CCJN 2380: DIGITAL JOURNALISM

Sample syllabus (from Fall 2010 -- subject to change)

Class sessions: MW 2:30-3:50 p.m., TTH 2-3:20 p.m., Umphrey Lee 288 Labs: TH 12:30-1:50 p.m., F 1-2:20 p.m., UL 288 or Convergence Newsroom

Course blog: smudigitaljournalism.wordpress.com

Jake Batsell, M.A.

Assistant Professor

214-768-1915 (office); 214-529-2978 (cell);

Email: jbatsell@smu.edu | Twitter: @jbatsell | Facebook: facebook.com/jbatsell

Delicious: www.delicious.com/jbatsell | LinkedIn profile | Personal blog

Office: Umphrey Lee 282C

Office hours: 4-5 p.m. M/W; 3:30-5 p.m. T/TH, or by appointment

This course serves as your humble guide to the rapidly changing universe of Web journalism. The 21st century newsroom requires a "platform-agnostic" mindset in which journalists must possess a broad set of multi-platform newsgathering skills and fluency in social media while also upholding the timeless journalistic standards of news judgment, accuracy, fairness and truth. Convergence and interactivity are the prevailing reality in today's newsrooms, and you will get a strong dose of both in this course. You will report and write news stories and blog items; "push" your own (and your classmates') work to computer screens throughout the world by using social media; shoot and edit digital photos; gather and edit audio to produce audio slideshows and NPR-style audio segments; and create your own portfolio website as a first step in establishing a personal journalistic brand. You will create high-quality, multi-platform news content and develop a professional Web presence while practicing the core journalistic values that, even in a changing media landscape, remain the industry's bedrock professional standards.

"The reality is ... we see lots of résumés from people with strong reporting skills – and that's not enough. If we see anything on the résumé that suggests 'new media,' that's an automatic plus."

-- Dwayne Yancey, senior editor for new channels at *The Roanoke* (Va.) *Times* (From "What Skills Do Media Professionals Expect From Today's College Media Students?", David Wendelken, 2010)

"I'm looking to hire 'digital disruptors' who bring fresh eyes to the newsroom and challenge the way we've always done things."

-- Patti Dennis, vice president of news, KUSA-TV, Denver (Comment during "New Models of TV Convergence" panel at the AEJMC Conference in Denver, August 2010)

Learning outcomes are expected in four categories. You will:

Acquire and polish multi-platform skills

- Write and blog with the time-pressed Web reader in mind.
- Gather and edit audio.
- Shoot and edit still photos.
- Produce multimedia content, including photo and audio slideshows.

Approach the news as a two-way conversation, not a one-way lecture

• Think of your audience by pursuing the stories that matter most to your readers and viewers. Ask yourself, "Why should somebody care about this?"

- Appreciate the art of journalistic curation in which you use your reporting skills to sort through the cacophony of the Web to find credible and relevant links for your readers.
- Harness social media to get your work noticed on the Web.
- *Understand audience metrics* that drive the new media landscape.
- *Embrace non-linear news design* that empowers your readers to experience the news however they want, in whatever order they want.
- Adopt the Web-first mentality that every major news organization now embraces.

Sharpen and expand your journalistic storytelling

- *Embrace versatility.* The dueling categories that long defined our profession print vs. broadcast, reporters vs. photojournalists, on-air "talent" vs. behind-the-camera professionals are quickly dissolving on the Web. Be a jack of many trades.
- Put the story first. Above all else, think of yourself as a journalist who has an everincreasing assortment of tools and technology to bring the story to your readers.
- Know how to write for the Web. Use search engine optimization in leads and headlines, appreciate that Web writing needs to be "scannable" for the time-pressed reader.
- Adopt a sense of urgency. Understand that online news sites require constant updating. Learn to fluently navigate The Daily Mustang's content management system (CMS).
- Demonstrate continued proficiency in reporting, writing, grammar and AP style.
- Take your readers to the scene with vivid multimedia storytelling.

Develop a sophisticated personal brand on the Web

- Create and customize a personal portfolio website that showcases your best journalistic work.
- Build a savvy social media presence on Facebook and Twitter that highlights your talents and personality (and won't make your mom blush or cost you a job).

Required texts:

- Journalism Next by Mark Briggs (November 2009, CQ Press)
- The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law
- Multimedia Case Studies from Columbia University Journalism School:

Study #1: The Facebook Conundrum: The New Haven Independent and the Annie Le Murder Study #2: Into the Breach: Should Student Journalists Save Local Political Reporting?

Online readings will be posted on <u>my Delicious page</u>. Follow current events by subscribing to RSS and Twitter feeds as part of your daily media diet, especially dallasnews.com, nytimes.com, cnn.com, smudailymustang.com and smudailycampus.com.

Attendance: Treat this class as if it is a job. You are expected to be in every class, show up on time and turn in work on time. **If you must miss class or lab, contact the instructor** <u>in</u> **advance**, just as you would your editor or boss at work.

Roll will be taken every day. Any student who misses the first day of class may be dropped. With three or more unexcused absences, you could be dropped or receive an "F." Absences also will factor into your class participation grade. You get one "free pass" for an unexcused absence. After that, each unexcused absence will result in an automatic deduction of at least 10 points from your class participation grade. An absence will be considered unexcused unless you are able to provide a doctor's note or some other good reason within 24 hours of an absence. Acceptable reasons for missing class include a verifiable illness, family

emergency, religious holiday or approved school trip. Again, **contacting me ahead of time will always help your case.**

Those with an unexcused absence will receive a zero on that day's class activity and will not be able to make it up. The three-absence rule described above will be enforced, because frequent absences will prevent you from gaining the technical skills and Web journalism literacy you will need to complete multimedia lab assignments and to pass the midterm and final exams.

The SMU Health Center has changed its policy on giving forms for excused absences. The Health Center's new policy is found at https://smu.edu/healthcenter/policy/absenceclass.asp. Please note that there is a PDF file in this information that you can download and submit to me for consideration of an excused absence. This form must be filled out fully for me to consider your absence as excused. If you consult a physician for an illness and receive specific certification for a recovery time, absences will be excused if I am given a form from the physician's office.

Stories:

You will cover one required spot news story and may cover more for extra credit. The following ethical guidelines apply to all written and multimedia work for this course and The Daily Mustang:

- Don't cover a story on any activity in which you are involved or to which you have a close personal connection. Don't use family members or significant others (boyfriend, sibling, parent, roommate, etc.) or friends as primary sources.
- In a full-length story or package, rely entirely on YOUR OWN reporting. If you must
 include information reported by another journalistic outlet (and I suggest you do this
 rarely, because there is almost always a way to find the information yourself), cite the
 publication. The instructor reserves the right to contact sources listed on your source
 sheet. When blogging, ALWAYS LINK to the original source that inspired your post.
- All stories must have more than one source. All should have local sources. **Don't quote** journalism faculty or j-students as sources unless approved in advance.
- Primary interviews should generally be conducted in person or by phone. E-mail
 interviews are for follow-up or to fill holes, check facts, or to set up interviews. Main
 interviews for a spot news story should be conducted by e-mail on an
 emergency basis only. Interviews conducted via e-mail should be specifically
 indicated as such in the story or blog item.
- Inform all sources that you are working on a story for Web publication. You must
 always tell all of your sources that the story you are reporting could be
 published or aired on multiple platforms. Your work could appear on news sites
 both on and off campus. Your stories, in other words, are for public consumption and
 your sources must know that.
- If background information or quotes are taken from a website, proper attribution is required in your story and source sheet, including a link to the website.
- Do not use anonymous sources unless approved by the instructor.
- Missing deadline will be penalized harshly. Unapproved late stories will receive an automatic F.

Source sheets: Attach a list to every story including the name of each source, the date and time you interviewed each person and his or her contact information (both a phone number and e-mail address). Stories without source sheets will not be accepted and will not be published. The instructor and/or story editor may contact sources to verify information.

Exams: For your midterm and final exams, you will evaluate professional news sites and multimedia packages under deadline conditions, based on Web 2.0 principles discussed in class.

Grading: Specific criteria on each of the below items will be discussed later, but here is the overall structure for how your grade will be determined in this course:

Multimedia storytelling:	300 points	30%
 1 radio story (100 points) 		
 1 photo slideshow (50 points) 		
 1 audio slideshow (150 points) 		
Promoting news content through social media:	100 points	10%
 10 "push" assignments 	•	
(One per week - 10 points each)		
Beat blogging portfolio:	100 points	10%
 8 weekly blog posts (80 points) 		
 Live blogging (20 points) 		
Two individual blog post grades (randomized)	25 points each	5%
Five pre-class tweets (using the hashtag #j2380)	50 points	5%
Spot news assignment	50 points	5%
Midterm exam (News site assessment)	50 points	5%
Final exam (Interactive news package assessment)	100 points	10%
Class participation (Class/lab assignments, case	100 points	10%
studies, speakers, attendance	e)	
Personal branding:	100 points	10%
 Portfolio website (75 points) 		
 LinkedIn page (25 points) 		
Total possible	1,000 points	
Total possible	1,000 points	
Semester grades:	935-1,000	Α
	895-934	Α-
	865-894	B+
	825-864	В
	795-824	B-
	765-794	C+
	725-764	С
	695-724	C-
	665-694	D+
	625-664	D
	595-624	D-
	Less than 595	F

[&]quot;A"s are rare and are awarded only for truly excellent work. Very good work receives a "B"; average work a "C"; below average a "D." This is in accordance with SMU regulations. I am happy to discuss your grade for any project. If you wish to protest a grade, a formal process is available.

Guest speakers: Professional journalists and other relevant speakers will be invited to class during the semester. A one-page summary of the speaker's presentation, worth 10 points, will be due at the start of the next class.

Classroom computers and cell phones: Please follow common courtesy. Yes, this is a Digital Journalism class. But that doesn't mean it's acceptable to play Tetris on Facebook during class, or to catch up on e-mail. Computers should be used for in-class assignments only. Check your e-mail, Facebook or other social networking sites before the start of class, when class ends or if there is a break during class. But out of courtesy to your classmates and to the instructor, texting, e-mailing, Web browsing, Facebooking and Tweeting should be avoided during class unless they are germane to a course activity. I welcome tweets that offer questions or comments during a class lecture or activity – just use the hashtag #j2380. Turn your phone off during class. If a cell phone rings during class, I get to answer it.

Failure to adhere to these policies will result in an automatic deduction of at least 10 points from your class participation grade. If you are caught more than three times failing to adhere to this policy, you will receive an "F" for your class participation and attendance grade.

Headphones: Always bring headphones or earbuds to class, particularly when we get into the multimedia section of the class. You will frequently need headphones for in-class activities.

Saving your work: Save and back up all of your work on an external hard drive.

Extra credit: You may volunteer for Daily Mustang assignments. Each published assignment can earn as many as 10 points. You can write stories or add a multimedia element to a story.

Academic dishonesty: Plagiarism, fabrication and resubmission or double submission of work performed for another class all are considered to be acts of academic dishonesty and a violation of the SMU Honor Code. Any of the above violations will result in an automatic failing grade on the assignment and a written referral to the SMU Honor Council and Dean of Student Life.

The Division of Journalism has adopted the following policies. By enrolling in this class you are agreeing to the following terms and conditions:

Reporting standards for all media projects

Your story will be graded on content: is it fair, is it newsworthy, is it well sourced? Is the story organized, are all questions answered, and is all information properly attributed? Are direct quotes preceded by strong transitions in print stories? At least 5 points may be taken off for problems like these. For errors of fact, expect 10 or more points off.

How to earn an "F" on any media project

Miss a deadline. Misquote or misrepresent someone. Rewrite or submit a story or package that was produced for another class. Fabricate or plagiarize.

Plagiarism and Fabrication

Plagiarism is stealing someone's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. Fabrication is making stuff up. Both strike at the heart of the journalistic process, where proper attribution and fact checking are paramount. As mentioned above, plagiarism and fabrication in this course will be addressed in the harshest manner possible, including referral to the honors council.

Excused absences for extracurricular activities

If you are participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled university extracurricular activity, you will be given the opportunity to make up class assignments. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with your teacher prior to any missed assignment. (See University Undergraduate Catalogue.)

Religious accommodations

If you are a religiously observant student who will be absent on holidays, you must notify your teacher in writing at the beginning of the semester. You should also discuss in advance acceptable ways of making up any missed worked. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

Disability accommodations

If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) (214) 768-1470 or http://www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. You should also schedule an appointment with your teacher to make any necessary arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.)

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Each week's online readings (if any) will be at http://www.delicious.com/jbatsell/readings

Week One: Aug. 23-27

Introduction/class structure. Industry overview: A new age for the news business.

Readings

Briggs foreword/preface

Briggs Ch. 1 – Intro (1-8), Tech Innovator Greg Linch (24-25)

Briggs' digital journalism links – a gold mine!! (335-337)

Lab exercise: Getting started on Twitter.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 4 - Microblogging (93-118)

Week Two: Aug. 30-Sept. 3

Web basics and analytics. SEO and Web headlines. Writing for the Web.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 1 – Web basics (9-13), FTP (21-22)

Briggs Ch. 11 – Analytics (310-21), SEO/Tech Innovator Dale Steinke (321-30)

Journalism 2.0 Ch.6, "How to Report News For the Web"

http://www.kcnn.org/resources/journalism_20_chapter6

Lab exercise: Deadline writing on multiple platforms.

Week Three: Sept. 7-10 (NO CLASS ON MONDAY, 9/6 – LABOR DAY)

Effective beat blogging, link journalism and the art of journalistic curation.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 3 – Beat blogging (79-86)

Guest speaker(s) on Thursday for both classes.

No lab exercise this week, but you can earn **10 points of extra credit** by attending the Social Media Workshop sponsored by the Press Club of Dallas and AAJA here at SMU on Saturday, Sept. 11. http://tinyurl.com/smuworkshop

Week Four: Sept. 13-17

More about blogging, social media and reader interactivity.

Readings

Brigas Ch. 2 – Advanced blogging (40-67) Homework: Do the first "aet going" exercise on p. 67.

Briggs Ch. 3 – Crowd-powered collaboration (68-79) and Pro-am journalism (87-91)

Briggs Ch. 10 – Social media distribution (330-33)

Lab exercise: Practice blog and push posts.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 1 – RSS (14-20)

Week Five: Sept. 20-24

Harnessing the Web and social media as a reporting tool. Mobile/live blogging. News as conversation.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 10 – Managing news as a conversation (277-309)

Briggs Ch. 5 – Going mobile (119-41)

Briggs Ch. 9 – Tech Innovator Jennifer Carroll and data-driven journalism (262-265)

Lab exercise: Columbia University case study.

(Details announced in class)

Week Six: Sept. 27-Oct. 1

Multimedia storytelling.

Readings

Audio slideshow "Driilling Down" boxes on page 155 and page 172 of the Briggs book.

Guest speaker on Thursday for both classes.

Lab exercise: To be announced.

Week Seven: Oct. 4-8

Audio gathering. Midterm exam.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 7 – Making Audio Journalism Visible (177-198)

Lab exercise (during **Wednesday and Thursday** class periods): Audio gathering

MIDTERM EXAM during Thursday and Friday lab periods.

Extra credit: Live-tweet the Sammons Lecture featuring PBS Newshour host Jim Lehrer on Oct. 6, 8 p.m.

Week Eight: Oct. 13-15 (NO CLASS ON MONDAY, 10/11 OR TUESDAY, 10/12 - FALL BREAK)

Audio Editing with GarageBand.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 7 – Editing Digital Audio (198-205) Skip the parts about Audacity.

Lab exercise: Audio editing

Week Nine: Oct. 18-22

Photo editing, Photoshop and slideshows.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 6 – Visual Storytelling With Photographs (142-76) Skip the Photoshop Elements stuff.

Lab exercise: Open lab for radio stories, which must be posted on course blog by 11:59 p.m. Friday, 10/22

Week Ten: Oct. 25-29

Audio slideshows, storyboarding, peer critiques of radio stories.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 6 – Building An Audio Slideshow in Soundslides (174)

Briggs Ch. 8 – Try Storyboarding (214-215)

Lab exercise: Open lab for **photo slideshows**, which are due by 11:59 p.m. Friday, 10/29

You should plan to be involved in Meadows' "Digital Threads" conference on Thursday and/or Friday.

Week Eleven: Nov. 1-5

Creating audio slideshows with SoundSlides. Begin storyboarding for final projects.

Guest speaker(s) on Thursday for both classes.

No Friday lab this week.

Week Twelve: Nov. 8-12

Digital resumes, LinkedIn and personal branding. More storyboarding for final projects. Online video.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 1 – HTML and CSS (23-39)

Briggs Ch. 8 – Telling Stories with Video (206-221)

Lab exercise: Storyboard meetings for final projects.

Week Thirteen: Nov. 15-19

Coping with information overload. Interactive mapping. Job opportunities in digital media.

Readings

Briggs Ch. 9 – Digitizing Your Life (243-253)

Briggs Ch. 9 – Map Mashups (268-276)

Lab exercise: Open lab for **audio slideshows**, which are due by 11:59 p.m. Friday, 11/19 (Students may also use lab time to work on web portfolio sites)

Week Fourteen: Nov. 22 and 23 (NO CLASS WEDNESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY – THANKSGIVING)
Columbia case study #2.

Week Fifteen: Nov. 29-Dec. 2

More on job opportunities in digital media; Multimedia packages.

Guest speaker(s) on Thursday for both classes – Digital Jobs Summit.

The TTH class will have its **final review session** during the Friday lab period.

Week Sixteen: Dec. 6-10

The MW class will have its **final review session** during class on Monday.

FINAL EXAM for MW class is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 9, from 3-6 p.m. in UL 288.

FINAL EXAM for TTH class is scheduled for Friday, Dec. 10, from 3-6 p.m. in UL 288.

KEY ASSIGNMENT DATES – DIGITAL JOURNALISM, FALL 2010

Week of Aug. 23

Sign up for spot story rotation.

Week of Aug. 30

• Sign up for spot story rotation.

Week of Sept. 7

- Spot story rotation begins.
- Blog beats assigned.

Saturday, Sept. 11

• Extra credit: Press Club of Dallas/AAJA Social Media Workshop, 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., SMU

Week of Sept. 13

• Weekly "push" requirement begins.

Week of Sept. 27

Regular blogging requirement begins.

Wednesday, Oct. 6

Extra credit: Sammons Lecture featuring Jim Lehrer, 8 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 7 and Friday, Oct. 8

• Mid-term exam during scheduled lab session.

Thursday, Oct. 21 and Friday, Oct. 22

Meadows' "Digital Threads" conference happens Thursday afternoon/evening and Friday a.m.

Friday, Oct. 22

• Radio stories due by 11:59 p.m.

Last week in October

• Sign up for storyboard meetings.

Friday, Oct. 29

• Photo slideshows due by 11:59 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 19

• Audio slideshows due by 11:59 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 3

• Last blog posts due by 11:59 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 7 (MW class) and Wednesday, Dec. 8 (TTH class)

Web portfolios and LinkedIn pages due by 11:59 p.m.

Final Exam

- Thursday, Dec. 9, 3-6 p.m. (MW class)
- Friday, Dec. 10, 3-6 p.m. (TTH class)