

**Loyola University Chicago**  
**Comm 279 – 201: Critical Issues in Journalism**

**Location: Class will be held online through Sakai with Friday synchronous sessions via Zoom at 2:45-3:35 p.m. (See make-up policy if you can't make the sessions)**

**Professor Patty Lamberti**  
**Office: SOC Room 223**  
**Office Hours:**  
**Mondays 12-1 p.m.**  
**Wednesdays 12-**  
**1p.m.**  
**Or by appointment**

**Office Phone: (312) 915-6860**

**Email: [plamberti@luc.edu](mailto:plamberti@luc.edu)**

**Course Overview:**

In this class, we will examine how such issues as:

- Race
- Gender
- Socio-economic status
- Bias
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Mental health
- Diversity
- The business model of news and other issues

affect journalists, the stories they tell (and choose not to tell) and the news-consuming public.

**Learning goals:**

- Thinking critically about how storytellers help and harm the public, often unintentionally
- Developing specific plans of action in response to newsroom issues that you will potentially encounter during internships and throughout your careers
- Soliciting interesting anecdotes from working professionals about critical issues in their workplaces
- Finding the strength, confidence and vocabulary to talk to one another and publicly about the strengths and weaknesses of news organizations

## **Course Materials:**

- All readings are free for this class and linked to on the syllabus. If you hit a pay wall for any readings, Google the headline. If the hyperlink on Sakai doesn't work, Google the headline.

## **Course Policies – IMPORTANT! READ THIS!**

### **Online assignments and synchronous sessions:**

Your assignments for this class will consist of reading articles and research, watching videos, contributing to class discussions on Sakai, taking weekly quizzes and completing four outside assignments. All of these can be done online, usually via Sakai, in your own timeframe, as long as the assignments are completed by the due dates on the syllabus.

Every Friday, between 2:45 and 3:45, we will “meet” as a group on Zoom, a videoconferencing tool available on Sakai. You will need a working a web camera and audio to use Zoom.

Zoom is available on Sakai under “tools” on the left hand side of the page. Simply click on Zoom a few minutes before our class session.

### **Makeup Policy for Synchronous Meeting Times**

If you cannot make our scheduled Zoom meeting time and you want credit for attending that class, you must watch the recorded video and send me an email with the subject line “5 Key Takeaways” by 11:59p.m. of the same day.

That email should contain 5 things you learned during that videoconference. The five takeaways should demonstrate that you watched the entire video, i.e. do not send me five things you learned from the first five minutes of the session.

The format should look like this:

### **Subject line: 5 Key Takeaways**

Dear Professor Lamberti,

After watching today's meeting, here are the 5 most important things I learned:

1. One sentence on what you learned from what we discussed.
2. One sentence on what you learned from what we discussed.
3. One sentence on what you learned from what we discussed.
4. One sentence on what you learned from what we discussed.
5. One sentence on what you learned from what we discussed.

### **Absences and Tardiness:**

In order to achieve success in this class, it will be imperative that you attend our weekly online sessions or complete the assignment above to prove you watched the video.

**Deadlines:**

NO ASSIGNMENTS – INCLUDING THE MATERIALS THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA SAKAI – WILL BE ACCEPTED BEYOND THE DUE DATE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

If you are ill or have another emergency, you must have documented proof (doctor's note, obituary, police report, etc.) that explains the situation. It is up to my discretion to accept this documentation or not.

**Academic Dishonesty Policy:**

Plagiarism of any form, of any kind and of any length will be reported to the Dean of Students. As you know, plagiarism constitutes using another's words or ideas without acknowledgment.

If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the class.

All projects you turn in for this class or present to the class must be original. You cannot submit materials used in another class. If you are caught doing so, you will fail the class.

Cheating on any other work associated with this class will receive a similar punishment.

**SSWD policy**

Students with disabilities who need accommodations should contact the Student Accessibility Center (SAC), formerly known as Services for Students With Disabilities (SSWD) through [www.luc.edu/sac](http://www.luc.edu/sac).

**Managing Life Crises and Finding Support**

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – just email me or schedule a meeting with me during office hours. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa.

Their phone number is 773-508-8840. The email is deanofstudents@luc.edu.

**Email policy:**

I will respond to all emails within 24 hours.

Keep in mind that I may not check my email right before an assignment is due. Ask questions early and re-read the assignment sheet. Often, the answer is there.

**Laptop and cell phone policy:**

Although technology is an integral part of communication, it doesn't always help you learn. The more you multitask, the less you learn. Multitasking is also disruptive to

instructors and the students around you.

Studies have shown the following:

1. According to Winona State University researchers, 68% of students who use laptops in the classroom aren't using them just to take notes – they're also surfing the web, checking Facebook and email, etc.
2. Former Stanford researcher Clifford Nass has found that multitaskers perform worse than non-multitaskers in nearly every category, including critical thinking skills and memory tests.
3. Researchers at Princeton and the University of California, Los Angeles had students in a lecture take notes on either laptops or pen and paper. Understanding of the lecture, measured by a standardized test at the end of the class, was worse for those who had taken notes on their laptops.

You are old enough to vote. You are old enough to join the military. You are old enough to be sent to an adult prison. You are old enough to fall in love, adopt a pet and in some cases, drink a beer. So out of respect for your age, we won't treat you like a child and *demand* that you *not* use your laptop or phone during class. Just know this – if you are checking social media, shopping, emailing and so on, you're hurting yourself. Why would you want to hurt yourself? If your tech-behavior starts to distract others, we'll lower the participation portion of your grade.

**Grading:**

In five years, you won't remember what grade you earned in this class.

At best, grades motivate you to learn as much as you can.

In the worst-case scenario, grades make you feel bad about yourself, question your life goals and hate school.

When thinking about grades, keep a few things in mind.

Grades don't always indicate how much you're getting out of a class, or school overall.

When you were in elementary school and high school, teachers and parents used grades to help keep you on task and unearth your talents.

But you are now an adult. It is your responsibility to learn as much as you can, keep yourself on task and uncover your passions. Grades may help you do this, but grades aren't your only guide on this road.

As an adult, you need to push yourself to learn – without the reward or punishment of a grade.

Getting As on assignments shouldn't be a reason to tell yourself, "I am a master at this. I don't need to try anymore. I'm checking out." You're not a master yet. An A means you're exceptional for a student in college. You can always improve.

Likewise, getting Cs shouldn't be a reason to give up. In fact, a C makes sense. That's an average grade, and you just started doing this.

We take a lot of time to make our grading policy transparent. You will receive a rubric for each assignment.

Your first assignment is worth less than latter ones. After all, as you learn, you should get better.

Quizzes on the readings will occur nearly every week during class. You are expected to read your assignments before class begins.

Please remember that we do not grade based on effort alone. We will not give you an A on one of the assignments simply because you tried your best.

For group assignments, part of your grade will be based on a peer evaluation.

### **Attendance, participation and professionalism:**

Participation means more than just talking a lot. It means contributing the conversationally thoughtfully. Your participation score will also be affected by how often you reply to others' comments on the Forum.

Professionalism includes arriving punctually to our online meetings and behaving appropriately. It's very noticeable during online sessions if you are talking to others, looking at your phone, etc. You are required to turn your video camera on during our online sessions unless you have a compelling reason to not do so.

### **Recorded session information**

In this class software will be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e. shortly after the course ends, per the [Sakai administrative schedule](#)). Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Please discuss this option with your instructor.

You must sign this form or discuss with me the reasons for not doing so:

<https://www.luc.edu/media/lucedu/online/officeofonlinelearning/Student%20Recording%20Release%20Form.pdf>

The use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University Privacy Statement shown below:

### **Privacy Statement**

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face

instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Students will be informed of such recordings by a statement in the syllabus for the course in which they will be recorded. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

**Final grade breakdown:**

*All assignments will be posted under “assignments” on Sakai.*

Attendance, participation and professionalism: 100 points

Weekly Forum Responses: 150 points

Quizzes: 150 points

Assignment one: 100 points

Assignment two: 150 points

Assignment three: 150 points

Final: 200 points

**Individual Assignment Grade Scale:**

A: 100-94

A-: 93-90

B+: 89-88

B: 87-83

B-: 82-80

C+ 79-78

C: 77-73

C-: 72-70

D+: 69-68

D: 67-63

D-: 62-60

F: 59-0

**Total Semester Grade Point Scale:**

*Grades are absolutely not rounded up at semester's end*

A: 1000-940  
A-: 939-900  
B+: 899-880  
B: 879-830  
B-: 829-800  
C+ 799-780  
C: 779-730  
C-: 729-700  
D+: 699-680  
D: 679-630  
D-: 629-600  
F: 599-0

**Semester Plan**  
**(subject to change – check Sakai regularly)**

*Week one - AUGUST 26-30*

Topic: Defining what “critical issues in journalism” means

Readings due by Wednesday:

[Predictions for Journalism in 2019](#)

- Read or listen to [“Does Journalism have a future?”](#)
  
- Read [“Defining Critical Thinking”](#)

DUE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28 by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY, AUGUST 30<sup>TH</sup> by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #1 and read/respond to others’ comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week two – September 3 - 6*

TOPIC: RACE

Readings:

- [The modern newsroom is stuck behind gender and color lines](#)

- [Four lessons from the media's conflicted coverage of race](#)

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #2 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week three: September 9 - 13*

Topic: Mental health

Readings:

- [Journalists and PTSD](#)
- [If it bleeds it leads](#)
- [Turning the page on "If it bleeds it leads"](#)

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #3 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week four: September 16-20*

TOPIC: GENDER

Readings:

- [Why Harassment is so common in newsrooms](#)
- [Women Dominate Journalism Schools but Not Newsrooms](#)
- [Study: male political reporters retweet other dudes 3 times more than their female colleagues](#)



- [Study Shows Female Journalists Face Rampant Online Harassment](#)

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #4 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week five: September 23-27*

**Assignment number 1 due by Friday at noon**

TOPIC: DIVERSITY

*Readings:*

[The failing diversity efforts of newsrooms](#)

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #5 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week six: September 30-October 4*

TOPIC: BIAS

*Readings:*

- Understanding Bias
- How implicit bias works in journalism
- How Journalists Minimize Bias

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #6 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week seven: October 9-11*

### **Assignment number 2 due by Friday at noon**

TOPIC: RELIGION

Readings:

What journalists need to better know about Muslims in order to write about them

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #7 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week eight: October 14-18*

TOPIC: Guns, guns, guns

Readings:

- Covering shootings
- Tips for journalists covering the latest rounds of mass shootings

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #8 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week nine: October 21-25*

## TOPIC: PUBLIC DISTRUST

### Readings:

- Dishonest Reporting is undermining trust in media worldwide
- How does the public think journalism happens?

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #9 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week 10: October 28- November 1*

### **Assignment #3 due for half of class – online presentations**

## TOPIC: SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

### Readings:

- J school is a necessary evil for minorities
- Known but not discussed <https://www.niemanlab.org/2018/07/known-but-not-discussed-low-income-people-arent-getting-quality-news-and-information-what-can-the-industry-do-about-it/>
- Covering Poverty: What to do and what to avoid

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #10 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week 11: November 4-8*

**Assignment #3 due for half of class- online presentations**

Topic: THE BUSINESS MODEL OF NEWS

Readings:

- How Piano built a paywall for newsrooms and what we've learned
- The 4 types of newsroom visitors
- Facebook offers millions to publishers

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #11 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION

ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom

on Sakai or complete make-up policy

by midnight

*Week 12: November 11-15*

Topic: Fake News

Readings:

- Maybe Facts Don't Care About Feelings
- What to do about shallowfake news
- How local journalism can upend fake news

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #12 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

*Week 13: November 18 - 22*

TOPIC: POLITICS

Readings due:

- [How Journalists Can Better Cover Elections](#)
- [Political Journalists on Why They Do – or Don't – Vote](#)
- [The Media Bubble is Real and Worse than You Think](#)
- [Journalists Overwhelmingly supported Hilary Clinton with cash](#)

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #13 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight

*Week 14: November 25-27*

Topic: Gratitude

- [Things journalists are grateful for](#)
- [The digital tools journalists are most grateful for](#)
- [Thank a journalist day](#)

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE WEDNESDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #14 and read/respond to others' comments

NO CLASS ON FRIDAY DUE TO HOLIDAY

*Week 15: December 2-6*

Topic: So now what do we do with everything we learned?

DUE WEDNESDAY by 7 p.m. – Complete readings and take week one quiz on Sakai under Quizzes

DUE FRIDAY by 9 a.m. – Post response to Forum #15 and read/respond to others' comments

ATTEND SYNCHROUS SESSION ON FRIDAY AT 2:45 P.M. via Zoom on Sakai or complete make-up policy by midnight.

FINALS DUE VIA SAKAI BY THE END OF OUR SCHEDULED FINAL TIME

