

## **MMC 2604 Media, Cultures, and Identity** **Spring 2026 Syllabus**

**Instructor:** Dr. Rachel Grant

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Office Hours: Thursdays 12:45-1:45 p.m. or by appointment

Class Time: 1:55-4:55p.m. Thursdays

### **Course Description**

In this course, we will engage in an examination of the role of media in facilitating, challenging, and enabling power dynamics as well as shaping identity in the United States and globally. We will address different types of media but will focus on journalism. More specifically, we will study the constructions of race, gender, sexuality, class, religion, and ability in media as well as the conditions of production that enable them.

In addition, we will consider the mass media to be one among many of societal institutions that we encounter daily. Therefore, we will take an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing the relationship between media, identity and power. We will explore your individual role and responsibility as a media consumer. Developing cultural awareness and sensitivity toward issues unfamiliar to your own personal experiences is a key component of this course.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

1. Define power dynamics (e.g. cultural, social, and economic privileges) that are visible and invisible in various forms of media.
2. Discuss how course concepts explain real-world media examples by critically examining various forms of media.
3. Apply cultural awareness, sensitivity and empathy while discussing social issues and in professional situations.
4. Analyze how people see themselves and not how we think they see themselves in various forms of media.
5. Analyze how different groups of people are represented in journalism
6. Implement best practices for including diverse perspectives (across fault lines) in journalism.
7. Critique journalism's role in societal evolution

### **Course Learning Goals & Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. To think critically about social issues regarding the various power dynamics in our society
2. To become an effective consumer and producer of mass media, including journalism, strategic communication and other sub-fields
3. To gain hands-on experience of critically examining and producing media that reinforce and challenge social and political issues
4. To identify how cultural perspectives can influence media

### Important Notes!!!

**You *will* encounter ideas and thoughts you do *not* agree with, but understand that this is one of the central purposes of this course.**

### Class Principle

**EVERYONE in this class demands respect, human dignity and common courtesy. Please exercise this class principle as you engage with your fellow classmates, professor and TAs throughout the semester. I expect no less!**

### ACEJMC Objectives

In addition to this course's specific objectives, the Journalism School also makes serious efforts to make sure the following goals are embedded across the curriculum:

#### CORE VALUES AND COMPETENCIES

As a student of the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications, you are expected to be aware of certain core values and competencies. Specifically, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be able to:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- 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 tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **General Course Requirements**

**Following Current Events and News:** This course is the beginning to your development as a media consumer and producer; thus, it is important that we keep up with news. Therefore, you are required to engage with a wide range of media content in addition to the class readings, documentaries and discussions. Keeping up with current events will allow us to distinguish how different media and their messages are created and inform our own cultural conceptions. Many of our class discussions may be centered on current events; thus, it is essential that you familiarize yourself with various news sources and be able to apply readings to practical situations that are found in the news.

**Attendance and Class Participation:** You should come to each class prepared, having done the readings/films/podcasts for the week—which will allow us time to engage with the material during class periods. In addition, you should be prepared to answer questions about the readings and share with classmates and the instructor any issues, thoughts and/or perspectives about the course material in a ***thoughtful and respectful manner***. Class attendance will be key, as it will affect how successful you are in all other course requirements.

Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation.

**Students Requiring Accommodations:** Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

If you fail to turn in an assignment, you have a week to turn in the assignment (NOT Quizzes). Five points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. After a week, you will **NOT** receive credit.

### **Required Texts**

Electronic Readings (all other readings available online through Canvas)

Additional short readings (newspaper, magazine, or online articles, etc.) may be assigned during the semester. These will be provided to you either on Canvas or through email (URL links).

### **Assessments**

Weekly Reading Quizzes

Journal Reflections (2)

Major Assignment #1: Media Analysis

Attendance: Low Stakes Mini-Assignments in Class

Two Essay Exams

Extra Credit: 3% toward final grade

A	97 – 100%	Exceptional Achievement
A	93 -- 96.9%	
A-	90 – 92.9%	
B+	87 – 89.9%	
B	83 – 86.9%	Extensive Achievement
B-	80 – 82.9%	
C+	77 – 79.9%	
C	73 – 76.9%	Acceptable Achievement
C-	70 – 72.9%	
D+	67 – 69.9%	Minimal Achievement
D	63 – 66.9%	
D-	60 – 62.9%	
F	Below 60%	Inadequate Achievement

### **Assignment Details**

#### **1) Weekly Reading Quizzes**

Every week you will be required to complete a quiz on Canvas. The quiz will comprise of 5 multiple-choice questions based on the week's readings and film(s). Questions will require you to understand the main arguments (not specific details) of the week's readings, podcasts and/or films. Quizzes should be taken by Monday at noon. The quiz will be available on Canvas by Friday at 8 p.m. I will drop the lowest two grades.

Aligns with Learning Objective (LO) 1.

#### **2) Journal Reflections (2)**

You will be going on a journey this semester. Thus, it's important to document your process and continue to reflect on your growth as a student. You will write three journal

reflections throughout the semester. These writing assignments will reflect your own thoughts and experiences with the topics discussed in class. These reflections also will build from one another. You will receive specific questions to answer before each reflection is due. Each reflection is worth **50 points each**.

Aligns with LO 2.

**3) Media Analysis (200 points)**

For this writing assignment, you will be provided a range of visual media images and written stories. You will have to choose at least one image and one story (total of 2 media artifacts). You must write two 3-page essays (one for each media artifact) in which you include evidence to support your argument(s). For each essay, you will a) critically analyze these media by highlighting any problematic messages present using evidence from class and b) you will indicate how you would alter, change, and/or edit the media artifacts that you critiqued in the first part. Problematic messages may include any stereotypes, insensitive material, or assumptions. Materials and rubric will be provided via Canvas. Each essay is worth **100 points** (200 in total).

Aligns with LOs 5, 6 and 7.

**4) Attendance: Low Stakes Mini-Assignments in Class**

Throughout the semester, I'll be taking attendance. Low stakes mini assignments that will help prepare you for take-home essay exams and the critical media analysis assignment will be utilized as a way to document your attendance.

Aligns with LO 2.

**5) Two Essay Exams (100 points each)**

This semester, you will have two essay exams that will test your engagement with class material. For these essay exams, you will be provided with three questions and you'll have to choose two questions to answer in essay format. One of the broader purposes of this course is to help develop your critical thinking skills! The questions, therefore, are designed to test your ability to make connections across course readings, in-class lectures/activities, and films/podcasts.

Aligns with LO 1, 3, 4, and 7.

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Introduction (January 15)**

Textbook Reading: Perry & Len-Rios, Chapter 1: Conceptual Understanding  
Watch: *Chimamanda Adichie: The Danger of a Single Story* (in class)