

Introduction to Media

JRSM 1700.M50

Spring 2026

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 2:45-3:30 p.m. or Wednesday 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. (By appointment) For students who can meet only in the morning – Wednesday 11:30 -12:00 a.m. (by appointment only)

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog Description

Social background, scope, functions, and organization of modern communication media, attention to all major mass communication media; philosophy and goals of modern journalism; impact on governmental, social and economic systems.

Prerequisites

None

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Campbell, R., Martin, C. R., Fabos, B., and Becker, R. (2022). *Media & Culture: Mass Communication in a Digital Age*, 13th Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's

ISBN 978-1319244934

Classroom format

This course is delivered online in an asynchronous format. In other words, we have no scheduled meeting time. This can be convenient for you, but it also means that it is essential for you to be an organized, motivated student.

You must have internet access and Microsoft Word or other word processing software that generates a ".doc" or ".docx" extension. All assignments MUST be filed in a ".doc" or ".docx" format; type must be double-spaced with indented paragraphs.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis Canvas login page: <https://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. On the Dashboard, click on the course card for JRSM 1700-M50.

Course assignments and expectations

This course is an introduction to all professional areas falling under the umbrella of mass communication. You will read about the history, purpose, role, function and future of newspapers, magazines, book publishing, radio, television, advertising, public relations, and other related industries and media activities.

Course work will be accomplished every week to check your learning and comprehension. Each assignment must be completed by its due date and time (Central Time), which may vary by assignment, so make sure to check each individual due date and time to ensure that you post by the deadline.

This course requires you to:

- Complete assigned readings from the textbook as indicated in the modules on Canvas.
- Complete quizzes that cover the assigned readings.
- Respond to discussion board prompts and post relevant comments on your peer's discussion board posts.
- Complete a media profile assignment.

Course quizzes

Quizzes are timed and you only have one attempt to take each quiz. You will typically have about 1 minute to answer each question so you should do the readings before attempting to take the quiz. There are generally 20 questions for each chapter on quizzes.

Discussion board posts

Each week you must post a link to a news story from any one of the following newspaper websites:

1. The Commercial Appeal
2. The Daily Memphian
3. The Jackson (Tennessee) Sun
4. The Tennessean
5. The Knoxville News-Sentinel
6. The Clarion-Ledger
7. USA Today
8. The New York Times
9. The Washington Post
10. The Wall Street Journal
11. The Chicago Tribune
12. The Los Angeles Times

These news organizations have been selected because they provide comprehensive news coverage for local, regional, national, or global issues. Articles from other news sites will not be considered. Access to The Commercial Appeal and The Daily Memphian, is available for free through the University of Memphis Library. You do not need to buy a subscription.

You should interact and develop discussion threads with your peers for each post. Don't summarize the news story in your discussion post. Think critically!

Media Profile

You'll complete a profile of a media company or outlet. Examples might be The Commercial Appeal, The Daily Memphian, Vogue magazine, FOX 13 Memphis, CNN, Archer, FleishmanHillard, National Public Radio, Vox, ProPublica, YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, TikTok, RandomHouse, or Instagram.

The profile must address the following items:

- Name of media organization.
- Brief history of the organization.
- Ownership of the organization.
- Key products of the organization.
- Typical target audience or clients served. (Hint: look at the company's media kit.)

The profile should be about 750 words in total and should cite information as a journalist would. Do not use APA or MLA style citations. Say things like: According to its website, The Commercial Appeal is owned by Gannett Newspapers with headquarters in McLean, Virginia, and publishes about 100 newspapers throughout the U.S. including the Tennessean in Nashville, the News-Sentinel in Knoxville and the Clarion-Ledger in Jackson, Mississippi. Give as much detail as you can in each section.

Questions about Grades

If you have a question or problem with a grade, exam question, or assignment, you have 48 hours after the assignment is returned to you to contact me, or the grade stands.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with me early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade.

Grading

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| Quizzes | 50% |
| Discussion Board | 30% |
| Media Profile | 20% |

A = 90% or above

B = 80% - 89%

C = 70% - 79%

D = 60% - 69%

F = Below 60%

ChatGPT and AI tools

ChatGPT and similar AI tools, though useful in many contexts, are inappropriate for use in this course. An important outcome of this course is to strengthen your own abilities as a thinker and writer. That is only possible when you do your own work. You may not submit work that is written wholly or partially by an AI tool. Assignment submissions may be run through AI detection software. If your submission appears to have been written using AI, you may either receive a failing grade or be asked to resubmit the assignment.

Other issues

Contacting me. The best and quickest way to contact me is via email (rwang4@memphis.edu). I will respond to email within two business days. If you have a problem, do not let it snowball. Contact me ASAP.

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in JRS 1700

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially along racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and ability differences.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity

How professional values and competencies will be met

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

- Recognize the role of media in influencing the political and cultural dynamics on the global stage.
- Demonstrate a strong historical sense of how mass communication technologies originated and developed.
- Understand the variety of relationships between media and their audiences, including diverse audiences.
- Be sensitive to the needs of diverse and under-represented groups in the delivery of media messages.
- Recognize the ethical and philosophical issues that arise in media culture and understand the range of viewpoints regarding these issues.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the behind-the-scenes operations and decision-making processes of major mass communication industries.
- Understand how new technology affects the media and communication.
- Understand what's involved in preparing for and advancing a career in the changing media.
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct effective interviews that elicit information needed to for delivery of media content.
- Development an awareness of how of forms of mass communication that are often taken for granted, such as music, movies television shows and social media postings, are used to affect society and effect change.
- Understand the allied fields of social media, advertising and public relations and their relationship to media systems.
- Understand mass communication theories and their application to media professions.

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

- Complete out-of-class assignments related to assessing content and media messages in newspapers, magazines, advertising, music, television, radio and movies.
- Participate in discussions about relevant issues and events in mass media.

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Grow awareness of the First Amendment and basics of media law
- Recognize major divisions of mass media, including newspaper, magazine, TV, radio, the internet, books, movies, music, public relations and advertising.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the need for diversity in all areas of mass communication.

Understanding

- When ethical decision making is discussed throughout the semester as it applies to each media profession, students will be required to present justification for their opinions during discussion and class exercises to show they are not just repeating the instructor's lecture points, but showing understanding of the process.
- A requirement to read news content regularly, either on web sites or in printed newspapers, will help students understand and appreciate the decisions that go into how news is covered and what is presented to consumers on a daily basis.

Application

- Written analysis of U.S. media operations and systems.

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 JRS 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 and the LiveSafe App 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.