

SYLLABUS CONTRACT & RESEARCH LAB AGREEMENT

Course: MC 451-Research Methods in Mass Media (Spring 2026)

Instructor: Dr. Alex P. Leith

Student Information

Name: _____

Major/Track: (Check one) ☐ Strategic Communication ☐ Journalism ☐ Media Production

Proposed Research Interest/Topic (Preliminary Idea): _____

Terms of Agreement

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the full syllabus for MC 451. I understand that this course functions as a **Research Laboratory**, requiring the use of specific computational tools and adherence to scientific workflow. I agree to the following policies:

1. The Scientific Phases I understand that this course is structured around distinct phases of research:

The Journalist, The Architect, The Builder, The Analyst, and The Publisher. I agree to follow this sequential workflow to build my project, recognizing that successful analysis depends on a strong foundation established in earlier phases.

2. The "Digital Office" & Tool Proficiency I acknowledge that this course requires the use of specialized software, specifically **R, RStudio, Quarto, and GitHub**. I accept responsibility for managing my files via the "Digital Office" structure (Obsidian and RStudio) and understanding that file management and version control are essential to my success in this course.

3. Iterative Research & Resubmission Policy I understand that research is an iterative process. I acknowledge that I may revise and resubmit any assignment worth **50 points or more** for a new grade (averaged with the original), provided the revision is submitted within **one week** of the original due date.

4. Deadline & Professionalism Policy I acknowledge that research projects rely on timely data collection and analysis. I understand that assignments are due **Fridays at 11:59 PM**. I accept that late work will be penalized **10% per business day**, and assignments submitted more than one weekday late without prior approval will receive a grade of 0.

5. Research Topic Consistency I agree to select a single research topic, theory, and media source during **Phase III (The Builder)**. I will use this subject for my Project Prospectus, Codebook, Data Analysis, and Final Web Portfolio. I understand that changing topics mid-semester is not permitted.

6. Academic Integrity & Generative AI I affirm that the analysis and writing I submit will be my own. If I use Generative AI tools, I will do so only within the boundaries explicitly permitted by the instructor (e.g., for brainstorming or coding assistance) and will disclose their use. I understand that submitting AI-generated analysis or narratives as my own violates the university's academic honesty policy.

Signature

By signing below, I agree to treat this course as a professional scientific engagement and to conduct myself as a rigorous researcher within the "Lab."

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____