

Syllabus Fall 2020

COMM DM 1611 01 Digital Media Literacies

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Bettina Fabos

Email Address: fabos@uni.edu (also bettina.fabos@uni.edu--they are interchangeable)

Phone: 319 273 5972 [I will not be in my office but you can leave a voicemail, which I will receive]

Office hours and location: <https://uni.zoom.us/j/7857053694> by appointment.

Preferred Communication: Email, Zoom, or Slack. Please email to request appointments.

Course Delivery

This course is offered fully online utilizing Blackboard Learn. We will be using the SLACK messaging tool and ZOOM video conferencing when we are unable to meet face to face and need to meet synchronously (virtual/live).

Class will meet, either face to face or synchronously, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4-5:15pm. If sessions will be as follows:

- Synchronous (live/virtual) SLACK discussion from 4-5pm

https://join.slack.com/t/media-literacy-world/shared_invite/zt-gdm5nx9u-WPDMTgfxpe9GhShvOSvUYQ Our Channel is called "media-literacy-world.slack.com"

- Synchronous ZOOM check in from 5-5:15pm

<https://uni.zoom.us/j/7857053694>

Statement Regarding COVID-19

Protecting our campus from COVID-19 depends on all of us acting with care and responsibility. To protect each other and our campus community, we are required to wear masks or face shields that cover our mouths and noses inside all campus buildings, including throughout the duration of class. We are asked to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms, stay away from others and seek medical attention if we're not feeling well and/or experience any symptoms such as a fever over 100.4°, and to communicate and plan proactively to make up for missed learning. We will maintain physical distancing by sitting in designated areas in the classroom. Failure to follow these requirements can result in students being referred to the student conduct process and faculty being referred to the Associate Provost for Faculty. We take these steps together recognizing that my mask protects you, your mask protects me, and together wearing masks protects the entire UNI community. Our collective actions will determine our ability to remain together in an in-person learning environment.

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the land on which we gather is the occupied territory of the loway, Sauk and Meskwaki, Wahpeton, and Sioux People.

Course Overview

Credit Hour (3 Credit Hours)

This course meets the Course Credit Hour Expectation outlined in the Course Catalog. Students should expect to work approximately 2 hours per week outside of class for every course credit hour.

Generally, I will provide feedback on assignment submissions within a week after the due date. Grading rubrics are included in each of the modules.

Prerequisite(s): COMM COR 1010 (48J:002) (Fall and Spring)

Catalog Description

Analysis and critique of the production and consumption of media messages to develop students as ethical and active digital citizens.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to help you deconstruct media messages and gain more control over them. We will learn to critique media content--photographs, newspaper articles, advertisements, Instagram posts, websites, etc.--to understand how media producers attempt to influence us and how we in turn can produce media to influence others. We will identify and critique "fake news," and learn about the cultural underpinnings that continue to define minority and gender representations. We'll also discuss the importance of multiple points of view and learn to identify our (U.S.) media's powerful leanings towards commercialism, individualism, and specific ideologies.

Benefits

This course aims to help you become media literate, but also to think more strongly about media content and production as it relates to citizenship and democracy. It will help you recognize that our current media trends have a strong historical context and legacy. It will also help you make choices about what kind of messaging you will employ in all your communication: professional, personal, visual or otherwise.

University Level Outcomes

- **Critical Thinking:** Students will demonstrate critical thinking through the ability to evaluate, analyze, and integrate information from a variety of sources in order to develop reasoned positions and solutions to problems.
- **Communication:** Students will display competence in oral, written, and visual communication, as appropriate for their discipline.
- **Program Content Knowledge:** Students will demonstrate discipline-specific knowledge and skills in their major fields of study.

Interactive Digital Studies Program Level Objectives

- **Digility:** Students will develop agile creativity through immersion in new technology
- **Ideas Matter:** Students will be able to critically engage with the ethical, economic and social challenges of our increasingly digital world.
- **Collaboration is king:** Students will demonstrate effective collaboration competencies
- **Confident Self Learning:** Students will develop the confidence to approach new digital interfaces, applications, and programming languages to problem-solve independent of peers or instructors.

Course Level Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Identify composition rules and practices for effective visual messaging
- Articulate semiotic principles--the meaning behind media messages.
- Describe ideological positions articulated through our media system.
- Explain the current and historical media representations of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality.
- Explain the pressures of commercial culture on media messaging.
- Use media skills to critique the media with the media.
- Identify fake news and the truth behind media messages

Modular Level Objectives

By the end of each modules you will be able to meet one or more of the following objectives:

- **Construction of Images:** Picture composition
 - Identify composition rules and practices for effective visual messaging.

- **Construction of Meaning: Semiotics**
 - Articulate semiotic principles--the meaning behind media messages.
- **Construction of Beliefs: Ideology**
 - Describe ideological positions articulated through our media system.
 - Identify residual, emergent, and dominant discourses and hegemonic practices.
- **The Searchers**
 - Explain how masculinity (as opposed to femininity) is constructed in the media.
 - Explain possible connections between media violent behavior and real violent behavior.
 - Explain residual, dominant, and emerging discourses of masculinity.
- **Construction of Gender: Masculinity**
 - Explain how masculinity (as opposed to femininity) is constructed in the media.
 - Explain possible connections between media violent behavior and real violent behavior.
 - Explain residual, dominant, and emerging discourses of masculinity.
- **Construction of Gender: Femininity**
 - Explain how femininity (as opposed to masculinity) is constructed in the media.
 - Explain residual, dominant, and emerging discourses of femininity.
 - Explain the historical context of masculine/feminine gender construction: captivity narratives (the first stories Americans told themselves) and the male gaze.
- **Construction of Race and Ethnicity**
 - Explain how race and ethnicity is constructed in the media.
 - Explain the historical context of media construction: captivity narratives and justifications for slavery as a acceptable economic and social practice.
- **Construction of Truth: Academic, Scientific, and Journalistic methods; Models of Expression and The Fourth Estate**
 - Describe the disciplines of academic, scientific and journalistic accountability.
 - Explain the four models of Expression, and the value of the Fourth Estate to democracy.
- **History of Fake News: Fake narratives, fake visuals, and the strategy of disinformation**
 - Articulate the history of fake news, fake visuals, and trickery from the turn of the century to today.
- **Institutions promoting Fake News: Facebook, Fox, and Online “Junk” News Sites**
 - Explain the key institutions that are undermining journalistic truth.
- **Identifying and Analyzing Fake News**

- Identify what is fake news and what is real journalism.

Course Organization and Schedule

This course is organized around the following themes: Construction of Meaning and Beliefs; Construction of Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Construction of Truth. There are 3 modules that contain weekly content:.

Course Organization

Module 1 - Media Analysis I: Construction of Meaning (Composition, Meaning and Beliefs)

We will start by understanding aesthetic composition (photographic and graphic design) and learn how to visually dissect and control a message; then we'll investigate the cultural symbols that make up so much of our communication; and finally we will learn how to identify the ideological spectrum--what does LEFT and RIGHT ideological positions mean, where messages lie on this spectrum, and what this means for culturally interpreting a text.

Module 2 - Media Analysis II: Construction of Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

We will analyze the media representation of masculinity, femininity, race and ethnicity, grounding our analysis in historical context. grounding our analysis in historical context.

Module 3 - Media Analysis III: Construction of Truth

We will study fake news, the discipline of journalism and academic scholarship, and investigate PR, Propaganda, Photoshop and Deepfakes.

Course Schedule

For the specific weekly readings, assignments, instructions, and due dates, please consult the Blackboard Learning courseroom.

Module 1

- **Week 1: August 17-23** The Construction of Images
- **Week 2: August 24-30** Practices of Looking & Introduction to Semiotics
- **Week 3: August 31 - September 6** Semiotic Analysis and Introduction to Ideology
- **Week 4: September 7-13** The ideological Spectrum

Module 2

- **Week 5: September 14-20** The Searchers
- **Week 6: September 21-27** Construction of Gender: Masculinity

- **Week 7: September 28 - October 4** Construction of Gender Femininity
- **Week 8: October 5-11** Construction of Race and Ethnicity
- **Week 9: October 12-18** Construction of Race and Ethnicity
- **Week 10: October 19-25** Work on Creative Project

Module 3

- **Week 11: October 26 - November 1** Construction of Truth: Academic, Scientific, and Journalistic methods; Models of Expression and The Fourth Estate
- **Week 12: November 2-8** History of Fake News: Fake narratives, fake visuals, and the strategy of disinformation
- **Week 13: November 9-15** Institutions promoting Fake News: Facebook, Fox, and Online “Junk” News sites
- **Week 14: November 16-20 (Classes End)** Identifying and Analyzing Fake News
- **Week 15: November 21-25** Final Exam Week: Fake News Essay Due

Required Text/Reading Materials

There is no official textbook for this course. Course readings include numerous articles, videos and podcasts from leading thinkers about media literacy, representation, and media culture. All assigned readings will be made available to you in the Blackboard Learn course.

All assigned readings, videos, and podcasts are an independent means of providing concrete experience to prepare students for each class session. You are expected to carefully read/view/listen and take the time to reflect upon the assigned materials. Successful online discussions and reflection journals depend heavily on a high level of student preparation with regard to the reading.

Instructional Methods

This course consists of the following activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the course and instructional module objectives. For each 3 or 4-week module you will work on various combinations of assignments, activities, discussions, readings, and challenges.

Synchronous Slack Discussions

There will be 2 discussions per week that will account for 30% of your overall grade. We will meet synchronously (live/virtual) Mondays and Wednesdays 5-5:15pm. Sessions will be in two parts:

- Synchronous SLACK discussion from 4:00-5:00

https://join.slack.com/t/media-literacy-world/shared_invite/zt-gdm5nx9u-WPDMTgfxpe9GhShvOSvUYQ
Our Channel is called “**media-literacy-world.slack.com**”

- Synchronous ZOOM check in from 5:00-5:15 <https://uni.zoom.us/j/7857053694>

How to Prepare

To be prepared for these sessions you will need to have completed the assigned readings and activities beforehand. A list of what is due and when is available in each weekly content folder in Blackboard Learn.

Participation

Online discussion will require active participation by all students. During our Slack and Zoom Discussions we will critically analyze the week's assigned readings, video, or podcast; discuss the results of the assigned Challenges and Quizzes; clarify course questions; and get to know each other.

You are required to engage in hour-long discussions during the semester (typically 2 per week; see Discussion Alternative below). You are allowed to miss one class discussion and still earn full credit. If you attend every discussion, you will receive up to **2.5%** extra credit.

Etiquette

Please always remember to address our Slack classroom community in a respectful manner. I expect each of you to agree and disagree with civility. I will give you your discussion grade at the end of the semester. You are free to check in with me to get a sense of how you are doing and where you might want to improve.

Discussion Guidelines

Being a good participant does not mean that you always have the answer; it can also mean that you know when to ask the right questions and when to recognize that the answers have already been offered by the class but need to be synthesized. Discussion is a central component of this class insofar as each person's analysis of the text can be enhanced by others' insights. [Here is a link to my discussion criteria \(as adopted by Catherine Palczewski\).](#)

Given that there are no graded tests and quizzes, I use discussion as a way to measure whether students are keeping up with the assigned reading, and have been reading each others' texts. Given this is a communication class, you should be able to communicate your understanding of the readings. You should spend time preparing for discussion in class, reviewing the reading/video/podcast material, and taking notes. You should come to class prepared to ask questions about the parts of the readings you did not understand completely. You should be able to identify textual elements in the assigned artifacts and in the texts analyzed by class members. We will use class discussion to develop our analysis at a more advanced level. I will not review the readings step by step in class, but instead will supplement them with more advanced applications and formulations.

To receive a passing discussion grade, you should consistently participate, demonstrating competence in each of the five discussion elements: **argument, questioning, synthesis, readings** and **hypothesizing**. To receive a "B," you should participate in every class, and excel in at least 3 of the areas. To receive an "A," you should participate in every class and excel in all of the areas. The first week of discussion will not be graded as you get your bearings.

Discussion Alternative

If you miss one day of discussion, this assignment should be a 1.5-2 page paper (single-spaced).

If you miss both days of discussion in a single week, this assignment should be approximately 3-4 pages (single spaced).

Evaluation Methods and Grades

Evaluation Methods

3 Graded Assignments (60%)

- Critical Essay: Ad analysis (Module 1) **15%**
- Creative Project: Gender and Race Analysis: Comparing “The Searchers” (1956) with a Current Captivity Narrative (Module 2) **25%**
- Fake News Essay (**15%**)
- Personal Reflection (3) for Module 1, 2, and 3 (**5%**)

1 Graded Activity (5%)

- Photoshop (**5%**)

Ungraded Activities (part of your Participation Grade)

- Picture analysis
- Draw a leader
- Political Compass
- My Ideological Framework
- Hegemony
- Fake News Challenges

Participation (5%)

- 5% participation will only be awarded to the most engaged and conscientious students.

Extra Credit (up to 5%)

- Fully participate in every class discussion (**up to 2.5%**)
- Culture Jam (due at end of semester) (**up to 2.5%**)

Determination of Grades

Final grades will be reported using the following scale:

Percentage	Letter Grade
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
63-69%	D+
56-62%	D
50-55%	D-
< 50%	F

Percentages earned for each assessment will be posted in the My Grades of the tools link on the Blackboard website. The total is figured into a percentage, and the grade is determined by the Grading Scale. Students are expected to monitor their own grades on Blackboard and save all graded work on their own computer.

University Policies and Procedures

Office of Compliance and Equity Management

The University of Northern Iowa does not discriminate in employment or education. Visit [13.03 Equal Opportunity & Non-Discrimination Statement](#) for additional information. (<https://policies.uni.edu/1303>)

Students Accessibility Services

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Fair Housing Act, and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. To request accommodations please contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS), located at ITTC 007, for more information either at (319) 273-2677 or send an email to accessibilityservices@uni.edu. Visit [Student Accessibility Services](#) for additional information. (<https://sas.uni.edu/>)

Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester, as soon as you become aware of your needs. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should check as to whether a Student Academic Accommodation Request (SAAR) form needs to be obtained from the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (phone 319-273-2677, for deaf or hard of hearing, use Relay 711) OR whether the instructor has been notified of needed accommodations electronically. SAS is located in the Innovative Teaching and Technology Center (ITTC), Room 007.

The Learning Center @ Rod Library

All UNI students are encouraged to take advantage of The Learning Center @ Rod Library (TLC) for assistance with writing, math, science, learning and study strategies, as well as other specific content areas. Due to COVID-19, all tutoring and coaching sessions will be done by appointment only and students will have the option to meet with a tutor in-person at Rod Library or via Zoom. Our hours will remain the same, from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm Monday through Thursday. For more information, go to <https://tlc.uni.edu/schedule>, email TheLearningCenter@uni.edu, call 319-273-6023, or visit the TLC desk located on the main floor of Rod Library. If you are unavailable during normal tutoring hours, online tutoring is also available through Smarthinking. You will need your CATID and passphrase to gain access. To access the Smarthinking platform go to <https://tlc.uni.edu/online>.

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

Important note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. 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. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.
2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class

participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.

3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

Academic Integrity

To ensure academic integrity and to follow [UNI policies on Student Academic Ethics](#) (see: IV. Academic Ethics Violations), students will not plagiarize, misrepresent, fabricate, or cheat. Unless otherwise instructed and approved by the instructor, students will take quizzes and exams **individually**, without collaboration with other parties and/or using notes or other texts. Similarly, students will submit work (papers, presentations, and other assessments) that is their own work (in regard to violations of these ethics policies, see: V. Academic Ethics Sanctions). (<https://policies.uni.edu/301>)

Course Communication and Technology

Blackboard (Bb Learn)

This course is completely an online utilizing Blackboard (Bb Learn) for instruction, materials, and communication. Blackboard can be accessed through the [UNiLearning Suite](http://elearning.uni.edu/) (<http://elearning.uni.edu/>)

All of the handouts and information for this course will be available in Blackboard. You are advised to check the website and email for communication. Any changes to the course syllabus or schedule will be announced through Blackboard or via email from your instructor. Assignments are due as specified in the syllabus and course checklist. You are responsible for learning how to use Blackboard for on-time submission of assignments. Tutorials are also available on the [Blackboard Learn Help website](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student). (<https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student>)

Communication with Instructor

I will primarily communicate with students via email, but I will be available by appointment as well for discussion by phone or Zoom. Send personal concerns to me via my personal email address and request appointments with me if you prefer to discuss concerns and questions live by Zoom rather than in an email. Generally, it will take me 24 hours to respond to emails, except on the weekends where it may take up to 48 hours. I will provide feedback on assignment submissions only as needed, and I will do this as well as grade within one week of the submission.

Attendance, Late Work, and Makeup Work

You will get ½ credit for late assignments. Guidelines for missed Discussions are noted above. As stated in the [UNI Catalog](#), “Students are expected to attend class, and the responsibility for attending class rests with the student. Students are expected to learn and observe the attendance rules

established by each instructor for each course. Instructors will help students to make up work whenever the student has to be absent for good cause; this matter lies between the instructor and student. Whenever possible, a student should notify the instructor in advance of circumstances which prevent class attendance.” This idea is neither novel nor unreasonable. Students should realize that an hour missed cannot be re-lived, that work can seldom be made up 100%, and that made-up work seldom equals the original experience in class.

See UNI [Policy on Class Attendance and Makeup Work](https://policies.uni.edu/306) (<https://policies.uni.edu/306>)

Online Netiquette and Classroom Civility

Because this is a fully online class, you will mostly be communicating with me and others through email, discussion forums, and other online communication. It is important to think of this communication as a formal dialogue.

- Be sure all communication has an appropriate subject line, identifies yourself, and is crafted professionally. For example, shorthand messages from your cell phone are generally inappropriate. I really appreciate professional email communication!! Please address me by my name (“Bettina,” not Dr. Fabos).
- Don’t waste my time (e.g., avoid “I hope this email finds you well...”); be succinct in your messages and get to the point: I often have to field 80 or so emails a day.
- Submit assignments through Blackboard NOT email (where they are very likely to get lost).

Technology Requirements

The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology successfully in this course. You are required to have access to and ability to use:

- UNI Gmail account
- High speed internet connection
- Blackboard Learn is supported on Firefox and Chrome (Internet Explorer and Safari do not support Blackboard and users can experience difficulty opening files)
- If required in this course
- Zoom (see Zoom System Requirements in START HERE for more information)
- YouTube, setting videos to “unlisted” in order to share links
- Google Drive and Google Apps (these are free with your UNI email account)
- Reliable equipment for video recording and storing recorded videos

Technical Support

If you experience any technical problems, contact the **Office of Continuing and Distance Education** at 319-273-7740 (local), 800-772-1746 (toll-free) or cesp-consult@uni.edu. Support hours are Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.