

JRN 205 Final Project

For the Final Project, you will apply knowledge gained from the semester's readings, course materials and discussions. The project serves as your final exam and is worth 100 points.

Your task is to create a "user guide" to modern media, explaining what it is and how and why people should use it and participate in it. Imagine that you're writing it for college-age peers.

You'll produce the guide in the form of entries on your own blog (you're a media creator!). In addition to writing, you are encouraged to incorporate other media — visuals, video, etc. — and include links to outside materials and examples.

Parts of the project will be due at weekly intervals starting Oct. 30 through exam week. That means you will produce at least five blog entries total, although you may choose to break up the project further into more than five entries. Expect to write 300-500 words (or equivalent in other form, such as video) each week.

(Please note that you also may post in your blog for other purposes, if you want. I just need to be able to find and possibly comment on your Final Project entries.)

Grading will be based on completeness, creative thinking, applied knowledge, support provided for ideas, inclusion of other sources or materials, and writing quality. I may ask questions or give positive feedback in the comments section on your blog. I will send any constructive criticism privately by email. Each week's section will be graded on its own so you'll know how you're doing. The final week's grade will assess not only the last section but the project in its entirety.

Here is an outline to follow, with topics to address in each of the five weeks.

Week 1: Due end of Sunday, Nov. 5

Part I: The Media Environment (Read Mediactive Introduction and Chapter 1)

- Define media and "mediactivity."
- Review some of the history of mass media ("Media 1.0" to present) and discuss issues or challenges it faces today, such as competition, revenue and technology.

WordPress

- Discuss barriers to entry, the shift toward media democratization and access, mass appeal vs. niche media.
- Discuss being a media user/consumer vs. being a media participant/creator.
- What purposes do various types of media today serve (news, advertising, etc.)?

Week 2: Due end of day Nov. 12

Part II: Risks and Rewards (Chapter 1)

- Explain how media can be used for good or bad, intentionally or carelessly. Include examples.
- Discuss the controversy surrounding the term "fake news." Include how you believe it should be defined. How does it differ from biased, sloppy or mistaken news? Provide examples.
- What is media credibility and why does it matter? Is there value in objective truth?
- Are there dangers in being uninformed or misinformed?
- Make a case for being a smart and active media user.

Week 3: Due end of day Nov. 19

Part III: Navigating the Mediasphere (Chapter 2 and 3)

- Define journalism, compared with other types of media (advertising, public relations, etc.). • Explain objectivity, neutrality, bias and tone. How do they relate to our media experiences?
- Discuss the role of "slow journalism" and investigative/enterprise reporting.
- Discuss the role of skepticism as a media user. What should you watch out for?
- List and explain resources that can help sort good information from bad. Include links.
- Discuss the importance of being open minded and seeking a variety of sources.

Week 4: Due end of day Nov. 26

Part IV: Being a Media Creator (Chapter 5)

- Identify ways a person can become a media creator (blogging, website, social media, etc.).
- Discuss Gillmor's five principles of responsible content creation.
- Discuss the choice of whether to engage in online debate, and the value of understanding valid and sound arguments vs. various types of fallacies.
- Explain the importance of search and how search engine optimization (SEO) works.

- Reflect on the role of ethics and the value of civility for a media creator.

Week 5: Due end of day Dec. 3

Part V: In Conclusion

- Summarize the biggest lessons you've learned in this class, or the most important things you think your audience needs to know about media.
- What do you think are the most pressing issues facing the media and media consumers/producers today?
- Share your predictions about the future of media and mediactivity.
- List, with links, resources that can help the audience of your media user guide.

