

MMC 2604 Media, Cultures, and Identity Fall 2024 Syllabus

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Office Hrs: Mon. 1:45 – 2:45 p.m., Wed. 4 – 5 p.m., or by appointment.

Course Meeting Times: Mon. (3 – 4:55 p.m.) and Wed. (2 – 3:50 p.m.)
Course Location: Florida Gym 285

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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

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 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 help foster an understanding of the diversity of

peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

It is important 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 think with rigor, fairness, and creativity.

The goal is never to agree on issues or find consensus as a class, but to educate ourselves rigorously and respectfully, adhering to the principles of social scientific knowledge. I expect everyone to civilly engage in discussions about different topics. Thus, curiosity and respect for different viewpoints and experiences are essential not only for success in this class but also for personal and intellectual growth. For this, it is essential that we all exercise respect, courtesy, civil dialogue, and empathy towards one another.

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

I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. It is critical that each class member 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' emotions 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 cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention.

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

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Materials:

- Most of the required material will be available through Canvas, either linked or attached as a PDF.
- There will be one required textbook, cited below. There is a physical copy 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.

- To be able to access the material through the provided links, you will have to be connected to UF Wi-Fi or the UF network via our **VPN software** if you are off campus. Refer to this [video instruction about how to connect to the VPN](#).
- We will be using a combination of textbook chapters, academic journal articles, book chapters, and nonacademic sources (news articles, videos, documentaries, etc.).
- Students must complete assigned readings/materials prior to the class in which they are discussed and be prepared to participate in individual/group discussion/activities.
- When there is more than one reading per class, I encourage you to read/watch the material in the order that it is listed.
- Some of the material is 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 in advance when in-class activities will take place, but they are likely to 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. Think of it as a day in which you must unexpectedly travel back home, need to take your pet to the vet, need a mental health day, are traveling to visit friends/family, need to care for a relative, must participate in a non-UF activity, etc. You only have 1 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 under any circumstance.

Quizzes:

- There will be three quizzes given during the course to assess reading and comprehension progress.
- Quiz questions will relate to key points made in texts read and videos watched for class.

- Quizzes will be administered during class and must be taken on the set date except for proof of illness, etc.

Midterm Exam:

- There will be **one multiple-choice, in-class exam** in the middle of the semester to test students’ knowledge of the subject’s foundations. Most of this exam will assess knowledge of fundamental concepts covered in weeks one through four. It will also require a basic demonstration of applying concepts to a selection of issues covered before the exam date.
- Students that require accommodations should reach out to me early in the semester. See information about the [Disability Resource Center](#) in the accommodations section below.
- Students must take the exam on the set date except for proof of illness, etc.

Final Essay:

- There will be **one short final essay** focused on the application of foundational concepts to various specific issues we will explore and discuss after week four.
- Students will have to show their abilities applying the theoretical and analytical foundations to specific media examples. They will receive guidelines on how to write the essay.
- Late submissions will get a percentage daily deduction. More information on this final assignment and its guidelines will be provided separately.

ASSESSMENT

Class Participation: 25%

Quizzes: 15%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Essay: 30%

IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES

Quizzes: Sept. 18, Oct. 30, and Nov. 20.

Midterm Exam: Oct. 9.

Final Essay: Dec. 4.

GRADING SCALE

Letter Grade	Percent	Letter Grade	Percent	Letter Grade	Percent	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 this has an impact on the letter grade you obtain. 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](#). 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.

COURSE EVALUATION

At the end of the class, you will have to complete a course evaluation online via GatorEvals. Course evaluations are very important, as they will help me plan and adjust the syllabus for next iterations of this class. They are also important for future students who will indirectly benefit from your feedback. It is expected that students will offer professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. [Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or [online](#). [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students online](#).

STUDENTS HONOR CODE

All students have to respect the [UF student honor code and conduct code](#). Students cannot turn in work that is not their own, including work generated by Chat GPT and other AI programs. If students have questions or concerns about how to approach submissions or how to use artificial intelligence appropriately, they are encouraged to come to office hours.

REACH OUT

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

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (August 26 & 28): Introductions

- Learning the syllabus.
- Getting to know each other.
- Forging community agreements.
- Journalism Excellence discussion (Part 1).

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Perry, E. L. & Len-Ríos, M. E. "Chapter 1: Conceptual Understanding" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 3 – 19.
- ["Journalism is a public good. Let the public make it."](#) Darryl Holliday, Columbia Journalism Review (December 15, 2021).
- ["The Danger of a Single Story"](#) Ted Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

PART I - FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Week 2 (Sept. 2 & 4): Conceptual Grounding

****Sept. 2 – LABOR DAY – NO CLASS****

- Journalism Excellence discussion (Part 2).
- Communicating across difference and Human Rights.
- Polarization and misinformation,

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.
- ["Americans' main sources for political news vary by party and age,"](#) Pew Research Center 2020 report.
- Watch short video on [Affective Polarization](#) by Prof. Lelkes

Week 3 (Sept. 9 & 12): Conceptual Grounding

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

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Alhabash, S., Cunningham, C. & Kononova, A. "Chapter 3: Who is American?" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 43 – 73.
- ["What is Intersectionality?"](#) video.
- [Intersectionality contextualized](#) video.
- "I Learn America – Abridge Version" on Kanopy.

Week 4 (Sept. 16 & 18): 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](#) on Agenda Setting Theory.

Quiz – Wednesday, Sept. 18

PART II - CRITICAL APPLICATIONS

Week 5 (Sept. 23 & 25): Social Class

- 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.
- "Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class" on Kanopy.
- Kendall, D. Chapter 5. *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*.

Week 6 (Sept. 30 & Oct. 2): 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.
- Watch *Convergence: Courage in a Crisis*.
- 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.

Week 7 (Oct. 7 & 9): Ability Studies

- 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.
- Watch *Love on the Spectrum* episodes.
- Samira Rajabi's TEDx talk "[Trauma Unmakes the World](#)" on YouTube.
- Rajabi, S. (2019). "Living with Herbert: Mediating Survival and Resilience." *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 8(4), 136-155.

Midterm Exam – Wednesday, Oct. 9

Week 8 (Oct. 14 & 16): Gender and Queer Studies

- 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.
- Watch the documentary "[The Codes of Gender](#)" (abridged version) by Sut Jhally.
- Watch "[Gendered Marketing](#)" video on YouTube.
- Hicks, G. R. "Chapter 6: Mass Media and the LGBT Community" in Len-Ríos & Perry. Pages 139 – 164.
- Watch "[Further Off the Straight and Narrow](#)" video.
- 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.]

Week 9 (Oct. 21 & 23): Body Image and Sexuality

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

STUDY MATERIALS:

- Burnell, K., Kurup, A. R., & Underwood, M. K. (2022). Snapchat lenses and body image concerns. *New Media & Society*, 24(9), 2088-2106. [You can skip statistics heavy sections].
- Watch *Missrepresentation* documentary.
- Mahon, C., & Hevey, D. (2021). Processing body image on social media: Gender differences in adolescent boys' and girls' agency and active coping. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 626763.

- Cohen, R., Slater, A., & Fardouly, J. (March 17, 2019) "Women can build positive body image by controlling what they view on social media," *The Conversation*.

Final Essay Assignment Given

Week 10 (Oct. 28 & 30): 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.
- [Author interview](#) with Dr. Jean Twenge discussing generational differences.
- [What is Generational Trauma?](#) #DeepDive Health video
- ["Breaking the Cycle of Generational Trauma"](#) by Dr. Candice Jones

Quiz – Wednesday, Oct. 30

Week 11 (Nov. 4 & 6): 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.
- Watch "Why Americans Love/Hated the Irish?" video.
- Watch "History Professor: Southern Italians Used to Be Treated the Same as Central Americans" video.
- Watch "Ugly History: Japanese American incarceration camps" video.
- Figueroa-Caballero & Mastro. "Examining the effects of news coverage linking undocumented immigrants with criminality: Policy and punitive implications."
- Watch "What does it mean to be a refugee?" TED-ED video.

Week 12 (Nov. 11 & 13): Race and Ethnicity

****Nov. 11 – VETERANS DAY – NO CLASS****

- The representation of race and ethnicity.

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).

- “Hollywood Report 2020: A Tale of Two Hollywoods,” UCLA [Skim through main findings and figures in pages 1-23].
- Watch “Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People” documentary on Kanopy.
- “Lack of Asian representation in media shows through in recent blunders”, *The Baltimore Sun*.
- “Racism in football: new research shows media treats black men differently to white men”, *The Conversation*.
- Watch “Latinos Beyond Reel: Challenging a Media Stereotype (Abridged Version)” on Kanopy.

Week 13 (Nov. 18 & 20): 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.
- Read the report "Missing & Maligned: The Reality of Muslims in Popular Global Movies" <https://assets.uscannenberg.org/docs/aii-muslim-rep-global-film-2021-06-09.pdf> [Focus on the main findings and figures.]
- [How Religion is Booming on TikTok](#) BBC video.
- ["Does the Media Portray Evangelicals Fairly?"](#)

Quiz – Wednesday, Nov. 20

Nov. 25 – 29 THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 14 (Dec. 2 & 4): Conclusion

- Solutions-oriented journalism.
- Communication for the future.
- Final essay discussion.

Final Essay Due Before Class – Wednesday, Dec. 4