The Washington Experience is an intensive, semester long course that will introduce students to political communication and D.C.-based organizations and individuals in the UNC School of Media and Journalism’s vast alumni and friend network. Political communication spans everything from political journalism and public relations to advertising and marketing. And, it takes place on social media and television, as well as the webpages of new journalism startups and print pages of newspapers. The hallmark of the class is a trip to Washington D.C. over fall break where students will visit various social media firms, journalism, party, and advocacy organizations, political consultancies, and legislative offices. The class will also feature a high-profile panel in Chapel Hill in November. At the end of the course, students will have a deep understanding of political communication across various fields and platforms, as well as a network of contacts who can help them launch their careers.

The School of Media and Journalism’s accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps Students taking this course will be able to think critically, creatively, and independently, learn how to conduct research and evaluate information, write correctly and clearly, and critically evaluate their own work and that of others.

Readings

Readings for the class will be made available on Sakai. In addition, there are four required books for the class:


Harris-Perry, Melissa V. *Sister citizen: Shame, stereotypes, and Black women in America*. Yale University Press, 2011. (Full text available online through UNC libraries)
Ladd, Jonathan M. *Why Americans hate the media and how it matters*. Princeton University Press, 2011. (Full text available on Sakai)

**Grades**

Participation: 20%

Reading Comments: 20%

Final Class Presentations and Paper: 60%

You are assigned letter grades for participation, reading comments, and your class presentations and papers.

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A 4
A- 3.7
B+ 3.3
B 3
B- 2.7
C+ 2.3
C 2
C- 1.7
D 1

3.833-4 A
3.832-3.500 A-
3.499-3.167 B+
3.166-2.834 B
2.833-2.501 B-
2.5-2.167 C+
2.166-1.834 C
1.833-1.500 C-
1.499-1.166 D+
1.165-0.832 D
0.831-0.498 D-

**Course Requirements**

*Participation*

This course is premised on active discussion. You are expected to come to class having completed the readings and ready to discuss them. There is a substantial reading load in the course, but it comes in lieu of other assignments. In addition, you are expected to be following the daily political media of whatever stripe. This course is also premised on a
number of trips and site visits. You are required to participate in all of these, and be attentive, respectful, and engaged in all class activities. 

Each week, you are responsible for posting one response to the readings on the Sakai forum. This should be in the range of about 500 words – so a substantial comment. These comments are due by 10pm the night before class.

**Final Group Presentations and Papers**

Career, Industry, or Organizational Analysis

For your final class project, you will work in groups to do background research on a career, industry, or even an organization in Washington D.C.. This will be an exhaustive background look at how this career, industry, or organization has developed over time, a comprehensive overview of the services and products they provide in the political space, the career trajectories of its practitioners gleaned through publicly available sources such as LinkedIn, the competitors in this space and their market shares, and their projected future growth.

This is the perfect opportunity to pick a career that, as a group, you would like to pursue – such as communications directors, political journalists, social media directors, or campaign managers. Or, to choose an industry that you might want to work in, such as publishing, political consulting, think tanks, or advocacy organizations. Or, to provide an in-depth profile of an organization you might want to work for one day, such as the Republican National Committee, digital consulting firms such as Blue State Digital, or advocacy organizations such as the National Rifle Association or Planned Parenthood.

The analysis should be comprehensive. There are a number of academic, market research, and journalistic resources that will help you provide a detailed history and overview of the career, industry, or organization of your choosing. The best projects will be comprehensive and detailed, and provide histories and overview descriptive statics on various aspects of the field, in addition to rich description about the type of work that this career, industry, or organization is involved in and its role in Washington D.C. and democracy more broadly. Additional research, such as interviews with practitioners, is welcome but not required. It might be a great way to make contacts for your future job search.

On Thursday, November 16th, you will present your in-progress ideas to the class. On Thursday, December 14th you will present your final project to the class and hand in your final paper. It’s an early morning final, so I will bring bagels and coffee.

**Resources**

Most of the readings for the class are on Sakai. As students, you have access to all of these resources. In addition, students should pay particular attention to sites that bridge social science and journalism. Here are a few of my favorites:
In addition, there are all sorts of amazing podcasts right now that bring social science perspectives to analysis of electoral politics, or that offer insider perspectives on the political process. If you have a favorite, share it!

**Special Accommodations:**

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at [https://accessibility.unc.edu/](https://accessibility.unc.edu/)

**Honor Code:**

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system ([http://honor.unc.edu](http://honor.unc.edu)). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor’s responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

**Seeking Help:**

If you need individual assistance, it’s your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

**Diversity:**

The University’s policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin [http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/](http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/). UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

**Laptops**

It pains me to do this, perhaps because I believe we have agency over our psychological desires, but the persistent distraction of social media is just too much to bear. People’s
heads buried in their laptops simply diminishes classroom discussion, and is particularly rude during class presentations and guest speakers. Because of this, we all have to digital detox a bit, so no laptops or mobile phones in class. Don’t worry, we will consume plenty of media in class.

**Course Schedule**

**Part One: Democracy and Social Identity**

*Tuesday, August 22nd*

Introduction to the course

*Thursday, August 24th*

Achen and Bartels, Chapters 1 and 2

*Tuesday, August 29th*

Achen and Bartels, Chapters 3 and 8

*Thursday, August 31st*

Achen and Bartels, Chapters 9 and 10

*Tuesday, September 5th*

Achen and Bartels, Chapter 11

*Thursday, September 7th*

Read the Introduction and Chapter 1 of *White Backlash: Immigration, Race, and American Politics*
Available online at: [http://pages.ucsd.edu/~zhajnal/resources/white-backlash-manuscript.pdf](http://pages.ucsd.edu/~zhajnal/resources/white-backlash-manuscript.pdf)

**Part Two: The Legacy Press and the Networked Public Sphere**

*Tuesday, September 12th*

Jonathan Ladd, Chapters 1 and 3

*Thursday, September 14th*

Jonathan Ladd, Chapters 4 and 5

*Friday, September 15th*
Trip to Fox News and Facebook. For the trip, read:

Tuesday, September 19th

Jonathan Ladd, Chapters 6 and 7

Thursday, September 21st

Jonathan Ladd, Chapter 8

Skim the Reuters Institute Digital News Report:

Tuesday, September 26th


Thursday, September 28th


Tuesday, October 3rd

Read Chapters 9, 11, 12, 58, 60, and 65, in US Election Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign. Available online at: http://www.electionanalysis2016.us/

Part Three: Strategic Communication

Thursday, October 5th
Greenberg, Introduction, Part 1, and Chapters 1, 3, and 7

Tuesday, October 10th

Greenberg, Part II and Chapters 13, 14, 18; Part III and Chapters 20, 21, 22 and 27

Thursday, October 12th

No Class, University Day

Tuesday, October 17th through Friday, October 20th

Fall Break Trip to Washington D.C.
For the Fall Break Trip, read Greenberg, Chapters 29, 33, 38, 44, and Part IV (395-448)

Part Four: The Citizen

Tuesday, October 24th


Thursday, October 26th


Tuesday, October 31st


Thursday, November 2nd

Harris-Perry, Introduction and Chapter 1

Tuesday, November 7th

Harris-Perry, Chapters 2 and 3
Thursday, November 9th

Harris-Perry, Chapters 4 and 5

Tuesday, November 14th


Thursday, November 16th

Final Paper In-progress Presentations

Tuesday, November 21st


Thursday, November 23rd

No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday

Tuesday, November 28th, Thursday, November 30th, Tuesday, December 5th

Because of the extensive number of trips for this class requiring a considerable time commitment, we will not hold class these three days. Use these periods as opportunities to work on your final papers.

Thursday, December 14th, 8am

Final presentations and papers due