**Combined Syllabus**

**AFAM 390 003; COMM 395 001 + 590 001, WMST 300. 005 + 550 002**

**Social Constructions of Black Health**

***Overarching Course Goals:***

Recognize and understand one’s values, identity, privilege and culture.

Use complex information from a variety of sources including personal, data, and observation to understand societal problems and the navigation thereof.

Work cooperatively with others, seeking their involvement and feedback.

Be an engaged and active collaborative learner

**Instructor**: **Akila-Ka Ma’at** Ph.D., (everyone). Assistant Professor in Dept. of Communication and Women and Gender Studies; Affiliate Faculty in African/African American Studies Program, [jwarre20@gmu.edu](mailto:jwarre20@gmu.edu). **Please call me Dr. Ma’at and I will try to address you by your preferred name too**.

**Office Hours**: **Please contact me anytime via email** if you have any questions or requests to share with me at [jwarre20@gmu.edu](mailto:jwarre20@gmu.edu) and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours Monday through Sunday. In addition, I am arranging to be available on **Wednesdays from 12-1pm** in person (Office Horizon Hall 5208). However, I am available as needed in person or via Zoom. Just email me if you want to arrange a meeting.

**Class Time****:** Our class will meet in person on **Mondays and** **Wednesdays 3:00-4:15 PM** in Lecture Hall 3. **Please communicate actively and responsively during our classes to create the high level of immediacy and engagement.**

**COVID-19 Safety Information:** Here are some safety guidelines provided by the university that you should follow: \*Mason Safe Return to Campus: <https://www2.gmu.edu/Safe-Return-Campus>

**Course Description**

Did you ever think that your perceptions, knowledge, beliefs, and experiences of disease and illness are formed in interaction with and between individuals, groups, and institutions that co-create what we know about and how we engage with sickness, health, and medical care?

Consider the Black man who needs pain medication for a legitimate injury and the physician who will not prescribe them because she assumes he is addicted to drugs based on a belief in the negative stereotypes touted within our society about Black men. How about Black pro football players who do not get the same coverage for head injuries as White players and the Black transgender female who is treated with indignation and reproach by staff at a physician’s office? The assumption is that Black players who go into pro football are already cognitively impaired. Black transgender people in many cases are reviled due to beliefs that they are an abomination of nature.

This knowledge about and the assumptions of Blacks and health evolve communicatively through various levels of social interactions. These interactions produce a perceived social reality and knowledge of disease and illness normatives that are taken up uncritically by the collective and individuals. It is critical that we deconstruct discourses of disease, and illness to counter deterministic ideations that maintain and propagate Black Health disparities and inequities.

This course will take on this deconstruction through an ecological lens. Social constructions are inherently situated within and shared through communication processes at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, communal, and organizational/institutional influenced macro-level influences, such as structural racism, which is also a social construction. We cover each level and how it contributes to social constructions of Black health. This process will engage students in slave narratives, media imagery, film/shorts, podcasts, and much more to foster critical thinking in discussions, group work, readings, and in critical reflection activities to apply social constructionism to how we perceive, think, and do health.

My primary research interest is the ways in which Black women’s health is communicated, acted upon, and enacted (performed). We will take a deep dive this semester in deconstructing intersecting realities concerning Black women’s reproductive health. This course is open to all regardless of race and ethnicity. *As each of us lives in a socially constructed reality with implications for our health,* *I implore you to bring your perspectives and experiences to foster a diverse and inclusive class environment and discussions*.

**Content Learning Objectives**

1. Locate and define one’s self identities and agency shaped by social constructionism.
2. Define, explain, critique, and apply diverse theories to social constructionism.
3. Describe types of constructions of Black Health.
4. Critically analyze and interpret constructions/representations of Black health and health outcomes.
5. Synthesize and apply course content.

**Class Texts**:

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Anchor.

Primm, A. B., & Griffith, E. E. (2013). Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism. Ebook is available through GMU library. You must sign in with you GMU id and password to access.

Roberts, D. E. (1999). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. Vintage.

Skloot, R. (2017). *The immortal life of Henrietta Lacks*. Broadway Paperbacks.

***Excerpts from the Following Texts:***

Asante, M. K., & Karenga, M. (2005). *Handbook of Black studies*. Sage Publications.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. Routledge. Routledge. Ebook is available through GMU library. You must sign in with your GMU id and password to access.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory*. New York University Press.

Gammage, M. M. (2015). *Representations of black women in the media: The damnation of black womanhood*. Routledge. Ebook is available through GMU library. You must sign in with your GMU id and password to access.

Stella, F., Taylor, Y., Reynolds, T., & Rogers, A. (Eds.). (2015). *Sexuality, citizenship and belonging: Trans-national and intersectional perspectives*. Routledge. Ebook is available through GMU library. You must sign in with your GMU id and password to access.

**Videos (used in the course outline):**

* Deconstructing White Privilege <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwIx3KQer54>
* How Structural Racism Works <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT1vsOJctMk>
* What Does ‘The Social Construction of Reality’ Mean <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqFhd-Igs6w>
* Social Construction of Race <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiwieME2tis>
* How Our Identities are Socially Constructed <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIuJT1n2vRY>
* How Social Media Shapes Identity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSpyZor-Byk>

* Michel Foucault’s Conception of Discourse as Knowledge and Power <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mb02e2SYdGg>
* What is Discourse <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQTO9tKBNLQ>
* Dynamics of Social Norms <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh1Fr9v2MSU>
* Discourse Analysis Part 2: Foucauldian Approaches <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_ffCsQx2Cg>
* Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory Explained!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJr0gO_-w_Q>

* Everything Wrong with Black Representation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACu4LacC2m8>

# Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire: Stereotyping Black women in media <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2teqoyPe3TU>

* Women’s Experience Under Slavery <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAe7ETfQ_aA>
* How Modern Medicine was Born of Slavery

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-JTw5dqM6o>

# Harriet A. Washington: Discussing Medical Experimentation on Black Americans <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSHkYHaKZik>

* Dr. Frances Welsing Interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z8SnSwiC7o>

# Birthing While Black: Examining America’s Black Maternal Health Crisis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYWkbhRriCY>

# Webinar: Confronting Racial Disparities in Maternal Health

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POLJCPP-2uc>

# Cultural Identity, Power, and Privilege <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G1gZun541E>

* Social Conditioning <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPp7uaGYdDw>
* Socialization Lecture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GUFLzUpwTE>
* Agents of Socialization <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PF7m1fFr2eQ>
* The Social Construction of Health and Illness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4rkWwqJdCw>
* Franz Fanon and Colonialism <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jST3yEOLhLs>
* The Colonization of Black Beauty <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIg6if0NBlY>
* What is Colonialism? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzhSMDxXq_w>

**Films and Other Important Material Required to Watch (see course outline for due dates):**

* Birth in American for Black Mothers – A Documentary “The AMERICAN Dream” – <https://www.kindredmedia.org/2016/07/18927/> (Available online – Watch on your own)
* Precious – Online at GMU Libraries. (Movie is extremely provocative. Some explicit scenes. Could be triggering. We will watch in class to talk this movie out)
* The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lack (Online at GMU Libraries. We will watch in class)
* Antebellum - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LF8ovdxp8s> (I will rent for class)
* Racism and Maternal Health on the Age of COVID-19 – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgnLlq_gZ_A> (Required to watch)
* PBS – Unnatural Causes: When the Bough Breaks – <https://unnaturalcauses.org/video_clips.php?vid_filter=Episode%202%20-%20When%20the%20Bough%20Breaks> (Required to watch all these video excepts on this webpage)
* Navigating White Spaces: The Power and Resilience of Black women –<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rshr8IEKOxk> (Required to watch)

**Websites (Required to review. See course outline for due date):**

* #sayhername Campaign

<https://www.aapf.org/sayhername>

* In Our Own Voice: Reproductive Health Justice

<https://blackrj.org/about-us/herstory/>

* Black Mama’s Matter Alliance

<https://blackmamasmatter.org/>

**Course Policies:**

\***Please do your best to not miss any class meetings.** This class is based on active group discussions and live presentations. If you miss any class discussions**, you will miss the meat of the class**. Do your best to avoid any work, family, health care, vacation, or other activities that may interfere with our class meetings. I will also do my best to arrange my insanely busy schedule, so I won’t miss any classes. (If you encounter any unforeseen problem, please email me about it).

\***Please read/review all the class readings prior to our class meetings.** S**o you can actively participate in our class discussions** of these readings. Note any questions or reactions/suggestions you have based on the readings that you can share with the class.

\***Please submit all *undergraduate* written work to me as MS Word document attachments via Blackboard**. I use the MS Word Track Changes editing program to review and provide my reactions and suggestions for your written work and will return your reviewed papers to you via Blackboard.

\***Please submit all *graduate* written work to me as MS Word document attachments via email (jwarre20@gmu.edu)**. If your Mason email address (Mason.edu) is not your primary email account, please make sure you link your Mason email account to your primary account because I will be using your Mason account to contact you.

\***Please keep any personal information that is shared during our class discussions private**, **so class members will feel comfortable sharing private information** that is germane to our class discussion topics. “What happens in our class, stays in our class!” I hope we will establish a class climate of mutual respect, comradery, and social support!

\***Please be aware that this course is founded upon critical pedagogy**, which is a teaching philosophy that encourage students to critique structures of power and oppression, to become aware of and question societal status quos. **You will be encouraged to question and challenge inequalities that exist in families, institutions, and societies to advance your intellectual and social acumen.** This work includes understanding how power and oppression impacts you first and foremost. So, we will take time throughout this course to reflect deeply on these influences in our life, as part of our identities, and as forming our choices, behavior, communication, and social relationships. It is from this introspection that we can begin our discussions about social constructions of health because they are bound in power/oppression. I will apply this topic to Black women’s reproductive health as this is an area of my research very dear to me. You are to bring in your own examples in applying course concepts to help maintain a climate of diversity and inclusion.

It is my hope that each student:

1. Feels affirmed
2. Feels valued
3. Has a voice
4. Can share in a safe space
5. Respects each other’s perspectives
6. Values critical thinking and reflecting
7. Is prepared to actively engage in discussions and activities
8. Brings a spirit of community and collaboration
9. Can acclimate to a semi-structured and adaptive class environment
10. Leaves this course with new understandings and skills to apply across contexts

\***Please be advised that, I am not a teacher, nor am I traditional**. I am a course facilitator who will help you as you learn the material. Think of me as a guide. I provide the frame and examples but it is you who decides to take action and try make sense of the material I present through your own lens and the readings. I will not hold your hand, nor will I regurgitate the readings**. Your learning is your responsibility.** **Being motivated in this manner is critical when applied to building your career.** Some of the readings may be challenging. You have the responsibility of bringing you queries and comments to class so we all can worked toward greater understanding together. This is the first time I am facilitating this course. So we are on this journey together. While I may frame this course in a particular way, please remember I am not claiming any big ‘T’ truths here. I will be working through the course material just like you. We will all bring our own diverse truths into the class setting to share multiple worldviews and perspectives.

\*Please remember that our goal is to be a community and have fun in the process of learning. **All of us must realize and manifest that hard work does not have to onerous. It can be hard but interesting and engaging if you allow it. It is a state of mind that each of you will to develop to deal with life.** More, I am not aligned with any rigid set of conventions or a hand holding structure. The structure of this course is flexible, adaptable, and dynamic to ensure you the best possible experience. As a result, I take my cue from you, the students. My courses are personalized for the class and for each individual student. **Personalization helps ensure you are learning your way.** ***Therefore, the course schedule (day to day classes) and assignments are modifiable to ensure you are getting the most out of your class experience.*** For me to gauge if you are getting the most out of our class it is important for you engage in class discussions and activities. This is when I can discern if the material is clear and if it is being applied. Your voice is important to me. What you have to say is important. I will make every effort to support and affirm you and make sure you thrive in this class.

\*Please understand that the above sentence is why **each class is student led to evidence your growth from engaging course content and through your reflective processes**. Additionally, in line valuing your voice and expertise, this class is reading heavy up front. In this way, we leave approximately half the semester for application opportunities drawing on the content material you did consume to collaborate and receive feedback from your peers. This will advance critical thought, you valuing your own voice and opinions, and during this time you will learn how you would like to synthesize your learning in a final project.

\*Please note that the assignments/activities presented here are not busy work. **These assignments are to designed to be fun but in the process challenge you to think deeply and critically about our social reality, your positionality, and your own agency and others.** The assignments/activities also allow you the opportunity to apply the readings in innovative ways not to just get an ‘A’ but to help you expand what and how you know. Understanding the demands of our current social climate, I will provide opportunities for bonus points and for you to revise any assignment to your satisfaction. Sometimes I will use rubrics; however, these evaluation tools will be broad, instead of giving specific directions, to allow room for your unique ways of interpreting course material.

\*Please keep in mind that If you are dedicated to getting a great grade, such as an A+ for the class, you will have to do all the work and **stretch yourself to connect our course material or your understanding of course material to other courses and outside material (e.g., news, podcasts, other sources) and present these connections in class discussions, in assignments, and activities.** Further, your active participation and collaboration, explicitly in-class discussion/activities, weighs heavily in your final grade.

\*Please, be ready to talk in class, release fears of not knowing what to say, take risks in linking concepts and applying readings aloud, and be okay with not having the right answer (there may not be one), and being challenged. You are stronger and more knowledgeable than you will ever know. We use 100% of our brains but popular social discourse says we use only 10%. You will be successful in this course even if you doubt your capability. I believe in you!

**Summary of Course Structure:**

1. Top heavy with discussion and content consumption
2. Bottom light with discussion and application
3. Student led and reflective
4. Discussion-based (limited to no lecturing)
5. Flexible and adaptable based on class and student orientations
6. Collaborative teamwork with peer feedback

**Undergraduate Assignments**

**Grading:** 5Reflective Narrative Podcasts & 5 Reflective Writings=30% (3pts each), Know Thy Selfie=10%, Photovoice Project=10%, Final Project=10%, Participation (discussion/activities)=40%, Total=100%. Final course grade rubric: A+ 97-100; A: 93-97; A- 90-93; B+: 87-90; B: 83-87; B-: 80-83; C: 79 and below (C is not a passing grade for graduate studies in the department).

**All assignments due in class except:**

* **Know They Selfie send via email** [**jwarre20@gmu.edu**](mailto:jwarre20@gmu.edu)
* **Photovoice send via email** [**jwarre20@gmu.edu**](mailto:jwarre20@gmu.edu)

**(I will print out for you)**

* **Podcast send via email jwarre20@gmu.edu**

**In-Class Activities:** We will engage several activities throughout this course to gain a greater understanding of and to apply course concepts. Some of these activities will be completed in class. Other in class activities may be extended into mini homework assignments that we will discuss the following class.

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**Reflective Narrative Podcasts (10 minutes max):** This assignment is adopted from strategies offered at a higher learning conference. You can chose to write your reflections; however, I strongly encourage you to practice organizing and stating your ideas out loud, which will help you articulate your ideas across contexts. These are not formal or professional podcasts. You will be given a prompt to respond to (come from the class discussion) and are to speak in a conversational tone and say where you getting any information that is not your own. Less is more. No need to dress up ☺. This is like a journal entry that does not follow the norms of academic reflective writing unless you choose to write out instead of podcasting.

**Reflective Writings (3 pages max, single space, one inch margins all around, APA citation of sources):** You will be provided with simple prompts that ask you to summarize your learning, identify points of insight and confusion, and establish connections between key concepts.

**Class Discussions from Reflections:** These reflections will be what you draw upon to when required to start the class discussion. These presentations are part of your participation/activities grade. Each person will be required to present at least one time. If you would like to present more times, you will earn 2.5% bonus points to enhance you final grade. Presentations with or without PowerPoint and are 10-15 minutes maximum. Presentations must have a structure. For example – state the problem, how the text expands or confuses the issue, recommendations on how to better understand the issue (see item #5 below). This is an informal but structured presentation. It must represent an organized train of thought. You must also complete a mind mapping assignment for each reflection (see item #7 below). The mind mapping must be handed ***(in class)*** the date the podcast or type reflection is due.

## The core elements of academic reflective writing

Reflections can motivate students to participate more actively in their learning and provide instructors with an important gauge for modifying their teaching (www. https://wac.umn.edu/).

Academic reflective writing requires critical and analytic thought, a clear line of argument, and the use of evidence through examples of personal experiences and thoughts and often also theoretical literature.

You should aim for a balance between personal experience, tone, and academic practice and rigor.

Academic reflective writing should:

* develop a perspective or line of reasoning
* develop a link between your experience or practice and existing knowledge (theoretical or personal)
* show understanding and appreciation of different perspectives to your own
* show recognition that your own understanding is likely incomplete and situations are rarely clear-cut and simplistic
* show learning resulting from the reflection (either by discovering something new or confirming existing knowledge) and how you plan to use it
* be written in an appropriate style with language relevant to your academic discipline
* sometimes, but not always, use theoretical literature to inform your understanding.

*A great deal of your time at university will be spent thinking; thinking about what people have said, what you have read, what you yourself are thinking and how your thinking has changed. It is generally believed that the thinking process involves two aspects: reflective thinking and critical thinking. They are not separate processes; rather, they are closely connected (Brookfield 1987).*

**Resources:**

* <https://wac.umn.edu/tww-program/teaching-resources/using-reflective-writing>
* <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/involved/chapter4.pdf>

**Insights and Strategies on Reflecting**

1. **Reflection is:**

* a form of personal response to experiences, situations, events or new information.
* a 'processing' phase where thinking and learning take place.

There is neither a right nor a wrong way of reflective thinking, there are just questions to explore.Chart, funnel chart

Description automatically generated

**Figure 1** shows that the reflective thinking process starts with you. Before you can begin to assess the words and ideas of others, you need to pause and identify and examine your own thoughts.

Doing this involves revisiting your prior experience and knowledge of the topic you are exploring. It also involves considering how and why you think the way you do. The examination of your beliefs, values, attitudes and assumptions forms the foundation of your understanding.

Reflective thinking demands that you recognize that you bring valuable knowledge to every experience. It helps you therefore to recognize and clarify the important connections between what you already know and what you are learning. It is a way of helping you to become an active, aware and critical learner.

#### **Reflection is:**

* documenting your response to experiences, opinions, events or new information
* communicating your response to thoughts and feelings
* a way of exploring your learning
* an opportunity to gain self-knowledge
* a way to achieve clarity and better understanding of what you are learning
* a chance to develop and reinforce writing skills
* a way of making meaning out of what you study

#### **Reflection is not:**

* just conveying information, instruction or argument
* pure description, though there may be descriptive elements
* straightforward decision or judgement, e.g. about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad
* simple problem-solving
* a summary of course notes
* a standard university essay.

# **How Do I Reflect?**

Because it concerns your thoughts, reflective writing is mostly **subjective**. Therefore, in addition to being **reflective** and **logical**, you can be **personal, hypothetical, critical** and **creative**. You can comment about your experiences as they related to course material and any outside connections you can make.

Reflective Narrative is an activity that includes **description** (what, when, who) and **analysis** (how, why, what if). It is an explorative tool often resulting in more questions than answers.

## What can I discuss in my podcast and written reflection as it relates to course content/readings/activities?

* Your **perceptions** .
* Any **questions** you have.
* **Experiences, ideas and observations** you have had, and how they relate.
* What you found confusing, inspiring, difficult, interesting and **why**.
* **Possibilities, speculations, hypotheses or solutions.**
* **Alternative interpretations** or different perspectives.
* How new ideas **challenge** what you already know.
* **What you need to explore next** in terms of thoughts and actions.

 You can also discuss **how** you:

* solved a **problem**
* reached a **conclusion**
* found an **answer**
* reached a point of **understanding.**

It's also helpful to make**comparisons** and **connections** between what you are learning and your prior knowledge and experience and your prior assumptions.

## Getting started

**Be clear about your task.** Reflective writing assignments can take many forms, so**check the guidelines in your course outline** before you begin. Clarify any questions or uncertainties. with your lecturer or tutor.

1. **Gather your ideas**

Before you write, you need to think and reflect. I suggest to start by drawing a **mind map. We will discuss how to do mind mapping in class. You are required to hand in your mind map for each podcast or reflecting writing.**

**Mind mapping** is a technique that can help you expand your thinking, structure your ideas, and make connections. You can use a **mind map** to plan your assignment and arrange items to create the structure of your writing.

**You must provide a typed or handwritten mind map for each reflective podcast and writing.**

1. Write your topic in the center of a blank page.
2. Draw related ideas on 'branches' that radiate from the central topic. When you get a new idea, start a new branch from the center. Include any ideas, topics, authors, theories, experiences associated with your topic.
3. Map quickly, without pausing, to maintain a flow of ideas. Associate freely and do not self-edit; at this stage anything and everything is OK.
4. Circle the key points or ideas. Look at each item and consider how it relates to others, and to the topic as a whole.
5. Map the relationships between the ideas or key points using lines, arrows, colors. Use words or phrases to link them.

##### **Resources on Mind Mapping**

* [**Mind Map Gallery**](https://mindwerx.com/buzan-mind-mapping/) - The Buzan Centre Australia / NZ
* [**Brainstorming and mind mapping for assignments**](https://www.monash.edu/rlo/research-writing-assignments/understanding-the-assignment/brainstorming) - Language and Learning Online, Monash University

## Tips to help you in your reflective writing process

* Think of an interaction, event or episode you experienced that can be connected to the topic.
* Describe what happened.
* What was your role?
* What feelings and perceptions surrounded the experience?
* How would you explain the situation to someone else?
* What might this experience mean in the context of your course?
* What other perspectives, theories or concepts could be applied to the

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**Know Thy Selfie:** This assignment comes from #selfieclass.

1. **How do we create ourselves?** These days, one selfie at a time. And each selfie bears information that can be used to read our identity characteristics: our race-ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status. Take or choose 5 selfies of yourself. You may be alone or with another person, but try to make sure you are a central and large part of the photo. All of the selfies should be different. Examine your selfies for your performance of:  
   -Race-ethnicity

-Socio-economic status  
-Sexuality  
-Gender

-Power and privilege

\*Consider these identity characteristics independently and as they intersect. Also consider how you know who to perform these identities.

1. **How do your selfies produce or obscure a sense of your identity?**
2. **Choose 5 selfies of yourself and analyze them for your construction of three intersecting and overlapping identity characteristics.**

Look at all elements of the way you present yourself  
—Clothing, pose, facial expression

But also the elements of the framing of the picture:  
—Background, lighting, proximity, angle of the camera.

And last any other elements in the picture:  
—People, animals, objects…

**5.Some questions for reflection as you prepare your response.**

* What in your selfies is accurate?
* What is obscured or ambiguous?
* Does the image portray one identity trait more than others?
* Where do the images place you in the spectrum of possibilities for each characteristic trait — for example, more or less feminine or masculine?
* How might different audiences perceive the images differently?
* How is the viewer addressed in the image?
* How do your selfies play off other well-known images? How do they play off each other?
* What is the apparent context of this image? How does that affect how it might be read?
* How do your selfies **perform** race/ethnicity, social/economic status, sexuality/gender as a **group**?
* What choices do you make to present yourself and what does this say about you: Clothing, pose, facial expression
* How do you frame the picture to construct meaning about your image? Background, lighting, proximity, angle of the camera
* How is privilege or oppression operative in your photo?
* Other elements in the picture? Objects? Other people? Location?
* Does the image/do the images portray one identity trait more than others? Why/how?
* How does your selfie/do your selfies play off other well-known images, or each other?
* Analyze the context of the selfies, and how it affects how they might be interpreted.

\*Create a thesis and develop your argument as you go, building and deepening your argument, adding nuance as you go.

**Relevant Readings:**  
Jill Walker Rettberg: [Seeing Ourselves Through Technology](http://jilltxt.net/books/)  
W.E.B. Dubois. “[Of Our Spiritual Strivings](http://www.bartleby.com/114/1.html).” The Souls of Black Folk.  
Herbert J. Gans. Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America  
Stuart Hall: Representation and the Media  
Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender

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**Photovoice Project:** This assignment comes from the Community Tool Box (https://ctb.ku.edu/en) and has been adapted for this class.

Photovoice is a process in which people – usually those with limited power due to poverty, language barriers, race, class, ethnicity, gender, culture, or other circumstances – use video and/or photo images to capture aspects of their environment and experiences and share them with others. The pictures can then be used, usually with captions composed by the photographers, to bring the realities of the photographers’ lives home to the public to spur change.

The concept has existed for many years, but much of the theoretical background of current programs comes from the work of Caroline Wang. In 1992, Wang and Mary Ann Burris developed Photovoice based on a combination of Paulo Freire’s notion of “critical consciousness” (a deep understanding of the way the world works and how society, politics, and power relationships affect one’s own situation); feminist theory, which emphasizes the importance of voice; and documentary photography, which is often used to help bring about social change. Photovoice has three main goals:

* To help those who are often unheard gain a voice, enabling them to record and reflect on their experiences and their communities’ conditions, both positive and negative.
* **To encourage critical consciousness. Through choosing, discussing, and reflecting on the subjects of their photographs, the photographers can come to a clearer understanding of their circumstances and the economic, social, psychological, and political forces that shape them.**
* To bring about change that will improve conditions and enhance lives by reaching and influencing policy makers.

### **Take Pictures**

Your job is to get out and take pictures that help you understand social constructionism through taking pictures of ‘anything’ that can help you apply this concept. You will be responsible to curating 10 photos from your photovoice collection that you feel best demonstrate what it is you are trying to communicate. This is not about being a professional photographer. Pictures tell a story regardless of professionalism. It is important to take shots of natural occurrences. Do not create the scene to photograph.

### **DISCUSS/REFLECT/CHOOSE**

Once you have the photos (be open to change them) you would like to share, we will share them in small groups. You will show your photographs and explain why they took them. You might discuss such topics as whether the scene evoked particular feelings, and how you your peers, how the pictures strike them, whether they bring up ideas or feelings, and whether a photo seems to make its point well.

The groups help you reflect on what they and others have done, on the aesthetic and intellectual decisions you have made, and reach a new understanding. Reflection is often the most important part of both intellectual and personal development, and the opportunity for reflection is absolutely critical.

The goal is to have a group of photographs that can be used to make a powerful statement about social constructions of health. We will talk about this photo as a class as well.

Part of this choosing process is writing one-two page single spaced papers for each of the selected photos. You are to explain why they chose the subject, the context in which they shot it, the intent of the picture, how it made them feel, its strong connection to course content. The papers are important for putting together these pictures together electronically so a person will understand your perspective. You can submit your photos and explanation in a word document, as a PowerPoint, or video.

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

**Final Project – Capstone Reflection Essay:** Review the in-class activities, projects, class discussions, and reflections you did this semester, and choose three different passages: explain how one of them shows a kind of strength in your work, another shows a kind of problem you are still working on, and a third reveals some learning —learning something about your subject, learning something about writing, or learning something about the relationship between the two. Therefore, it is critical to keep all the products of your work in this class. You have to review them all to explain the three areas and provide examples. This paper is single spaced, typed, 1” margins all around, must have 6 in-text references and 6 citations, with no first person pronouns (i.e., I, me, my etc.). Source: https://blog.tww.umn.edu/now-and-then-using-writing-reflect-and-transfer-learning

**Graduate Experience**

Graduate students work on a collective project that will 1. require you to use evidence-based systematic literature processes (publish to PROSPERO), 2. identify resilience studies (quantitative/qualitative, first in the discipline of communication and across disciplines), and 3. determine the discourse that is being constructed about Black women's resilience using critical discourse analysis methods to interpret and critique studies' findings salience and usefulness as related to intersectional oppressions lived by Black women and as impacting their health. The way in which resilience is applied to Black women is unclear and is just thrown around. We seek to provide clarity and direction.

This project contributes to a systematic literature review I am conducting with Breonna Riddick (RA), a PhD candidate, on resilience. So, the you will engage in our course content that lays the groundwork for understanding social constructionism and critical discourse analysis techniques. The project is where you will apply your understandings (even though you will engage undergraduate materials as well). The presentations of your short reports assignment creates a course dialectic that explores troubling social phenomena but also tries to advance how to move beyond these challenges.

In addition to several short reports based on your resilience study, there will be required to write a midterm and final research paper. You will have a weekly number of readings for the systematic lit review that each of you must annotate and on which the short reports to me/class will be based (these reports must also integrate to one or two of the undergraduate readings the week of presenting for 7-8 minutes).

You will have an interesting and impactful course experience that is supported through 1. innovative pedagogical engagement, 2. a project that stretches your understanding of social phenomena and methodological positionality, and 3. the opportunity to coauthor this literature review, and 4. present your work at NCA.

**Graduate Assignments**

**Grading:** 10 short-research/strategy proposals/presentations 30%, Mid-Semester Project 15%, Final semester paper 35%, Participation 20%, TOTAL = 100% Final course grade rubric: A+ 97-100; A: 93-97; A- 90-93; B+: 87-90; B: 83-87; B-: 80-83; C: 79 and below (C is not a passing grade for graduate studies in the department).

**\*\*\*\*All papers due in class.**

* **10 short-research/strategy proposals- 1000 to 1500 words, single spaced**
* ***At least*** 2 resilience journal article and 1 course reading (for the week you will be presenting) to serve as the foundational piece for your proposal.
* How does social constructionism/discourse/representation factor into the problem?
* At least 1 journal articles to form the foundation of your selected methodology/strategy. (Explore at least 5 different methodologies/strategies during the course of the semester)
* What is the research/socio-cultural problem?
* At least one research question.
* Observation of selected discourse type (e.g., podcast, social media group/platform, social discourse, health policy, stereotypes, slavery, health disparities, reproductive health, etc.)
  + Observations do not have to be overly extensive, considering the limited amount of time and resources a modest selection of examples (e.g., 3) will be acceptable for these projects.
* Your discussion (10 minute presentation/discussion).
* **One of these 10 short reports will be a collaborative manuscript reporting the systematic literature methods to PROSPERO (a publication).**

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

* **Mid-Semester Project Paper (can integrate readings from short reports)**
* Draft a 2000 to 4000 word paper addressing: How is Black women’s resilience constructed within the Communication discipline, in particular Health Communication?
  + Systematic Literature review provision of social construction of resilience, critical discourse analysis as a methodology (number of resilience articles to be determined)
  + What are the recurring themes, words, images?
  + Are there political and social consequences for Black women’s health? If so what are they?

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

* **Final Semester Project (can integrate mid-semester project)**
  + Draft a 5000 to 7000 word manuscript for publication.
    - Continuation of mid-semester project
    - Building on systematic literature review and methodology
    - Systematic Literature review provision of social construction of resilience, critical discourse analysis as a methodology (number of resilience articles to be determined)
    - What are the recurring themes, words, images?
    - Are there political and social consequences for Black women’s health? If so what are they?
* Prepare a no more than 10min presentation to report your project to a scientific audience.

The format for the Mid-Semester and Final research papers should include the following 5 sections:

* Statement of problem: explaining what you plan to study, why this is an important topic to study, and what you want to find out about this research topic.
* Review of the literature: identifying what is currently known about this topic from published research, what still needs to be learned, what theories or models are relevant to this research study, and how your research questions and/or hypotheses build from your review of relevant research and theory related to your research topic.
* Statement of Method: describing your research plan and specific methods used for the study (including the specific research method and data collections strategies (measuring instruments) you used, your sampling strategy, and the steps you took to operationalize (conduct) your study.
* Results: presenting your basic research findings (broken down by your findings answered each research question and/or hypothesis), presented in writing, numbers, and visually (with tables and/or graphs).
* Implications: discussing and explaining the meaning of your major findings, identifying any study limitations and directions for future research, as well as applications of your findings for addressing the problems related to the issue you studied.

The research papers and short reports should use the latest APA style (7th edition) for citations (see:[**https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\_and\_citation/apa\_style/apa\_formatting\_and\_style\_guide/general\_format.html**](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)**)** Research papers in my courses for graduate students are typically from 15-20 pages in length, double-spaced (but not including references, figures, or appendices), so they are suitable for submission for possible conference presentations and/or journal publications.

Course Outline

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | | **Topics** | **Readings/Videos/Other Content Materials Noted on Due Date**  **Complete, Read and View Before Each Class**  **Make notes, connections, and document questions for class discussion.** |
| **Getting Started** | | | |
| **Week**  **1** | **Jan 24** | **Easy, Breezy** | **Everyone**  Informal meeting/chats. No shop talk. Just sharing. |
| **Grads**   1. Start reading Berger and Luckman   READ THE FOLLOWING FOR CONTEXT:   1. Van Dijk, T. A. (1989). Structures of discourse and structures of power. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *12*(1), 18-59. 2. Asante, M. K., & Karenga, M. (2005). *Handbook of Black studies* Chapter 4, Chapter 6, & Chapter 8 |
| **Jan 26** | **Syllabus Review**  **Selfie Project Discussion**  **Graduate Experience Discussion** | **Everyone**   1. Introduction activities 2. Read Syllabus and Note Questions Prior to this Class |
| **Undergrads**   1. Start Know Thy Selfie Project 2. What Does ‘The Social Construction of Reality’ Mean <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqFhd-Igs6w> 3. Cultural Identity, Power, and Privilege <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G1gZun541E> 4. Social Conditioning <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPp7uaGYdDw>   \*\* Undergrads do the exercises (write/write it out) in the social conditioning video **due in class Jan 26**.   1. How Social Media Shapes Identity <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSpyZor-Byk> 2. Stuart Hall’s Representation Theory Explained! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJr0gO_-w_Q> 3. Read https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/involved/chapter4.pdf |
| **Grads**   1. Continue with Berger and Luckman 2. Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory*. Chapters 1-5, Chapter 7 3. Lewis, J. A., Williams, M. G., Peppers, E. J., & Gadson, C. A. (2017). Applying intersectionality to explore the relations between gendered racism and health among Black women. *Journal of counseling psychology*, *64*(5), 475. |
| **Week**  **2** | **Jan 31** | **Reflections and Community Building** | **Everyone**   1. Document any revisions to the syllabus 2. Community Building Exercise 3. Socialization Lecture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GUFLzUpwTE> 4. Agents of Socialization <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PF7m1fFr2eQ> |
| **Undergrads**  **Reflective Narrative Podcast due, #1**   * + - 1. Guess, T. J. (2006). The social construction of whiteness: Racism by intent, racism by consequence. *Critical Sociology*, *32*(4), 649-673.       2. Smedley, A., & Smedley, B. D. (2005). Race as biology is fiction, racism as a social problem is real: Anthropological and historical perspectives on the social construction of race. *American psychologist*, *60*(1), 16.       3. Conrad, P., & Barker, K. K. (2010). The social construction of illness: Key insights and policy implications. *Journal of health and social behavior*, *51*(1\_suppl), S67-S79.       4. Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire: Stereotyping Black women in media <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2teqoyPe3TU> |
| **Grads**   1. Continue with Berger and Luckman 2. White, R. (2004). Discourse analysis and social constructionism. *Nurse researcher*, *12*(2). 3. Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & society*, *4*(2), 249-283. 4. Collins, P. H. (1989).The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *14*, 4-745. 5. Smedley, A., & Smedley, B. D. (2005). Race as biology is fiction, racism as a social problem is real: Anthropological and historical perspectives on the social construction of race. *American psychologist*, *60*(1), 16. 6. Conrad, P., & Barker, K. K. (2010). The social construction of illness: Key insights and policy implications. *Journal of health and social behavior*, *51*(1\_suppl), S67-S79. |
| **Feb 2** | **Discuss Findings From Know Thy Selfie Project** | **Undergrads**  Draft of Know Thy Selfie Project Due.  Revision to KTS is required based on readings and new understandings. Revised Project Due Feb. 28, 2022 by 11:59 pm.   1. Deconstructing White Privilege <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwIx3KQer54> 2. How Structural Racism Works <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT1vsOJctMk> 3. Dr. Frances Cress Welsing Interview <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z8SnSwiC7o> 4. Social Construction of Race <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiwieME2tis> |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #1 Due**   1. Finish reading Berger and Luckman 2. Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| **Laying the Theoretical and Methodological Foundations** | | | |
| **Week 3** | **Feb 7** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Narrative Podcast due, #2**   1. Berger & Luckman Chapter I 2. Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism* Chapter 1 & Chapter 3 3. Engebretson, J. (2003). Cultural constructions of health and illness: Recent cultural changes toward a holistic approach. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, *21*(3), 203-227 4. Conrad, P., & Barker, K. K. (2010). The social construction of illness: Key insights and policy implications. *Journal of health and social behavior*, *51*(1\_suppl), S67-S79. 5. The Social Construction of Health and Illness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4rkWwqJdCw> |
| **Grads**   1. Engebretson, J. (2003). Cultural constructions of health and illness: Recent cultural changes toward a holistic approach. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, *21*(3), 203-227 2. Trochmann, M. (2021). Identities, intersectionality, and otherness: The social constructions of deservedness in American housing policy. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, *43*(1), 97-116. 3. Roberts, D. E. (1999). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. Chapter 1-3 |
| **Feb 9** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Narrative Podcast due, #3**   1. White, R. (2004). Discourse analysis and social constructionism. *Nurse researcher*, *12*(2). 2. Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & society*, *4*(2), 249-283. 3. Gopaldas, A. (2013). Intersectionality 101. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *32*(1\_suppl), 90-94. 4. Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory*. Chapters 1-5, Chapter 7 |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #2 Due**   * + - 1. Roberts, D. E. (1999). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. Chapter 4-6       2. Hill, R., & Lee, T. P. (2015). The Killing of Black People by the US State is as American as Apple Pie: Groundwork toward a Critique. *Journal of Race & Policy*, *11*(2).       3. Dutta, M. J. (2015). Decolonizing communication for social change: A culture-centered approach. *Communication Theory*, *25*(2), 123-143.       4. Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2004). Poverty, structural barriers, and health: A Santali narrative of health communication. *Qualitative Health Research*, *14*(8), 1107-1122. |
| **Week 4** | **Feb 14** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Narrative Podcast due, #4**   1. Berger & Luckman Chapter 2 pp 47-91 2. Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism* Chapter 2, Chapter 4 Chapter 5 3. Dutta, M. J. (2015). Decolonizing communication for social change: A culture-centered approach. *Communication Theory*, *25*(2), 123-143. 4. Taylor, J. Y. (1999). Colonizing images and diagnostic labels: oppressive mechanisms for African American women's health. *Advances in Nursing Science*, *21*(3), 32-45. 5. The Colonization of Black Beauty <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIg6if0NBlY> 6. What is Colonialism? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzhSMDxXq_w> 7. Franz Fanon and Colonialism <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jST3yEOLhLs> 8. Michel Foucault’s Conception of Discourse as Knowledge and Power <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mb02e2SYdGg> |
| **Grads – DETAILED DISCUSSION OF RESILIENCE PROJECT** |
| **Feb 16** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**   1. What is Discourse <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQTO9tKBNLQ> 2. Dynamics of Social Norms <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh1Fr9v2MSU> 3. Discourse Analysis Part 2: Foucauldian Approaches <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_ffCsQx2Cg> 4. Lewis, J. A., Williams, M. G., Peppers, E. J., & Gadson, C. A. (2017). Applying intersectionality to explore the relations between gendered racism and health among Black women. *Journal of counseling psychology*, *64*(5), 475. 5. Robles, J. (2012). A discourse analysis of “social construction” in communication scholarship 6. How Our Identities are Socially Constructed <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIuJT1n2vRY> |
| **Grads – DETAILED DISCUSSION OF RESILIENCE PROJECT**  **Short Paper #3 Due** |
| **Week 5** | **Feb 21** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**   1. Berger & Luckman Chapter 2 pp 92-128 2. Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism* Chapter 6 & Chapter 7 |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #4 Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Feb 23** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Narrative Podcast due, #5: You will reflect on the process of completing the Know They Selfie Project.**   1. Revised Know Thy Selfie Project Due and Deep Discussion |
| **Grads**   * 1. Resilience Studies |
| **Week 6** | **Feb 28** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**   1. Berger & Luckman Chapter 3 |
| **Grads**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Mar 2** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**   1. Women’s Experience Under Slavery <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAe7ETfQ_aA> 2. How Modern Medicine was Born of Slavery <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-JTw5dqM6o> 3. Harriet A. Washington: Discussing Medical Experimentation on Black Americans <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSHkYHaKZik> 4. Birthing While Black: Examining America’s Black Maternal Health Crisis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYWkbhRriCY> |
| **Grads Short**  **Short Paper #5 Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Deep Dive Applications** | | | |
| **Week 7** | **Mar 7** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Writing #1 Due**   1. Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 2. Roberts, D. E. (1999). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. Chapter 1-3 |
| **Grads**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Mar 9** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**   1. Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism. Chapters 1, 2 2. Roberts, D. E. (1999). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction****,*** *and the meaning of liberty*. Chapter 1-3 |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #6 Due**   * 1. Resilience Studies |
| **Week 8** | **Mar 14** | **SPRING BREAK. YAY!!!!**  **Undergraduates Take Pictures for Photovoice Project – Due March 23** | |
| **Mar 16** |
| **Week 9** | **Mar 21** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Writing #2 Due**   1. Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism. Chapters 3, 4 2. Roberts, D. E. (1999). *Killing the black body: Race, reproduction, and the meaning of liberty*. Chapter 4-6 |
| **Grads**   * 1. Resilience Studies |
| **Mar 23** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Final Project Discussion + Collaborative Feedback on Photos** |
| **Grads**  **Midsemester Paper Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
|  | **Films, Discussions, and Collaborations – Time to get the work done!** | | |
| **Week 10** | **Mar 28** | **Film Day** | **Everyone:**   1. Everything Wrong with Black Representation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACu4LacC2m8>  Mammy, Jezebel and Sapphire: Stereotyping Black women in media <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2teqoyPe3TU>Webinar: Confronting Racial Disparities in Maternal Health <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POLJCPP-2uc>   1. Birthing While Black: Examining America’s Black Maternal Health Crisis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYWkbhRriCY> |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #7 Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Mar 30** | **Film Day** | **Undergrads** |
| **Grads**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Week 11** | **April 4** | **Film Day** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Writing #3 Due: Film Response**   1. Finish Reading Henrietta Lacks |
| **Grads**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Apr 6** | **Film Day** | **Undergrads** |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #8 Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Week 12** | **Apr 11** | **Film Day** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Writing #4 Due: Film Response** |
| **Grads**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Apr 13** | **Film Day** | **Undergrads** |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #9 Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Week 13** | **Apr 18** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Reflective Writing #5 Due: Film Response**  **Review required websites and a one page reaction for class** |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #5 Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Apr 20** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads**  **Photovoice Project Due** |
| **Grads**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Week 14** | **Apr 25** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads** |
| **Grads**  **Short Paper #10 Due**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Apr 27** | **Discussions**  **In-Class Activities** | **Undergrads** |
| **Grads**   1. Resilience Studies |
| **Week 15** | **May 2** |  | **Everyone**   1. Class Conference/Presentations Due |
| **May 4** |  | **Everyone**   1. Class Conference/Presentations Due   **Final Papers Due for Grad Students**  **Reflection Final Project Due for Undergrads** |

**University Policies**

**Academic Integrity:**

* The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the current **APA** format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.
* As in many classes, some projects in this class may be designed to be completed within your study group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Collaborative projects may be divided up so that individual group members complete portions of the whole, provided that group members take sufficient steps to ensure that the pieces conceptually fit together in the end product. Other projects are designed to be undertaken independently. In the latter case, you may discuss your ideas with others and conference with peers on drafts of the work; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.
* Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously, and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

**Disability Accommodations:**

* Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. The Disability Services office is located in the Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474
* Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

**Diversity and Inclusion:**

* Diversity is one of our university’s core values. The Department of Communication seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own. We are an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and disability.

**Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, Interpersonal Violence:** George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support.

[University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct](https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/sexual-harassment-policy/)

As a faculty member and designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s [Title IX Coordinator](https://diversity.gmu.edu/sexual-misconduct) per [university policy 1412](https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/reporting-of-clery-act-crimes-andor-prohibited-sexual-conduct/). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the [Student Support and Advocacy Center](http://ssac.gmu.edu/) (703-380-1434) or [Counseling and Psychological Services](https://caps.gmu.edu/) (703-993-2380). You may also seek assistance from [Mason’s Title IX Coordinator](https://diversity.gmu.edu/sexual-misconduct) (703-993-8730; [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu)).

**Privacy:**

[Student privacy](http://registrar.gmu.edu/facultystaff/student-privacy/) is governed by the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)](http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html) and is an essential aspect of any course.

Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. I am not supposed to respond to messages sent from or send messages to a non-Mason email address.

**Student emails**: In addition, please be aware that as of Fall 2018, [Virginia law designates](https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/hb1-guidance-2/) student email addresses as among the records that must be kept strictly private unless students give written consent for sharing. We should all **use bcc when emailing to multiple students**, to shield their email addresses, or email students from within Blackboard; I will not require students to share email addresses with other students.