

# Visual Media

JRSM 3900-001

Spring 2026

Class meetings: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:20 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Meeman 202

**Michael Robinson, M.A.**

**Office Hours:** Meeman 334C | Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and by appointment

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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Introduction to and application of principles of visual communication, including typography, color and organization for print and digital media using Adobe Creative Cloud.

### Prerequisites

None

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Golombisky, K. & Hagen, R. (2017). *White Space Is Not Your Enemy (3rd ed.)*. Waltham, MA: Focal Press. ISBN-13: 978-1138804647.

Adobe Illustrator CC

Adobe InDesign CC

Adobe Photoshop CC

*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](http://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 stock the toolbox of a creative media professional. Students will learn techniques and the principles behind them to execute designs for work in the creative industry. Further, students will build a portfolio of work to show potential employers. A typical class session will consist of a lecture, discussion, and assignment/lab time.

Students are required to complete multiple design activities and design projects throughout the semester, as well as a final portfolio. The design activities reinforce principles of the software and teach techniques for creative work. The design projects allow students to work creatively for various applications of graphic design skills.

## Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page:  
<http://memphis.instructure.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 JRSM 3900 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

## Course Requirements

- All assignments are to be submitted electronically via Canvas.
- 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 for the assignment, will receive a grade of 0.
- All homework and quizzes are due at 11:59 p.m. Sunday of the week they are assigned. Late work is not accepted and may not be turned in for the revision deadline.
- Design projects may not use templates, model any existing design or use any photos the students did not shoot. Doing so is grounds for failure of the assignment. Repeated offenses will result in failure of the course, academic suspension and/or academic dismissal. The exception to this rule is modifying an existing template to create a branded resume and business card.
- 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.

## Use of AI in this Course

Certain assignments in this course may direct you to use ChatGPT for specific purposes and with specific directions. On those assignments, you may use ChatGPT as directed. On all other assignments, you are not permitted to turn in any work that is created, completely or partially, by ChatGPT or another AI tool. Assignment submissions may be run through AI detection software. Unauthorized use of AI tools like ChatGPT may result in a failing grade or a request to resubmit an assignment. **Use of AI for creative assets including but not limited to images, graphics or layouts is strictly prohibited.**

## Assignments

DA1: Measurements and Tools

DA2: Color Study

DA3: Sizing and Toning

DA4: Page Design

DA5: Personal Logo

DA6: Video

DA7: Gif

DA8: Chart

DA9: Magazine Cover

DA10: Vector Illustration

DP1: Poster Design

DP2: Photo Essay

DP3: Flyers/Ads

DP4: Infographic  
DP5: Social Media Visual Branding  
DP6: Resume, Business Card and Portfolio  
DP7: 12-page Magazine (16 pages for Honors credit)

Final Presentation: Updated Portfolio Website

### *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. Students contracting the course will produce a 16-page magazine for DP 6 instead of a 12-page.

### *Portfolio*

All Department of Journalism and Strategic Media undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active online portfolio of their work. More information about the final review of portfolios is in the Assessment section later in the syllabus. However, JRSM 3900 is a key point in the portfolio process. Students must create their portfolios and include several items from this course: 1. The personal branding developed in 3900, including logos, colors and type styles; 2. The résumé developed in 3900 as an HTML document and downloadable PDF; and 3. Design work samples created in the course, which have been revised from their original submissions. Final portfolios will be graded on these measures.

### **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: Plusses or minuses may be given. 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:*

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>
Design Activities	100
Weekly Quizzes	100
Design Projects	750
Final Presentation	50
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>1000</b>

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, Jan. 20 – 25: Introduction*

Class format and expectations. Using the Creative Cloud software. Basics of visual communication. Assignments: Quiz 1

### *Week 2, Jan. 26 – Feb. 1: Design Foundations*

Mini art school. Design research. Toolbox for InDesign, Photoshop, Illustrator. Measurements. Readings: WSINYE Preface, 1, 2, 5  
Assignments: Quiz 2, DA 1

### *Week 3, Feb. 2 – Feb. 8: Type and Color*

Typography and CC type tools. Color and Pantone system. Setting type. Readings: WSINYE 7, 8  
Assignments: Quiz 3, DA 2, DP 1

### *Week 4, Feb. 9 – 15: Photography*

Three pillars of digital photography. Rule of thirds. Lighting. Metadata. Selections. Sizing. Saving for multiple media. Color correction. Toning. Assignments: Quiz 4, DA 3

### *Week 5, Feb. 16 – 22: Layout*

Page layout. Grid and modular design. Dominant art. Page flow. Readings: WSINYE 3, 4, 6  
Assignments: Quiz 5, DA 4, DP 2

### *Week 6, Feb. 23 – March 1: Branding and Advertising*

Branding. Logos. Multiplatform applications of branding. Ad design. Readings: WSINYE 9, 14  
Assignments: Quiz 6, DA 5, DP3

*Week 7, March 2 – March 8: Design for Web and Multimedia*

Design for video and multimedia. Colors and type for the web. UI/UX.

Readings: WSINYE 11, 13

Assignments: Quiz 7, DA 6, DA 7

*Week 8, March 9 – 15: Spring Break*

No new work or assignments due this week -- a good time to meet remotely one-on-one with questions or concerns, catch up on a missed assignment or revise anything that still needs work.

*Week 9, March 16 – 22: Data Visualization*

Alternative story forms. Data visualization. Infographics.

Readings: WSINYE 10

Assignments: Quiz 8, DA 8, DP4

*Week 10, March 23 – 29: Publication Design*

Layout and styling for editorial content. Design trends.

Assignments: Quiz 9, DA 9

*Week 11, March 30 – April 5: Design for Social Media*

Design for social media. Additional Illustrator tools.

Readings: WSINYE 12

Assignments: Quiz 10, DA 10, DP5

*Week 12, April 6 – 12: Resume and Branded Materials*

Personal branding. Resumes. Business cards.

Assignments: No assignments

*Week 13, April 13 – 19: Web Portfolio*

Wordpress. Wix. Work time to develop resume and portfolio content.

Assignments: DP6

*Week 14, April 20 – 26: Magazine Work Week*

Review page design and editorial style. Work time to develop resume and portfolio content.

Assignments: DP7

*Week 15, April 27 – 29: Portfolio Revision*

Individual magazine critique.

Assignments: Revised content uploaded to web portfolio.

***Final Presentation: Thursday, May 7 from 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.***

## **ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES**

### **Professional Values and Competencies in JRSM 3900**

- 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 as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- 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.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- 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)*

- Show a technical awareness of digital design tools through class assignments, lectures and demonstrations.
- Interpret various theories and practices of visual communication and how they connect with diverse target audiences.
- Identify the basic principles of layout, design and typography and their varied applications in the world.
- Familiarity with current and emerging 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)*

- Produce designs for print and digital media.
- Apply various photo editing methods for print and digital production.
- Combine multiple techniques for styling typography.
- Integrate photos, graphics and text into a layout.

## How assessment of student learning will be met

### *Awareness*

- Become aware of visual communications development and ethics of visual communications.

### *Understanding*

- Understand different steps of the design process, including target audience, principles of design and standards of production.

### *Application*

- Create at least five projects, including social media graphics, advertisements, personal branding and a multi-page publication; all showcasing proficiency in Adobe Creative Cloud software, specifically Photoshop, InDesign and Illustrator.

## 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.