

CCJN 3358: NEW MEDIA NEWS

Fall 2008 syllabus (subject to change)

M/W 12:30-2 p.m.; Lab session: F 11 a.m.-12:20 p.m.

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Office hours: 10:15-11:15 a.m. daily, or by appointment

This course serves as the backbone for the Division of Journalism's convergence newsroom. You are the pioneering journalists who will relaunch the student Web site known until now as the Daily Data. You will edit or co-edit at least one section, constantly updating your assigned section with fresh stories, photos and multimedia content that will encourage readers to make a habit of visiting our site. Throughout the course of the semester, you will report and write stories; edit and post stories written by other students; file blog items; shoot and edit still photos and Web videos; create audio content such as slideshows and podcasts; and collaborate on Flash multimedia projects. As individuals and as a team, you will produce high-quality work under deadline, upholding the timeless journalistic standards of news judgment, accuracy, fairness and truth.

Learning outcomes are expected in three categories:

Sharpening and expanding your journalistic storytelling

- *Put the story first.* Above all else, think of yourself as a journalist who has an ever-increasing assortment of tools and technology to bring the story to your readers.
- *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.
- *Know how to write for the Web.* Use search engine optimization in leads and headlines, and file early versions of breaking stories followed by more complete versions later.
- *Adopt a sense of urgency.* Understand that online news sites require constant, creative updating. Learn to fluently navigate our content management system (CMS).
- *Demonstrate continued proficiency* in reporting, writing, grammar and AP style.

Collaborating in a newsroom environment

- *Work as part of a team.* Multimedia storytelling has many moving parts. Executing it well requires proactive, constructive communication between you and your colleagues.
- *Taste life as an editor.* Supervising your section will require smart advance planning. You will need to ensure that your section has a steady stream of content, and you often will collaborate with your fellow editors to decide which content is cross-posted elsewhere on the site. You also will edit and post students' work from other classes.
- *Think of your audience.* Pursue the stories that matter most to your readers and viewers. Ask yourself, "Why should somebody care about this?"

Acquiring and polishing multimedia skills

In addition to managing and editing your section, you will:

- *Shoot and edit news videos for the Web.*
- *Gather and edit audio.*
- *Shoot and edit still photos.*
- *Produce multimedia content*, including audio slideshows and Flash graphics.
- *Empower your audience* with interactive features such as comments, surveys and links.

Reading requirements:

- Most material for class discussions and activities will come from outside readings that will either be e-mailed to you or posted on Blackboard.
- You also should closely follow current events by reading a variety of local and campus news publications, especially *The Dallas Morning News* and *Daily Campus*, and by watching news broadcasts and bookmarking Web sites as part of your daily media diet.
- As the semester progresses, we will increasingly rely on chapters and exercises in *Flash Journalism: How to Create Multimedia News Packages* by Mindy McAdams.
- All written work in this class will follow AP style, so always have your *Associated Press Stylebook* handy. (You didn't sell it back to the bookstore, did you?)

Attendance: Treat this class as if it is a job. You and your fellow students will be counting on each other. 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 in 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. Three or more unexcused absences and you could be dropped or receive an "F." An absence will be considered unexcused unless you are able to provide a doctor's note or some other good reason why you were not in class within 24 hours of an absence.

Those with an unexcused absence will receive a zero for that day's activity and will not be able to make it up. Acceptable reasons for missing class include a verifiable illness, family emergency, religious holiday or approved school trip. Contacting the instructor ahead of time will almost always help your case.

Stories:

You will write at least four news stories for the site during the semester. The following ethical guidelines apply to all written work for both this course and the Web site:

- Don't cover a story on any activity in which you are involved, which could create a conflict of interest.
- 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.
- All stories must have more than one source. All should have local sources. Do not rely on journalism faculty or journalism students as sources.
- Primary interviews should be 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 story should be conducted by e-mail on an emergency basis only, and interviews conducted via e-mail should be so indicated in the story and approved in advance by the instructor.
- Inform all sources that you are working on a story for Web publication.
- Web sites may be used to provide background and facts, but avoid using quotes found on the Web. If information or quotes are taken from a site, proper attribution is required in your story and source sheet, including a link to the Web site.
- DO NOT use family members or significant others (boyfriends, sister/brother, parent, roommate, etc.) as primary sources.
- Do not use anonymous sources unless approved by the instructor.
- Missing deadline will be penalized harshly. Late stories may 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 (preferably both a phone number and e-mail address). Stories without source sheets will not be accepted and will not be published on the site. The instructor and/or story editor may contact sources to verify information.

Guest speakers: Professional journalists and other relevant speakers may be brought into 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.

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:

Editing/content management:	300 points	30%
• 12 weekly memos (25 points each)		
Multimedia content:	300 points	30%
• 1 video (75 points)		
• 1 photo slideshow (50 points)		
• 1 audio slideshow or podcast (50 points)		
• 3 Flash assignments (25 points each)		
• 10 weekly blog posts (5 points each)		
Stories:	150 points	15%
• 2 spot news stories (25 points each)		
• 2 profile/trend/feature stories (50 points each)		
Final multimedia project (choose your own role):	150 points	15%
Course assignments:	100 points	10%
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Total possible	1,000 points	
Semester grades:	925-1,000	A
	895-924	A-
	865-894	B+
	825-864	B
	795-824	B-
	765-794	C+
	725-764	C
	695-724	C-
	665-694	D+
	625-664	D
	595-624	D-
	Less than 595	F

*****SAVE AND BACK UP ALL OF YOUR WORK!!!*****

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. If you intend to post work from another class on the site, you must clear it with the instructor in advance. 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. Never quote friends or family members unless you have advance permission from the instructor.

TENTATIVE CLASS OUTLINE

Each lab and class session will start with a budget meeting focused on running our daily Web site. The remainder of lab and class will be devoted to 1) lectures and class activities covering the topics outlined below; and 2) lab time for preparing and posting news content. Individual assignments and exercises will be explained in detail as they occur. The class structure is deliberately flexible to allow for adjustments as our site and the convergence newsroom evolve during the course of the semester.

Weeks 1-2: Aug. 25 – Sept. 5

Setting up the new Daily Data; Writing for the Web; Blogging effectively

Weeks 3-5: Sept. 8-26

Video storytelling on the Web

Weeks 6-7: Sept. 29-Oct. 10

Gathering and editing audio; Producing slideshows

Weeks 8-10: Oct. 15-31

Flash journalism – interactive news packages and graphics

Weeks 11-15: Nov. 3-Dec. 5

Putting it all together: Multimedia projects

THIS COURSE WILL NOT HAVE A TRADITIONAL FINAL EXAM. YOUR FINAL PROJECT WILL SERVE AS YOUR FINAL EXAM, AND WILL BE DUE DURING THE SCHEDULED FINAL PERIOD.

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 relevant 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.

Mechanical standards for writing

- *Associated Press style and grammar errors: 2 or more points
- *Punctuation errors: 2 or more points
- *Spelling: 10 or more points for misspelled names or other proper nouns; 2 or more points for all other spelling errors
- *Awkward or unclear phrasing: 2 or more points

Mechanical standards for broadcast and multimedia projects

Points may be deducted for the following:

- *Handing the mic to your interview subject
- *Visible lav cables
- *Improper field and post-production audio levels
- *Failure to white balance
- *Shaky shots
- *Improper shot framing
- *Accidental silhouettes
- *Lack of natural sound and natural sound transitions
- *Muddy audio mixes
- *Clipped audio editing
- *Flash frames
- *Jump cuts
- *Inaccurate iNews formatting
- *Lack of CGs and hit times
- *Failure to include CGs with complete names, correct titles and accurate spelling
- *Including video the student did not shoot (without prior instructor approval)
- *Failure to check out and return gear on time

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.

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 work. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

Disability accommodations

If you need academic accommodations for a disability, you must first contact Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities at (214) 768-4557 to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. You should also schedule an appointment with your teacher to make any necessary arrangements. A verification letter from Ms. Marin or another official is required. (See University Policy No. 2.4.)

Additional grading information

1. "A"s are rare. They 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 university regulations.
2. All work will be judged rigorously. Letter grades are based on a 10-point scale. For example, the "B" range is as follows: 80-82 B-; 83-86 B; 87-89 B+. The same spread applies to all letter grades (except there is no A+).
3. Your teachers will be happy to discuss the content of your papers. If you wish to protest a grade, a formal process is available.