

Sample Syllabus

JMC 303: JMC Colloquia on Race and Media

The Pulitzer won: “On Being a Black Man,” an interactive project of *The Washington Post*

(Note: This syllabus is hypothetical, based on a course of instruction that would be anticipated if the instructor is a professional journalist of color working in print or broadcast media. Other instructors from advertising/PR fields would adapt in professionally appropriate ways. Gray content is hypothetical. Regular type is fixed)

1 credit hour • Weekend of _____ Friday, 6-10 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.; Sunday, 1-5 p.m. • Don Morris Room 320

Instructors: Doug Mendenhall • Instructor of Journalism and Mass Communication

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I. Course Description

Short course, varying topics related to race in JMC professions. JMC 302 may not be repeated. JMC 303 must be taken twice. See Semester Schedule for current offerings. Colloquia are generally taken beginning in the fourth semester and may charge special fees for materials, travel or equipment.

The fall 2014 colloquia will introduce students to issues associated with reporting and production of an interactive multimedia feature for a major metropolitan newspaper, exploring in particular the development of “On Being a Black Man,” the Pulitzer prize winning effort of the Washington Post staff, including contributions by the instructor. Students will have the opportunity to interact via Google chat with other journalists and the subjects of some stories that were part of the series.

Prerequisites: Fourth semester of university study or permission of the instructor.

II. Purpose of the Course

The mission statement of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication is “to engage students in critical and creative thinking in the classroom, in the laboratory and through mentoring relationships, leading them to become exceptional, ethical and agile communicators in a rapidly changing media environment, embracing technology, valuing global diversity and embodying Christ-centered service.”

The JMC perspective on diversity is that those who control the flow of images in the mass media have a responsibility to their audience to illustrate messages in a fair and truthful manner, without bias or prejudice, and with careful consideration to creating imagery that does not reinforce societal stereotypes.

To facilitate that mission, this colloquy on Race and Media will explore the portrayal of race and ethnicity in U.S. media. The primary focus of the course will be on contemporary issues of race and how those are reflected in television, film, journalism, social media and advertising.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students are expected to understand the responsibilities and challenges of major media to explore populations of color within the communities they serve.
2. Students are expected to study and analyze a major, prize-winning interactive series and discuss its impact on the community and on the work of other media entities.
3. Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to discuss issues of race and ethnicity relevant various JMC-related professional environments openly and respectfully in interracial settings.
4. Students are expected to gain a critical grasp of issues that arise at the intersection of race/ethnicity and specific JMC-related professional environments – and to be better prepared for navigating those issues as they begin their own professional careers in mass communication.

IV. Unique Christian Perspective

Most media practitioners voluntarily adhere to ethical principles. Students in this class will be expected to adhere to normal ethical standards. In addition, they are expected to live by a higher set of standards established by Jesus Christ. A Christian media practitioner, skilled in communicating complex ideas and rooted in the principles of free speech and free press, has much to offer media organizations today.

V. Readings

Being a Black Man: At the Corner of Progress and Peril, editor, Kevin Merida. *Washington Post*. 2007.

Assigned articles: One week before the start of the course, each student will receive an assignment to read one of the chapters of the text, review its online, interactive components prepare a one-page synopsis for later distribution to other students. Depending on class size, some chapters may have more than one reader, or the instructor may add other reading assignments. At the appropriate time during the course, the student(s) who read the chapter will lead the rest of the class in a discussion of the topic with which it deals, explaining key points and seeking to engage other students in a broader look at the topic.

VI. Class schedule

Friday evening

Reporting on race: A brief history.

Saturday morning

Being a black man: Where we are – the stories and the reporters

Saturday afternoon:

Being a black man: Who we are – the stories and interactive developers

Sunday afternoon

Being a black man: What we're talking about – the stories and the aftermath

VII. Grading policies

Writing a one-page brief of the assigned scholarly article and directing a class discussion of the topic will be worth 100 points.

Participation in class discussions will be worth 25 points per block, for a cumulative 100 points. Students will be expected to be present, alert and contributing to the discussion in meaningful ways.

A 5- to 7-page reaction paper (or a video alternative) will be worth 200 points.

Letter grade standards are:

A: 92-100 B: 83-91 C: 74-82 D: 65-73 F: Below 65

Note that a 92 is required for an A, although grades are rounded to a 10th of a percentage point.

VIII. Attendance policies

Students are expected to attend the entire 15 hours of class meeting. An emergency that requires the student to miss up to three hours may be excused at the discretion of the instructor if the instructor deems the material missed can be made up and if the absence is caused by:

- a. Serious illness of the student.
- b. Death or critical illness in immediate family.
- c. Approved university off-campus activities.
- d. Other absolutely unavoidable occurrences.

IX. ACU dress code

Students are encouraged to demonstrate by their dress and appearance a mature Christian attitude and the ability to discern propriety. The university also seeks to prepare students

for professional careers where certain standards of dress are required for employment. Part of the educational process, then, is learning to dress appropriately. The following standards and guidelines will assist students in making decisions about their dress and appearance on campus, in class, in Chapel and at all university-sponsored activities, including athletics events:

1. All students, staff and faculty are expected to dress with Christian appropriateness. Dress should be modest. Some extremes are not acceptable, including halter tops, crop tops/open midriffs and short and/or revealing skirts and shorts.
2. Body piercing is a growing concern among health care professionals and in some cases is considered by the university as outside the bounds of Christian appropriateness. Extreme, or otherwise distracting or harmful, body piercing is discouraged and will be addressed by Campus Life officials.
3. During work periods, student workers are expected to conform to the dress code set by the department in which they work.
4. Shorts may be worn on campus, during classes and in Chapel. However, shorts (and skirts) must be modest and conform to a standard of mid-thigh or longer.
5. Athletic clothing appropriate to the sport may be worn while participating in athletic classes/activities in designated athletic areas.
6. Clothing with inappropriate advertising, pictures and/or sayings that are contrary to the mission and Christian standards of ACU are prohibited.

X. Disability statement

Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodations for any recognized disability must submit requests in writing to the instructor by the end of the second week of the semester. This documentation must come in writing from ACU's Alpha Academic Services, which can be contacted at Ext. 2667.

XI. Racial, Sexual Harassment statement

Racial and sexual harassment is a violation of the code of conduct as described in Section 2-02 of the ACU Student Guide and will not be tolerated during class or class-related activities. Harassment is any action, including a joke or suggestion that creates an intimidating, hostile or degrading environment and would have such an effect on a reasonable person of the alleged victim's status. Violations of this section will be referred to Campus Life.

XI. Academic integrity

Violations of academic integrity and other forms of cheating, as defined in ACU's Academic Integrity Policy, involve the intention to deceive or mislead or misrepresent, and therefore are a form of lying and represent actions contrary to the behavioral norms that flow from the nature of God. *Any use of writing that has not been done by you must be acknowledged by citing the source. It is never appropriate to borrow sentences or portions of sentences and include them in an assignment in such a way that they appear to have been written by you.* Violations will be addressed as described in the policy. While the university enforces the policy, the most powerful motive for integrity and truthfulness comes from one's desire to imitate God's nature

in our lives. Every member of the faculty, staff and student body is responsible for protecting the integrity of learning, scholarship and research. The full policy is available at the provost Web site (www.acu.edu/campusoffices/provost).

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication has an even tougher policy regarding academic integrity. It can be found at www.acu.edu/jmc/policies/integrity.html.