Course description: This course “examines research methods in and theories of mass communication in the context of the practice of journalism and public relations in a democratic society. A research paper provides students with practice applying specific methods and theories to explore contemporary issues in journalism and public relations.” Prerequisites: JOUR 350 and JOUR 351; and major status.

Office hours: Mondays: noon-2 p.m.; Tuesdays: 1-3 p.m. Also, I have space reserved in the library some Thursdays from 1-3 p.m. for meetings with Senior Seminar students specifically. A full schedule will be forthcoming.

What's in it for you? In Senior Seminar, we will explore together the philosophical and theoretical bases of different approaches to research as we investigate the relationship between mass communication and culture. You will become familiar with the academic research process in the humanities and social sciences. Through this process, you will become a critical consumer of mass media content and a more thoughtful practitioner in your field. Finally, this course will offer the opportunity for you to reflect on your years of university education and what your degree means by examining topics related to your sequence in the major.

Course Goals:
• Our primary goal is to understand the ways that journalism and public relations are social institutions with associated roles and responsibilities. Parts of the process include:
  • Understanding some of the major theoretical concepts in journalism and public relations and the methods used to conduct that research.
  • Applying theoretical concepts and methods in a critical examination of professional norms in journalism, PR, and visual journalism in ways that promote reflective practice.
  • To make explicit connections between theory and practice and between academic and professional research (i.e. newsgathering and PR research).
  • To create a deeply researched written work of scholarship.

Course structure: This is a seminar course, which means much of our work will be student-driven. The course will consist of class discussion, student-led sessions and research presentations. These activities will provide guiding steps toward the completion of your awesome final projects. This type of course requires commitment, engagement and collaboration among the professor and students. I pledge to offer you my attention, ample feedback and guidance. I hope you will come prepared with an open mind to explore
alternate points of view. Success in this course depends on punctual attendance, meeting deadlines, class participation and a willingness to grow.

This quarter, we are taking part in a series of workshops offered by the Learning Commons titled “Integrating Academic Literacies: Research and Writing. These strategy-based workshops address key dimensions of research-based writing and span critical junctures in the inquiry-composing process.

**Success criteria:**
- Critique of Classmate paper draft 10%
- Graded Canvas prompts on readings 15%
- Group oral presentation on one theory 20%
- Preliminary steps toward final paper 25%
- Research Paper, including fabulously designed presentation 30%

**Required Texts:**
- Course readings as posted to Canvas

**Major assignments:**

**Research Paper:** You will apply a theoretical approach to a research topic of your choosing. You will spend a large amount of time throughout the quarter writing the final 14-page paper. It is an important part of your grade and deserves your best effort.

**Preliminary steps toward final paper:** You will have a series of smaller reflective writing tasks that will guide you through the research process. Completing these steps will contribute greatly to the quality of your research paper.

**Theory Presentation:** Pairs of students will be responsible for leading the class discussion on a theory for a chosen week. This involves meeting with me ahead of time to formulate a lesson plan, class readings and discussion questions.

**Grading scale:** (A) = 94-100%, (A-) = 90-93%, (B+) = 87-89%, (B) = 83-86%, (B-) = 80-82%, (C+) = 77-79%, (C) = 73-76%, (C-) = 70-72%, (D+) 67-69%, (D) = 64-66%, (D-) = 60-63%, (F) = below 59%

**Attendance/Deadlines:** We can’t succeed without your presence and participation. Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than three classes (15% of the class meetings) without documented and serious extenuating circumstances will result in automatic failure for the quarter. Talk to me early if you are having problems. Similarly, major assignments are due on the date assigned and will be docked one grade for each day late. Smaller assignments (online prompts, etc.) are due at deadline and can’t be made up.
**Academic integrity:** WWU students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following the policy and procedures regarding academic dishonesty as set forth in the WWU Academic Dishonesty Policy and Procedure (see Appendix D of the University Bulletin). If you are in this class, you’re close to the end. *Don’t blow it now.*

**R-E-S-P-E-C-T:** We can all learn from one another when the classroom functions as a learning community. We achieve that by showing respect for one another, especially when personal differences are at issue. The university setting is one in which new ideas and perspectives are openly explored. Mutual respect for everyone is key to ensuring a safe environment that promotes learning for all students. On a small level, this means giving each other our full attention and staying off our smartphones, etc. On a larger level, this means adhering to Western’s commitment to creating an environment free of discrimination and harassment. Federal and State laws, as well as University policies, protect faculty, staff, and students against discrimination based on the following legally protected characteristics: Race, Color, Creed, Religion, National Origin, Sex (including pregnancy and parenting status), Age, Disability, Marital Status, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, Genetic Information and Veteran Status.

**Disability resources:** Reasonable accommodation for people with documented disabilities should be arranged the first week of class through Disability Resources for Students: telephone 650-3083; email drs@wwu.edu or visit www.wwu.edu/depts/drs.

**Student services:** Western encourages students to seek assistance and support at the onset of an illness, difficulty, or crisis. Please turn to our resident experts for help:

- In the case of a medical concern or question, please contact the Health Center: 650-3400 or visit Student Health.
- In the case of an emotional or psychological concern or question, please contact the Counseling Center: 650-3400 or visit Counseling Center.
- In the case of a health and safety concern, please contact the University Police: 650-3555 or visit University Police.
- In the case of a family or personal crisis or emergency, please contact the Dean of Students: 650-3450 or visit Dean of Students.
**Course Schedule:** This schedule is likely to be adjusted based on the needs of the class as we progress through the steps toward your final paper. Students are responsible for the changes, which will be communicated via Canvas and in class.

- **9/22:** Course introduction, policies, etc. Setting course norms. Overview of some of the big questions. Sign up for theory presentations.
- **9/27:** What is theory? Reading: Griffin ch. 1 & 2, Lasswell’s model. Start brainstorming final project ideas. Break into small groups by track (News/Ed, VJ, PR).
  - **9/29:** Getting Started workshop in Haggard Hall 222 with Shevell Thibou. *Project topic reflection due.*
- **10/4:** Objective vs. interpretive theory. Reading: Griffin ch. 3 & 4. Narrowing down project ideas.
  - **10/6:** Finding and Using Sources: October 6th also in Haggard Hall 222 with Shevell and Paul Piper. Theory presentation preparation. *Final research question due.*
- **10/11:** *Who?* Theory presentation: Hierarchy of Influences, Worlds of Journalism
  - **10/13:** Zotero training with Gabe Gossett from WWU Libraries. Meet in 222 Haggard Hall. Bring laptop.
- **10/20:** *Says What?* continued. Theory Presentation: Semiotics.
- **10/25:** To Whom? Theory Presentation: Audience Theory. Read: McQuail, chapter 15).
- **10/27:** In what channel? Theory Presentation: Media ecology *Research design due.*
- **11/1:** With what effect? Theory Presentation: Agenda Setting.
- **11/8:** One-on-one meetings w/ BJB (Final paper outline due at meeting)
- **11/10:** One-on-one meetings w/ BJB continue. *Literature review due.*
- **11/15:** Paper workshop day. Discuss and work on presentations.
- **11/17:** Rough draft of paper due on Canvas. Classmate critiques in class (bring hard copy).
  - **11/22:** Revising and editing workshop, 222 Haggard Hall, with Shevell.
11/24: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING
• 11/29: Final presentations
• 12/1: Final presentations, continued.
• 12/2 (Friday) Final paper due at 11:59 p.m.

* Starred classes meet in the 222 Haggard Hall