

Information Design

CRMM 4920-001

Fall 2025

12:40-2:05 p.m., Monday/Wednesday, MJ 202

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Visual presentation of quantitative and spatial information. Examines the planning, design, and preparation of statistical graphs, charts, timelines, diagrams, and maps.

Prerequisites

JRSM 3900

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Cairo, A. (2012). *The functional art: An introduction to information graphics and visualization*.
Berkeley, CA: New Riders.

Adobe Photoshop CC, Adobe InDesign CC, Adobe Illustrator CC, Microsoft Excel, SPSS, Tableau, multiple online tools

Note: Students can purchase the Adobe Creative Cloud on a month-to-month basis from Adobe.com. Students can also access software in classroom computer labs, at the University Center Tech Hub on the UofM campus, and at citrix.memphis.edu.

One Flash Drive (At least 8GB capacity) or access to external storage.

Note: University computers are regularly erased, and lost files cannot be recovered. Saving files on university computers is not permitted.

Classroom format

This course is designed to develop skills in data visualization and information literacy. Students will learn the software used to create graphics for print and interactive platforms. As such, the course includes elements of design, coding, mathematics, statistics and production.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page: <http://instructure.memphis.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for CRMM 4920 – 001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Course Requirements

- All assignments are to be submitted electronically via Canvas.
- Generally, each assignment will come with unique formatting guidelines. Be sure to follow these guidelines exactly. Work that does not comply to these guidelines, as well as the production specifications indicated for the assignment, will receive a grade of 0.
- All major projects (except the final) can be resubmitted with corrections and revisions one week after it is returned to you.
- Work will be critiqued in the classroom and must be suitable for presentation. Students are encouraged to work ahead on assignments to develop their creative processes for the work.

Honors

Any student who would like to contract this course for honors credit must speak with the instructor before the honors deadline to complete the needed paperwork.

Grading

Grading Philosophy: A=Professional quality work that could be use with little or no modification; B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement, but would require revision to be used professionally; C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement, but would need significant revision; D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality; F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirement.

NOTE: Students in Journalism and Strategic Media must earn a C- or better to earn credit in the course. Students completing an honors contract must earn a B or better for honors credit.

Grade Distribution:

Assignment	Percent of grade
Data activities	25%
Data projects	45%
Final project	25%
Portfolio	5%

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%

B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%

C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%

D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%

F 0-59.4%

Computer usage

Students are expected to use a computer in this course. Students will use Apple computers in class, but may use Windows computers at their own discretion. Students will work with the design software standard in the professional world. At this time, the professional standard is the Adobe Creative Cloud, particularly Adobe Illustrator, Adobe InDesign and Adobe Photoshop. Extensive instruction about how to use these programs will be offered in this course.

Writing style

Although this is primarily a design course, students will be required to write a minimal amount as part of their study. In these cases, students are expected to adhere to the Associated Press style guide.

Additionally, in design projects, students will use text as part of their projects. Within creative reason, the text used in these projects must also follow the AP guidelines.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Overview of data visualization. Infographics, maps, charts, and Big Data. Why visualize data?

Read: Cairo 1

Homework: DA 1.

Week 2

Software for data visualization. Illustrator, Excel, SPSS, Tableau, Google Charts, eSpatial. Classic alternative story forms. Text graphics. Parts of an infographic. Controlling type, tone and color. Layering information/visual hierarchy.

Read: Harrower online

Homework: DA 2.

Week 3

Forms and functions. Visualization as a technology. Art and Communications.

Read: Cairo 2-3

Homework: DA 3, DP 1.

Week 4

Statistics that matter. Central tendency. Significance. Change over time.

Read: Notes online

Homework: DA 4.

Week 5

The complexity challenge: Presentation and Exploration.

Read: Cairo 4

Homework: DA 5, DP 2.

Week 6

The Eye and the Visual Brain. Visualizing for the Mind. Images in the Head.

Read: Cairo 5-7

Homework: DA 6.

Week 7

Creating infographics. Interactive graphics.

Read: Cairo 8-9

Homework: DA 7, DP 3.

Week 8: Fall break

Week 9

Mapping. Maps in Tableau. Maps in Illustrator.

Read: Readings online.

Homework: DA 8.

Week 10

Social network analysis.

Homework: DA 9, DP 4.

Week 11

Graphics for social media.

Homework: DA 10.

Week 12

Data mining. Work time.

Homework: DP 5.

Week 13: Work week

Week 14: Work week

Week 15

Final portfolio preparation.

Assignments: Portfolios.

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in CRMM 4920

- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

How professional values and competencies will be met

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)

- Acquire a technical awareness of the computer as a tool in design through class assignments, lectures and demonstrations.
- Establish a working knowledge of data visualization.
- Understand the basic principles of presenting quantitative and qualitative information visually.
- Integrate photos, graphics and text.
- Become familiar with state-of-the-art developments in technology and the use of contemporary software for the design and production of specific editorial, print and collateral material.

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)

- Ability to create a range of charts and graphics.
- Techniques for infographics for print and digital publication.
- Ability to create social media driven graphics.
- Write content to support data visualizations.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Aware of the complexities of data presentation.

Understanding

- Understand the ways data visualization can be used to communicate a message.

Application

- Produce data visualizations for print and digital platforms serving journalistic, public relations, advertising, strategic media and business purposes.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé

- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have

sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out

through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

Weather policy

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.

Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.