

**Syllabus**  
**JMS 760:1001 Social Influence of the Media - Fall 2016**  
**Tuesdays, 4:00 – 6:45 p.m., Greenspun Hall, #1120.**  
**Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies**

**University of Nevada Las Vegas**  
**Greenspun College of Urban Affairs**

**Instructor:**

**E-Mail:**

**Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m., Tuesdays, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. to Noon, or by appointment.**

**I. Catalog Description:** Analysis of communication patterns and their social importance; considers news, public affairs, and entertainment influences.

**II. Seminar Goals:** This course introduces participants to the social theory of Symbolic Interactionism and its application to media and reception studies, including social media. Students will read seminal theoretical works by Weber, Mead, and Blumer, critical analyses and discussions of those works, as well as more contemporary applications by media studies scholars. A seminar-length paper with topic approved by the professor will be required for completion of the course. The seminar paper will evolve stepwise during the semester. See the description of assignments below for detailed information.

**III. Learning Outcomes:** By the completion of the course, students should be able to perform the following:

1. Develop and organize the components of a research proposal.
2. Analyze theoretical and contemporary works by media studies scholars.
3. Construct a high-quality research proposal based on an approved topic.

**IV. Readings:** Anticipate anywhere from 30 to 100+ pages of reading per week. Some chapters and articles will be distributed via electronic copy. There is also an assigned course text.

**V. Recommended Text:**

American Psychological Association. *Publication manual of the American psychological association*. Washington: American Psychological Association. (Note: Fifth or Sixth editions are fine for this class, but if you're new to APA Style, go ahead and buy the latest edition).

**VI. Required Text:**

Bilandzic, H., Patriarche, G., & Traudt, P. (Eds.). (2012). *The social use of media: Cultural and social scientific perspectives on audience research*. Bristol, UK: Intellect. (Hereafter, BPT)

**VII. Grading:**

Writing Skills Exercise	--	--
Working Bibliography	100	20
Final Paper Question	50	10
Abstracts (10 at 10 pts. each)	100	20
Final Paper Outline	50	10
Final Paper Draft	100	20
Final Paper	100	20
Discussion Leader/Participation	--	--
	<b>500 pts.</b>	<b>100%</b>

Final grades will be computed as a percentage of earned versus total possible number of points. Resulting percentages will be assigned letter grades.

## **VIII. Required Work:**

Writing Skills Exercise: Please see instructions at WebCampus folder for this item.

Working Bibliography: This assignment forces seminarians to compile an initial list of 20 reference items, in APA format, representing core theory and empirical research informing final papers.

Final Paper Question: The goal with this assignment is to force seminar participants to narrow their research interests for the semester. Use the following framework in satisfying the requirements of this assignment. Complete the following statement: "What is the relationship between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_." A good statement derives from extensive reading of an isolated and complete body of prior research literature, where previous scholars have discussed theories informing their research, defined key constructs, developed field methods, and collected and analyzed data. False starts by seminar students are to be expected. Evolutions in the statement are anticipated. A good statement communicates extensive reading and thinking has occurred. The goal is to generate a clear research question reflecting lots of prior reading. Do that and I can better help you going forward in the semester.

Abstracts: Generate ten abstracts central to your final paper between now and the end of the semester. See specific deadlines in the "Weekly Course Content" section of this syllabus. Abstracts will first be edited by peers, then graded by your professor. Relevant refereed journal articles, scholarly books chapters, proceedings from academic conferences, and the like are your target publications. Articles in consumer publications or industry trades are not suitable for abstracting.

An abstract leads with the work's title, in correct referential format according to American Psychological Association style. The typical body for an empirical study summarizes the: 1) purpose; 2) theory or perspective incorporated; 3) major questions and/or hypotheses; 4) method; 5) results; and 6) discussion. This will differ for a non-empirical discussion of theory or method. Regardless of source, please add an additional paragraph or two detailing what you consider to be the work's major strengths and/or weaknesses. Use the criteria found elsewhere in this syllabus as a guide. Write in the third person for such documents. Typical length is 250-500 words. Please double-space all documents.

Final Paper Outline: Your final paper in this seminar will be a research proposal. You will not actually conduct a study in this seminar. Your paper will lay the groundwork for such a study should you choose to do so at a later time. Outlines force the writer to organize literature searches into a cohesive organization and flow. Key articles in the literature search, often positioned later in the argument, define theories, constructs, and directions for future method-guided inquiry. Toward this end, you are to construct a one-to-two page, single-spaced outline for your forthcoming paper. This assignment is a natural extension of the previous assignment, and establishes a roadmap for writing the first draft of the final paper. It also establishes key titles, headers, and sub-headers to be included in the draft and final versions of the paper. Consult APA for formatting. The outline should flow from the Final Paper Topic assignment, and from feedback provided for that previous assignment.

Final Paper Draft: The word "final" in this assignment takes precedence over the word "draft." For all practical purposes, this paper should be considered the seminar participant's final best effort. They will be read as such. This is not a work in progress, but a completed work ready for a careful read by the course instructor who will evaluate the paper for both content and style. The typical seminar paper is more than 20 but usually less than 30 pages, including references. Only minor revisions in content or style should be expected after this point in the semester. Grading of content and style for this assignment will be rigorous. No late documents will be accepted.

Final Paper: Energy and diligence in assignments to date should result in an outstanding Final Paper. Those seminar participants who work hard through the semester should find this phase of the seminar most rewarding, as only minor additions or corrections culminating in an outstanding document. The Final Paper is due at the beginning of the final examination period.

## **IX. Seminar Format**

Preamble: We will begin each seminar promptly at 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Drinks and snacks are fine. Please do not bring larger meals with you to the seminar. Please turn off all cell phones or related communications devices during the seminar. Laptops or related note taking devices are fine. Please do not use audio recording devices, unless part of DRC accommodations. We will take one break during each seminar session.

Part 1: We will begin each session with any necessary shop keeping, and segue into a freewheeling exchange of "News and Views" from the world of current events relatable to social theory and media. We'll make an effort to link those events with our growing knowledge of the seminar's subject matter. Each seminar participant is encouraged to share items read and seen and relate them to current seminar readings. Feel free to bring in print clippings or electronic posts.

Part 2: A second part of each seminar will reconsider any remaining old business from the previous semester. In the truest sense of the term and in keeping with the originating German tradition of graduate seminars, our meetings are an ongoing process of reading, inquiry, and discussion anchored in student input with professorial guidance. Just because time forces us to disband doesn't mean that thinking about previously discussed theory and research ceases. Here we will entertain any nagging questions and new insights based on previous readings and discussions.

Part 3: Once we're rolling in the semester, two abstracts will be due every seminar over the course of five weeks. We will take five to ten minutes to edit these via peer review. I'll provide more information about this as the deadline for the first abstract approaches.

Part 4: The bulk of each seminar will be spent discussing assigned readings. Begin to look for patterns and trends in these readings. Try to anticipate what I might want to talk about during these coming sessions. Don't just get the reading done, but begin to think about which of these ideas resonate with your own views, appeal to your methods of thinking and inquiry, or represent potential venues for your own future research endeavors in the form of a thesis or dissertation. I will, generally, serve as the discussion leader for this fourth phase of each seminar. Anticipate lots of questions. Use the following template to prepare for each seminar discussion.

1. What was the author's purpose in presenting this theoretical discussion, critical essay, or empirical study?
2. Did the author incorporate a theoretical basis or rationale for the basis of the current work -- a body of theory from which the current work was derived?
3. What questions were asked either implicitly or explicitly? Were these questions answered?
4. Were the research methods (if an empirical study) the most appropriate given the author's stated purpose? Why? What, if the methods seem inappropriate? Would you suggest more appropriate methods?
5. Was there a clear articulation of how data would be analyzed? Were there clear linkages between theory, method, and data analysis? If the reading was pure theory, what methods might one incorporate to utilize this perspective for actual research? What might data look like?

6. Did the analysis of data seem logical? Was the analysis consistent with what you know about the appropriateness of various analytic techniques?
7. Was the discussion adequate? Were major issues raised at the beginning of the discussion addressed and brought to closure?
8. Could the writing be improved in any way? How?
9. What does the article or study contribute to our knowledge in this area?
10. What follow-up writing and research would you suggest?

**X. Weekly Itinerary** (subject to modification)

Aug. 30 Relocate. Introductions, orientation, readings, syllabus. Taking stock of who we are. Semester goals. Begin, practice, and complete Writing Skills Exercise.

**Introduction**

Sept. 06 The Sociology of Reality Construction. Read: Morris; BPT: Introduction.  
Due: Writing Skills Exercise (Submit via “Assignment” tool, WebCampus).

13 Meet at Pioche Room, Lied Library, Suzy Skarl, Orientation to Databases and Resources.  
M. Weber. Read: Ritzer & Goodman.

20 G. H. Mead. Read: Mead.

27 H. Blumer. Read: Blumer. Read Blumer.  
Due: Working Bibliography.

Oct. 04 Critiques of Symbolic Interaction. Read: Schwartz & Jacobs.  
Due: Final Paper Question.

**Symbolic Interaction and Media**

11 Goffman and McLuhan. Read: Meyrowitz.  
Due: Abstracts 1 & 2.

18 Symbolic Interaction & Uses and Gratifications. Read: Altheide; BPT Chapter 4.  
Due: Abstracts 3 & 4.

Note: This is the week of the third presidential debate, held on the UNLV campus. Faculty and staff have been informed that campus access will be severely hampered due to visiting press and security. We will meet this week, but we will need to determine an off-campus location for our gathering.

**Exemplar Studies – Symbolic Interaction, other Perspectives, and Audience Research**

25 Media Ethnography. Read: BPT Chapter 3 & Chapter 6.  
Due: Abstracts 5 & 6.

- Nov. 01 Research on Families. Read: BPT Chapter 8.  
Due: Abstracts 7 & 8.
- 08 Hermeneutical Approach to Media Participation. Read: BPT: Chapter 11.  
Due: Abstracts 9 & 10.
- 15 Imagined Communities of Television Viewers: Reception Research on National and Ethnic Minority Audiences. Read: BPT: Chapter 5.  
Due: Final Paper Outline
- 22 Articulating media activities on social media platforms. Fandom. Read: BPT: Chapter 1 and Chapter 13.
- 29 Film Audiences. BPT: Chapter 7.  
Due: Final Paper Drafts
- Dec. 06 Final thoughts. Future directions. BPT: Chapter 13.
- 13 Final Examination Period.  
Due: Final Papers: 6:00 p.m.

## **XI. UNLV Policies**

Student Conduct: Students who enroll at UNLV agree to abide by policies governing academic conduct. Those policies are provided via a link below. Students are strongly encouraged to read these policies.

<https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/misconduct/policy>

Plagiarism: All abstracts and final paper assignments will be analyzed via Turnitin, a plagiarism software that compares your written assignment to literally billions of webpages and student papers. Plagiarism is when you represent someone else's writing as your own. Plagiarism is a major violation of student conduct and results in harsh penalties. Students caught plagiarizing will be reported to UNLV's Office of Student Conduct, will be administratively dropped from the course, and will receive an "F" grade for the semester. Avoid problems with plagiarism by making sure that all your writing is original, that you provide proper punctuation when quoting or paraphrasing another author's published work. Here's a simple guide to help you:

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/TM/curr390\\_guide.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/TM/curr390_guide.shtml)

DRC: The instructors in this course abide with UNLV policies relative to student learning disabilities. Students who are working with DRC personnel and can provide accommodation documentation should contact the professor early in the semester in order to manage special writing or testing needs.

**Incomplete Grades**—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

**XII. Grading Written Work – Code Sheet:** The following items represent a standardized system used in the evaluation of your writing. This system facilitates the process of noting common errors in writing and content. This process hastens grading of any mistakes in style and mechanics and allows more time for concentrating on what you say rather than how you try to say it. You will observe a series of numerical codes on your paper when any written work is returned – unless it’s a perfect paper in terms of mechanics and style. Simply refer to the codes below to discover the nature of your infraction. Note: This code sheet differs slightly from the one found in the WebCampus folder for the first week’s assignment – “Writing Skills Exercise”. The guide in the WebCampus folder is one I use in all undergraduate courses. The one found here has a few additional items more attuned to work in graduate seminars.

1. All or portion of assigned paper not typewritten. All or portion of paper not double-spaced. -10
2. Incorrect Spelling. -2
3. Incorrect punctuation. -2
4. Incorrect use of possessive punctuation, or missing possessive punctuation (e.g., its, it's, woman's). -5  
When is it its? When it’s not it is. When is it it’s? When it is it is.
5. Should be capitalized, or incorrect use of capitalization (e.g., internet, iPod). -2
6. Improper noun/verb agreement. -2

For example, many writers improperly use the noun media as a singular noun. Similarly, many writers use the noun data as a singular noun. Both of these nouns are plural. Below are some examples of proper usage:

- “The mass media are very powerful.”
- “The data reveal that children are susceptible to television’s powerful messages.”
- “Does media coverage of criminal trials undermine the legal process?”

In this case, media is not the subject. Coverage is the subject and the word *does* refers to coverage, not media.

7. Awkward phrase or sentence construction. -2

Often, this infraction is noted for passive sentence constructions. A passive sentence construction buries the noun and verb, as opposed to placing them at or near the front of the sentence. Ideally, noun and verb should be next to each other in a sentence. Below is an example of a passive sentence construction:

“Upon hearing of the grading policy, the students decided to work harder.”

Here’s an example of an active sentence structure for the same sentence:

“The students decided to work harder upon hearing of the grading policy.”

Yet another example of awkward sentence structuring is the use of prepositions to end a sentence. Prepositions are words like near, upon, above, in, below, and after. Try to avoid ending sentences with a preposition. Below is an example.

“The student tried to find out what class he was in.”

Here's an example of how to restructure this kind of sentence.

"The student tried to find out in which class he had enrolled."

8. Non-parallel verb tenses. -2

9. Not a sentence. -2

10. Incorrect word choice. -2

11. Avoid, in the future, sexist referencing. Eliminate the use of he or she as a reference for the generic third person. Of course, these references are appropriate when dealing with a specific person. No points penalized.

12. Improper referencing of program materials, or improper referencing of printed materials (newspapers and magazines should be underlined, radio and television programs should be set off in quotation marks or italics). -2

13. Quoted or paraphrased material implies references to outside source(s). Where's the proper citation? -2

14. Quoted material in excess of four typewritten lines should be block indented. -2

15. One quote or source does not support the claims for a statement of this magnitude. -2

Graduate students should learn that one source does not a major argument make (e.g., "Research has shown that children learn from television."). Two citations is better, three or more the norm.

16. Turn off the right justify feature on your computer. Your document's margins should line up in a straight line on the left hand side only. No penalty.

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**XI. UNLV Policies:** The UNLV Provost posts a set of course policies to all faculties. We are asked to forward those policies to you. Below is a recent copy of that memo in full:

**Academic Misconduct**—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

**Copyright**—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)**—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Expected Learning Outcomes** – All syllabi should include discussion of learning outcomes for the course.

**Grading/Exams/Grade Posting** – All syllabi should clearly indicate processes for grading, exams and grade posting. In keeping with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), grades should not be posted unless you can ensure complete confidentiality for individual students. Please remember that Social Security numbers are not adequate protection of privacy. The preferred method for posting grades is to assign random numbers to the students and scramble the listings so that they are not in alphabetical order.

**Religious Holidays Policy**—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor **within** the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or **within** the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Transparency in Learning and Teaching**—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

### **University Library**

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is Susie Skarl ([https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians\\_by\\_subject](https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject)). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.



**Tutoring and Coaching**—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

NOTE: Students who represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity shall also have the opportunity to make up assignments, but the student must provide official written notification to the instructor no less than one week prior to the missed class(es).

**This policy shall not apply in the event that completing the assignment or administering the examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university that could reasonably have been avoided. There should be good faith effort by both faculty and student to come to a reasonable resolution. When disagreements regarding this policy do arise, they can be appealed to the department chair/unit director, college/school dean, and/or the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee.**

**For purposes of definition, extracurricular activities may include, but are not limited to; band, drama, intercollegiate athletics, recruitment, and any other activity sanctioned by a college/school dean, and/or the Executive Vice President and Provost.**

**Rebelmail**—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always [@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:@unlv.nevada.edu). **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

**UNLV Writing Center UNLV Writing Center**—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

**Final Examinations**—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

Thank you for reviewing these items. Have a great semester!

In addition, I have added one additional policy consistent with School procedures.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes grades are only awarded when students meet both of the following criteria: the student can document medical or social hardship *and* over 80 percent of required course activity has been completed satisfactorily with a cumulative passing grade. The awarding of incomplete grades is made more complicated by the nature of online distance education courses. As a general rule, this online course is not offered every semester.

#### References

- Heffernan, J., & Lincoln, J., (1982). *Writing: A college handbook*. New York: W. W. Norton.  
Biggs, J. B. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).