication and storytelling. Labs and tutorials will teach the practical skills necessary for a proficiency in the tools used by professionals.

The class heavily relies on participation through class discussion. Being present and engaged during class is part of your grade. We will review case-studies, debate the efficacy and merit of published news stories and digital campaigns, and hold in-class critiques of assignments. Students will take responsibility for participating in classroom discussions by researching to find answers and sources of information, documenting and sharing information, problem solving, and asking questions.

Process Book

Students are required to keep a process book for sketching design approaches, working on class assignments, and collecting design ephemera and other sources of inspiration. In essence, this is a collection of your progress both in and out of class. Documenting your process is equally as important as the final product, and this process book will be assessed and included as a part of the final grade for all projects in order to help observe your process and concepts.

Attendance

Student participation is essential to the success of this class and, therefore, attendance is mandatory. This class will be held entirely online using [Zoom](#). Students are expected to attend class with the same regularity, discipline, and participation as an in-person course. It is incumbent upon students to be active participants and, as such, students are also required to keep their cameras on, when available, in class.

You are permitted two (2) unexcused absences in the semester without penalty to your grade. No explanation necessary. After your second unexcused absence, the instructor may lower your attendance grade 10 points (out of 200 points total) for each additional absence. Excused absences include religious holidays, a verifiable death in the immediate family, or with a doctor's note. If you are sick, please stay home.

Requirements for class attendance, make-up assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies. Click [here](#) to read the university attendance policies.

Remote Learning

A variety of realtime, collaborative education tools, including [FigJam](#), will be used to supplement learning and facilitate group discussions and participation.

Platforms

Canvas is our central hub for the semester. Be sure to turn “on” notifications. LinkedIn Learning is our textbook. Weekly viewing links are posted in Canvas Announcements.

Textbook & Required Materials

There are no required textbooks for this class. All reading assignments will either be posted on Canvas or provided as handouts in class. However, you will be required to log into LinkedInLearning.com to watch software training tutorials throughout the semester. These are available for free to UF students [here](#) (this will be linked on Canvas).

[Figma](#) is required for this class and will be the primary design tool used for all course work. Students can obtain a [free version](#) of the software with a valid UF email address. In addition to Figma, students may find it useful to supplement class assignments with software in the Adobe Creative Cloud Suite. The classroom lab will have computers with this software on it. However, if you would like to purchase it for your own computer, UF IT offers students a discounted rate at <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/software-services/adobe/>.

Assignments & Grading

Breakdown of total possible points for each assignment (for a total of 1,000 points):

Project 1	100 points
Project 2	100 points
Project 3	100 points
Project 4	200 Points
Research Report	100 Points
Labs (5 total)	100 points
Homework (5 total)	100 points
Attendance	200 points

Evaluation of Grades

These are the four main categories that will make up your final grade:

- **50% Projects** Includes four (4) projects.
- **10% Research Report** Includes one (1) design research report.
- **10% Labs** Includes five (5) LinkedIn Learning tutorial assignments.
- **10% Homework** Includes five (5) homework assignments.
- **20% Attendance** This class is a mix of in-person and remote lectures. Attendance is mandatory for both.

Please review the project rubrics on Canvas to understand the specific grading scale.

Grading Scale

A	1000 - 940
A-	939 - 900
B+	899 - 870
B	869 - 830
B-	829 - 800
C+	799 - 770

C	769 – 730
C-	729 – 700
D+	699 – 670
D	669 – 630
D-	629 – 600
E	590 – 0

More information on grades and grading policies is here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Deadlines

Deadlines are a necessary part of the communication world and a missed due-date represents an empty page and lost clients. Projects, homework, and labs are due to Canvas on the assigned due date.

For every day past the deadline on Canvas, your labs, homework, and projects will lose points:

LABS/HOMEWORK

Due to Canvas = -2 points (10%) per day after the deadline.

PROJECTS

(1) Final Critique = -15% if you miss critique. (2) Due to Canvas = -10% if submitted late.

Make-up Work

You are eligible for make-up work only in the event of an excused absence. Work may be different from what is originally assigned. It is your responsibility to ask for make-up work within a week of the absence. If you are absent or tardy it is your responsibility to obtain missed information from another student in the class. If you cannot reach out to another student, please reach out to me. But please give me at least a 48 hour time frame to reply to all Canvas and email messaging.

Academic Honesty Policy

Honesty: All students are required to adhere to the University of Florida Honor Code. Plagiarism, such as turning in or altering the work of others, will result in a failing final grade.

There is a huge difference between inspiration and blatantly copying someone's work. All designs submitted for class assignments must be produced during the 2024 fall semester. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

Full information regarding these policies is available at www.registrar.ufl.edu and www.dso.ufl.edu.

Respect

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by respect for fellow students.. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society. Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a range of perspectives and experiences. To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name that differs from that which appears 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.
- If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC Director of Community and Culture, 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.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should first register with the Disability Resource Center at (352) 392-8565 or <https://disability.ufl.edu/> by providing appropriate documentation.

Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Counseling & Wellness

Resources are available on campus for students who experience personal problems or lack clear career and academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance. Find out more information at <https://counseling.ufl.edu> or (352) 392-1575.

University Police Department: (352) 392-1111 or 911 for emergencies.

Course Schedule

(Schedule, lecture topics, and deadlines are subject to modification)

	Lesson	Project	Homework	Labs
Week 1 Jan 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Course Overview and Syllabus		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 1 assigned	
Week 2 Jan 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review of graphic design fundamentals		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 1 due	
Week 3 Jan 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Research-based design & usability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 1 assigned		
Week 4 Feb 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 1 critiquesUser journeys & user experience, interface designDeveloping a design research report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Research report assigned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 2 assigned	
Week 5 Feb 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wireframing, storyboarding, responsive design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 1 dueProject 2 assigned		
Week 6 Feb 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 2 critiquesGestalt principles		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 2 due	
Week 7 Feb 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Editorial design and story concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 2 dueProject 3 assigned		
Week 8 March 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Part 1: Interactive storytelling, multimedia, picture editing		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 3 assigned	
Week 9 March 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 3 critiquesPart 2: Interactive storytelling, multimedia, picture editing		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 3 due	
Week 10 March 17	No class; Spring break			
Week 11 March 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Interaction and motion design	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 3 dueProject 4 assigned		
Week 12 March 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Product design and branding		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 4 assigned	
Week 13 April 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pitching design proposals		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 4 due	
Week 14 April 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 4 critiquesProject management, production workflow, and design hand-off		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 5 assigned	
Week 15 April 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none">New media tools, artificial intelligence, design, and a shifting media landscape		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Homework 5 due	
Week 16 April 28	Exam week, No class or final exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project 4 dueResearch report due		<ul style="list-style-type: none">All labs due