



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

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University Council

August 20, 2021

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE – 2021-2022

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Graduate Student Representative – TBD

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal from the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication for a new Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy will be an agenda item for the August 27, 2021, Full University Curriculum Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

Susan Sanchez, Chair

University Curriculum Committee

cc: Provost S. Jack Hu
Dr. Rahul Shrivastav

PROPOSAL FOR A CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Date: May 7, 2021

Certificate Title: Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy

College: Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

Department/Division: Department of Journalism
Cox Institute for Journalism Innovation, Management, and Leadership

Effective Term: Fall 2022

Which campuses will offer this certificate? Athens

CIP: 09010201

1. Purpose and Educational Objectives

State the purpose and educational objectives of the program. How does this program complement the mission of the institution?

Clickbait. Deepfakes. Disinformation. Bias. Conspiracies. Hoaxes. The media, especially the news media, shapes what individuals know about their community and the world, and being literate about the information they receive is essential to making good decisions. There is no better time to learn how to navigate the news, as disinformation isn't going anywhere. Our democratic society needs as many people as possible — citizens as much as journalists, educators, and other professionals — to wade into the digital world equipped with concepts and tools to help them recognize the difference between truth and falsehoods.

This certificate program would enhance students' ability to discern between credible information and information disorder through critical examination of how we access, analyze, verify, create, and share media messages with an emphasis on news. The students will study the critical role news organizations play in our marketplace of ideas and will explore journalistic responsibility and important ethical constructs of the news and information ecosystem.

This proposed certificate will be offered by the James M. Cox Jr. Institute for Journalism Innovation, Management, and Leadership with support from the broader Journalism Department and faculty. Open to all students enrolled at the University of Georgia, the certificate will require completing 12 academic credit hours, including an introduction course and a capstone course.

2. Need for the Program

Explain why this program is necessary. In addition, provide the following information:

- a. **Semester/Year of program initiation** – Fall 2022
- b. **Semester/Year of full implementation of the program** – Fall 2022
- c. **Semester/Year first certificates will be awarded** – Spring 2023
- d. **Annual number of graduates expected once the program is established** – 100 students per year are expected to complete the certificate
- e. **Projected future trends for number of students enrolled in the program** – 500 students per year are expected to be enrolled in the certificate

Current events have created the need for this certificate program, and it is a need we do not see waning in the near future. “Although misinformation is hardly new, the current trends with media manipulation are sophisticated, which means we must become more media savvy,” said Dr. Amanda Bright, who has created the course that will serve as the certificate’s capstone (see below). Throughout the courses offered as part of this certificate, students will be introduced to terminology, context, tools, and techniques that will allow them to develop news literacy and understand the important role journalism plays in our democratic form of government. Recent research has provided data demonstrating the empirical effectiveness of media literacy instruction (Guess et al, 2020). This article can be found here:

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1920498117>.

The topics covered in the certificate’s courses are vitally important as students are trained to take their place within a global economy. A report by the University of Oxford and the Reuters Institute’s Digital News Report for 2020 said that addressing the lack of critical media literacy is one of the most urgent needs in our global society. This report can be accessed here: <https://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2020/overview-key-findings-2020/>.

Especially in light of our deepening partisan divide, it becomes imperative that we think deeply about how we inform ourselves on the critical events that shape us and our role in the world. Students will explore the important responsibilities of a free press with an emphasis on our country’s marketplace of ideas, and critically assess the corruption caused by misinformation and disinformation – much of it created for nefarious purposes and amplified by social media networks that lack adequate curation and moderation. The instruction will be rooted in scholarship related to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and how it creates a form of social contract between our information ecosystem and our country’s citizenry and how that contract depends on that citizenry being information literate. We believe research published by Damasceno (February, 2021) highlights the conceptual value of our certificate and its ability to be responsive as well as contextualize media literacy inside civic dialogue and democracy. This article can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120984444>.

Overall, the intent of the program is designed to equip its students with the tools to distinguish truth amid information disorder, which is a clearly identified need. “If people do not have correct information, they cannot make correct decisions,” Bright said.

Moreover, this certificate program helps the Cox Institute fulfill a vital mission, which is to foster innovation. We believe our approach in packaging these four courses into an academic certificate program is pioneering and allows our university to create a unique value proposition. We have found no other journalism programs offering such a certificate or minor. These are the *closest approximations*:

- Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts Amherst: <https://www.umass.edu/communication/node/921>
- Communication at University of Wisconsin-Parkside: https://www.uwp.edu/learn/academiccatalog/2019-2021/comm.cfm#CP_JUMP_325758
- College of General Studies at University of Pittsburgh: <https://www.cgs.pitt.edu/digital-media-certificate>
- ASU’s Cronkite School offers a free three-week online non-credit course: <https://cronkite.asu.edu/news-and-events/news/cronkite%E2%80%99s-news-colab-launches-free-online-media-literacy-course>

Finally, as the Cox Institute builds out the certificate program in collaboration with Journalism Department faculty, it will expand existing departmental relationships with the Poynter Institute’s Media Wise initiative: <https://www.poynter.org/mediawise/>, First Draft: <https://firstdraftnews.org/> and Trusting News: <https://trustingnews.org/>, and it intends to develop new collaborations with organizations such as the News Literacy Project: <https://newslit.org/educators/professional-development/>.

Timing of program offering: Provided the requisite approvals are achieved in a timely manner, the certificate is expected to be offered beginning in fall 2022 with the first certificates anticipated to be awarded in spring 2023.

3. Student Demand

- a. Provide documentation of evidence of student demand for this program, which may include a student survey.**
- b. Provide evidence that demand will be sufficient to sustain reasonable enrollment.**
- c. To what extent will minority student enrollments be greater than, less than, or equivalent to the proportion of minority students in the total student body?**

Students are increasingly seeking out courses to help them better navigate our complex media landscape. Enrollment in JOUR 3030, Media, News and Consumers, the introductory course for this certificate, has increased on average by more than one-third since its introduction in 2016. Student interest in a more in-depth course led to the creation of JRLC 3600E, Media Savvy: Becoming Digitally Literate, which will be the capstone course for this certificate. Faculty surveyed 124 first- and second-year students across a diverse set of intended majors: Accounting, Advertising, Agricultural Communication, Anthropology, Atmospheric Sciences, Criminal Justice, Ecology, English, Entertainment and Media Studies, Finance, Journalism, Political Science, Public Relations, Psychology, Real Estate, and Sport Management. These students overwhelmingly (93%) agreed that future employers would place value on this certificate, and a significant majority (about 70%) expressed interest in enrolling in such a program, with more than one-third rating their likelihood of enrollment as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.

Initially, the certificate will appeal to Journalism majors and at least 100 completions in the first year of offering are expected, but the intent is to expand quickly beyond the major, capitalizing on the interest other majors have shown in the introductory course as expressed above. Within the first three years of operation, student enrollment in the certificate program is expected to exceed 500 across all majors. Enrollment in the certificate is expected to reflect the make-up of the overall campus population in terms of gender and ethnicity.

4. Program of Study

Provide a detailed program of study for the certificate program, including:

- a. Specific course prefixes, numbers, and titles**
- b. Identify any new courses created for this program**

This certificate will use four existing courses (12 credit hours) in a tracked path featuring an introductory course, two intermediate courses, and a capstone course.

Introductory Course:

JOUR 3030 – Media, News, and Consumers (3 hours)

The relationship between media and society. Because of the First Amendment's commitment to freedom of press and speech, attention is focused on news. Students will become critical consumers of media and will explore how media create and disseminate messages. Focus on current issues in all media forms.

Intermediate Courses:

JOUR 5320/7320 – Journalism Ethics and Diversity (3 hours)

Exploration of complicated issues related to ethics and diversity, which inevitably arise in the news media but defy clear-cut answers. The course considers social responsibility and presents a contemporary framework for transparency and community with a focus on diversity as a guiding journalistic principle.

JOUR 5420/7420 – Credibility, the News Media, and Public Trust (3 hours)

Examination of what has become the central conflict in journalism: how to sustain credible practice in a time of wrenching change. This class will be taught from the perspective that understanding the changes offers the best chance of resolving the conflict in favor of credible practice.

Capstone Course:

JRLC 3600E — Media Savvy: Becoming Digitally Literate (3 hours)

The media shapes what an individual knows about their community and the world, and being savvy about the news is essential to making decisions. This course enhances the ability to discern between news and misinformation through critical examination of how we access, analyze, verify, and create media messages. We will look closely at the critical role news organizations play in informing us and its significance for our democracy. This course's purpose is to be a project-based survey of concepts, techniques, and tools that guide those who are media savvy, such as journalists, to make educated decisions about digital content.

5. Model Program and Accreditation

a. Identify any model programs, accepted disciplinary standards, and accepted curricular practices against which the proposed program could be judged. Evaluate the extent to which the proposed curriculum is consistent with these external points of reference and provide a rationale for significant inconsistencies and differences that may exist.

N/A

b. If program accreditation is available, provide an analysis of the ability of the program to satisfy the curricular standards of such specialized accreditation.

N/A

6. Student Learning Outcomes

Describe the proposed learning outcomes for the certificate program.

Individual Course Outcomes

Each course within the certificate program has specific learning outcomes that have been

approved within the course curriculum process. Each of those outcomes are listed below, which illustrates how these courses can be packaged into a coherent certificate offering.

JOUR 3030 – Media, News and Consumers:

- Understand key concepts of news media, including the relationship between journalism and society.
- Grasp the full nature of the First Amendment, including their rights.
- Become more critical consumers of media via a focus on current media controversies and events.
- Be introduced to media history, ethics, and law.

JOUR 5320/7320 – Journalism Ethics and Diversity:

- Understand frameworks for systematic exploration of ethical issues confronting journalists.
- Demonstrate an understanding of issues of diversity as they apply to the gathering and presentation of news.
- Understand concepts of social responsibility and professional ethics.
- Analyze how journalistic norms and financial constraints of the news industry impact ethical decision making.

JOUR 5420/7420 – Credibility, the News Media, and Public Trust:

- Discover the depth and seriousness of the crisis of credibility between the news media and the public.
- Ascertain what threatens the business model for journalism.
- Examine where journalists are succeeding and failing at restoring credibility and strengthening performance.
- Understand how audiences can help make journalism more credible.

JRLC 3600E — Media Savvy: Becoming Digitally Literate:

- Identify and understand the typology of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation.
- Identify media literacy-related concepts like filter bubble, homophily, confirmation bias, echo chambers, as well as bots, trolls, sock puppets, etc., on various platforms.
- Use professional techniques and tools to practice fact-checking.
- Employ a codified verification process for content.
- Understand how journalists use fact-checking and journalistic verification processes and reflect on the effectiveness and challenges of building trust with an audience.

Certificate Program Outcomes

The learning outcomes of each course tie together so that students earning the certificate have a holistic construct of news literacy. The Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy learning outcomes are:

1. Students should demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

2. Students should demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.
3. Students should be able to evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
4. Students should apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work and to understand the digital world.

7. Assessment

Describe how the learning outcomes for the program will be assessed.

Individual Course Assessment

Each of the four courses within the Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy has formative and summative assessments, through exams, writing, and projects, to provide feedback to instructors as well as students about their understanding and application of the learning outcomes during the program. The capstone course, JRLC 3600E—Media Savvy: Becoming Digitally Literate, will employ a comprehensive summative assessment where students will participate in a project-based simulation to employ conceptual knowledge and tools gained throughout the certificate.

Certificate Program Assessment

The Cox Institute will treat the Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy as an academic enterprise as required by Academic Affairs policy and therefore will engage in a direct program review process each year, with an indirect review process in place once every three years. Each of these assessments will be based on the Certificate in News Literacy Learning Outcomes in No. 5.

Direct, and done every year:

- A pre-test and post-test (given during the introductory and capstone courses of the program, respectively) to measure improvement on student learning outcomes.

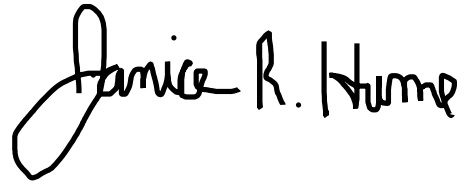
Indirect, rotating once every three years:

- Survey of professionals who have hired students who completed the Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy.
- Exit interviews with those completing the Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy.

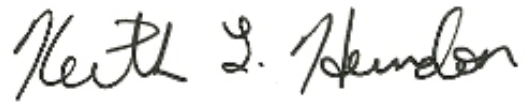
Required Approvals:



Charles Davis, Dean



Janice Hume, Department Head, Journalism



Keith Herndon, Director, Cox Institute



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May 7, 2021

S. Jack Hu
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
and Provost
203 Administration Building
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602

Sent by Email to currsys@uga.edu

Dear Provost Hu:

Misinformation. Disinformation. Deep fakes. Fake news.

News consumers must sift through a confusing landscape of truth and falsehood, fact and fiction. Never has the news media been more complex, more economically challenged, or more beset with fakes and frauds posing as news outlets. How do readers and viewers make sense of it all?

The Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication feels a responsibility to help our students navigate the news media and make better, more informed choices, while also gaining an understanding of how the news media works, how news is made and what differentiates the news from other, less trustworthy forms of mass media.

To that end, we have proposed and received approval from the University Council for a new undergraduate certificate program in News Literacy. This certificate is based on existing courses and faculty resources and there will be no budget implications for added this program.

It is attached. I hope that it meets your approval.

Sincerely,

Charles N. Davis
Dean

Documentation of Approval and Notification

Proposal: Undergraduate Certificate in News Literacy

College: Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

Department: Journalism and Cox Institute for Journalism Innovation, Management & Leadership

Proposed Effective Term: Fall 2022

Department:

- Cox Institute for Journalism Innovation, Management & Leadership Director, Dr. Keith Herndon, 5/7/21
- Journalism Department Head, Dr. Janice Hume, 5/7/21

School/College:

- Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication Dean, Dr. Charles Davis, 5/7/21