I. Course Objectives and Goals

JCM495, Great Ideas Capstone, is an assessment/performance class for all broadcast, cinema, corporate and journalism majors. It is designed for you to draw upon what you have learned in previous communications courses and other classes in your college experience. It will also introduce you to new methods of gathering and presenting information for media. You will use what you have learned in previous classes and combine it with new methods to display your ability to think, write and present information that demonstrates your competency to enter the communications work force or continue your education in graduate school. You will accomplish this through a series of culminating projects, discussions and presentations.

Because JCM495 carries the name "great ideas," we will look at the role of communications globally, focusing upon the communication “great ideas”—free expression and technology—as they exist in various countries.

A. Goal

The capstone course challenges students to think creatively and analytically about great ideas and values such as media accuracy, free expression, ethics, history and diversity. Students are assessed through a thematic project where they demonstrate a mastery of professional competencies.

B. Objectives

- Explore selected great ideas in communication pertinent to the values and competencies in the Elon Eleven.
- Engage in research and the critical evaluation of relevant communication topics and concepts, requiring students to gather, analyze, synthesize and present information from primary and/or secondary level sources.
- Demonstrate ability to use appropriate tools of technology for a major individual and/or group production project.
- Assist in bridging academic experience with plans for employment in the communications industry or graduate school.
- Provide an opportunity demonstrate creative and analytical skills in you specific concentration/s, including effective writing skills and effective speaking and presentation skills.

In conjunction with these objectives, students should approach this class as if it were a job. All work is to be turned in on time, free of error and typed. Grammatical errors will result in a lowered grade on all assignments. You are expected to attend class each day. If for some reason you cannot attend, let the instructor know ahead of time. You would not miss work without prior approval or a valid excuse unless you wanted to lose your job. The same principle applies in this class. A failing grade (less than a C-) will mean you lose your chance to graduate unless you repeat this course.

II. Course Requirements

1. Attendance. JCM495 is a performance course, and you are expected to assume a professional attitude as a participant. Attendance is required. We will use much of our class time to discuss issues of relevance to your assignments and your major. We will also use class time for presentations. Your absence from them is unacceptable. Make-up work is almost impossible to schedule effectively and will be accepted only for excused absences at the discretion of the instructor. Contact the instructor BEFORE the class session you will miss. One other thing: Because you will be working on projects that will require extensive research or time working outside class, we will not always
have class. Remember this. There will be days when we do not have class, but you will still be responsible for working as if you were in class.

Great Ideas Capstone follows the School of Communications rules for class attendance. You are allowed three absences. Each absence beyond them will result in a drop in your final grade by one-third of a letter grade. You are also expected to complete the course with a C- average. If you miss more than eight classes, you automatically receive an F. Missing a presentation by one of your classmates is unacceptable except under the most extreme of cases. If you have questions on the School's attendance policy, please visit Blackboard, Course Documents, Professional Policies Statement.

If you know you must be absent, let the instructor know ahead of time, if possible. The School of Communications’ attendance policy may be found on our Blackboard site or on the School’s site.

2. Assignments and Deadlines. All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, copy edited and turned in ON TIME. This means meeting deadlines. Master the ability to work on deadline early in the semester, and do not fall into the habit of pushing deadlines and turning work in late. Announcement of a deadline should not cause panic but should prompt you to organize and allocate you time calmly and wisely and to work efficiently. Late papers on any assignments may not be accepted or may be lowered a letter grade for each day they are late (If your work is due at 12:15—and you turn it in at 2 p.m.—it’s late.

For out-of-class assignments, late papers will receive a reduced grade unless you make arrangements with the instructor BEFORE the assignment is due that lateness is justified. On some assignments the grade will be an F for failure to meet the deadline. An assignment that cannot be turned in one week following its due date will not be accepted except under the most rare of circumstances (e.g. you are in the hospital, etc.).

Writing and speaking with few mistakes is imperative for you as you close your undergraduate career. Basically, if anything you turn in or present in class contains more than 10 grammar/punctuation/style errors, the work is unacceptable and must be redone with loss of points.

3. Copyediting and Style. Follow the latest edition of the authority on style for your particular concentration. If you cannot find the answer to your style question, consult Webster's New World Dictionary. This dictionary should be your reference when a stylebook fails to cover a point. On research papers, use the style of notation that conforms to your type of research, e.g. Chicago for qualitative research and MLA for quantitative.

4. Consideration of Readers/Viewers/Publics. Never forget that what you research and then write is not for you solely when you're in communications; it's for an audience. Always take the audience into consideration, and explain your target audience when you make a class presentation.

5. Copying and Plagiarism. All Elon University students sign the university's honor code. It is assumed that you will not copy the work of others and attempt to pass it off as your own. If I suspect that this has happened, I as your instructor am required by Elon’s Honor Code to take action. If you turn in work that is someone else's, you will receive an F for the course. It’s really simple: If you use someone else’s work, give them credit with an endnote or full mention in the body of your paper.

6. Learning Differences. Some students have diagnosed learning differences. If this is true with you, please see me so that we can discuss your specific academic needs.

III. Course Materials

A. Readings: We will read a variety of materials this semester. Much of it you will find, read and then report on to the class. There is no book specifically assigned for this class.

B. Assorted communications skills: You are expected to be familiar with the tools of your chosen concentration—video editing, page layout and design. All students should be familiar with presentation equipment (lcd projectors, e.g.) and software (PowerPoint, e.g.). You are responsible for making sure presentations prior to class.
IV. Course Assignments

A. Great ideas: It’s election season, so we’ll be dealing with media and elections as our great idea. We’ll read about elections in the past, about current elections, and we’ll focus on national and state elections. This can encompass elements from every sequence. There’s advertising, reporting, public relations, and cinema that are all elements of how we understand elections.

B. Group projects/presentations: When you leave school and move into a communications job (or almost any job), you will find that the finished product almost always depends upon a team effort. That is the rationale behind group projects. The danger is that individuals within the group do not contribute equally. For group projects, each group member will fill out an evaluation of group members’ involvement in the project and presentation. I will not share these with anyone. Your candidness in assessing those with whom you work is, therefore, imperative. The exact focus of your projects will be discussed in class, but you may begin to pick people with whom you would like to work immediately and even formulate your own ideas and bring them to me. We will present our group work in some way, which might include a showing, a TV show, something written, etc. You may also present work as a traditional projects.

C. Individual projects: Individual projects may be a part of our course, depending upon the way you structure your application part of the course. Individual projects allow you to demonstrate that you have mastered the tools of communication. You should work in your area of concentration. In the event you have multiple concentrations, select the one in which you feel most comfortable or in which you would prefer to work. If you think you are going to graduate school, plan on doing a serious research paper. In fact, everyone should plan on a serious project (topic might be humorous). When I say serious, I am saying that you should take what you do as something of value for you and me. You are expected to present a short synopsis of your individual research to the class. This part of the course counts more than any other. You may use information gathered from other parts of the class to complete this part of the course.

D. Portfolio/résumé: Put together samples of your work that will enable you to find employment after graduation. Résumés should be accurate, brief and attention getting. Look for examples of each that you like and emulate. In this section of the course, we'll look toward your future. We will explore jobs, graduate school, etc. One thing that we will do is explore and research specific jobs and/or companies with whom you would like to work. We'll share this information with the class. I suggest strongly that you create online portfolios that can be uploaded now on Elon’s network or upon another, off-campus site. We want to discuss what is needed in a portfolio, résumé, cover letter, and have mock job interviews.

E. Readings: This part of the course will involve class participation and your own selected reading of works specific to your concentration and/or interests, along with New News Out of Africa. Plan to share with the class what you have learned from your individual readings (class participation). We’ll talk more about what you read later. It may pertain to what you will research.

F. Assessment: All students will take an assessment exam that contains general questions related to Elon's communications program as well as questions tailored specifically to your area of concentration.

V. Grading

15 percent—Portfolio/résumé/interview
5 percent—Assessment exam
25 percent—Great ideas analyses/readings/reports/presentations
55 percent—Your project (10 percent of the 55 will be midterm presentation or 25/30 if you do two projects)

VI. Grading System

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>93 and above</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89.99</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-69.99</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>63-66</td>
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<td>60-62</td>
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<td>59.99 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
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All communications majors must make a C- or better for their final grade in JCM 495.
When I say "articles," I mean articles from journals—like Media Studies Journal or Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly. Book reviews in journals are not articles and should not be used. An article from USA Today, while it might be pertinent to what we discuss, is not sufficient. There will be times when articles from magazines and papers are what you need, but I’ll let you know when that’s the case. Also, don’t forget that hard copies of books still exist in the library. Everything of value is not solely on line. Yes, it’s easier to go online, but you should still look in the library for information that’s not digital.
Weeks 6-8, October 6-24

Great ideas

Assignments- 1. As part of our great ideas, we will study the relation of media and politics, specifically elections, in the United States. We select seven presidential elections and discover the way media affected their outcome, how politicians used media, and any other elements of the two. This will include multiple elements of media—from reporting to advertising and public relations, to the way media technology affected the political outcome and vice versa.

A second element will involve a close watch on the current political races. As a class, we can determine how we will do this. We can, for example, have half the class focus on the Democrats and other on the Republicans. Or, we can have most of the class look at the two major political parties with others looking at the minor parties and their candidates. We can canvas media outlets to see what people are saying about the candidates and the elections. We can report on our home states, and/or we can focus on the so-called “battleground” states to see what is occurring.

Other races are important, too, and we can look at local, state and non-presidential national elections. Because of media, elections and their outcomes may be complicated. Straight news, advertising, public relations and other media elements affect what people see, believe and how they vote. We should be able to analyze these things, or at least be able to discuss them in class.

People for years have written about the power of the press to affect elections. Thomas Jefferson in 1799 said in order to get himself elected, the Democratic-Republican party would have to use the press. “The engine is the press” is the exact way Jefferson described his strategy for the 1800 election to James Madison.

The papers- 1-2 no more than 5 pages, please.

1. State reaction: With only a couple of students, we are all from different states. Your first paper will be on important state races plus state analysis of the presidential race. While we’re focusing on specific parties nationally, in this paper, look at the whole picture in your state. Find polls specific to your state, voting trends, anything that might let us know something about how your state is trending. Think about this and all assignments from multiple perspectives: pure journalism, public relations, advertising, etc. Turn this paper in and discuss it on Oct. 1.

2. Three before the election: This paper will be strictly along your selected party lines. Deal with any debates that have occurred and how media has covered your party, spin that surrounds the debates and the candidates. This is where you deal with anything that you might think is pertinent to date. Turn this paper in and discuss on Oct. 6, and we’ll discuss on Oct. 6 and 8.

3. The historical election research: This should be in depth and explain the election in terms of candidates and political parties. The media element is central to this. Explain media’s role in this election fully. Bring examples to class if needed to explain to the class. Approach this more as a research paper with no limit on length or elements. This is due Oct. 13, and we’ll discuss on Oct. 13 and 15.

4. The last paper will be your overall perspective of the presidential race and state races. We’ll see if you can determine from all that you’ve observed and read who’s going to win. In this paper, concentrate on your respective parties, but broaden out some to include some information from the opposing forces. For this class and this part of the great ideas, have accessible for the class, assorted political advertisements that we can watch via YouTube or other sources. Use this paper as a summary for all you need and want to say. You can even offer historical comparisons. This is due Nov. 3.

5. October 10 and 17 will be days set aside for group activities. We/you can meet in class or at another location. It might work to have two groups meet with me individually on one Friday and the other on the next. Think about it and let me know.

6. On Oct. 24, groups will meet individually with me to discuss midterm presentations and your project progress.

7. Provide for the class reading/s that you would like for class members to do in relation to your project to make all better consumers of your subject matter (Oct. 22).

No class Monday, Oct. 20, fall break.
Week 9, October 27-31
Research projects midpoint presentations
Great idea culmination

*Assignments*- 1. Each group/individual will give a 10-15-minute presentation on your project to date (Oct. 27-29). Remember, this presentation is equal to 10 percent of your total project and course grade. This is a teaching presentation. Ask me what that means.

2. Looking at elections and media before the vote. Whew! We’ve written lots, studied lots and completed midterm presentations. On Friday, Oct. 31, we want to see if we can present some examples of what’s been happening with the election in a visual way through advertisements, online elements, even viral video. We want to look one last time at what’s going to happen on Tuesday to see if we can make any predictions.

Week 10, November 3-7
Outlining the rest of the semester
Final group meetings

*Assignment*- 1. For your projects: You need your material such as bibliography, outline, etc., maybe even a rough draft of your project, if one's available. You'll want to ask about proper citation and even questions about presentation. This will be a test run for final presentation. These will be individual/group meetings during class time.

2. On Nov. 3, we will set dates for your project presentation as well as dates for interviews, etc. Unless you want to be first at everything, you’d better be present. Then I’ll review with individual groups your midterm presentations.

3. On Nov. 5 or 7, Ross Wade will join us for a session on interviews.

4. On Nov. 5 or 7, we’ll discuss election results in relation to what we’ve studied.

Weeks 11-12, November 10-21
Portfolio/résumé/interview

*Read*- Berger: Writing a research report, avoiding common reasoning errors

*Assignments*- Individual interviews about jobs, presentation of final portfolio, résumé, cover letter.

Week 13, November 24-28
Individual assessment
Writing the research

*Assignments*- On November 24, we will have individual assessment meetings, or more interviews if needed.

Nov. 26-28, Thanksgiving holiday.

Weeks 14-14, December 1-8
Course evaluations
Individual assessment
Research presentations

*Assignments*- Group presentations represent the culmination of your semester’s work. Since this counts 55 percent of your grade, they should not be taken lightly. Each presentation should involve all group members, demonstrate your ability to use the tools of a communicator, prove you have mastered the skills taught in your discipline and provide a body of information that enhances our understanding of your particular subject. Presentations should last a minimum of 30 minutes and not more than 55. Depending on the number of presentations, you may have the entire class period. We’ll begin on the 3rd, unless we need the 1st.

Final Examination Period, Tuesday, December 16, 1 p.m.
Assessment exam, completion of project presentations–if necessary