

Professional Development

JRSM 4950 M50

Spring 2026

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and by appointment

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Development of professional skills while completing a journalism or strategic media work experience.

Prerequisites

None.

Textbooks

None.

Classroom format

This class is completely online and all assignments will be delivered through Canvas.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM 4950 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

Grading

In JRSM 4950, final grades of A-F will be calculated using the formula listed below.

Quizzes 40%

Professional Headshot 30%

Career Services Checklist 30%

Students will complete quizzes covering each module's content, including lecture notes, videos and linked resources. Additionally, students are responsible for submitting a current professional headshot and a Career Services Checklist completed in collaboration with either the dedicated CCFA Career Services Specialist or another member of the Career Services staff. Students must contact the Career Services Specialist in advance to schedule a meeting during which they will complete their checklist. **Do not wait until the final weeks to schedule your meeting – you have all semester to do so.**

Earning an A for any of these components denotes exemplary performance. This means your Professional

Headshot was of a high quality and reflects industry-level expectations and your Career Services Checklist was thorough and thoughtfully completed. Similarly, a B denotes above average performance, C satisfactory, D below average and F unsatisfactory.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module One, Jan. 20 – Feb. 8: Resume + Portfolio

Effective resumes, online portfolios, positioning yourself and your work, maintenance and updates
Assignments: Quiz 1

Module Two, Feb. 9 – March 1: Networking + Job Hunting

Making connections, elevator pitches, professional organizations, the job hunt, interview skills, LinkedIn
Assignments: Quiz 2

Module Three, March 2 – 22: Navigating the Workplace

Appearance, verbal and electronic communication, collaboration software, etiquette, handling conflict, Title VII, promotion and advancement
Assignments: Quiz 3

Module Four, March 23 – April 12: Personal Business

Freelancing, contracts and billing, writing checks, budgeting, taxes
Assignments: Quiz 4

Module Five, April 13 – 29: Conclusion

Mental health, next steps
Assignments: Professional Headshot and Career Services Checklist

ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

Professional Values and Competencies in JRSM 4950

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by

methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work

- Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

How professional values and competencies will be met

Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)

- Think critically about pre-professional presentation and how to position oneself on the job or internship market
- Understand professional expectations and the skills needed to navigate workplace environments as a confident employee, team member or freelancer
- Examine personal business concepts as they relate to insurance coverage, taxes and other administrative needs

Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)

- Recall module concepts through scenario-based quiz questions.
- Produce an industry-level quality headshot to better position themselves in competitive job or internship markets
- Collaborate with Career Services Specialist to identify key strategies for resume improvements and interview preparation

How assessment of student learning will be met

Awareness

- Become aware of professional expectations and how to navigate the workplace.
- Become aware of various professional organizations and online platforms and how these can be resources for professional development.

Understanding

- Understand their own strengths, areas of improvement and how to present themselves.
- Understand the nuances of professional verbal and electronic communication and workplace dynamics.

Application

- Creation or updating of personal professional materials, including resumes, portfolio websites and LinkedIn pages.
- One-on-one consulting session with the CCFA Career Services Specialist

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use

WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

Online SETEs

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Diversity and inclusivity

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

Weather policy

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.

Student support

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.