



J201 – INTRODUCTION TO MASS COMMUNICATION

Credits: 4 Credits; Communication-B Course

MWF: 9:55 a.m. – 10:45 a.m., 2340 Humanities

Professor Mike Wagner, William T. Evjue Distinguished Chair of the Wisconsin Idea

mwagner8@wisc.edu OR michael.wagner@wisc.edu¹ @prowag (Bluesky) #UWJ201

Office Hours, 5164 Vilas Hall: Monday 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Rathskeller Hours: Friday 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Lead TA: Elohim Monard, monarddrivas@wisc.edu

Lead TA: Office Hours: Monday 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., 5007 Vilas Hall

We live in a *mediated society*. Every aspect of social life—our relationships with friends, family, employers, and acquaintances, our democracy and politics, even our businesses and economy—is profoundly shaped by communication. Mediated communications—from the news, advertisements, entertainment, and social media—influence how we choose our political leaders, learn about ideas and products, decide what to believe and what to purchase, choose what entertains us, perceive others, and come to understand the world.



Moreover, we live at a time of dramatic change in the mass communication landscape. A century ago, radio was in its infancy. There was no broadcast television, no cable television, certainly no Internet, and the only media that could properly be thought of as ‘mass’ was the newspaper or a magazine. The World Wide Web has only been with us since 1989, and few people even knew about it until the mid-to-late 1990s. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat did not exist when you were born. Right now, an AI bot may be trying to follow you on X, Bluesky, Mastodon, or Threads to mine your behavior and sell you things. One month ago, Meta employed fact-checking journalists to check the veracity of claims people made in their Facebook posts. But no longer. The pace of change in how we communicate is so rapid that this syllabus will be partially obsolete by the time it is in your hands...in the unlikely event that you choose to print it out in the first place. For example, can we have TikTok or not?

So, what are we doing here?

¹ Note: mike.wagner@wisc.edu and mjwagner2@wisc.edu are the email addresses of Prof. Wagner in Engineering. Be careful!

J201 is about developing conceptual tools to understand how and why our society's mediated communications work the way they do and what any of that has to do with living a good life. It is about getting beneath the surface layer of why Joe Rogan is so influential, why so many people started playing Chess after binging *Queen's Gambit* on Netflix, why a phony story went viral, or why some people change their minds when presented with persuasive evidence that they are wrong while others don't. We will develop knowledge and skills applicable across contexts and in different forms of media. Throughout the semester, we will pursue and six learning outcomes:

Course Learning Outcomes

Think <i>critically</i> about consumption, production and transmission of media.	Think <i>empirically</i> about media and its effects: the perspective that we can make and test claims about what media do.	Learn about the <i>multiple roles of media</i> and the <i>contexts</i> shaping how mass communication is produced and disseminated.	Develop your thinking about the role of mass communication in <i>democratic government</i> . Roles of journalists, governments, advocates and citizens.	Understand ongoing <i>changes in the media system</i> and their long-term <i>implications</i> .	Develop a <i>normative, ethical</i> understanding of issues in media production and distribution.
---	--	---	--	---	--

These learning outcomes are animated by two broad course objectives.

First, J201 is the introductory course for many of the skills needed in later School of Journalism & Mass Communication classes. It is an essential introduction to journalism and strategic communication for those considering a [major in the SJMC](#). And its extensive written and oral communication assignments fulfill UW-Madison's [Communication-B requirement](#).

Second, because ours is such a mediated society, our course content will be useful to students not majoring in the SJMC. Skills such as critical analyses of news content and advertising, knowledge of media structure, and perspectives on media effects will be useful whether you are a journalist, advertiser, business owner, scientist, doctor, physicist, consumer and citizen.



Grading scale

92-100=A; 88-91.99=AB; 81-87.99=B; 76-80.99=BC; 70-75.99=C; 60-69.99=D; 59.99-0=F

Rules, rights & responsibilities: See the Guide to [Rules, Rights and Responsibilities](#)

Grades (out of 100 points)

Students may earn up to 1.5 points of extra credit, 0.5 points at a time.

Speeches (10 points possible)

Prepared speech 1 (5)

Prepared speech 2 (5)

Media analysis essays (40 points possible)

2 Essays (20 points each)

Exams (30 points possible)

2 Exams: one midterm worth 15 points, and one final worth 15 points

Participation (20 points possible)

3 Short writings (9 (3 points each))

Discussion attendance and participation (7)

Online discussion - Bluesky (4)

Diversity & Inclusion

“Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

Academic integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison’s community of scholars in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/misconduct/academic-integrity/>.



Accommodations for students with disabilities

McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement: “The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in

instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.”
<http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

Religious observances

Students must notify the instructor within the first two weeks of class of the specific days or dates on which they request religious observance relief. If you require a make-up for scheduled work, contact your TA well in advance.

Course Values

Transparency: Things might change. This syllabus may change. We may need to do less. We may need to go virtual. Or hybrid. I will keep you informed every step of the way.

Flexibility: While you should absolutely work to keep up with your assignments in this class, the circumstances of the semester are such that there may be a time(s) you cannot meet a deadline. Please let your TA or me know as soon as you can if you are going to miss a deadline. . . before the deadline.

Tenacity: You will get out of the class what you put into the class. That said, I understand that you might have less to put into the class right now. Still, try to read, show up prepared, do your work, and participate in class and on Bluesky (#UWJ201). It might be that you feel challenged, exhausted, or overwhelmed more quickly than normal or it might be that you have huge amounts of time you did not have before and you can do even more work than normal (we likely have both groups in class). *Be honest with yourself about your capacity* – and find a way to still challenge yourself to learn as much as you can while maintaining your health and well-being.

Compassion: I want you to succeed. I want you to succeed in a way that works for the situation we are in. I’m happy to lend an ear, offer advice, and – most importantly – work to find an agreeable accommodation for you to make sure you get the most out of class. It is better to do this right away rather than letting work pile up.

Fun: This stuff is awesome. We’ll have fun together learning about it, applying what we’ve learned, asking questions, and thinking about what it all means for our individual and collective futures.



Course schedule, content & readings

***Readings Found on Canvas; do the readings BEFORE class**

Week 1: Mass Communication – What is it? Why Should we Care?

Jan. 22: Welcome to J201 – Course Introduction

Jan. 24: Ripped From the Headlines: Why Should We Care About Mass Communication?

1. Carroll, Fiona and Rafael Weber Hoss. (2025, Jan 15). “Meta’s factchecker cut has sparked controversy – but the real threat is AI and neurotechnology.” *The Conversation*.
2. McArdle, Megan. (2025, Jan. 9). “Here’s the truth: Meta ending fact-checking is a win against censorship.” *Washington Post*.
3. Agence France Press. (2025, Jan. 7). “Disinformation experts slam Meta decision to end US fact-checking” *France 24*.
4. Spangler, Todd. (2020, Nov. 5) The ‘Queen’s Gambit’ spurs boom in sales of chess sets, books. *Variety*.

No speeches or discussion section meetings this week

Week 2: The Information Environment

Jan. 27: The News Media Ecology

1. Center for Communication and Civic Renewal. (2023). “[Wisconsin’s Media Ecology & Civic Health](#).”
2. Pew Research Center. (2023). “Black Americans’ Experiences With News.”

Short Writing Assignment #1 Handed Out

Jan. 29. Information Flow in a Hybrid Media Environment

3. Wagner, Michael et al. (2019, March 29) What makes Wisconsin swing? *Vox.com*

Jan. 31: Demassifying Communication in the Advertising Age

4. Froelich, Nik. (2022). “The Truth in User Privacy and Targeted Ads.” *Forbes*.
5. John, Lesli K., Tami Kim, and Kate Barasz. (2018). “Ads That Don’t Overstep.” *Harvard Business Review*.

Discussion sections begin meeting, no speeches yet.

Week 3: Industry/Ownership and the Information Environment

Feb. 3: Media Ownership, News Coverage, and Post-Broadcast Democracy

1. Galicza, Natalie. (2024). “Who owns the news?” *Desert News*.
2. Molla, Rani & Peter Kafka. (2022). “Who Owns What in Big Media Today.” *Vox*.

Short Writing Assignment #1 (Due, 9:00 p.m.)

Feb. 5: Ownership and News Coverage

3. Ordway, Denise-Marie. (2023). “Horse race reporting of elections can harm voters, candidates, news outlets: What the research says.” *Journalist’s Resource*

Feb. 7 : Agency Structures in the 21st Century

4. CEO Monthly. “The Typical Structure of an Advertising Agency.”

Discussion Sections: Prepared Speeches: 1 (1-2), 2 (3), 3 (4)

Week 4: Mass Communication and the Agenda

Feb. 10: SJMC Presentation from Sandra Kubat & Indexing and the Alarm-Patrol Hybrid Model

1. Shafer, Jack. (2013). "Why Journalists are like Cops and Firefighters." *Reuters*.
2. Strieff, Daniel. (2020). "The 15 Most Influential Journalism Stories in US History."

Short Writing Assignment #2 handed out

Feb. 12: How the News Informs What People Think is Important

3. Stroud, Natalie. J. (2017). Attention as a valuable resource. *Political Communication* 34(3): 479-489. You can retrieve this on Canvas.

Feb. 14: Getting Attention on Ads

4. Klein, Ezra. (2023). "How the \$500 Billion Attention Industry Really Works." (Can listen to podcast interview with Tim Hwang or read transcript).

Prepared speeches: 4 (1,2), 5 (3), 6 (4)

Week 5: Psychology and Mass Communication

Feb. 17: What Motivates Journalists

1. Calame, Brian. (2006). "Scoops, Impact of Glory: What Motivates Reporters?" *New York Times*.

Short writing assignment #2 (Due 9:00 p.m., submitted to Canvas)

Media Analysis #1 handed out

Feb. 19: Framing and Traits

2. Li, Jianing. et al. (2020, December 8) When do voters support Black Lives Matter or the Green New Deal? *Washington Post*.
3. Freelon, Deen. McIlwain, C. D. Clark, Meredith. D. (2016). Beyond the hashtags: #ferguson, #blacklivesmatter and the online struggle for offline justice.

Feb. 21: How Ads Motivate Us

4. Stelzner, Michael (2022). "How to Get Facebook Ads Working For You in 2023." *Social Media Examiner*.
5. CoreSight Research. (2022). "Motivating Customer Action and Driving Business Growth with AI-Generated, Personalized Digital Marketing."

Prepared speeches: 7 (1), 8(2), 9 (4, 5)

Week 6: Mass Communication and Culture

Feb. 24: When Reporters Cover Race and Gender

1. Kriess, Daniel. (2021, April 5). "Polarization Isn't American's Biggest Problem – Or Facebook's." *Wired*.
2. Merrefield, Clark. (2020, July). "Race and the newsroom: 7 studies to know." *The Journalist's Resource*.
3. McLeod, Doug. (2020, 5 June). "Five problems with your protest coverage: What reporters and news consumers need to know about protest narratives." Center for Journalism Ethics.

Feb. 26: Cultivation

4. Gifford, Bonnie. (2020, Sept.) "What is mean world syndrome?" *Happiful*.

Feb. 28: Strategic Communication and Culture

5. Devega, Chauncey. (Sept 15, 2018). "How algorithms reproduce social and racial inequality." *Salon*.
6. Noble, Safiya. (2018, March 26). "Google Has a Striking History of Bias Against Black Girls." *Time*.

Prepared Speeches: Prepared Speeches: 10 (2), 11 (3), 12 (5, 6)

Week 7: Mass Communication and Public Knowledge

Mar. 3: Does Journalism Help Citizens Learn Things?

1. Jurkowitz, M., Mitchell, A. (25 March, 2020). "Americans who primarily get news through social media are least likely to follow COVID-19 coverage, most likely to report seeing made-up news. "

Mar. 5: Digital and Social Media from a Strategic Communication Perspective

- Guest Speaker Deb Pierce, SJMC

DUE: 9:00pm– 1st draft of Media Analysis Essay 1 (Submit to Canvas)

Mar. 7: Knowledge Gaps

2. Vogels, E. and Anderson, M. (9 October, 2019) "Americans and digital knowledge." Pew Research Center.
3. Valenzuela, Sebastián. and Rojas, Hernando. (2019). "Taming the digital information tide to promote equality," *Nature*. You can retrieve this on Canvas.
4. Auxier, et al. (2019). "Public knowledge and experiences with data driven ads." Pew Research Center

Prepared Speeches: 13 (1), 14 (2), 15 (3), 16 (4)

Week 8: What Do We Know So Far?

Mar. 10: Mid-Semester Check-In

1. Nash, Jo. (2015). "What is The Good Life and how to attain it" *Positive Psychology*.

Mar. 12: Exam Review Jeopardy

Peer Reviews Due 9:00pm on Canvas for Media Analysis Essay 1

Mar. 14: Midterm Exam

No discussion section meetings this week.

Week 9: Bias and Mass Communication

Mar. 17: Is the News Media Biased?

1. Beauchamp, Z. (2019, Nov. 7). "The media's biggest bias is its centrism." *Vox*.
2. Klein, E. (2020, Jan 28). "Why the media is so polarized - and how it polarizes us." *Vox*.
3. Cooke, C. C. W. (2020, Nov. 12). "Biden's media campaign." *National Review*.

Mar. 19: Hostile Media Perception and Presumed Media Influence

4. Stray, Jonathan. (27 June, 2012). "How do you tell when the news is biased? It depends on how you see yourself?" *NiemanLab*.

Mar. 21: Finish Media Analysis Essay 1

DUE: 9:00 p.m.– Final draft of Media Analysis Essay 1 (submit to Canvas)

Prepared Speeches: 1 (1), 2 (2), 3(3), 4(4)



Week 10: Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories

Mar. 31: Fact-Check Journalism

1. Wong, Julia. C. (2021, April 12). "Revealed: The Facebook loophole that lets world leaders deceive and harass their citizens." *The Guardian*.

Media Analysis #2 handed out

Apr. 2: Who Believes Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories?

2. Foley, J. and Wagner, M. W. (26, May 2020) "How media consumption patterns fuel conspiratorial thinking." *TechStream*.
3. Young, Dannagal. G. "I was a conspiracy theorist, too." (15 May 2020). *Vox*.

Apr. 4: How Advertising Can Fight Misinformation Through Observed Correction

4. Bode, Leticia and Emily Vraga. (2020, May). "Americans are fighting coronavirus misinformation on social media." *Washington Post*.

Prepared Speeches: 5 (1), 6 (2), 7 (3), 8 (4)

Short Writing Assignment #3 handed out

Week 11: Persuasion and Mass Communication

Apr. 7: Are Journalists in the Persuasion Business?

1. Elections and Democracy Network. (Fall 2020). "Recommendations for media covering the 2020 U.S. presidential Election."
2. Deaven, K. (13 Jan. 2021). "What we learned in 2020 and how it can help newsrooms in the year ahead." Center for Media Engagement.

3. Deaven, K. (5 Aug. 2020) "Four steps to building trust with tv news audiences." Center for Media Engagement.

Apr. 9: Psychological Routes to Persuasion, Motivated Reasoning

4. Duggal, R (April 19, 2019). Consumer attitudes: A small factor that makes a big impact." *Forbes*.
5. Singer, Natasha. (2012, Nov 17). "Your online attention, bought in an instant. *New York Times*."
6. Cassella, Carly (2021, July 18). "How vaccine apathy- not hesitancy – may be driving flattened vaccination rates." *Science Alert*.

Apr. 11: Multi-level Marketing, Audience Profiles

7. Bodell, Walter. (2020) 6 effective PR strategies for multi-level marketing companies. *Agility PR*.

Prepared Speeches: 9 (1), 10 (2-3), 11 (4, 5), 12 (7)

Short writing assignment #3 (Due 9:00 p.m., submitted to Canvas)

Week 12: Mass Communication Ethics

Apr. 14: Journalism Ethics

1. Baughman, James. L. "The rise and fall of partisan journalism." Center for Journalism Ethics.
2. Brockell, Gillian. (2019, June 8). "How the homophobic media covered the 1969 Stonewall uprising." *Washington Post*.

Apr.16: Consequences of Content Moderation

3. Schwarzman, Stephen. (Jan 23, 2019). Can we make artificial intelligence ethical? *Washington Post*.

Apr. 18 Advertising Crises & Ethical Codes

4. PR Wire. (2020, May 25). The 4 best crisis communication examples of all time, according to Digital Silk. PR Wire.

Prepared Speeches: 13(1), 14(2), 15 (3), 16 (4)

DUE: By 9:55am, Dec. 1 – 1st draft of Media Analysis Essay 2 (submit to Canvas)

Week 13: The Future of Mass Communication

Apr. 21: Automated Journalism

1. Graefe, Andreas. (2016). Guide to automated journalism. *Columbia Journalism Review*.
2. Peiser, Jaclyn. (2019). The rise of the robot reporter. *New York Times*

Apr. 23: Computational Social Science

3. Resnick, Brian. The military wants to build a bullshit detector for social science. *Vox*.
4. AI Voice Detection. *Washington Post*.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2024/ai-voice-detection-trump-harris-deepfake-election/> -- NOTE: Use the link, this is an interactive reading.

Apr. 25: Intervening at Scale vs. Connecting in Person

5. The Wheel pitch from *Mad Men*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suRDUFpsHus> –

NOTE: Use the link, this is a video.

Peer Reviews due by 9:00 p.m.

Week 14: Wrapping Up

Apr. 28: What Do We Know? What Don't We Know?

Apr. 30: Exam Review Jeopardy

May 2: No Class **DUE: Final draft of Essay 2 (submit to Canvas) by 9:00 p.m.**

No section meetings this week.

****Final Exam: May 5, 7:45 a.m. 9:45 a.m. Location TBD by the university.**



Section Activities

J201 sections run on the active participation of students. The speeches, discussion, and writing students also qualify the course to fulfill Communication B requirements. In this class, each student will give two prepared speeches at specific points during the semester. Each of these activities will take place in the context of a specific reading(s) from the required readings in the syllabus.

In the case of the prepared speeches, students will be assigned a reading based on their personal section number. The syllabus and schedule denote which student is assigned to speak and which readings) to speak about.

Descriptions of each assignment follow.

Prepared speeches

You should devote the first part of your presentation (1 minute) to identifying the main arguments of the reading, outlining the author's claims, reasons, and evidence—or, in some instances, your perspective on what the author was trying to communicate.

The rest of your presentation (2.5 minutes) should deal with your reaction to the reading. You need to make your own claim and your reason for that claim, providing evidence to support it. Like a good paper, your talk needs a short introduction and wrap up with a satisfying conclusion (usually about 30 seconds).

Do not read your presentation! You may speak from *simple* notes that keep you on track, but allow the words to emerge conversationally. The key to a good speech is practice: it will help you get your timing right and plan what you want to say and how to say it. A good strategy is to practice your presentation in front of a mirror, a voice recorder, or for a friend.

Speech evaluation criteria

TAs will use the following evaluation criteria for prepared and impromptu speeches.

Content

- Accuracy – Do you accurately capture what the article’s author (or the speaker) was saying?
- Clarity – Is your own claim (or response) clear?
- Reason and evidence – Do you present reason and evidence for your claim? Are they convincing?
- Organization – Is your content well-organized and structured? Is it easy for the audience to follow?

Delivery

- Inflection and emphasis – Does your inflection and emphasis help convey your meaning (as in normal conversation)?
- Speed – Are you talking too fast or too slow?
- Filler words – Are you avoiding the use of slang and all those crutch phrases like “like,” “um,” and “basically”?
- Time management – Have you kept to the time specified?
- Overall engagement – Do you seem to be enjoying yourself (even if you aren’t)? Do you seem to be engaging with the audience?

Online discussion (Bluesky)

Online participation is a requirement for this course, and the Bluesky platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Create a Bluesky account; share your handle with your TA.

Writing amazing questions and answers on Bluesky (tagging them with #UWJ201 and a hashtag for your discussion section (ex: #301)) will:

- Help you develop writing skills necessary for any career path
- Reinforce the imperative skill of justifying thoughts and claims with credible evidence- and then citing the evidence!
- Enhance critical thinking sought out by employers
- Deepen your understanding of the course content by gaining diverse insights and perspectives from your peers
- Help you develop positive strategies to use social media as a professional

Your participation on Bluesky will count towards 4 points of your final grade.

In order to receive your points per week, you must post [1 Question/Concept Integration and 2 Responses per week] relevant to our class subject matter per week. You can post questions up through week 12, your best 8 weeks will be graded. A Question is a post that asks a question stemming from either the readings or a recent lecture. For example, “Prof. Wagner said on Monday that talking to people with different political views can help moderate people’s attitudes. But are there times when moderate attitudes are not useful?” A Concept Integration is you using something we have learned and applying it to something you see happening. For example, “This post from Elon Musk is a great example of the Hostile Media Effect in action. (link to the post).” Responses are you responding to a Question or Concept Integration post from a classmate. The

classmate need not be in your Discussion Section. Use the search feature to look for the course hashtag to find posts.

The deadline for #UWJ201 posts is 11:59 p.m. on Fridays.

Media Analysis Essays

You will write two 1,500-word papers, each tied to the class readings and each requiring some outside investigation. Even though these papers are short, they should still each have the three basic components of an academic essay:

1. An introduction which also clearly states a thesis (and please underline that thesis).
2. A body which develops the thesis, with one argument per paragraph, and several points of evidence supporting each argument.
3. A conclusion which not only restates the thesis, but leaves the reader with something more, such as speculation on the broader implications of the thesis.

The first draft of your essay is due on Canvas (as is the final version). You will receive feedback from your TA and complete a peer review. The first draft is not a set of bullet points and incomplete thoughts. It is a full draft of the essay. After you turn in the draft, you'll get feedback from your TA and your peers. Then, you'll revise the essay, **highlighting changes you have made (like this) and turn in the final draft.**

Peer Reviews

For each essay, each student will write 2 or 3 reviews of classmates' papers. (Thus, each student will also receive 2 reviews of their essay.) Peer review is worth 2 points (or 10%) of the Media Analysis grade. Peer reviews should include both things the author did well and at least one substantive comment about what the author can improve. Which does the student need to work on more, writing style and grammar or argument and evidence? If the paper is light on using course or reading content, do you have suggestions for resources they might draw from?

Your TA will upload all first drafts to an online shared folder, where you can download your peers' essays. Strive for a 250-word comment, not just a brief sentence. Make an **open-ended, prose response using complete sentences; do not line edit the paper.** (It may be appropriate to enter a comment into the paper's text if this helps you point to a specific statement.)

Note that these peer reviews will **not** be anonymous, so you should take care to offer constructive criticism (the same kind you would like to see someone offer on your paper).

Exams

There will be two exams in J201. The exams may include multiple choice and essay questions (there will be three essay questions, you will answer one of your choice). They will include material from lectures and the required readings. The final exam will be *not* cumulative, nor will it be longer than Exam 1, but you will have the full two hours of final exam time to take it.

Make-up exam policy: To take a make-up exam, notify your TA *in advance* and provide documentation of the reason for your absence. *Only in extreme cases can exams be made up without prior notification.* Make-up exams are oral exams with Professor Wagner.

Short Writing Assignments

At 3 times during the semester, students will be asked to write a brief response to current events and/or concepts from lecture. These prompts will come from the professor, and will ask the students to give an opinion, offer a story, or otherwise contribute something to that space. Short assignments will typically be 500 words, due within one week of the prompt.

Participation

Active participation in section—contributing to discussions in informed and substantive ways—will be assessed by TAs.

Extra credit

Students may earn up to 1.5 points of extra credit, accrued in .5-unit increments. Extra credit opportunities will be announced throughout the semester; usually, they will be invitations to participate in research studies being conducted by graduate students and faculty members in the School of Journalism Mass Communication. In order to obtain extra credit for participating in studies (.5 point for each study), you must 1) take part in the study and 2) keep a log which includes the date you participated in the study and 2-3 sentences describing what the study was about and your thoughts about the experience. You will need to turn in your extra credit log on Canvas at the end of the semester. If you do not wish to take part in these studies, you can still earn extra credit by attending a presentation about the studies. If you attend these alternative presentations, you will still need to keep a log that contains the date of your attendance and 2-3 sentences describing what you learned (you can only earn extra credit for doing the study or going to the presentation about the study - not both).

General Policies

Attendance: Attendance in lecture is expected. You cannot learn if you are not there. Discussion section attendance is mandatory. Absences should be approved by your TA *prior* to the discussion meeting, except in the case of an emergency.

Readings: The readings in the course are varied and diverse. They include news articles, chapters of books, academic articles, blog posts, examples of journalism, critiques of journalism, ethics handbooks, and advertising videos. In short, they constitute a selection of the information environment we deal with every day. These readings are ***required***, and may appear on an exam, in an assignment, or on a quiz the week for which they appear, or a following week. ***Required readings are available on Canvas.***

Guest lectures: Throughout the semester, we will have a few guest lectures. Given by professors in the SJMC and other experts, the lectures are scheduled to be directly relevant to course content, and ***their material will appear on exams***. The lectures are outstanding opportunities to learn what the foremost experts in mass communications are learning in their research. Students are expected to attend, be attentive, take notes, and ask good questions.

Deadlines: Are real. Meet them. Late work when accepted will receive a 10% grade reduction for each day after the deadline. Late work reductions end at 50%. So, no matter how late you are on an assignment, the most you can lose is 50%.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is an important resource provided by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Students can visit the Center for help with writing at all levels, for all kinds of assignments and get feedback and advice about their work. Essays for J201 must be turned in with proper grammar, punctuation and citation: TAs will not correct grammar and punctuation, but will lower grades on essays with significant problems. To polish your paper for submission, or to simply improve your writing, the Writing Center is the place to go.

Grade grievance process: If you are concerned about a grade, begin by emailing your TA a clear and dispassionate explanation of why you think the grade was mistaken. Your TA will follow up with you about next courses of action. Clear mistakes or errors in grading as a result of computation of scores (i.e. mathematical errors) will be quickly amended. However, be aware that any grade grievance based on substantive answers will entail a re-grade of the assignment—*meaning that there is a risk that points will actually be lost in a regrade*. If, after discussion with your TA, you are not satisfied, I will grade your paper. I will grade a clean copy and will not know what your original grade was.

Course communication: Assignment guidelines, specific assignments, announcements, extra credit opportunities, course syllabus, due dates, grades, etc.; everything that is important will be communicated through the course Canvas page: Be sure to check it regularly. I will also email particularly important comments to the class email list.

E-mail: We are committed to responding to weekday emails within 24 hours. Weekend emails will generally be replied to by Monday evening. *This means that you should not count on being able to get a response the night before a deadline*—so plan ahead. You are also more likely to get a pleasant and helpful response if you are respectful in your email, use complete sentences and good punctuation. We consider class emails professional communications.

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty requires that the course work a student presents to an instructor represents the student's own academic efforts. While we encourage J201 students to study for exams together, remember that the essays and posts you write for class must be your own. Copying or paraphrasing text, including from fellow students, without proper quotation and citation is plagiarism. This includes "patchwriting," the piecing together of different sources into a paper, often with minimal editing. Plagiarism is sufficient grounds for failing the course.

ChatGPT: ChatGPT is an algorithmic technology that has the potential to produce essays for courses like J201. You are free to use ChatGPT to help provide ideas for your work, but the final product must be written in your own words.

Turnitin.com: Unfortunately, despite special efforts on the part of faculty at the School of Journalism & Mass Communication, a small but persistent portion of students continues to engage in unethical academic practices (i.e., cheating). After many discussions, the faculty of the School has decided to use turnitin.com, a service that accepts uploaded papers and automatically evaluates them for plagiarism. Students in J201 will be required to upload their papers to Canvas, which is connected to Turnitin.com.