

MEDIA STUDIES, JOURNALISM & DIGITAL ARTS

Senior Interdisciplinary Research Seminar

Fall 2021

MJD450 Senior Research Seminar, In Person

Wed. 1:30-4:40PM, JM142/JM288

Dr. Jon Hyde & Dr. Kimberly Sultze

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THE COURSE

This is the research seminar for your senior capstone experience in the Department of Media Studies, Journalism and Digital Arts. **WELCOME!**

The course will focus on the conceptualization and the interdisciplinary background research necessary for your senior seminar project. We will initially zero-in on choosing, conceptualizing and triangulating a **socially significant topic** which has **national and international connections or implications**. This will be followed by extensive research, ethnographic studies, and the development of a critical literature review. The final research phase will involve pilot studies and interviews which should be directly related to the issues that you are exploring. Throughout each of these phases, you will be putting together the essential pieces of your research proposal.

Each of the research elements in the proposal will serve as cornerstones in the final production and development of your MJD senior capstone project/thesis during the **spring semester**. Your final capstone project should take the form of either **(1)** a full-length documentary film, **(2)** a substantive book which incorporates excellent photographs and illustrations, or **(3)** an extensive interactive web documentary. It should examine a **socially significant topic** that is of **national or international interest** through a variety of **interdisciplinary angles**. It should be a high quality research and analysis project which represents the best of what you can accomplish. **All three forms must include extensive writing and visual production (photographic, graphic, video).**

REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Attendance, Adherence to COVID Campus Guidelines, Professional and Ethical Communication, & Active Participation (20%)**—This seminar is a highly **participatory** class. One of the essential requirements for this course will be *actively helping your classmates conceptualize and hone their topics and proposals*. You need to be verbally engaged every single week. **Attendance for this class is a must!** This class meets only once a week. **Excessive absences will result in a failing grade.**

It's very important that as a community, we follow good practices during the global pandemic. Not only will this help us keep people healthy, but it will also enable us to stay open with in-person instruction.

Professional and Ethical Communications and Interactions: It is of absolute importance that you treat all of the people with whom you communicate with the **utmost respect and integrity**. This goes for your face-to-face interactions as well as all emails, telephone calls, texts, tweets, or other forms of communication. Do not send flaming communications to your peers, to coworkers, to faculty and staff at the College, or to people in the outside world. Take the time to be respectful and professional. If there's something going on with you or going on in the class that you're concerned about, your professor is the first point of contact. Feel free to talk with your professor after class, or to reach out to set up an appointment time to meet.

2. **Research Process Projects (30%)**—During the first half of the semester, you will be developing and refining your senior seminar topic, selecting and defending your chosen medium, defining appropriate research strategies, and developing the research components of your topic. A series of assignments will be associated with each of these steps. **LATE projects will be penalized 10% for every day they are late. After 7 days, the late assignment converts to a zero (0). Any major assignment not turned in will count as a minimum TWO grade deduction from the FINAL OVERALL COURSE GRADE.**

3. **Final Research Proposal (50%)**—The final focus of this class is the development of a **research proposal** for a professional quality and nationally-/internationally-oriented media project. This proposal should be well-conceived, thoroughly investigated, and thoughtful and reflective in its treatment of an important topic. **The Final Research Proposal is due Wednesday, December 8th at 1:30pm.**

DIVERSITY and INCLUSION: Our classroom should be an inclusive learning environment for all students, and it is important that we work together to create and maintain an inclusive community for all forms of diversity: race, gender, class, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnicity, etc. Acts of hate or bigotry will not be tolerated.

Be Present in the HERE and NOW! This class is not a telephone booth. Nor is it ‘background noise’ for your text messaging. In this day and age, a cell phone can be an indispensable tool. Most media producers are wired to the gills with phones, pagers, headsets, palm pilots, etc. However, this classroom is a sanctuary from all that—perhaps your last. We are asking for your focused attention. **If you carry a cell phone with you, make certain that it is off. Put your laptops away. No phone calls or text messaging in class.**

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty. The Department of Media Studies, Journalism & Digital Arts strictly enforces rules regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty. It is your responsibility to understand the forms that plagiarism and academic dishonesty can take, and the scholarly methods used to avoid them. Both represent grounds for immediate failure of the course.

The Field of Media Studies and our Pedagogical Choices for this Class: Canvas will be used only in a judicious and limited fashion for this course in its current in-person format. Why is this the case? It’s because we as professors make very deliberate choices related to pedagogy – choices that connect very directly to our areas of expertise and our field of Media Studies, Journalism & Digital Arts. As you should know, in many of our courses, we chronicle some of the downsides of too much time in front of screens, and further discuss important issues related to privacy and surveillance, to ownership, and to creativity in online media forms. Prior to COVID-19, we were already witnessing one of the greatest migrations in history – the migration of humans away from the outdoors and the natural world to the indoors and in front of screens. With the global pandemic, this has only intensified. One of our goals, in keeping with our field, is to help students reduce the time they spend on devices. Habitual use of Canvas locks you in front of a screen as the gateway to the course, which does not fit with that goal.

GRADING

A	94-100	C+	77-80
A-	90-94	C	74-77
B+	87-90	C-	70-74
B	84-87	D+	67-70
B-	80-84	D	64-67
		F	below 64

Expectations & Guidelines

What the Senior Seminar project is

- ✓ A **substantive** treatment of an important, **socially significant** topic and its **related issues**
 - you should be selecting and developing **your own topic**
 - the topic should be explored from multiple interdisciplinary angles
 - this is an **ISSUE-based** project
- ✓ An in-depth, investigative nonfiction/documentary project
- ✓ It should be targeted toward a **national or international audience**
- ✓ Its finished form will be either a **book, multimedia web documentary site, or documentary film**. Book projects can be done solo or with one partner. Web projects can be done solo or with one partner, but working with a partner is highly recommended. Film projects must involve 2 people minimum, 3 people maximum.
- ✓ A high quality, professional work and presentation
- ✓ You should work in a primary medium in which you have both experience and talent; all projects should include both words and images.

Things to think about:

- Originality of Topic
- Exploration of important unanswered or under-answered questions
- Access to subjects, material, places, experiences...
- Creativity of Presentation
- Working Solo versus Partner/Group
- Components of Your Existing Skill Set—In what topics do you have a background? In what medium do you have experience and skill?
- Research, travel and production costs

DATE	TOPIC
Sept. 1	Introduction and Overview – Expectations for the Senior Capstone
Sept. 8	• STORM SPOTTING Due -- Defining appropriate research strategies
Sept. 15	• Untold Stories Due -- Significant Topics and Foundational Research
Sept. 22	Individual Meetings
Sept. 29	Research Strategies
Oct. 6	• Topic Proposal Due
Oct. 13	Disciplinary perspectives and approaches
Oct. 20	Examining Related Works
Oct. 27	• Critical Literature Review Due
Nov. 3	Defining the angles of pursuit – how the lit review shapes your approach
Nov. 10	Conducting an Ethnographic Observation, Pilot Interview
Nov. 17	• Ethnographic Observation and Pilot Interviews Due Synthesizing a Strong Proposal
Nov. 24	<i>Thanksgiving Break, No Class</i>
Dec. 1	Focused Work on Proposals
<u>DEC 8</u>	<u>Final Research Proposal Due</u>