

Global Digital Cultures (JMC:6333:0002), Fall 2024
Thursdays 2:30–5 p.m., E254 AJB

Professor: Brian Ekdale (he/him), brian-ekdale@uiowa.edu

Drop-in hours: Tuesday from 1:30–3:30pm & Thursday from 1–2pm or by appointment

Drop-in location: E324 AJB and on Zoom (<https://uiowa.zoom.us/my/bekdale>)

Supervisor: Associate Dean Christopher Cheatum, christopher-cheatum@uiowa.edu

SJMC DEO: Professor Melissa Tully, E332 AJB, melissa-tully@uiowa.edu

Course Description: In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams describes culture as “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.” This was before social justice groups became synonymous with hashtags, international diplomacy was negotiated over social media, and personalization algorithms were implicated in promoting genocide.

Taking inspiration from Williams, this graduate seminar will take a “keywords” approach to understanding digital media in a global context. From affordances to platform governance to creator culture, we will discuss seminal research on digital and social media as well as more recent efforts to understand the relationship between technology and society around the world. Cultural studies will be our primary orientation, but we also will engage with relevant scholarship from critical theorists and social scientists as well as contemporary news coverage.

In this seminar, you are expected to participate in weekly discussions, submit reading response briefs, write a publishable book review, and produce a research paper or project proposal based on a topic of your choosing related to digital media.

Textbook/Materials. There is no required textbook for this course. All required readings will be posted on ICON as PDFs or links.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is dedicated to equity, anti-racism and social justice. A fuller statement of this commitment can be found [here](#). We strive to serve our students well in this regard, and consider diversity, equity, and inclusion as social resources that inform our learning environment. We train our students to achieve cultural competency across the diversity of groups that inhabit our global society. Among other things, this involves enhancing students’ ability to communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds and experiences. In our classes, we discuss these themes through the concepts of media representations, bias and resulting stereotypes, and the effects of discrimination and structural inequalities as they pertain to all aspects of the media, from foundational concepts to advanced professional and graduate training. In accord with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, and the dictates of academic freedom, we support an open discussion of all relevant viewpoints, even those with which we disagree. We encourage conversation that is based on facts and documentation, and on a mutual respect for one another.

What about “The Canon?” This is a graduate seminar at a research-intensive university, so it is reasonable to ask whether the readings were selected from The Great Canon of media and communication research. My answer is that the assigned readings were selected to provide a diversity of voices and approaches to the topics being discussed. While there is no singular Canon in our field, what passes as canonical typically privileges the views of old/dead white men from wealthy countries (e.g., Baugh-Harris & Wanzer-Serrano, 2018; Chakravartty et al., 2018; Chakravartty &

Jackson, 2020). Scholarly knowledge is more interesting than that. I have sought to put together a list of assigning readings authored by scholars who hold a variety of gender, racial, and national identities as well as scholarship that is engaged with many different parts of the world. As such, this syllabus is my (admittedly incomplete) attempt to expand our understanding of what the field can and should be.

That said, every collection of readings has a bias and this syllabus is no exception. In particular, this syllabus has a recency bias as I sought to assign some of the latest research published in this area. In addition, I was also careful not to assign any particular author more than once to ensure we are reading from a diversity of voices.

Learning Objectives. The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified 12 specific learning goals for the SJMC curriculum. I have bolded the learning goals that I will emphasize in this course:

We learn to ...

- ***Write correctly and clearly***
- ***Conduct research and evaluate information critically***
- ***Present images and information effectively***
- ***Use media tools and technologies appropriately***
- *Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts accurately*
- *Evaluate work for accuracy, fairness, style, and clarity*
- *Create audience-aware, culturally responsive communication*

We explore ...

- ***The multicultural history of media professionals and institutions***
- ***The role of media in shaping cultures***

We value ...

- ***The First Amendment and free speech***
- ***Equity and inclusion for a diverse global community***
- ***Ethical principles in pursuit of truth, accuracy and fairness***

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation (20%): The success of any seminar depends on the participation of its students. Therefore, you will be graded on your attendance, preparedness, contribution, and cooperation.

- **Attendance** means showing up. Simply put, you should be in seminar. If you have a legitimate reason for arriving late, leaving early, or missing class, please discuss this with me before the start of class.
- **Preparedness** means completing all assigned readings prior to the start of class. While I encourage you to draw from your individual experiences and areas of expertise, our discussions should be centered on the theories and concepts explored in the weekly readings.

- Contribution means sharing your ideas. Each of you offers a unique perspective based on your beliefs, upbringing, and areas of expertise. Therefore, it is important that you share your thoughts, opinions, and reactions with each other.
- Cooperation means working well with others. A seminar should be a place where everyone feels comfortable sharing their views, even if those views are uncommon or unpopular. At the same time, you must always be aware of how your words and actions affect those around you. Intolerance, antagonism, and demagoguery have no place in the healthy exchange of ideas.

Reading Response Briefs (10%): To help spark in-class discussion, each week you will write a response brief to the required readings. In your response, I want you to (1) identify the reading that resonated with you the most (i.e., the argument was most provocative, the evidence was most persuasive, the writing was most compelling, etc.) and briefly state what you appreciated about the reading and (2) identify the reading that resonated with you the least (i.e., the argument was least provocative, the evidence was least persuasive, the writing was least compelling, etc.) and briefly state what you didn't appreciate about the reading. These briefs should demonstrate that you understand the readings, you've grappled with their arguments, and you are able to clearly communicate your ideas. I am less interested in the quality of your prose than the thoughtfulness of your critiques. Therefore, your response to each article may take the form of a paragraph or a series of bullet points. Upload your response briefs to ICON at least an hour before the start of class.

- Sometimes life gets in the way and things don't work out as planned. Because of this, everyone gets 2 "free passes" on the reading response briefs. I have scheduled 12 weeks of topics with assigned readings. You are expected to submit at least 10 briefs during the semester.
- These are low stakes writing assignments intended to generate discussion during seminar. As such, they will be graded as follows:
 - *Full credit: Demonstrates thoughtful engagement with the readings*
 - *Half credit: Does not demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the readings*
 - *No credit: Missing*

Book Review (20%): Select a recent academic book about digital (published within the last three years) written by a scholar based in, identifies with, and/or focuses on the Global South. You should select a scholarly book that is relevant to the course, your research interests, and that would be suitable to submit as a book review to a relevant journal. You will propose your book by week 5 of the semester for approval. While you are not required to submit your review to a journal, you are encouraged to do so. In addition to the written review, you will provide a short presentation in seminar on the book, including its strengths and limitations. More details on the assignment will be given in week 3.

Research Project (50%): Each of you will develop an original research project that explores a topic of your own choosing. This scholarship should demonstrate your ability to apply course concepts to your individual research agenda. For this project, you have two options:

1. Produce a "conference ready" research paper that examines media content. This paper should include an introduction; a review of relevant literature; a description of your research puzzle or research question(s); an explanation of your methodology; a findings/analysis section; and a discussion/conclusion section that summarizes the significance of this

research. This paper should be approximately 20-pages long (double-spaced, 12pt font, 1-inch margins).

2. Propose a “field ready” research study that involves human subjects. This proposal should include an introduction, a literature review, and a description of your research puzzle/question(s) and methodology. This proposal should be approximately 10-pages long (double-spaced, 12pt font, 1-inch margins). In lieu of a findings/analysis/discussion section, you must prepare a HawkIRB application for human subjects review, including subject recruitment documentation (e.g. recruitment email, etc.) and data collection instruments (e.g. interview protocols, surveys, etc.). You are not required to submit your IRB protocol for review, but you must prepare and turn in to me all of the required documentation (including relevant recruitment materials and interview protocols).

In addition to submitting your research project at the end of the semester, you must also:

- Submit a 500- to 750-word research proposal, describing your proposed topic, justifying its significant, and stating if you plan to submit a full paper or a project proposal. In your proposal, you will want to briefly review relevant literature, present a research puzzle or pose one or more research questions, and propose methods for solving this puzzle or answering these questions. The proposal is due by the start of class on Week 7.
- Share your research project with your peers in a formal, in-class presentation during class on Week 14 or 15. This 10- to 12-minute presentation should approximate a presentation at an academic conference. I will cut off any presentation longer than 12 minutes, so please ensure that you practice in advance. We will have a brief Q&A session following each presentation.

Grading Scale:

A	93–100	B-	80–82	D+	67–69
A-	90–92	C+	77–79	D	63–66
B+	87–89	C	73–76	D-	60–62
B	83–86	C-	70–72	F	59 and below

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Readings are listed in a suggested reading order.

Week 1 (8/29) – Introductions

- Szulc, Ł. (2023). Culture is transnational. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 26(1), 3-15.

Week 2 (9/5) – Global Media Studies

- Mishra, S. (2019). “Transnational Media: Key Concepts and Theories.” In S. Mishra & R. Kern-Stone (eds), *Transnational media: Concepts and cases* (pp. 13-25). Medford, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- McMillin, D. (2007). *International media studies*. John Wiley & Sons. (ch. 3, “Connecting Structure and Culture in International Media Studies”)
- Harindranath, R., & Gómez-Cruz, E. (2023). Beyond concepts as tokens: heuristic value and epistemic politics in the study of digital subalterns. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 16(4), 228-234.
- Demeter, M. (2020). *Academic knowledge production and the Global South*. (ch. 2, “The Stories Are Written by the Victors: Theoretical Considerations”)

Week 3 (9/12) – Affordances

- Davis, J. L. (2020). *How artifacts afford: The power and politics of everyday things*. MIT Press. (ch. 2, “A Brief History of Affordances”)
- Shaw, A. (2017). Encoding and decoding affordances: Stuart Hall and interactive media technologies. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(4), 592–602.
- Darling-Wolf, F. (2021). In the city, they go “pit pit pit”: Digital media’s affordances and imagined (dis) connections in a rural Japanese community. *New Media & Society*, 23(7), 1863-1881.
- Bonini, T., Treré, E., Yu, Z., Singh, S., Cargnelutti, D., & López-Ferrández, F. J. (2024). Cooperative affordances: How instant messaging apps afford learning, resistance and solidarity among food delivery workers. *Convergence*, 30(1), 554-571.

Week 4 (9/19) – Data Colonialism

- Couldry, N., & Mejas, U. A. (2020). *The costs of connection: How data are colonizing human life and appropriating it for capitalism*. (“Preface: Colonized by Data”)
- Valente, J. C., & Grohmann, R. (2024). Critical data studies with Latin America: Theorizing beyond data colonialism. *Big Data & Society*, 11(1).
- Horst, H. A., Sargent, A., & Gaspard, L. (2024). Beyond extraction: Data strategies from the Global South. *New Media & Society*, 26(3), 1366-1383.
- Seto, K. S. (2024). Platform sub-imperialism. *Big Data & Society*, 11(2).

Week 5 (9/26) – Platform Governance

- Gorwa, R. (2019). What is platform governance? *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(6), 854-871.
- Flew, T. (2021). *Regulating platforms*. John Wiley & Sons. (ch. 5, “Platform Regulation and Governance”)

- Li, L., & Zhou, K. (2024). When content moderation is not about content: How Chinese social media platforms moderate content and why it matters. *New Media & Society*, 14614448241263933.
- De Gregorio, G., & Strelau, N. (2023). Inequalities and content moderation. *Global Policy*, 14(5), 870-879.

Week 6 (10/3) – Doing Research

- Smith, L.T. (2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*, 3rd edition. New York: Zed Books. (Ch. 2, “Research Through Imperial Eyes”)
- Brock, A. (2018). Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 1012-1030.
- Caliandro, A. (2018). Digital methods for ethnography: Analytical concepts for ethnographers exploring social media environments. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 47(5), 551–578.
- Abidin, C. (2021). From “networked publics” to “refracted publics”: A companion framework for researching “below the radar” studies. *Social Media + Society*, 7(1).

Week 7 (10/10) – Journalism

- Nielsen, R. K., & Ganter, S. A. (2022). *The power of platforms: Shaping media and society*. Oxford University Press. (ch. 1, “The Rise of Platforms”)
- Peterson-Salahuddin, C. (2021). Opening the gates: Defining a model of intersectional journalism. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 38(5), 391-407.
- Mehendale, S. G., & Jaggi, R. K. (2023). Remedying the fractured domain through slow journalism: A case of journalistic podcasting in India. *Media International Australia*, 187(1), 57-72.
- Nothias, T. (2024). Critique-in-the-loop of news production. *Journalism*, Advanced online publication.

Week 8 (10/17) – Information Disorder

- Wardle, C. (2018). The need for smarter definitions and practical, timely empirical research on information disorder. *Digital Journalism*, 6(8), 951-963.
- Hall, N. A., Chadwick, A., & Vaccari, C. (2024). Online misinformation and everyday ontological narratives of social distinction. *Media, Culture & Society*, 46(3), 572-590.
- Koliska, M., & Roberts, J. (2024). Epistemology of fact checking: An examination of practices and beliefs of fact checkers around the world. *Digital Journalism*, Advanced online publication.
- Ong, J. C., & Tapsell, R. (2022). Demystifying disinformation shadow economies: fake news work models in Indonesia and the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 32(3), 251-267.

Week 9 (10/24) – Harassment

- Riedl, M. J., El-Masri, A., Trauthig, I. K., & Woolley, S. C. (2024). Infrastructural platform violence: How women and queer journalists and activists in Lebanon experience abuse on WhatsApp. *New Media & Society*, Advanced online publication.
- Dodds, T., Geboers, M., & Boukes, M. (2024). “It became no man’s land”: The burden of moderating online harassment in newswork. *Journalism Practice*, Advanced online publication.

- Walulya, G., & Selnes, F. N. (2023). “I thought you are beautiful”: Uganda women journalists’ tales of mob violence on social media. *Digital Journalism*, 11(10), 1962-1981.
- Heung, S., Jiang, L., Azenkot, S., & Vashistha, A. (2024, May). “Vulnerable, victimized, and objectified”: Understanding ableist hate and harassment experienced by disabled content creators on social media. In *Proceedings of the CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*.

Week 10 (10/31) – Platform Labor

- Anwar, M. A., & Graham, M. (2022). *The digital continent: Placing Africa in planetary networks of work*. Oxford University Press. (ch. 6, “Resilience, Reworking, and Resistance: Hidden Transcripts of the Gig Economy”)
- Posada, J. (2022). Embedded reproduction in platform data work. *Information, Communication & Society*, 25(6), 816-834.
- Soriano, C. R. (2023). Solidarity and resistance meet social enterprise: The social logic of alternative cloudwork platforms. *International Journal of Communication*, 17.
- Qadri, R. (2023). Algorithmized not atomized: The distributed solidarity of Jakarta’s gig workers. *International Journal of Communication*, 17.

Week 11 (11/7) – Artificial Intelligence

- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Goyanes, M., & Durotoye, T. (2024). A scholarly definition of artificial intelligence (AI): Advancing AI as a conceptual framework in communication research. *Political Communication*, 41(2), 317-334.
- de-Lima-Santos, M. F., Yeung, W. N., & Dodds, T. (2024). Guiding the way: a comprehensive examination of AI guidelines in global media. *AI & SOCIETY*, Advanced online publication.
- Gondwe, G. (2024). Artificial intelligence, journalism, and the Ubuntu robot in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards a normative framework. *Digital Journalism*, Advanced online publication.
- Medrado, A., & Verdegem, P. (2024). Participatory action research in critical data studies: Interrogating AI from a South–North approach. *Big Data & Society*, 11(1).

Week 12 (11/14) – Activism

- Etter, M., & Albu, O. B. (2021). Activists in the dark: Social media algorithms and collective action in two social movement organizations. *Organization*, 28(1), 68-91.
- Varma, A., & Shaban, S. (2024). Conceptualizing feminist solidarity through resistance in the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 17(2), 120-126.
- Cui, J. (2023). The (de)-politicization of Internet memes in Chinese national youth propaganda campaign. *Information, Communication & Society*, Advanced online publication.
- Kreiss, D., & McGregor, S. C. (2024). A review and provocation: On polarization and platforms. *New Media & Society*, 26(1), 556-579.

Week 13 (11/21) – Creator Culture

- Mehta, S., & Kaye, D. B. V. (2021). Pushing the next level: Investigating digital content creation in India. *Television & New Media*, 22(4), 360-378.

- Arriagada, A., & Craig, D. (2024). Living my Latin American influencer dream: How racism and nationality shape Latin American influencers within the US. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Advanced online publication.
- Ye, Z., Huang, Q., & Krijnen, T. (2024). Douyin's playful platform governance: Platform's self-regulation and content creators' participatory surveillance. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Advanced online publication.
- Bishop, S. (2023). Influencer creep: How artists strategically navigate the platformisation of art worlds. *New Media & Society*, Advanced online publication.

Week 14 (12/5) – Final Project Presentations

No Assigned Readings

Week 15 (12/12) – Final Project Presentations

No Assigned Readings

Finals Week

Research Project due Wednesday, December 18 by 5pm

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism and academic misconduct occurs when a student presents ideas and/or words that are not her own. It is academic fraud. Clear evidence of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly the course. Per college policy, I am required to report academic misconduct to the departmental DEO.

According to the University of Iowa Academic Policies, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Presenting ideas from sources that you do not credit
- Using direct quotations without quotation marks and/or without credit to the source
- Paraphrasing information and ideas from sources without credit to the source
- Failing to provide adequate citations for material obtained through electronic research
- Downloading and submitting work from electronic databases without citation
- Submitting material written by the student for a previous course at this or any other institution
- Submitting material written by someone else as one's own, including purchased papers

While you are permitted to use AI programs (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard, Copilot) to help generate ideas for your research and to proofread and copyedit your writing, you may not use it to generate brief or extended passages of texts that you submit as if it were your own work. Submitting any written assignments (including response briefs) that include textual or visual material created by generative

AI but not based in your original writing constitutes academic misconduct. Doing so will result in a 0 for the assignment and a required meeting with the professor.

If you use writing assistance programs to proofread and copyedit your work (e.g., Grammarly), I encourage you to save versions of your assignments before and after using these assistive tools. That will help us resolve any questions about whether the ideas and words you have submitted are indeed your original work.

In academia (as well as professional journalism), your reputation and success are dependent on your professional integrity. Any lapses, great or small, can irrevocably damage your reputation and, in turn, your career. I would much rather you miss a deadline or turn in subpar work than engage in any form of academic misconduct.

You are responsible for understanding this policy. If you have questions, please ask for clarification.

Additional university, college, departmental, and course policies

Attendance and Absences: University regulations require that students be allowed to make up examinations which have been missed due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances. Students with mandatory religious obligations or UI authorized activities must discuss their absences with me as soon as possible. Religious obligations must be communicated within the first three weeks of classes.

Exam Policies

School of Journalism and Mass Communication Resources

- [Find Your Path](#) – SJMC careers page
- [Journalism Student Center](#): on the third floor of Adler, find our internship coordinator, academic advisor, and peer mentors here
- School of Journalism and Mass Communication social media: [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#)
- [School of Journalism and Mass Communication labs](#): rooms and hours for our multimedia labs

Help with Classes and Careers

- [Center for Inclusive Academic Excellence](#): Support for historically marginalized and/or first-generation students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- [Writing Center](#): make in-person or online appointments for writing help
- [Tutor Iowa](#): Resources for all kinds of academic support
- [Career Center](#): help with jobs, internships, and other career services
- [Student Disability Services](#): help with course accommodations for students with disabilities

Health Support and Advocacy

- [University Counseling Service](#): mental health counseling support
- [Mental Health at Iowa](#): comprehensive list of resources including 24/7 support line
- [CommUnity Crisis Services](#): free, nonjudgmental emotional support to anyone who needs it via phone, chat or text
- [Student Health](#): Provides medical care to all University of Iowa students

- [Rape Victim Advocacy Program](#): Free, confidential care for people affected by sexual violence
- [Domestic Violence Intervention Program](#): Free services for people affected by domestic violence and dating violence

Food, Finances, and Other Basic Needs

- [Financial Aid Offices](#): support and information on loans and other financial support
- [Student Life Emergency Fund](#): support for students in a financial emergency
- [UI Food Pantry](#): free food for any student, staff, or faculty member at Iowa who needs it
- [Being Not Rich at Iowa](#): crowd-sourced resource guide by University of Iowa Student Government
- [Hawkeye Meal Share](#): you can request up to 14 free meals a semester from dining halls through Hawkeye Meal Share

Identity and Belonging

- [Pride House](#)
- [Afro-American Cultural House](#)
- [Asian Pacific American Cultural House](#)
- [International Student Support and Engagement](#)
- [Latino Native American Cultural Center](#)
- [Women's Resource and Action Center](#)

The Dean of Students also has a [master list](#) that has more campus resources for students. And the Division of Student Life has this page for [Basic Needs and Support](#).

University Policies

[Classroom Expectations](#)

[Exam Make-up Owing to Absence](#)

[Free Speech and Expression](#)

[Mental Health](#)

[Military Service Obligations](#)

[Non-discrimination](#)

[Religious Holy Days](#)

[Sexual Harassment/Misconduct and Supportive Measures](#)

[Sharing of Class Recordings](#)