

DMC-DMK SENIOR RESEARCH SEMINAR

Fall 2025
DMC 450 Senior Research Seminar
Wed. 1:30-4:40PM, JEM142



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THE COURSE

This is the research seminar for your senior capstone experience in **Digital Media, Marketing and Communications**. It is **part-1** of the **2-semester Senior Seminar Capstone**.

The course will focus on the **conceptualization and the interdisciplinary background research** necessary for your senior seminar project. We will initially zero-in on triangulating a **socially significant topic** which has important **national and international implications** and **shelf-life**. 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 DMC-DMK senior capstone project/thesis during the **spring semester**. Your final capstone project will involve creative hands-on media work along with off-campus productions. It should take the form of either:

- (1) A full-length **Documentary Film** with excellent video, audio, writing, titles, images, and graphics/motion graphics.
- (2) A substantive **E~Book** which incorporates excellent writing, images, audio, graphic designs and layouts.
- (3) An extensive **Interactive Web Documentary** with excellent writing, images, audio, video, graphics and layouts.

The project 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 projects must include extensive writing, audio, and visual production (photographic, graphic, audio, and video).**

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance, Adherence to HEALTH 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 mentally and 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.**

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 professors are the first point of contact. Feel free to talk with your professors 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 FRIDAY, December 5th at 1:30pm.**

Class Contributions to Health and Happiness—One of the fundamental elements of human health, happiness, and well-being is that it is not merely a “me” issue but a “WE” set of issues. There is very much a collaborative aspect to most aspects of our well-being. It’s important in this course to find ways to contribute to the collective well-being of the class.

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 DMC strictly enforces rules regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty. This includes any use of ChatGPT or other AI systems. 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.

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**
- ☑ This is an **ISSUE-based** project about **others**. It is **NOT** about you, your talents/pursuits, members of your family, nor your home community.
- ☑ An **in-depth, thoroughly researched, investigative nonfiction/documentary project**. It should not be conceived of or developed as a promotional piece for a person, organization, or business. However, it may likely have social justice import and informed appeals for advocacy.
- ☑ A **HIGH QUALITY**, professional work and presentation with shelf-life and the potential to be picked up and/or distributed by professional media sources.
- ☑ You should be selecting and developing **your own topic**.
- ☑ The topic should be explored from **multiple interdisciplinary** angles.
- ☑ It should be targeted toward a **national or international audience**.
- ☑ Its finished form will be either an **E~book, multimedia web documentary site, or documentary film**.
- ☑ **MULTIMEDIA FORMS**. ALL projects should include YOUR OWN words, images, A/V, and graphic elements.
- ☑ **COLLABORATION?** Yes, you may work **collaboratively with other DMC seniors**. All members of a group must share in the work equally. **Each member must also have taken courses and have experience in your primary medium.**
 - ▶ **E~Book** projects can be done solo or with one partner.
 - ▶ **Web interactive documentary projects** can be done solo or with one partner, but working with a partner is *highly recommended*.
 - ▶ **Documentary Film** projects must involve **2 people minimum**, 3 people maximum.

Things to think about:

- ☐ Exploration of important unanswered or **under**-answered questions
- ☐ Originality, Social Significance, and “Freshness” of Topic
- ☐ Longer-term shelf-life of the project
- ☐ Access to subjects, material, places, experiences...
- ☐ Creativity of Presentation
- ☐ Working Solo versus Partner/Group
- ☐ Components of Your current and developing technical skill sets—In what topics do you have a background? In what media forms do you have a professional “fluency”? In what areas do you need to develop a stronger set of skills?
- ☐ How can you develop a stronger background and skill sets this semester?
- ☐ Research, travel and production costs (Holidays, Spring Break).

DATE	TOPIC
Aug. 27	Introduction and Overview – Expectations for the Senior Capstone
Sept. 3	• STORM SPOTTING Due -- Defining MULTI-LAYERED research strategies
Sept. 10	• Untold Stories Due – SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE and FRESH/INNOVATIVE Topics and Foundational Research
Sept. 17	Individual Meetings
Sept. 24	FOCUSED Research Strategies
Oct. 1	• Topic Proposal Due
Oct. 8	Cross-Disciplinary perspectives and approaches
Oct. 15	Critiques and Examinations of Related Works
Oct. 22	Targeting Audiences: Surveys, Demographics, Psychographics
Oct. 29	• Critical Literature Review Due
Nov. 5	Defining the angles of pursuit – how the lit review shapes your approach
Nov. 12	Conducting an Ethnographic Observation and Pilot Interviews
Nov. 19	• Ethnographic Observation and Pilot Interviews Due Synthesizing a Strong Proposal
Nov. 28	<i>Thanksgiving Break, No Class</i>
Dec. 3	Focused Work on Proposals
<u>DEC 5</u>	<u>Final Research Proposal Due</u>