JOU4930 CJCxDC: Navigating DC's Media & Communications Landscape

Spring 2026 Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR

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CLASS SCHEDULE

Wednesdays, 9am - 5pm

LET'S CHAT

Office Hours: Mondays & Thursdays, 4-5pm
(Virtual or in-person)

COURSE WEBSITE

https://elearning.ufl.edu

ABOUT THE COURSE

CJCxDC blends professional experiences with the city's dynamic political and international landscape to allow students to learn, work and live in a top media and communications market. Students in this 3-credit immersion course will spend 10 weeks in Washington, DC.

This course is designed to equip you with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the dynamic and competitive world of DC media and communications. In the end, you'll build a portfolio of work showcasing your skills and expertise. You'll also develop a professional network and receive feedback from industry leaders and mentors, providing valuable insights and guidance throughout the course.

Throughout the course, you'll be immersed in the unique cultural and professional landscape of Washington, DC. You'll have opportunities to meet new people and explore vibrant work cultures in media, public affairs, advocacy, public relations, and political communication. You'll also have the chance to experience firsthand how media and communication shape national conversations, leaving the course feeling more confident and prepared for your post-grad career in communication.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will:
- Better understand the demands of and skills needed to succeed in the journalism and communications industry, particularly in Washington, DC.
- Get a diverse view of various areas of work (e.g., political communication, campaign messaging, public interest communications, non-profit and advocacy communication) and niche industries (e.g., technology, health, tourism, climate change, sports, film) in communications.
- Build your professional network.
- Create multimedia content that can be used in a professional portfolio.
- Develop and apply critical thinking, listening, teamwork and professional and soft skills through your work and interaction with peers and industry leaders.
- Offer, evaluate and respond to peer and professional feedback.

COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:
- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the U.S.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.

PREREQUISITES

This course will be departmentally controlled. Students taking this course must have applied to and been selected to participate through CJCxDC.

COURSE FORMAT & DATES

This is a Spring 2026 course that meets in-person in Washington, DC. This course does not meet during the University's regularly scheduled class meeting times, so your participation should not conflict with your other scheduled courses. During inclement weather or "snow days," we will move to an online format or reschedule.

We strongly recommend that you notify your employers that this is a **requirement** for your program, allowing them to plan accordingly.

All details and links are in the course timeline. Please bookmark this for easy access, as I will update it regularly.

COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

The program runs for 10 weeks from January 20 to April 2, 2026. All Wednesday in-person class meetings will begin with a lecture from 9am-10:15am. Site visits, workshops, guest speakers, and professional development activities will take place following the lecture until 5pm or as otherwise noted.

Note: All times and schedules are subject to change.

Pre-Arrival (Virtual)
- Wednesday, January 7 at 6pm: Virtual Pre-Arrival Meeting
- Wednesday, January 14 at 6pm: Virtual Personal Branding Session

Week 1: January 19-25 | Introduction to DC Media and Communications
- Wednesday, January 22 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting & orientation
- Sunday, January 26: LinkedIn Profile "Before" Screenshot due by 11:59pm

Week 2: January 26-February 1 | Covering Congress
- Wednesday, January 29 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting
- Friday, January 31: Professional Connection #1 due by 11:59pm

Week 3: February 2-8 | Building Your Personal Brand in Political Media
- Wednesday, February 5 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting

Week 4: February 9-15 | Be on Your Best Civic Behavior
- Wednesday, February 12 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting

Week 5: February 16-22 | Local News in a National Politics Town
- Wednesday, February 19 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting & Mid-Term Professional Check-In

Week 6: February 23-March 1 | Maryland State Politics
- Wednesday, February 26 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting
- Friday, February 28: Professional Connection #2 due by 11:59pm
- Friday, February 28: LinkedIn Learning Course #1 Certificate due by 11:59pm

Week 7: March 2-8 | Non-Profit HQ
- Wednesday, March 5 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting

Week 8: March 9-15 | Advocacy Communications
- Wednesday, March (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting

Week 9: March 16-22 | SPRING BREAK - No Class)
OPTIONAL: Public Interest Communications One Week in DC

Week 10: March 23-29 | [Topic TBA]
- Wednesday, March 26 (9am-10:15am): In-person class meeting & final presentations

Finals Week: March 30-April 3 [Topic TBA]
- Tuesday, March 31: Professional Connection #3 due by 11:59pm
- Tuesday, March 31: LinkedIn Learning Course #2 Certificate due by 11:59pm
- Tuesday, March 31: Updated Resume due by 11:59pm
- Wednesday, April 2: LinkedIn Profile "After" Screenshot due by 11:59pm
- Wednesday, April 2: Final Project: Professional Portfolio Website due by 11:59pm

Portfolio Development Components (Dates TBA):
- Branding Workshop
- Professional Dress Workshop
- Professional Headshots Session

Recurring Assignments Throughout Semester:
- Weekly Reflections: Due every Sunday by 11:59pm (Weeks 1-10)
- Weekly LinkedIn Posts: Due every Friday by 11:59pm (Weeks 1-10)
- Professional Engagement: Comment on at least 2 professional posts per week

Note: Specific site visit locations, guest speakers, and detailed activities for each Wednesday meeting will be announced via the course timeline, which will be updated regularly on Canvas. Check the timeline weekly for detailed information about upcoming activities and any schedule changes.

TEXTBOOKS & READINGS

There is no required textbook for this course. However, staying connected to daily news and political developments is essentia**l** to your success in this course and your future career in communications/public affairs. **You must regularly follow current events to understand the real-time context in which strategic communication operates**.

Daily News Aggregators:

- **Politico Playbook** (mandatory for all students)
- Axios AM/PM

- Punchbowl News AM
- The Washington Post's The 7
- Axios Washington DC

Additional Recommended Resources: National news and trade publications, including The Washington Post, Washingtonian Magazine, C-SPAN, Politico, PR Week, The Holmes Report, AdWeek, and AdAge. Free content is available on all listed publications, and you can create free accounts to several of these with your UF login. Subscribe to their daily/weekly newsletters to stay informed.

SUGGESTED READINGS & RESOURCES

Suggested readings and resources include:
- Online databases accessible through the UF Library, such as WARC, Mintel, Simmons and Statista. See the [UF Library guides from April Hines](#) for major-specific resources. You must be signed on with the UF VPN to access these databases.
- Training videos available on [LinkedIn Learning](#). You may access LinkedIn Learning for free with your UFL login.

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

Final grades will be based on the following scale:
- A: 92-100%
- A-: 90-91%
- B+: 88-89%
- B: 82-87%
- B-: 80-81%
- C+: 78-79%
- C: 72-77%
- C-: 70-71%
- D+: 68-69%
- D: 62-67%
- D-: 60-61%
- E: below 60%

You can earn **700 total points** in this course through the successful completion of the following assignments:

Weekly Reflections (100 points). Weekly reflections are an opportunity to document your personal and professional growth in Washington, DC. Share your perspective, observations and experiences. You might find these reflections valuable as you prepare for interviews and conversations with professionals. Reflections must be double-spaced and at least 250 words. *(10 points each)*

Here are some helpful questions to ask yourself while thinking about your reflections. You are not required to answer these specific questions but may use them as prompts to guide your thinking.

- *What surprised you most about Washington, DC this week—either professionally or personally?*

- *How did a news story or political development you followed connect to what you observed in your internship or coursework?*

- *What professional skill or insight did you gain this week, and how might you apply it in the future?*

- *Describe a meaningful conversation or interaction you had this week. What did you learn from it?*

- *What challenged you this week, and how did you respond?*

- *Who did you meet or observe this week that influenced your thinking about your career path?*

- *What aspect of DC culture or professional norms did you notice, and how does it differ from your expectations?*

Professional Networking & LinkedIn Presence (250 points). You will meet many incredible professionals in DC, but it's all too common for students to never follow up. This assignment ensures you build lasting professional relationships and develop a strong LinkedIn presence—both critical skills in DC's relationship-driven professional landscape**.**

I. **Professional Networking:** For this assignment, you must connect with and follow up with **one professional each month** (three total) during your time in DC. For each connection, send a personalized LinkedIn connection request or introduction email, schedule and conduct a follow-up conversation (virtual or in-person coffee chat), and document your interaction and next steps. Submit your materials through the Google Form provided, including a screenshot of your connection request/initial outreach, a photo from your coffee chat (virtual screenshot or in-person photo), and a brief reflection (150-200 words) on what you learned and how you plan to nurture this relationship moving forward. *(50 points per professional connection, 150 points total)*

II. **LinkedIn Presence:** LinkedIn is an essential tool for building your professional presence and staying engaged with industry developments. For this assignment, you will amplify your engagement with the following connection assignments. *(100 points)*

- **LinkedIn Profile Update (20 points):** Submit a "before and after" comparison of your LinkedIn profile, demonstrating improvements made throughout the semester
- **Weekly Posts (20 points):** Post at least one industry-relevant update, article share, or professional insight each week by Friday (10 weeks minimum)
- **Professional Conference (10 points)**: Post one reflection post about your insight and experiences while attending a professional conference or seminar
- **Professional Engagement (20 points):** Actively engage with professionals' content and newsletter posts by commenting thoughtfully on at least 2 posts per week
- **Trade Publication Engagement (10 points):** Share and comment on at least one article from an industry trade publication (PR Week, The Holmes Report, AdWeek, AdAge, Politico, etc.)
- **LinkedIn Learning Courses (20 points):** Complete **two** free LinkedIn Learning courses on topics such as marketing, communications, sales, data analysis, or digital marketing. Submit your completion certificates (10 points each)

CJCxDC Digital Storytelling and Thought Leadership Content (100 points). You'll capture and share your experience in DC through digital storytelling on CJCxDC's Substack, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other platforms. Your content will be published on CJC's digital channels and attributed to you, building your professional portfolio while promoting the program.

- **Substack Article (25 points):** Write a thought leadership piece or reflective essay about your DC experience (upload as PDF or Word document once complete)
- **LinkedIn Article (25 points):** Write an article to be published on our LinkedIn newsletter showcasing your professional insights or experience (upload as PDF or Word document once complete)
- **Day in the Life Reel (25 points):** Create and post a "day in the life" reel on LinkedIn that documents your typical day in DC. Submit link via Canvas after posting.
- **Trade Publication Review (25 points):** Write a review or analysis of a relevant trade publication article (submit on Canvas)

FINAL PROJECT: Professional Portfolio Website (250 points): Your final project is to build a comprehensive professional portfolio website that effectively communicates your personal brand, showcases your work, and highlights your skills and experience while working in DC media and communications. The goal is to create a polished, shareable link that you can use in job applications, networking conversations, and professional correspondence. You may create a new portfolio using Canva, Wix, WordPress, or another platform of your choice, or continue building an existing portfolio.

Portfolio Development Components: Throughout the course, you will participate in **mandatory** portfolio-building activities and workshops that will strengthen your portfolio content, including:

- **Branding Workshop:** Receive guidance on developing a strong personal brand and creating a cohesive visual identity for your portfolio and professional presence.
- **Professional Headshots:** Participate in a professional photography session to capture high-quality images for use in your portfolio and online profiles.
- **Professional Dress Workshop:** Work with a personal fashion consultant on your professional appearance and style in preparation for your headshot session.
- **Resume Update:** Submit an updated resume that highlights the professional experience and skills you've acquired during the course.

Overall professionalism, participation, engagement and timeliness (100 points). This evaluation measures your professional conduct, initiative, and active participation throughout the program. Your grade reflects how you interact with peers, industry leaders, partner organizations, and program staff across all meetings, workshops, and site visits.

Requirements & Expectations:

Punctuality (20 points): Arrive at least 10 minutes early to all scheduled meetings, site visits, and workshops. Bring a valid state-issued ID to all professional visits. Repeated tardiness may result in dismissal from activities.

Preparation (25 points): Each student will be assigned a week to research the people, companies, and organizations you'll meet before each visit. Complete the Organization/Company Brief template prior to each site visit and come prepared with thoughtful questions.

Professional Appearance (15 points): Dress appropriately for all professional settings. Business casual includes collared shirts, blouses, khakis, and professional footwear. When in doubt, overdress.

Active Engagement (25 points): Demonstrate genuine interest and participation during all activities. Ask questions, take notes, contribute to discussions, and engage meaningfully with speakers and peers.

Communication & Responsiveness (15 points): Respond to all program communications within 24 hours. Check email and course announcements daily. Complete all required forms and submissions on time.

*Mid-Term Professional Check-In: You will have an in-person mid-term evaluation to discuss your progress, professionalism, and areas for improvement.

Note: Students who disengage completely, stop responding to communication, or fail to attend required activities without prior approval will earn a 0 for the entire course.

Partner organizations will also evaluate your participation, and their feedback will factor into your final grade.

HOW TO SUBMIT ASSIGNMENTS

You will submit all assignments on Canvas. Assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the due date unless otherwise noted.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

COMMUNICATION

You will be required to communicate and stay connected with other CJCxDC students and the instructor throughout the program. This course relies on a strong sense of community, and your active participation in our shared communication channels is essential. Building a supportive network with your CJCxDC cohort is one of the most valuable aspects of this program—stay engaged, support each other, and make the most of this shared experience.

Expectations:

- **Engage with Peer Content:** Actively engage with fellow students' LinkedIn posts, the CJCxDC newsletter, Substack articles, and group chat discussions through reactions, comments, and meaningful contributions. Supporting your peers' content builds community and demonstrates professional collegiality.
- **Stay Connected:** Check group text, UFL email, and course announcements daily to stay informed about program updates, schedule changes, and important information.
- **Open Communication:** Please feel free to text, message, or email me with any questions or concerns you have. I'm happy to provide feedback or guidance on assignments, professional development, or your DC experience. I will always do my best to make myself available, but please allow up to 48 hours for a response unless the matter is time-sensitive.

COURSE PROFESSIONALISM

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school, and professional decorum is expected at all times. You are expected to conduct yourself in

an honest, ethical, respectful and courteous manner with other students and with me, abiding by the UF Student Conduct and Honor Codes.

Please follow rules of common courtesy for email, discussions and chats. UF provides a Netiquette Guide for Online Courses here: http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES & RESOURCES

For information on university-wide academic policies and campus resources, please visit: https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies