

U of Maryland - Philip Merrill College of Journalism

JOURNALISM 203

Multimedia Storytelling

Fridays, 9:00 am - 11:45 am, Fall 2011

Rooms 1101, Knight Hall

Instructor:

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Mr. Young is a Senior Editor at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He regularly works with reporters to craft and edit audio and video stories, and he previously served as the newspaper's Web Editor.

About the Course:

This course is designed to give journalism students a basic understanding of the multimedia skills necessary to survive in an evolving newsroom. The push towards digital formats -- the Web, tablets, smartphones -- and the tightening of newsroom budgets means print journalists must be able to do more than just write and report. This hands-on study of storytelling in several media platforms is divided into three main sections, or "slices": audio, photo, and video. Students will produce audio pieces, photo slideshows, audio slideshows, and video reports.

The course will serve as an introduction to still photography, audio, and video, including the fundamentals of capturing interviews and natural sound. Each section will include instruction in proper field techniques, shooting, capturing and editing, and, finally, posting assignments online. Students will also learn the ethics and discuss the latest trends in each medium.

A final project will serve as the final exam for the course. Students will come up with proposals and storyboards for their final projects, which must be approved by the professor. Proposals may be revised throughout the course and students are encouraged to think through potential assignments and consult with the professor often. It is recommended that students choose topics that can be revisited instead of one-time events. Students will be expected to use their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of audio, photo, and video to make judicious decisions about the medium that best serves their story. The professor will consider such decisions, in addition to the reporting, technical execution, content and overall substance of the final projects.

A [class blog](http://terpstorytellers.blogspot.com/) (<http://terpstorytellers.blogspot.com/>) will be the central hub of the class. All assignments will be turned in on the blog. Students will be invited as blog authors on the first day of class. A free Google account is required, but a Gmail address is not necessary to participate -- any e-mail address will suffice.

There are a few assigned readings, but in many weeks homework will include watching multimedia productions from around the Web. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and viewings

Audio Slice:

This section will introduce students to the power of sound in storytelling and provide exposure to the skills necessary to collect and prepare audio for multiple platform distribution. There will be

particular emphasis on developing your journalism skills for broadcast or online streaming. At the end of this section, you should have an understanding of the unique qualities of broadcast news production. Each class will have a lecture/discussion and a lab component. You will conduct multiple recorded interviews which will be incorporated into radio packages. You will also learn the basics of producing audio slide shows blending sound and photos.

Photojournalism Slice

This slice will introduce students to the techniques and fundamentals of photography -- a powerful tool in documenting the world around us. Students will be encouraged to think visually and discover ways to approach newsworthy events and situations, creating provocative, storytelling images, learning to work within ethical boundaries, and grasping the all-important concept of "no photos please..." The question of "What makes a good image?" will also be discussed. Students will be required to caption every photograph in this slice and say why it has journalistic value -- and will critique each others' work.

Students are encouraged to bring their cameras with them during their time on/off campus and document situations they determine to have journalistic value. Document the political rally you went to, or the ski trip, the wedding last weekend, but not the night at the bar with your friends. Document the snowball fight or the press conference, but not the four hours you spent playing Playstation with your roommates. Get the picture.

Videojournalism Slice

This section helps print journalists think visually and understand the layered elements that go into news video on the Web. The slice will incorporate hands-on shooting and editing to help students overcome inexperience or technology-related concerns. Students will build on material covered during the previous slices, learning to combine audio and video in ways that convey information and logic, while leveraging the power of this visual medium. By the end of the videojournalism slice, students will have a new appreciation for video from familiar and unfamiliar sources. They will learn the fundamentals of framing, lighting, composition, and sequencing, along with the ethical reporting, shooting, and editing practices. They will be able to approach stories in different ways and be familiar with technology and storytelling techniques that will allow them to do so.

Textbook:

Sound Reporting: The NPR Guide to Audio Journalism and Production,
by Jonathan Kern. (Just one book, and it's only \$20.)

Equipment:

You *must* provide:

- A digital still camera, preferably one with the ability to control settings manually. *A cell phone camera is not sufficient.*
- SD memory card or tapes for recording devices checked out from the school.
- Batteries for borrowed recorders.

You are *encouraged* to provide:

- A camera tripod (a limited quantity are available for loan from the school).

Grading:

- The course has a total of 1,000 possible points, with each slice comprising roughly 200 points and the final project the final 400 points. That means the final project is worth more than a third of the final grade. An A will be 900 to 1,000 points, a B will be 800 to 899, etc... Point values of each assignment are marked on the syllabus, and where no points are mentioned, the assignment will be evaluated as part of class participation.
- Deadlines: Points will be deducted for late work.
- Photographs, videos, and interviews should portray people, scenes, and action as they are in real life. With the exception of basic editing and color correction, no photographs, videos, scenes or interviews may be staged, directed, falsified, coerced, or otherwise manipulated.
- Students will not focus on friends, roommates or family members for interviews for any assignment, including the final project, unless they get permission from the professor beforehand.
- Students will identify the subjects in their stories for assignments and for the final projects. No anonymous sources without prior permission from the professor.
- Students will not include music tracks in assignments unless music is an integral part of the story, and, unless the use of music has been approved by professor.
- Students will receive point deductions if they do not come to class with the necessary equipment when requested.
- All homework will be turned in on the class blog.

Attendance:

If you have a legitimate excuse let the instructor know PRIOR to the class period to be missed. This is the only situation where makeup work is allowed.

Participation:

Class participation is a part of the final grade.

Academic Integrity:

Academic dishonesty, including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. The college has adopted a "zero tolerance" policy on academic dishonesty. Any abridgment of the university's academic integrity standards in a College of Journalism course will be referred directly to the dean. The dean will send all confirmed cases to the university's Office of Judicial Affairs with a recommendation of expulsion from the University. Please see [Code of Academic Integrity](#) and [Student Honor Council](#) for details.

Students with Disabilities:

Students with a specific disability (permanent or temporary, physical or learning) needing special accommodation during the semester should make an appointment to to discuss their situation.

SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is subject to change. The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule at anytime to best fit the needs of the class. Check the class blog for the latest version and information about upcoming homework.

Audio Week 1 (Sept 2)

- First week of class - course overview
- Discuss the unique qualities of radio and the power of sound in storytelling
- Listen to award-winning examples
- Equipment check-out and introduction to digital audio recorders
- Proper microphone technique
- **In-class assignment:** Back Story exercise
- Post audio assignment to class blog
- Marking and reading radio scripts

HOMEWORK:

Required Reading: *Sound Reporting*, "Chapter 6: Story Editing" pp. 93-115 (handout)

Required Listening: [On the Media: Pulling Back the Curtain](#)

Audio Assignment: Basic News Story

Audio Week 2 (Sept 9)

- Discuss assigned listening -- more on when to use audio for storytelling
- Basic interview techniques
- Interview demonstration
- Finding ambient sound in broadcast reporting
- Introduction to Audacity audio editing software
- **In-class assignment:** Edit of interview demonstration
- Pitch stories for interview features

HOMEWORK:

Required Reading: *Sound Reporting* - "Reporting" pp. 48-72

Audio Assignment #1 (50 points) - Interview feature

Audio Week 3 (Sept 16)

- Listen to and discuss Audio Assignment #1
- Discuss assigned reading
- Audio ethics
- Multi-track editing
- **In-class assignment: Audio Assignment #2:** Man-on-the-street piece (50 points)

HOMEWORK:

Required Reading: *Sound Reporting*, "Chapter 3: Writing for Broadcast" pp. 25-38

Re-submit a new version of Audio Assignment #1 (optional)

Audio Week 4 (Sept 23)

- Listen to and discuss man-on-the-street pieces
- Discuss assigned reading
- Audio ethics
- The "hook"
- The story arc
- Choose story ideas for profile assignments

HOMEWORK:

Audio Assignment #3: (100 points) - Profile piece

Required Reading: *Sound Reporting*, "Chapter 1: Fairness" pp. 8-24

Required Viewing: [Ira Glass on Storytelling](#), Third and fourth videos in the playlist

Photo Week 1 (Sept 30)

- Review profile pieces
- Introduction to photojournalism
- Writing captions, sizing images
- Where photojournalists find story ideas, how they get to the breaking news first, what tools they need to be prepared for the job.
- **In-class assignment:** U of Maryland in three photos

HOMEWORK:

Required Reading: *Photojournalism: The Professionals' Approach*. Visual Variety, pp. 14-24. (handout)

Photo Assignment #1 (50 points): Capturing an event in pictures.

Photo Week 2 (Oct 7)

- Critique and discuss Photo Assignment #1.
- Photoshop Basics -- cropping, color correction.
- **In-class exercise:** Touching up images from previous assignment

HOMEWORK:

Photo Assignment #2 (100 points): "Portraits" Find a stranger, faculty member, athlete or coach, and take three distinctly different portraits that say something about the subject's life, profession, major, personality, background, etc.

Photo Week 3 (Oct 14)

- Critique Photo Assignment #2
- Photo story: shooting photos in sequence, organizing slide shows
- Blending images with sound: some basic dos and don'ts
- Watch award-winning examples
- Introduction to SoundSlides
- **In-class exercise:** SoundSlides exercise

HOMEWORK:

Photo Assignment #3 (50 points): Audio Slide Show

Draft Final Project Proposal (30 points): Write a pitch for your final project, following the format described on the blog.

Photo Week 4 (Oct 21)

- Assemble Audio Slide Show
- Discuss Final Project proposals

HOMEWORK:

E-mail progress report on final project proposal

Choose a favorite work of multimedia

Video Week 1 (Oct 28)

- Review favorite multimedia picks
- Introduction to video journalism (when video works best)
- Examples of successful and unsuccessful online videos.
- Shooting basics
- Introduction to the concept of sequences.
- **In-class:** Shooting Exercise

HOMEWORK:

Video Assignment #1: Sequence Shoot. (50 points).

Video Week 2 (Nov 4)

- Class cancelled.

Video Week 3 (Nov 11)

- Intermediate video editing
- **In-class:** edit sequence shoot
- meetings to discuss final project proposals
- Planning the shoot and storyboarding

HOMEWORK:

Video Assignment #2: (50 points) Storyboard your final project

Video Week 4 (Nov 18)

- Review storyboarding assignment: students present their project outlines
- Taking your videos to the next level: more video storytelling tips.
- **In-class:** Sequence shoot 2 (in teams)

HOMEWORK:

Video Assignment #3: (50 points) Final project shoot.

<< Thanksgiving break -- no class (Nov 25) >>

Review Day (Dec 2)

- **In-class production:** finish Sequence shoot 2 (Video Assignment #4)

Fine-Tuning Final Projects During Class (Dec 9)

- Bring in drafts or final project footage for feedback.
- This class will also include an overview of the videojournalist as a one-person-band, highlighting equipment needs, challenges, advantages and disadvantages. Students will be encouraged to work toward the final exam. They should use their knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of audio, photo and audio combinations, video, and the Web itself to make judicious decisions about the medium that best serves their story.

Watch Final Projects (Dec 16)

- * **Meet to watch final projects and give informal feedback**