

# MEJO 712: Visual Communication and Multimedia

## Spring 2020

**Section:** 966

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### Course Overview

This course is designed to help you develop your literacy in the disciplines of visual communication and multimedia, their role in journalism and communication, and their basic principles and best practices. In this course, you will:

- gain a better understanding and appreciation for visual communication theories, principles, ethics, and best practices;
- gain experience putting that knowledge into practice; and
- learn to analyze and critique works of visual communication.

The end goal is to give you the knowledge to start speaking the language of design, more confidently evaluate works of visual communication, and collaborate more effectively with designers, photographers, and other viz comm practitioners.

### What This Course Is Not

This is not a course that will turn you into a professional designer, photographer, or videographer if you aren't one already. It will teach you basic concepts and best practices, but true mastery takes many more hours than this course can provide.

This course is also not about teaching software. The assignments are designed so that you can complete them with relatively basic tools such as PowerPoint, iMovie, or drag-and-drop design software. If you wish to learn a more advanced tool, I certainly encourage it. I am happy to help answer specific questions about a piece of software if I am familiar with it. Extensive software training, however, is beyond the scope of this course.

Here are a couple resources from UNC if you are interested in learning software:

- [Free access to Adobe Creative Cloud](#)
- [Free access to LinkedIn Learning \(formerly Lynda\) software tutorials](#)

### Required Textbook

***The Non-Designer's Design Book***, by Robin Williams

The [fourth and latest edition](#) is available as an eBook (\$16) or paperback (\$24). You can also find the third edition as an eBook or paperback. The two editions are similar enough that you can choose either one.

## Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Assignments Due
1	1/8–1/12	Viz comm: Intro & History (short week)	
2	1/13–1/19	Theories & Principles Underlying Design	PPT assignment, Part A (1/19)
3	1/20–1/26	Layout	
4	1/27–2/2	Typography	
5	2/3–2/9	Color	PPT assignment, Part B (2/9)
6	2/10–2/16	Data Visualization/Infographics	PPT assignment, Part C (2/16)
7	2/17–2/23	Photography	
8	2/24–3/1	Video	
9	3/2–3/6	Pulling It All Together	Infographic (3/8)
<b>SPRING BREAK 3/6–3/15</b>			
10	3/16–3/22	Usability and Accessibility	
11	3/23–3/29	Web and Mobile	Usability test, Part A (3/29)
12	3/30–4/5	Logos and Branding	
13	4/6–4/12	Laws	Multimedia explainer (4/12)
14	4/13–4/19	Fake, Real, and In-Between	
15	4/20–4/24	Reflection (short week)	Usability test, Part B (4/24)

## When Life Happens

- You are all juggling life, work, and family in addition to this class, so it's understandable to have a week where those other important things make it impossible to meet class requirements. When that happens (or you expect it to happen in an upcoming week), let me know ASAP, and we can discuss an accommodation. Try not to wait until after you've missed a deadline.
- If you might have to miss two or more weeks, let me know and we can talk through how to proceed. In such situations, my goal is to be supportive and help you decide on the best option for you.

## Communicating with the Instructor

- **Check Sakai's Messages tab and your UNC email at least every other day so you don't miss any time-sensitive information.**
- To contact me, email [john.zhu@unc.edu](mailto:john.zhu@unc.edu) or use Sakai's Messages tab (be sure to check the box for sending a copy to my email). Communications from me typically come via Sakai's Messages tab, with a copy to your UNC email.
- If you need a phone call with me, let me know and we can set up a time.

## Course Materials

All course materials will be on the class Sakai site at <http://sakai.unc.edu>. Look in the Course Materials tab. Your weekly materials include:

- Readings: Your weekly discussions will be based around these.
- Influential and Interesting: These provide diverse perspectives from some of the masters of the craft. You should at least skim these, and you may have discussion questions based on them.
- Diving Deeper: This is optional material that may be useful or interesting.
- Survey: A survey about the previous week's lesson to help me evaluate the course materials and to identify any potential points that need clarification.

## Grading

Per the UNC Graduate School handbook, the grade scale used for graduate-level courses is:

- H:** High Pass
- P:** Pass
- L:** Low Pass
- F:** Fail
- IN:** Work incomplete

This differs from the traditional A/B/C/D +/- system. The H/P/L scale does NOT map to the A/B/C/D scale. An H does not equal an A, and a P is not the same as a B. H's are for exceptional work and are rare throughout UNC's graduate-level programs. P's in no way suggest deficiency, and you should be proud of a P. To quote the director of my UNC master's program, "There are more P's than H's in 'Happy'." If you ever have questions about how you are doing beyond the grades, just ask me.

## Grade Components

1. Weekly discussions: 35% of your final grade
2. Weekly class survey: 5%
3. Four assignments: 60%

Each component is explained below.

**Note:** You will not earn a final course grade higher than a Low Pass if:

- You get 4 Low Pass grades in the course, whether it's for weekly discussions or the assignments; OR
- You receive 2 F's in the course, either for failing to submit an assignment or for not participating at all in discussions during a particular week.

If that note has you worried, don't be. Put forth a good effort, meet the discussion requirements, follow directions on the assignments, and you should be ok.

## 1. Weekly Discussions (35%)

In an online course, the discussion forums are where we “hold class,” so participation in the forums is important. The forums are also where we will work on one of the main goals of this course—getting practice in evaluating and critiquing works of visual communication.

Each week, typically by Monday evening, I will post discussion topics under the Forums tab in Sakai. The weekly discussions will close at midnight on Sunday night.

**To earn a P for discussions in a particular week, you MUST**

- have at least 5 substantive posts per week, AND
- post in at least 3 discussion threads that week, AND
- post in all the discussion threads where participation is required (these will be noted in the titles of the threads)

**Having fewer than 5 substantive posts would lead to a Low Pass for the week.**

**Having zero posts in a week would result in an F.**

Look in the Course Materials tab on Sakai for discussion guidelines, including examples of what “substantive posts” look like. In short, a substantive post is meaty, on time, and on topic.

Finally, please do not use the forums for anything other than class-related discussions. If you are not sure if a topic is appropriate for the forums, just ask me.

## 2. Weekly Class Survey (5% of Final Grade)

Each week, you need to complete a short survey about the previous week’s lesson (the link is in the current week’s materials). **This is NOT a quiz**; you’re not being evaluated on your answers. This is graded on a Pass/Fail basis: Complete the survey and you get a P. This is meant to help me assess which readings are working and which need tweaking. It also gives me some idea of whether you are understanding the material and if there are any questions that need to be addressed.

## 3. Assignments (60%)

You have four assignments (see details in Sakai under Course Materials section):

1. Creating a PowerPoint presentation (Part A: 5%; Part B: 5%; Part C: 5%)
2. Creating an infographic (15%)
3. Creating a multimedia explainer (15%)
4. Conducting a usability test (team project) (Part A: 5%; Part B: 10%)

**If you receive an L on an assignment, you can revise and resubmit it one time for a new grade before the last day of the semester. Resubmission does not guarantee a better grade.**

## Technical Issues

UNC ITS (<https://help.unc.edu>, 919-962-4357) provides 24/7 assistance with Sakai requests. Live chat is available between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Monday-Friday. I can also try to assist with Sakai questions before you contact ITS.

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the foundation of college life, so academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure on the assignment in question. Academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating, unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, fabrication, submitting the same work in multiple courses and aiding and abetting.

## Honor Code

The UNC honor system and code are in effect for MEJO 712. They are available in full at <http://honor.unc.edu>.

In brief, the Honor Code is the heart of integrity at UNC-Chapel Hill. It says that all students shall “Refrain from lying, cheating, or stealing,” but the Honor Code means much more. It is the guiding force behind the students’ responsible exercise of freedom, the foundation of student self-governance at UNC, which subscribes to the view that members of the UNC community should be responsible for upholding the values that have been agreed upon by the entire community.

## Diversity

UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community, and the university does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The university’s policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is found at <http://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>.

## Accessibility

I am committed to creating a learning environment that serves the needs of all students. If you anticipate any accessibility issues related to the format, materials, or requirements of this course, please let me know and we can explore potential options. If you have a disability or think you may have one, you may also wish to contact the Department of Accessibility Resources & Service (AR&S) at 919-962-8300 or [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu). Visit <https://accessibility.unc.edu> for more information. If you have other situations that might present an obstacle to the successful completion of this course, don’t hesitate to discuss them with me.

## Members of A Community

Students in this course should recognize their membership in a learning community. We are partners exploring issues in a digital environment.

In this course, we do not have the benefit of body language or face-to-face contact, so we have to work a bit harder at understanding and at being understood. We perceive only what is typed on the screen.

## Plagiarism and Digital Media

We all use the internet for research. With a wealth of information available, including everything from pre-written essays to ready-made graphics, the potential for plagiarism is enormous. Keep in mind that as easy as it is for students to find and copy information from the internet, it is just as easy for instructors to find the same information.

To avoid plagiarizing, remember that the same rules apply to information found on the internet as to information found in print sources:

- When you take ideas or quote from a source, you must paraphrase accurately and give credit by appropriately citing to the original source.
- If you take a sentence or phrase directly from a source, you must indicate it by using quotation marks around the direct quote and citing the original source.
- Citing digital sources can be confusing. For more information on how to cite Web-based sources, see the Citing Information tutorial (<http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/citations/>) or contact a reference librarian (<http://www.lib.unc.edu/ask.html>).

## Online Class Statement

1. By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by UNC-Chapel Hill policies related to the Acceptable Use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy (<http://its.unc.edu/about-us/how-we-operate>) on topics such as copyright and privacy protection.
2. When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill, such as Google or YouTube, please note that the Terms and Conditions of these companies apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to digital content. You should be aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC-Chapel Hill.
3. When links to sites outside of the [unc.edu](http://unc.edu) domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

4. Online courses may at times require Web-based assignments that are public in nature and may be viewed by third parties online. This is especially true in social media and blogging platforms. Be mindful of the information you choose to share publicly as part of your assignments. Under the Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) a student's education records are protected from disclosure to third parties. However, FERPA protection does not extend to material shared publicly by students.

## Accreditation

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

<http://journalism.ku.edu/acejmc-professional-values-competencies>.

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, including:

- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.