Due to Covid precautions, our lab is reduced to 10 computers. As such, we can only accommodate half the class each scheduled course period in-person. You will be assigned which weeks you may attend physically, and all other classes you will attend via Zoom. However, physical attendance is not required and you can Zoom for all class times if you choose. Each week you will be assigned online modules to complete on your own time and class time will be used for critique and discussion of the week’s work. The SJMC Mac Lab (W332) will be open extended hours for you to complete any work that requires software.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Of course, try telling that to your professors when they ask for a 4-page paper. But it’s true. Not all of the information of your work will come from the words you write.

This course explores how to present your work visually so that it enhances your content and promotes understanding. Through hands-on exercises and critique, you’ll gain the skills to create posters, slides, and any other visual format to create pieces that are easy to understand, visually compelling, enhance your message, and effectively communicate your content.

You don’t need to be artistic to take this course. Visual communication design is about structuring content more than making something “pretty.” Believe it or not, understanding visual communication design can even help you become a better writer as we learn about hierarchy, grouping, and economy to help create information architecture!
The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: (website link). We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

This course contributes to these learning outcomes by helping you achieve proficiency in understanding and applying the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in real space and cyberspace. The following outcomes are this course’s learning objectives:

**Law and Ethics Learning Goal**
Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in real space and cyberspace, and demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and their historical development. 
*Students will learn about image licensing during this course.*

**Media Literacy Learning Goal**
Understand the principles of media literacy and develop the skills necessary to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains. 
*Students will learn visual communication and layout to fulfill this goal.*

**Writing and Storytelling Learning Goal**
Understand that clear, concise, correct writing is at the heart of journalistic expression and that reporting and communicating it effectively requires a knowledge and achievement of the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work. 
*Students will engage in a research portion during design planning and then covert them into visual narratives.*

**Diversity Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Learning Goal**
Understand and value the diversity of groups (including communities defined by gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation) in a global society. Enhance students’ ability to effectively communicate with people from different backgrounds and experiences. 
*Students will understand visual contexts in other cultures, particularly cultural contexts of color theory. We will also consider the power of representation and thoughtfully representing people with diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind.*

**REQUIRED TEXTS**
None.

You should know that as a UIowa student, you also have access to the LinkedIn Learning website to learn more about design and software. You can log in with your UIOWA ID. Look for the institutional login at the bottom of the login page.

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**
Pencils (mechanical or regular, HB)/pens
Sketch paper/sketchbook/gridded paper (download dot grid pattern paper)
Camera (your smartphone is fine)
The course uses an additive model of grading. You begin with zero points and earn towards your final grade.

This course will consist of 12 graded exercises, 11 of which are valued at 50pts and one multi-week final exercise valued at 100pts, for a total of 650 total available points.

### Points to Final Letter Grade Conversion

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
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<td>94%</td>
<td>611</td>
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<td>&lt;60%</td>
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</tbody>
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**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES & SKILLS**

The following topics will be presented for you to understand and explore:

**VITAL PRINCIPLES OF ART & DESIGN**
- Aesthetic Response
- Line and Shape
- Contrast and Visual Weight
- Positive and Negative Space
- Figure-Ground Relationships
- Gestalt Principles
- Denotative and Connotative Imagery
- Design Process
- Texture
- Repetition and Pattern
- Rhythm
- Power of the Frame
- Color Theory, Interactions, and Connotative Meanings
- Composition and Compositional Structures
- Balance
- Hierarchy
- Movement
- Proximity and Air
- Alignment
- Consistency

**BEGINNER TYPOGRAPHY**
- Letterform
- Kerning and Tracking
- Alignment
- Type Contrast and Hierarchy
- Readability Contrast

**GRAPHICS AND REPRODUCTION**
- Image and Font Licensing
- File Types
- Vector Graphics
- Raster Images and Resolution
- Color Models
- Bleeds

**PRESENTATION DESIGN**
- Informational Posters/Scientific Posters
- Data Visualization
- Slideshow Design
- Diagrams
Course Guidelines

Course Truisms

Course Truisms

No matter which of my classes you are in, the following is true:

- **The Material is Cumulative**
  This means, you can't ignore portions of the class and expect to be fine. Each concept builds on other concepts. This is why you should not miss classes (but if you do, come to my office to discuss what you missed).

- **To Get an A in my Classes, You Need to Fail**
  Whether design, photography, or storytelling, creating something is about iteration. Iterations are failures, but they are fail forwards. Further iterations are built on the backs of those failures. If you only have one idea or try one thing, it is likely not the best solution, and you will have real failure (a poor project). But, if you explore multiple potential solutions, it is likely you will find a successful solution. You need to give ample time to make a draft and then honestly assess and address issues with the work. And to keep doing that until you have a good final product.

- **Learning is Ultimately on You**
  If you do not understand something, or miss a class, the onus is on you to find out further about the subject or ask for clarification or repetition. I am not a mind reader. Once I present a concept, if there are no questions I assume you are aware of it, have taken note of it, and understand it.

- **Time on Task**
  Learning a craft requires time and deliberate practice. According to the student handbook, students in a three-credit course should expect to spend 6 hours outside of class time on the course.

- **Read and Re-Read Instructions**
  I put in a lot of effort on crafting my exercises and projects. There are specific instructions to ensure you are addressing specific concepts. I will generally go over instructions quickly (giving a gist) in class, but you should stop and read all instructions before starting (or re-starting) and before handing in. If you are unsure of something, ask.

- **You are Being Prepared to be a Professional**
  As such, you don't get points for things you are expected to do such as attend class, be on time, and present your projects in a professional manner. However, you can and will lose points if you do not meet these expectations.

- **I'm Super Flexible**
  This is your class. I know what I want to teach you, but I'm flexible (about certain things). If there is something the class really wants to learn/do or some project in our class isn't working out, let me know and I'll see how I can accommodate. Do you really want a tutorial on something? Just ask.

- **If You Aren't Having Fun, It's You**
  Having fun isn’t the right words. Engaged is probably better. The work in my classes isn't digging ditches—it's creating something. The act of creating should be engaging. You should have feelings of pride and happiness when you complete something. If you're not feeling that, I bet you are not letting yourself get engrossed in our material. Creating something is an amazing act. Practice meraki.

- **The Subjects I Teach are Not as Subjective You Think**
  You may think that, because I teach visual things, that it is subjective. But no. Art is subjective. We are making communication. In our context there is no right and wrong as in rote knowledge. However, there is effective and ineffective and there are multiple solutions that can fall in either of those categories or anywhere in between. So I have to suss out where it falls on the scale, and, yes, that is a bit subjective. However, I believe I am very good at formalizing what it is that makes a piece effective and asking you to apply those concepts.

- **I Want to Give Everyone an A**
  But what I want to do and what I will do are two different things. You earn an A. You earn each grade I give you. I try to facilitate you getting an A as best I can. But remember that whole thing above about the learning being on you? The earning is on you, too.

- **You are Entering a Portfolio-based Profession**
As such, you should leave my class with portfolio-quality work. I could easily complain about the state of grade inflation. But the skinny of it is that no one at a job interview cares about what grade you got on one of your portfolio pieces. They are the ones giving you the grade that matters. They want to see:

- **An understanding of core concepts.** In visual communication, these can pretty much be summed up as contrast, space, and position to create hierarchy, grouping, balance, and movement.
- **Flashes of talent and potential.** This is using the core concepts but also showing creativity and ability.
- **Attention to detail.** Everything matters. A misspelled word matters.
- **Creative thinking.** Nothing trite or overdone. Throw away your first ideas.

### General Policies

The policies in this document (all sections) are for multiple reasons:

1. **They are preparing you for being a professional.** If you are already prepared, these policies really won’t affect you at all because you do the things you need to do and don’t try to take advantage or take the easy route.

2. **They assure everyone is being treated equally.** By formalizing these policies and applying them to all students equally, you can be assured that no one is getting special or harsher treatment. Let’s face it, instructors are real people. We have feelings and biases. Just like anyone else you like or dislike certain people for your own reasons (my perceptions of you is usually tied to how I perceive your work ethic in class and how much interaction I have with you). I will apply these policies to everyone. Ruthlessly.

3. **They help me be a better teacher for you** by taking the emotional stress off of me and so I can focus on teaching, refining course content, helping you learn in and out of class, and giving you useful, actionable feedback of your work.

### If You Hand in Work That Disregards Instructions

When you disregard the instructions, it makes it hard to grade for the concepts I am trying to teach you. There is a difference between not understanding something (see **mulligan** section) and not bothering to read the instructions.

If your work comes in and misses whole important portions of the instructions, I will not grade it. I will send you an email telling you to re-read the instructions (not specifically what you missed). You will have 24 hours to rectify. You will be docked for being late (see **late penalties** section below).

### Don’t Plagiarize

Design/Photography/Art is often inspired by other people’s works. However, outright copying a piece is considered cheating and will be dealt with as such. Start with something you like and make it your own with your own spin on it. That’s how plenty of people work.

If plagiarism is determined, you will fail the assignment.

### Stay off Phones, Social Media, News, Other Classwork, Etc. During Class Time

Our class is not that long. You can focus on this class and its material for this period without outside distraction. Plus, it’s flat out rude and disrespectful to be on these things when your instructor is talking.

Obviously, the exception is when I ask you to be on social media or your phones because we really do need to use them in this major.

### Come Prepared

You should have what you need for our class. I always tell you ahead of time when you need something. Check the course website.

There are also times I ask you to prepare content for certain projects. DO NOT come to the class (usually a work day) and prepare it there. Have it ready so you can engage in the next part of the project.

I reserve the right to dock you points on a project for not coming prepared.
Right to Change the Course and Course Schedule as Needed
I reserve the right to change the course and schedule as I deem fit. I only do it with your best interest in mind such as when I think the class needs to learn slightly different material or needs more time on a project.

Image and Template Use
In my design courses and assignments, you may use found photography, ephemera, printed matter, etc, however, you must manipulate, re-translate, or in some way alter the meaning of the images enough to make them "your own" unless otherwise noted.

While we are working under fair use as students, you should get in the habit of using properly licensed images and will be required to do so.

You may not use templates in any of my courses unless specifically allowed to do so. Evidence of a template will result in an automatic zero on the assignment.

Communication with the Instructor
Across our department, the general vibe is that instructors are referred to by their first names by the students. I don't love that or agree with it. I never called a professor by their first name. However, most bosses in this industry go by first names. As such, I defer to the general rule. Most of my life, people have referred to me by my last name "Ripka". It is fine address me as "Ripka", "Kevin", or "Professor Ripka". Your choice.

Face-to-face communication is my preferred method to interact with you. I have set student drop-in hours posted on courses.kevinripka.com, the syllabus, and on my door (W341). Further, I am available by appointment. I am there a lot and have my door open when it is fine to pop in, so feel free to do so. I will not set up appointments later than 5pm or on weekends.

Do not use ICON to communicate to me except for some note about a project before it is graded, so that I see it while grading. I likely won't see it.

When you do email me, don't expect an email back quickly. Sometimes it will happen, other times it will not. The weekends are my time. I will generally be less accessible then.

As far as email goes, I do not expect a formal email, however, you aren't texting me either. Write out words. Be polite. Use proper grammar. Remember you are not emailing a friend, you are emailing someone who is technically a superior. Email me as you would a boss who let's you call them by the first name. Business casual ain't just a way to dress, it's a way to address. See what I did there?

I will not respond to any email regarding grading. That is face-to-face conversation. You can email to request to speak about a grade, but drop-in hours are probably the best.

Critiquing your Peers
All of my classes will require you to critique work created by your peers. The following are guidelines:

- **You do not call something “bad” or “terrible”.** Instead, say things like "I don't think this is working because..." or "I believe this could be stronger by...". The key is giving actionable feedback.

- **You are not allowed to say “I like it”.** Ok, you can say that, but that is not all you are allowed to say. You have to unpack it. Why do you like it? Put it in terms of the concepts we have discussed.

Remember that we are all students. Just because someone gives you particular feedback, doesn't mean it is right. Accept the critique and think critically if it is useful.

Everyone is an Equal in My Classroom
I don't care what physical characteristics, sexual preferences, religious affiliations, place of origin, political affiliation, or any other quality you have. Everyone deserves to be an equal and treated with mutual respect. I believe that to be true for the world-at-large, but I don't control the world, I only control my classroom. As such, show respect to each other when you are in my classroom.

Honestly, I think our students are great and I've never had a problem in the classroom along these lines. But don't be the first. There will be repercussions.

Upload EXACTLY What I Ask You to Upload to ICON
I specify with every exercise/project what should be handed in and how (almost always ICON). I do this because I want you to get used to certain file formats and provide all assets. I spend way too much time chasing down people to hand it in correctly and I don't intend to continue doing this.

Look at the information (located in the left sidebar under project name) on the instruction sheets before you upload. I will consider the project late if I have to email you for the right thing for me to grade. See the late deductions below.

You should know how to zip (compress) a folder (and that you zip folders of files, not individual files) by this point in your education. If you do not, refer to [http://multimedia.jmc.uiowa.edu/help/software-help/mac-os/compressing-files/](http://multimedia.jmc.uiowa.edu/help/software-help/mac-os/compressing-files/). Zip folders full of files, not individual files.

**Final Grading**

Personally, I already feel like my grading is generous. Grades will not be rounded up. You earn what you earned. If you are on the border, you should have been aware and put in the work to get to the next level.

Below you'll find policies of how your final grade can be reduced. Do not be surprised if the final grade you receive is lower than your final grade in ICON because these things must be compiled at the end by hand. The end of the semester is stressful not only for you, but for instructors. By making this formal and mechanical, it reduces that stress. It also sets up clear expectations from you for the semester.

**Attendance**

During this semester of Covid, in-person attendance is not required. Online counts. See your course's setup document on ICON.

**Punctuality**

It is expected that you are at the class earlier than the start time. The start time of the class is when the instructor expects to begin. That said, I always start talking at 3 minutes after the start time as a grace period.

If you come after I have starting talking, you are late. You will be marked in ICON as late.

**Late Penalty on your Final Grade**

I understand things happen. Therefore, I give you a couple of freebies for being late. But chronic lateness says more about you such as you don't leave early enough or care enough to get to class.

3 Times Marked Late = 2% reduction of final grade

Each additional marked late after 3 = 0.5% reduction of Final Grade

This is tracked on ICON and compiled at the end of semester.

**Punctuality Accomodation for Distant Previous Class**

There are semesters you may have one class far away from your next class. You will need to provide me with documentation that this is true if you ask for accomodation because you may often miss the grace period. You should do this the first week of classes.

**Due Dates and Extensions**

Ours is a world of deadlines. All projects should be completed and submitted by dates indicated in ICON.

**Lateness Penalty**

Any project marked late in ICON will be subject to a point reduction.

The following is the penalty schedule:

- 10 point project = 3 point late reduction
- 20 point project = 5 point late reduction
- 25 point project = 5 point late reduction
- 50 point project = 7 point late reduction
- 100 point project = 10 point late reduction
I'm not a monster. If it's 5 minutes late, it's fine. But, you are in a professional program. You need to learn time management and the importance of deadlines.

If you are having technology issues with uploading to ICON, you need to email me your work. If the file size is too big, downsize as much as possible and send to me (pdf, small jpg, even a screenshot) and let me know this is your only issue. The work should be fully finished and you need to prove that.

Work (without a granted extension) is Not Accepted After One Week Late
If a project/exercise is not submitted within one week of the due time without reaching out to me about what is happening and getting my sign off, it is a zero.

Radio silence when you are late on a project is unprofessional.

I will only give sign off if it was an unavoidable circumstance. Your poor time management is not unavoidable. If you know you can't get something done, you should have secured an extension (see below).

Extensions
I fully understand that you are juggling 5 classes (or more) and maybe work, extracurricular things, and life in general. This is why I feel I give ample time to complete assignments. I feel it is up to you to manage your time and allow yourself ample time to complete a project or prepare what you need for a project (like when you have to schedule an interview).

Extensions will be granted as long as you ask for them well before your project is due. They will not be granted after the due time. They will not be granted within 2 hours of the due time. But I'd rather you put the time into your project and do it right than slap something together to get it in.

At the same time, you should not ask me for multiple extensions during the semester unless you are having issues with items mentioned in the excused absences section. They are not because you have poor time management skills.

There will be certain projects where I will not grant an extension unless it is due to one of the excused absence reasons above.

Flipped Classroom "Reading" Quizzes
Graphic Design and Web Design Basics are both flipped classroom courses. As such, before many classes you will watch a recorded lecture and take an associated “reading” quiz on ICON. ICON automatically grades these for me.

These are due before the class period. However, I allow them to be active on ICON for one week after the due date because it is important you watch the lectures. If you take them during this one-week grace period, I will subtract 15% of available points from the quiz at the end of the semester when I am compiling grades. Don't be surprised by this at the end.

Mulligans
I am fully committed to you learning the material you are presented in class. As such, I offer mulligans on foundational exercises built to learn the key concepts. (In Graphic Design they are called exercises, in Web Design missions, and in Photojournalism assignments.)

Mulligans are for work that is wrong because you don't quite understand the material. They are not for work that is poorly done, incomplete, or not handed in. As such, you only can hand in a mulligan if you have:

- Handled the exercise in on time
- Completed the exercise in its entirety and to the instructions (what I deem is a "best effort")

You will have one week after your feedback and grade is submitted through ICON to resubmit.

Major projects (and anything else noted) do not have mulligans as they are given longer timelines and you have every opportunity to review your project with me before you hand it in.

Extra Credit
I do not offer any extra credit in my courses. This is because I believe I give you every opportunity to be successful in my class by allowing mulligans on exercises, high availability to you to help you with your work, and am generally very accommodating.

Do not ask me for extra credit.

Good Habits When Working with Files

**Save your work.** *Often.* Every single program on a Mac uses command + s to save documents. You should be saving as you go. I am in the habit of saving versions. What this means is that, if I make a major change to a document, I save it as docname_v2 using v # to denote to myself where it is in my work. That way, if I wind up wanting to go back, I can open the previous file.

**Don't save your work on the lab computers.** You should have an external drive to save your work (or use a cloud service like dropbox or google drive). You never know if a computer will be wiped or go down. Make sure you're saving all assets for a project. You should create a new folder for each project to keep all related assets. Don't leave things in the downloads folder.

**Understand files and file types.** First off, an application is different than a file. For instance, you don't save your file *to* photoshop. You save your file *with* photoshop. You should understand how to save files, how to make folders, and where to find files and folders on the Macs. It is also important, particularly in my visual communication classes, to understand why and when to use various file types. Do not overlook this simple base knowledge. This is why I ask you to prepare and upload specific file types to iCON.

Recommendation Requests

I am willing to give good students letters of recommendation. However, I have the following ground rules in place:

- **I need to know you from more than coming to one course.** Two courses is usually enough for me to get to know you as a student. But being in my class and actually spending time interacting and getting to know you outside of the class (my office hours) is way better.

- **You should only ask if you ended my course with an A.** I feel I give lots opportunity to do well in my classes with things like mulligans and being available to you if you don't understand something. If you didn't take that opportunity, how can I really give you a good recommendation?

- **Understand that I am not the best reference for an academic program.** I'm really only a reference if you want someone to weigh in on your ability to create and make projects for a professional grad program. Due to the nature of my classes I have no idea if you would make a good researcher. Ask one of the academic faculty instead of me if you plan on submitting to a research-intensive grad program.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Important Policies and Procedures

Some of the policies relating to this course (such as the drop deadline) are governed by its administrative home, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 120 Schaeffer Hall.

Class Behavioral Expectations

Students are expected to comply with University policies regarding appropriate classroom behavior as outlined in the Code of Student Life. This includes the policies and procedures that all students have agreed to regarding the Steps Forward for Fall 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, all students are required to wear a face covering when in a UI building, including a classroom. In addition, the density of seats in classrooms has been reduced. In some instances, this will allow 6 feet or more of distance while in other cases, it may be less. Regardless, wearing a face covering and maintaining as much distance as possible are vital to slowing the spread of COVID-19. In the event that a student disrupts the classroom environment through the failure to comply with the reasonable directive of an instructor or the University, the instructor has the authority to ask that the student immediately leave the space for the remainder of the class period. Additionally, the instructor is asked to report the incident to the Office of Student Accountability for the possibility of additional follow-up. Students who need a temporary alternative learning arrangement related to COVID-19 expectations should contact Student Disability Services arrangements:/ +1 319 335-1462) [https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/fall-2020/covid-19-temporary-learning-arrangements/](https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/fall-2020/covid-19-temporary-learning-arrangements/).

Class Recordings: Privacy and Sharing
Some of the sessions of a course could be recorded or live-streamed. Such recordings/streaming will only be available to students registered for this class. These recordings are the intellectual property of the faculty, and they may not be shared or reproduced without the explicit, written consent of the faculty member. Further, students may not share these sessions with those not in the class or upload them to any other online environment. Doing so would be a breach of the Code of Student Conduct, and, in some cases, a violation of the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Absences and Attendance
Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (form).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College’s Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/.

Administrative Home of the Course
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Communication and the Required Use of Email
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Complaints
Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities.

Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies.

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).
Sexual Harrassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.