

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: _____