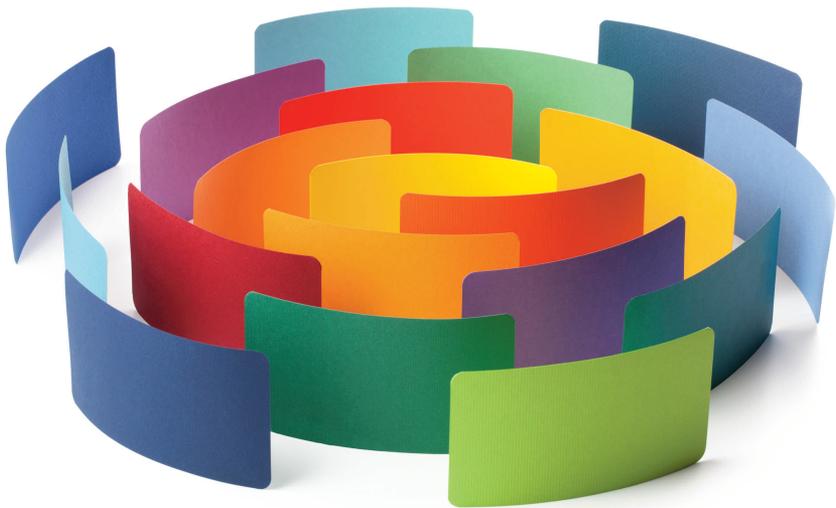


Best Practices in Teaching Diversity in Journalism and Mass Communication

Sponsored by
The Teaching Committee
of the Association for Education in Journalism
and Mass Communication



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Best Practices in Teaching Diversity in Journalism and Mass Communication

This booklet contains the winning entries of the Best Practices in Teaching Diversity in Journalism and Mass Communication Teaching 2018 competition, sponsored by the AEJMC Elected Standing Committee on Teaching.

Booklets produced for the previous competitions can be found online at:
aejmc.com/home/2010/09/best-practices-in-teaching-booklets

2018 Winning Entries:

FIRST PLACE:

Jan Larson, Wisconsin-Eau Claire for “Immersion Reporting: Civil Conversations”

SECOND PLACE:

Joe Grimm, Michigan State University for “Busting Biases by Publishing Cultural Competence Guides”

THIRD PLACE:

Jennifer Sadler, The University of Mississippi for “Developing Cultural Intelligence by Leveraging Social Media for Experiential Service Learning”

HONORABLE MENTION:

Sheila Peuchaud, Nevada, Reno for “‘Diversity Style Guide’ for Media Ethics”

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Best Practices in Teaching Diversity in Journalism and Mass Communication

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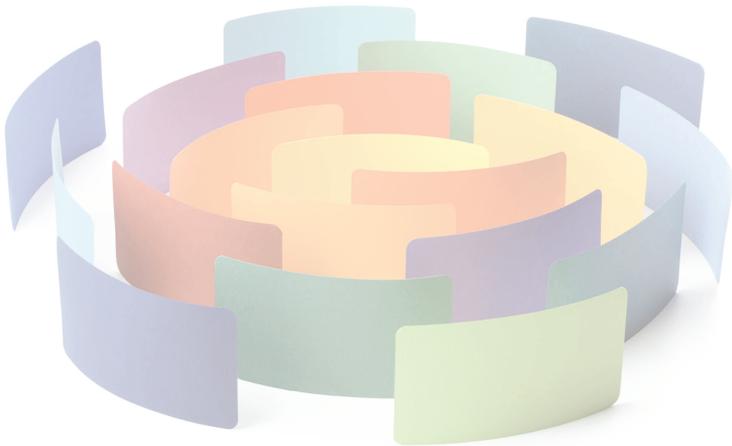
Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication

234 Outlet Point Boulevard, Suite A, Columbia, SC 29210

Ph.: 802-798-0271 | FAX: 803-772-3509 | E-mail: jennifer@aejmc.org | www.aejmc.org

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First Place

Immersion Reporting: Civil Conversations

Jan Larson
Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Abstract: Immersion Reporting: Civil Conversations is a 300-level immersion-reporting course designed to produce multimedia stories that explore how ordinary citizens shaped the extraordinary events of the Civil Rights Movement during the late 1950s and into the 1960s. The course collaborates with a University sponsored 10-day domestic intercultural immersion experience – Civil Rights Pilgrimage – traveling the Civil Rights trail to sites of historic importance to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. During the journey, students produce multimedia journalism telling the continuing story of the movement and the communities and people along the trail.

Explanation: Immersion Reporting: Civil Conversations is a 15-week course that includes lecture, lab and a 10-day spring break immersion-reporting trip through Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, Selma, New Orleans, Little Rock and Memphis. The first seven weeks of the course are spent learning the history of the movement, conducting parallel contemporary readings and arranging on-site interviews in communities along the trail. The last seven weeks is devoted to lab time to work on producing the multimedia journalism.

Some weekly work is completed outside the hybrid class. Students watch selected portions of the PBS Television series *Eyes on the Prize* and “A Time for Justice: America’s Civil Rights Movement,” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Readings include Michelle Alexander’s “The New Jim Crow,” and the Pulitzer Prize winning book, “The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of the Nation,” by Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff. Students submit discussion prompts used during class sessions and prepare individual presentations on portions of the reading. Labs during the first seven weeks are used to develop story ideas, conduct research and arrange interviews.

During the trip, which is funded through a combination of grants and course fees, students participate in much of the itinerary that includes visits to civil rights museums in the host cities, a slavery re-enactment and meetings with both foot soldiers of the movement and current activists. Reporters separate from the group to work on stories in their selected communities. While each student produces a journalism blog from one of the cities visited during the pilgrimage, the students return to campus and use remaining weeks to produce content for Civil Conversations. The course grade is derived from Reading/Video Discussions, 10 percent; Reporter’s Notebook, 15 percent; CJ blog post, 15 percent; Multimedia Stories, 15 percent; and a Final Reflection, 10 percent.

Rationale: Issues of race, class and gender typically take a backseat to event coverage in mainstream U.S. news reporting. According to a year-long 2010 Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism and its Social and Demographics Trends project, "Media, Race and Obama's First Year," African Americans as a group attract relatively little media attention. The study found that most coverage during the study period focused on specific episodes rather than on examining broader issues and trends that affect the lives of blacks. (<http://www.journalism.org/node/21403>).

If the challenge of fully covering underserved communities and broad social topics is to be met, students must be engaged in experiences that move them beyond episodic coverage of a one-time event. The domestic immersion course provides the real-world experience that will prepare students for their future work as journalists and challenge them to acquire the commitment to promote journalism as building democracy for all of society's members.

Outcomes: Throughout the journalism curriculum, faculty members strive to engage students in the purpose, principles and practices of journalism.

The purpose of journalism is to give people the information they need to participate in a democratic society. Journalism should educate, inform, entertain and/or touch the human heart.

The principles this course focuses on primarily include the role of journalism as an independent monitor of power, giving voice to the voiceless, journalism as a public forum and the responsibility to conscience journalists possess.

The practices of journalism this course studies include reporting, writing, editing and producing journalism across platforms.

Immersion Reporting: Civil Conversations has been transformative in the lives of dozens of students. Former students report the experience remains a highlight of their college years. A student confessed near the end of one pilgrimage that he had signed up to escape winter for a few days. But, he continued, he was a different person after the trip and had a new commitment to giving voice to those often unheard. After graduation, a student who participated in Civil Conversations convinced her local TV station to send her back to Selma to cover the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday and to track down foot soldiers of the movement. Her resulting three-part series netted her station a news Emmy. Finally, another former student recently wrote about how the course continues to inform her work in public radio in Atlanta where she helped create an online special project examining the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The piece [*following on the next page*] is a draft prototype of a museum exhibit shared with The National Voting Rights Museum and Institute in Selma, Alabama. The QR code can be scanned to hear a short audio clip from the subject.

Civil Conversations



Photo and text by

“We are Selma and we are moving backwards.”

— **Charlotte Richardson**

Charlotte Richardson was 9 years old when her friend stopped playing with her at a creek near her home in Selma, Alabama. She asked him why.

“Fred said, ‘My mom says you’re a nigger.’”

Puzzled, Richardson asked her grandmother what the word meant. She never saw Fred again.

It wasn’t the last time Richardson would realize she was different from white children.

“As a young black watching how my grandmother raised me, and she had

to, I remember when we were walking down the sidewalk — any white person passed by, we had to move back and let them pass first,” she said.

“We’d step in the mud or whatever the case may be.”

Richardson, then 12 years old, joined the march for voting rights on Turnaround Tuesday. She knew the dangers because Alabama State troopers severely beat her cousin on Bloody Sunday.

“I’m not really afraid to die,” she said, “because as far as I’m concerned you weren’t really living.”

Today, Richardson lives in Ohio. She could never again live in Selma, where she says her memories of growing up in the Jim Crow South still haunt her.

“I’ve ran to keep from getting raped from white men,” she said. “Okay, I’m not talking about the white boys I’m talking about white men. Because you know it was like, ‘Oh, I want a piece of that little black meat.’”

If it were up to Richardson, all of Selma would be bulldozed and covered with dirt.



The following links to a radio piece one of the students reported, wrote and produced on the Freedom Rides. The story features interviews with Freedom Riders and the former Montgomery Chief of Police who was a desk captain the day the call came through that a mob had attacked the bus riders in Montgomery. (<https://soundcloud.com/breane-lyga/montgomery-police-desk-captain-recalls-freedom-rides>)

Second Place

Busting Biases by Publishing Cultural Competence Guides

Joe Grimm
Michigan State University

Abstract: In the Bias Busters guides to cultural competence, students produce for commercial sale books in print and digital formats that answer 100 of the basic, everyday questions people have about a racial, religious, cultural or other marginalized group. To do this, students interview members of the study group, asking stereotypes people like dispelled and what they think others should know. Students then research, write and edit, adding photos, videos, charts, motion graphics, or audio to illustrate the answers. The books support themselves and are used on campus, by other universities, non-profits and in industry. Students have facilitated some of these workshops.

Explanation of the teaching practice or activity: The class is set up as publishing team to create a guide that will help others feel more comfortable conversing across cultural lines. In doing so, the students themselves must have wide-ranging interviews with a number of people as they ask what biases, stereotypes and hidden truths are widely unknown to others. The chance to publish a book while still in college pushes them to work collaboratively. They work to cross cultural lines to learn information, not just as a diversity exercise, but as the essential step in the process. Initially, they are unsure about how to find people or how to have difficult interviews. They are trained in finding sources and conducting interviews across cultural fault lines. They have published guides about African Americans, Latinos and Hispanics, Muslims, Jews, transgender people and half a dozen other groups. They have visited a mosque, a synagogue, a Chaldean Cultural Center, an immigration center, a police department, and met with people over coffee and in homes. "Expert allies" from these diverse communities have come to the classroom and critique the work.

Students go from feeling challenged, but wanting to publish, to having three or more successful interviews that go longer than they expected and that are fun. We say "once you have talked to one person from a group, you have talked to ... just one person." No person speaks for everyone in a group. The students draw answers from reliable research by the Pew Research Center, Gallup, the Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United Nations and commissions. The students learn to avoid unreliable and opinionated sources because their answers must stand up to scrutiny.

The Bias Busters series has developed four values:

- Accuracy: In every answer, in the mechanics and in scope and focus

- **Authority:** You can take our answers to the bank. They are reported, not guesses.
- **Accessibility:** Average sentence length is 16 words, the guides are simple and clear, the type is large and the price low. We share some answers on the web for free.
- **Respect for subjects as well as readers, who never get “yelled at” for wondering.** The students’ mission is to be conversation starters by easing concerns about hurting other people or embarrassing oneself by appearing ignorant.

Guides are timely. When Black students on campuses were protesting, Bias Buster students produced “100 Questions and Answers About Africans.” During the 2016 presidential campaign, they were interviewing immigrants. After Chaldeans were detained for deportation to Iraq, the students were interviewing Chaldeans. After the interviews, research and writing comes the editing. The students edit each other and we send drafts, first of the questions and then the entire guide, to a diverse cross-section of allies. Students are not parachuting in for interviews. They are working WITH people and know they will be held accountable what they publish.

Rationale: I have tried to teach diversity and inclusion by layering modules or activities onto core journalistic values. This has included requirements or encouragement for using diverse sources or stories, interviewing people the students are not experienced with, discussions, diverse speakers and outreach. However, these seemed like optional add-ons or curricular checkboxes.

By moving a group – any group – into the center of the course and enlisting them its members as allies, it is essential to navigate diversity, to think about what we are learning, to discuss issues and to respect members of marginalized communities as experts. Students even ask for field visits and guest speakers who can help them accomplish the assignment. Students become adept at seeking out and sharing sources.

They learn, face to face, how important identity is. Their interviews quickly take them to deep levels of meaning. They know their first audience will be people in the communities and they figure out and publish timelines, glossaries and resources. Through experience, they learn that journalists must reach across any perceived barrier, whether cultural, religious, social, racial or gender, to get the story. There are tremendous generational, geographic, experiential and intersectional differences within communities. Most importantly, students learn that although there are differences among people, we all want respect, opportunity and security and our families.

Outcomes: Bias Busters has grown way beyond the confines of a single semester or classroom. Several students have taken this elective more than once. Three students customized the course into an independent study to produce a

guide on sexual orientation. They have learned discuss “hot” issues constructively. In addition to learning with each other, they have learned from each other in deep conversations about intersectionalism, white privilege, institutional racism, colorism and transphobia. Learning – and learning to learn – are the key outcomes in any classroom, and student behaviors indicate this is happening. And we have had other desirable deliverables:

- In-class learning has been shared with the larger campus in Bias Busters launches and events. The largest was when a request for a guest speaker became a panel of six women from the Trans Sistas of Color Project, which drew an audience of 125 people. Before that guide was written, it was already teaching. The students handled logistics.
- Residential housing has us do staff seminars with the guides, the campus police train with them and distribute copies, as does the university’s office of inclusion.
- Private industry, including Blue Cross-Blue Shield, has had us present workshops.
- An immigrant resource center used our guides as a fundraiser and a newspaper chain bought newsroom sets.
- Hundreds of Bias Busters have been purchased for training by a dozen universities and non-profits including Cal Poly, Northwestern University and UNITY: Journalists for Diversity.

Bias Busters supplemental material: A testament to the effectiveness of these guides as tools for teaching diversity is the extra lengths so many students have gone to, to sustain and deepen their experience. One student took it upon herself to create a study guide for the series. Another boiled three of the guides down into 10-question handouts that a women’s group wanted to use in its interfaith training conversations. When the university library asked for a program about the guides, half a dozen students organized the program. That meant delivering an introduction with visuals to about 100 people. Then, the students divided the audience into diverse groups and challenged them to use each other to answer questions from the guides. The instructor did none of this. It was all them. Audience members got comfortable with each other, talked about issues they normally avoid and wound up shaking off discomfort and learning from each other. The guides were just the kind of conversation starters we hope for them to be.

The students write the guides; they can tell you lessons that stayed with them, even years afterward:

It’s been about two years since I worked on the guide called “100 Questions and Answers About African Americans,” and I think the guide is as relevant as ever. As a country, we’re still dealing with racial prejudice, inequality and police brutality. These guides can be a good place to start difficult conversations, simply by giving people the opportunity to ask questions and find carefully researched and reported answers.

I studied humanities as well as journalism. In my humanities courses, we'd sometimes critique the media, talking about how stories can perpetuate stereotypes or leave out context. Bias Busters was a great opportunity to practice journalism in a socially-conscious way. And it wasn't easy, either. The books directly confront cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes, and those aren't simple topics to talk about or report on.

It was a great exercise in listening. This is a topic I, as a white student from a mostly white rural area of Michigan, cannot be an expert on. And that's OK. It's all about listening to your sources, who do have the knowledge and lived experiences, and making a very conscious, sustained effort to stay true to their words and feelings in your reporting. If you don't get it, ask again. Read back the quotes and say, "Am I understanding this right?" And that's a lesson that extends beyond reporting on social issues and into any beat.

— *Kelsey*

Through Bias Busters, I learned meaning behind new cultural traditions, and was challenged to unveil the unique adversities each has faced. In the two years I was involved, the publication grew from a printed pamphlet into a nationally marketed multimedia piece that included graphic design elements and video. It was one of the most rewarding experiences as a journalist, but also personally, at (the university).

— *Madeline*

When I worked on the series it was really interesting to gain different perspectives on a subject. Whether it was American Veterans or American Jews, I learned so much by asking questions and taking multiple answers, combining them into simple terms for our readers.



I can tell you that last year when Hanukkah started, I brought in my electric Hanukkah and my copy of "100 Questions and Answers about American Jews." It was a great conversation starter and still is. I actually decided to keep the book on top of my computer tower on my desk and one of my coworkers comes over almost daily to learn a new fact. He didn't grow up around a lot of

Jews so he's interested to learn more.

Through the two books I worked on, I gained a greater understanding of different cultures and the main stereotypes they face. As a Jew myself, I even learned new facts. The thing I love about the books is they are easy to read and cover a wide range of topics. It's all in an effort to better educate people and have them understand others around them who may be different than them—or frankly the same.

The Bias Buster series helps facilitate conversation among coworkers, friends and foes alike.

— *Daniel*

I have bettered my interviewing and researching skills, hopefully to benefit my future journalism career. I'm a pretty introverted person so it has been very good for me to push myself to meet new people and ask questions. I am honored to continue to be a part of such an important project to ask the hard questions and educate people about identities typically not given a mainstream voice. I am extremely passionate about the work I have done for Bias Busters!

— *Alexis*

Participating in the Bias Busters class was one of my greatest experiences during my time at (the university). It was a culturally enriching opportunity that I believe gave all of its participants the ability to look at the world and the people within it through a different lens. Producing these guides in a short turnaround period with only about 10-12 team members also taught us time management, teamwork and strong communication skills. For many of us, Bias Busters was a good introductory class for what would be waiting for us in our jobs post-graduation. Three years removed from (the university), I still like to show off the cultural competency guides I helped produce and speak of my experience.

— *Lia*

Third Place

Developing Cultural Intelligence by Leveraging Social Media for Experiential Service Learning

Jennifer Sadler
The University of Mississippi

Abstract: Launched in Spring 2017, WeSayLOU is an experiential service-learning project for internet marketing students that requires the class to educate the REDACTED (LOU) community on relevant issues via social media. The focus of the project shifts every semester, with former topics including affordable housing and education. The most recent focus—the intersection of politics and the black community—coincides with the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Since its inception, students have developed photo/quote profiles from interviews of over 200 community members, staged a standing exhibition, and written and produced daily digital content.

Teaching Practice or Activity: REDACTED, is an intensive skills-based class that allows students to understand the theory and practice of digital planning and advertising. Traditionally a textbook-based class, the shift to more mixed media learning materials and projects with a diversity focus and community engagement has led to developing cultural intelligence alongside building hard skills. Students work in teams to tell the stories of community members and educate locals as it relates to an overarching theme for the semester. The project began in February 2017 when students held an on-campus standing exhibition depicting the faces and stories of community members who voiced their concerns regarding affordable housing.¹ As the class builds awareness through an experiential model of developing digital media skills, they also develop cultural intelligence through service learning.

For this project, students are given a mix of media materials over two weeks to discuss and explore the history and context of their selected theme for the semester. For the theme of “The Intersection of Politics and the Black Community,” the class read National Geographic articles about inequality, reviewed the Barack Obama segment of ‘My Next Guest with David Letterman’ and the 13th documentary on Netflix. They also reviewed NPR podcasts on the relationship between the Trump administration and the Congressional Black Caucus on topics concerning black citizens and they dissected the meaning of an illustrator’s depiction of Confederate statutes. Each approach to the topic provided a new way for students to receive complex or uncomfortable information. Interest meetings outside of the class were held so that students could meet with members of student organizations to ask questions about that community. These members also have a direct link to their topic for the semester, such as the black student union for insight on politics and the black community.

Over the following weeks, students learn about social media planning and management with a focus on how to relay messages on different platforms and to different groups. Students work within teams to create a plan for the week they will post that includes a literature review of the theme and a content calendar. They are then given access to the WeSayLOU Facebook and Twitter accounts to manage content and inform the community on their topic for the semester.²

Students are required to post curated content (media from outside sources), medium articles (original written pieces), content marketing pieces (original infographics, videos, podcasts, etc.) and community profiles. Community profiles are done in a 'Humans of New York' style, drawing from the popular Facebook page where a photographer takes a photo and quote snippet from interviews with members of the community. At the close of the semester, students write a summary of their experience with the project and how it has impacted their view of both the topic and the people who are intricately connected to the topic.

Rationale: Soon Ang and P. Christopher Earley first introduced the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) in 2003 after realizing that social and emotional intelligence were lacking a cultural component.³ This was largely applied to global work environments and understanding behaviors that may be translated differently between ethnic groups. However, framed within the context of a small community, intercultural interactions can provide a similar ground for misunderstandings in the absence of a well-developed cultural intelligence.⁴ In essence, college students are often confined within their known social groups and are rarely challenged to extend learning about other groups or actively engaging within that unknown community. Judgments and assumptions can be made about others based on how information is processed and applied in social situations. Providing contextualization to these assumptions with real-life interactions may help to foster a better cultural intelligence.

As part of the project, students research the topic, inform the public, and meet with community members to gather insights and stories for the WeSayLOU social media pages. The experiential component is designed to give students an opportunity to practice skills learned in the classroom. By volunteering at community events and reporting live from city meetings to better inform the public, students fulfill a service-learning activity for the project.

Outcomes: Community members have embraced the project and shared profiles of friends, neighbors, and others within the LOU area. Because students are responsible for growing their audience organically, they produce shareable content and in doing so have reached over 100,000 people through original content pieces, articles and community profiles. In the Spring of 2016, the project was accepted as part of the Service Learning Symposium on campus. Students presented their understanding of the topic and its impact on the community. Reflection articles and papers indicated that students place a higher value in their diverse community and that they are proud to be able to share these stories. Students

have taken these skills into independent projects after completing the class. The project continues to address new topics each semester that impact the surrounding community.

Examples of Student Work:



Top Left: Students participating in a standing exhibition to showcase the voices of community members.

Top Right: A Close-up of one of the photos/quotes that was eventually displayed online after the exhibition.

Left: A 'Thank You' post students made to express gratitude to some of the community members who chose to be interviewed.

Top: Infographics students created to give a visual representation of data/statistics. Top left is data for redacted education as compared to the rest of the US. Top right is a breakdown of housing in Redacted.



Left: A Twitter post from the WeSayLOU account – the post is a medium article written by a student about African American home ownership.

¹ Redacted/

² REDACTED

³ Earley, P. C., & Ang, S. (2003). Cultural intelligence: Individual interactions across cultures. Retrieved February 10, 2018, from

<https://books.google.com/books?id=g0PSkiOT8ggC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

⁴ Ang, S., Van Dyne, L., & Tan, M. (2011). Cultural Intelligence. In R. Sternberg & S. Kaufman (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Intelligence* (Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology, pp. 582-602). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511977244.030.

Honorable Mention

'Diversity Style Guide' for Media Ethics

Sheila Peuchaud
University of Nevada, Reno

Abstract: In this Media Ethics assignment, students work in pairs or groups of three to produce a video or podcast "Diversity Style Guide" for reporting on and communicating strategically with diverse stakeholders. Students consult the AP Stylebook, professional ethics codes, advocacy organizations' media kits, and examples of problematic and exemplary content. This assignment bridges media production skills with diversity concepts. As students engage with their peers' presentations, themes naturally emerge, such as "do your research ahead of time," "if you don't know how to refer to someone, ask that person" and "avoid these clichés and stereotypes."

I. Explanation of teaching/methodology

Objective: Students learn and teach how to do solid, sensitive reporting and strategic communication with diverse populations. Diversity is conceptualized as race, gender, sexual identity, neurodiversity, age (e.g. minors and the elderly), and vulnerability (e.g. domestic violence and sexual assault survivors, people affected by suicide).

Deliverable: 6-7 minute media podcast, video, or multi-media presentation.

Group Project: Students rank topic preferences, then I assign pairs or groups with two objectives in mind: (1) students should be working on an issue that interests them; (2) students experience working with peers who are different from themselves in terms of gender, race, socio-economic status, etc.

Research: Students consult the AP Stylebook, professional codes of ethics, as well as media kits produced by advocacy groups. They seek out examples of problematic reporting and strategic communication, and examples of successful reporting and strategic communication about and for the diverse and vulnerable populations.

Grading Rubric: Students are evaluated on how well they address the following topics:

- (1) Potential pitfalls for media professionals working with diverse stakeholders
- (2) Examples of problematic professional mediated communication
- (3) Advice and solutions for media professionals working with diverse stakeholders
- (4) Examples of exemplary professional mediated communication
- (5) An overview of relevant terminology

Additionally, students are evaluated on the quality of their media product:

(6) Production values

(7) Journalistic attribution for all sources

II. Rationale

The Diversity Style Guide assignment in Media Ethics ensures that *all* students are exposed to challenges and best practices of communication involving diverse populations in a required course, regardless of whether they enroll in a diversity-specific elective. In recognition of the importance of diversity to ethical professional media practice, Media Ethics has a diversity-specific Student Learning Objective:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity's impact on the credibility and civic purpose of professional media practice. Students will gain the knowledge and skills to incorporate multiple perspectives and represent diverse stakeholders equitably and accurately.

Students meet this SLO by finding examples of professional communication that undermined trust and credibility by failing to meet diversity expectations. They research best practices and positive examples that avoid the pitfalls of stereotyped content.

This assignment bridges the conceptual content of the course with production skills from the wider curriculum, making the assignment more relevant. Students actively synthesize the information for other students to use and learn. Students spend time engaging with the material because improvisation is not an option.

In two class periods, the class attends presentations about racial demographics (e.g. African Americans, Latinx, Native Americans), gender and sexual identities (e.g. LGB, transgender, nonbinary), neurodiversity (e.g. intellectually disabled, mental health) and people in vulnerable situations (e.g. domestic violence, sexual violence, suicide). Generalizable themes regarding diversity best practices naturally emerge in the debrief, such as “if you don’t know how to refer to someone, ask what they prefer.”

III. Outcomes

Colleagues have adapted the assignment for their own Media Ethics courses:

“I was so impressed with the quality of the work that the students produced and their fluency on these topics that I immediately decided to incorporate a version of the assignment for my own ethics class.”

“This excellent assignment concept provided fresh paths for getting students engaged in the practical realities of diversity and ethics in media. It provided opportunities for delving below the surface of topics, with students expected to navigate substantial matters of policy in covering increasingly diverse populations.”

Anonymous end-of-term student evaluation feedback was unanimously positive:

“The Diversity Style Guide assignment was one of my favorite assignments I have done in this School.”

“I felt as though the things we were discussing were relevant to the challenges of reporting in today’s world.”

A local professional “Diversity Beat” journalist attended the student presentations: *“The Diversity Style Guide assignment allowed students to better grasp concepts of diversity, which can be quite daunting. Using a digital format to develop explanatory materials for race and diversity in the media provided the ideal medium to engage them.”*

Example of Student Work: Script for Transgender/Nonbinary Group Video
(video link available upon request; video contains identifying information)

Identity, in one way, shape, or form has dominated conversation and media over the past few years. Identity is a fluid, ever evolving concept and as these new identities are expressed to the world it is our duty as journalist to stay up to date as possible. The words and phrases we use dramatically affect how things are perceived and talked about by our society. It’s only natural to assume that “the media” should change to better present these ideals, right? It is starting to become clear that the burden has fallen on individual journalists to stay informed on the growing understanding of identity when reporting. There are some things you, as a journalist, should consider before you write about or include someone who identifies as transgender, agender, intersex, or any identity.

Transition - Before moving forward, a crash course on gender and sex is necessary.

Lesson 1: It is common in everyday conversation to use sex and gender interchangeably, but if you are going to be accurate you need to know the difference. Sex is biological and is typically assigned at birth. Gender is a someone’s personal identity, like “man” or “woman”.

Neither one is binary. Not everyone is either male or female, a man or a woman. Intersex people are people who are born with anatomy that doesn’t match the typical definition of male or female. Transgender people have a gender identity different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender-nonconforming or genderqueer people may identify with a gender but not follow gender norms in how they express themselves. There is also agender, meaning a person simply does not have a gender identity.

Though the binary may seem to make life easier for some, the concept attempts to force identities into a box.

Lesson 2: Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation are NOT the same thing. Gender identity is how someone sees themselves. Sexual Orientation is who some-

one is sexually attracted to. NEVER assume someone's gender based off of their Sexual Orientation, and vice-versa.

Lesson 3: If you aren't certain of someone's gender identity do not just assume it. Be diligent, ask the person how they identify, and what pronouns they use. There may be situations when it is impossible to ask someone for clarification. Only in this case it is acceptable to infer based on how they express themselves.

There are people who use the singular "they" as a gender-neutral pronoun. Different organizations have different rules, but most will say to avoid it because it can be confusing for the audience. Write around it or briefly explain if you need to use it. This is simply one example of how language around this subject is developing.

Lesson 4: When covering this group, you have to understand that language is important. The terminology surrounding sex and gender issues has been changing a lot lately. Terms that were acceptable even just a few years ago are now outdated or offensive, but unfortunately, they still are used in the media.

For example: I'm sure many of you have heard of the word hermaphrodite, but the word intersex is much less common. It used to be acceptable to call people with "both male and female parts" a hermaphrodite. But now this term is out of date and considered highly offensive.

Another example is "Transsexual", which is still commonly used in place of transgender. The term was sometimes acceptable in major media style guides, but it is now universally avoided.

The AP Style guide recently updated their gender identity section to remain accurate. As a journalist, ignorance is the biggest hurdle for reporting on these topics. It is our journalistic duty to keep up to date with these terms and how they may be changing.

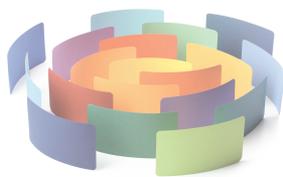
When looking for a story try to **move beyond clichés** and be more diverse in your storytelling. "Coming out" and "transition" narratives have been overdone. Cliché stories such as these don't capture the full scope of their lives.

As another example, when you search for "intersex" in the news almost everything you find will be about how hospitals lie to their intersex patients. These stories are newsworthy, but if they are the only stories being told it gives the impression that this is all there is to these people and their lives.

When illustrating the story, avoid images like transgender people performing stereotypical gender roles, like a trans-man shaving or a trans-woman putting on makeup. Another common cliché is using before and after pictures of someone's transition. These images are usually added for the audience's curiosity but don't

add any substance to the story. Instead they give the impression that someone's gender identity is just a superficial performance.

Conclusion: As a journalist we have the duty to present citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing. The way we write about these communities affect how our audience views them. In these evolving times journalists need to stay accurate, diligent, remain empathetic, and **NEVER ASSUME**. Thank you.



Best Practices in Teaching Diversity in Journalism and Mass Communication