

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Com 535 | Spring 2009

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You will have the most success reaching me via e-mail. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours. Please do not call after 10 p.m. unless it is an emergency.

This syllabus is subject to change at any time throughout the semester. I will issue a revised syllabus the same week any changes are made.

OVERVIEW

This course will examine how to leverage the Web to go beyond the written word and tell stories with images, audio and other tools. We will focus relentlessly on hands-on work. There also will be theoretical discussions, case studies, and reviews of innovative new technologies and techniques. You will brainstorm, plan, report and execute a multimedia project.

The primary focus will be images and audio, and telling stories using a combination of the two. Everything you do will be a springboard for later courses on video and Flash.

REQUIRED SOFTWARE PROGRAMS

Audacity (Freeware audio editing program)

- <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>
- Make sure to download and install the LAME encoder too.

Adobe Photoshop CS3 (Photo editing)

- This is one of the programs in the Adobe Creative Suite.

SoundSlides Plus (Audio slide shows)

- <http://www.soundslides.com> (Pro version, \$69.95)
- <http://support.soundslides.com/index.php?pg=kb.page&id=41> (Video plug-in, \$19.95)

FTP client

- Fetch: <http://www.fetchsoftworks.com/> (\$25)
- If you already have another FTP program, that's OK.

Audio converter

- Switch (free version): <http://www.nch.com.au/switch/>

REQUIRED AUDIO EQUIPMENT

You are required to have a handheld digital audio recorder with a USB connector. I highly recommend the Olympus WS-300 series recorders, which can be purchased for less than \$100 at most major electronics retailers.

<http://www.amazon.com/Olympus-WS-321M-Digital-Recorder-Player/dp/B000VDQAU0>

Headphones and external microphones are not required.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Podcasting with Audacity: Creating a Podcast With Free Audio Software
(Download the PDF, \$12.99)

<http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=0132366576>

Journalism 2.0: How to survive and thrive

(Download the PDF, free)

http://www.kcnn.org/resources/journalism_20/

COURSE STANDARDS

Expectations: This class will not teach you how to press button X to produce result Y. "New Media" is a very demanding field of journalism which expects professionals of all ages and experience levels to learn new technologies, software and equipment on a daily basis with little or no coaching or formal training. The same intellectual inquisitiveness that motivates you to rip music MP3s and to noodle with the controls on a new digital camera you got for Christmas will serve you very well here. You will be required to download and use several software programs and to use a digital audio recorder. When I took my first photojournalism class in college, the instructor didn't tell us how to load the film or operate the camera's shutter. He showed us how to tell stories with pictures.

Academic integrity: Plagiarism will not be tolerated. To quote Professor Wendell Cochran, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to fabrication, improper collaboration, or cheating on an assignment) will be dealt with severely. Punishment may range from failure of an assignment to dismissal from the university. By this point in your education you should be familiar with the university's Academic Integrity Code.

Attendance policy: All six sessions are mandatory. The only excused absences are those caused by either a death in your immediate family or a serious personal medical problem. If you are ill you must call my cell phone at 202.680.0488 in advance of class; the voice mail records time and date. If you miss more than one class, for any reason, you may be asked to drop the course and retake it.

WEEK-BY-WEEK OUTLINE

This should be a lively and interesting course. Let's have some fun!

Class dates: Jan. 17, Jan. 24, Jan. 31, Feb. 14, Feb. 21, Feb. 28. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

Saturday, Jan. 17:

- Introductions. Review syllabus
- Equipment and software review
- What is Digital Storytelling?
- Case study: Echo Company
- Introduction to audio reporting
- Hands-on exercise: Classroom audio interviews
- Editing audio in Audacity
- Homework assignment

Saturday, Jan. 24:

- Introduction to digital imaging
- Working with Adobe Photoshop CS3
- Telling a story with images
- Hands-on exercise: Create a photo slide show
- Combining sound and images
- Working with Soundslides
- Hands-on exercise: Create a narrated slide show
- Homework assignment

Saturday, Jan. 31:

- Planning a multimedia project
- Storyboarding
- Linear versus non-linear storytelling
- Case study: Torino Olympics
- Hands-on exercise: Storyboarding your final project
- Homework assignment

Saturday, Feb. 14:

- Progress review on final projects
- Geotagging and interactive maps
- Case study: Tornadoes in Iowa
- Hands-on exercise: Create a Google mashup
- Homework assignment

Saturday, Feb. 21:

- Transparency: Presenting original documents
- Crowdsourcing and wikis
- Social networking

User-generated content: A two-way conversation with readers
Managing message boards and comments

Saturday, Feb. 28:

Group review and critique of final projects

About the final project:

The final project will be to tell a digital story using all of the techniques covered in class. I will go over the requirements the first day of class and you will have almost six weeks to work on it. We will critique all the projects as a group on the final day of class.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

I do not give exams or quizzes. You will be graded almost entirely on the work you produce.

Graded exercises: 70 percent

Final project: 20 percent

Professional conduct and classroom participation: 10 percent

All assigned work will be assessed on the following scale:

- A (90-100) Professional quality work. Ready for publication.
- B (80-90) Good quality work but some problems exist.
- C (70-80) Student fulfilled the assignment but had major problems.
- D (60-70) Excessive problems, indicating a lack of effort and attention
- F (Below 60) Assignment not completed, missed deadline, serious errors,
including misspelled names

Any assignment that is submitted after deadline without prior permission will receive a failing grade (an immediate reduction of 32 points). An assignment that is not submitted at all receives a zero; that will significantly lower the overall course grade. E-mail is preferred for submitting assignments and time stamps will determine whether assignments are turned in on time.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Please be punctual. Arriving late is a distraction and a discourtesy.

Engagement is essential. Please contribute to the discussion.

Cell phones and pagers must be switched off during class.

Proper spelling and grammar are required on all assignments.