

COMM 621: Enterprise Reporting in Diverse Communities
Autumn 2010
Tuesday/Thursday XXXXX XXX

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to produce multimedia journalism projects that move beyond the basic newswriting drills and skills you mastered in COMM 421 and 422. You will become well versed in traditional examples of diversity reporting, which include projects about people of different races, ethnicities, socio-economic classes and ages. We'll also explore reporting on government/politics, sports, business and science/health care. But you will be pushed to dig even deeper. Diversity of thought is what we're really after. A diverse community can be one based on a common occupation, like farming or engineering. It may include a group of people with a unique interest or skill, like playing musical instruments, speaking foreign languages or designing video games and iPhone applications. Or perhaps it's a bit more serious, like communities linked by war, homelessness, crime or addiction. No matter what "diverse community" becomes your focus, you will need to use a 7-step process to fully report on it and produce a professional-level multimedia project.

COURSE GOALS

The goal is to get all or part of your enterprise project published in *The Lantern* or another media organization. Whether a newsroom is in your future or not, the skills you accumulate throughout the quarter -- in-depth research, reporting, critical thinking and interviewing -- will benefit you in any academic or professional environment that requires thinking and acting "outside the box." You will have immersed yourself in a part of the world that you had not known nearly as well before. That experience should be worthwhile at a minimum. It may prove to be unforgettable.

REQUIRED READINGS

Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (2009 preferred); available at local bookstores.

The Two W's of Journalism: The Why and What of Public Affairs Reporting; Davis Merritt and Maxwell McCombs; available at local bookstores.

Journalism Across Cultures, Fritz Cropp, Cynthia M. Frisby, Dean Mills; available at local bookstores.

Other assignments will be available online or on hold at the library.

All readings should be done prior to the assigned class period..

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Read the online versions of *The Washington Post*, *NY Times*, and any other newspaper, magazine or journalism site you can find that has well written and produced multimedia projects on diverse communities. Read, view, listen and interact as much as you can from as many different sources as you can. The more you do, the better you'll report, write and produce.

GRADING CRITERIA

35% Final Project
20% Midterm
5% SPJ presentations
5% Discussion groups/participation
10% Profile
10% Blog
10% Book review
5% Project outline

Letter Grades will be assigned on following point system:

A: 94-100
A-: 90-93
B+: 87-89
B: 84-86
B-: 80-83
C+: 77-79
C: 74-76
C-: 70-73
D+: 67-69
D: 60-66
E: below 50-59

MIDTERM

There will be one midterm exam. It will cover everything that has occurred in class from lectures to SPJ presentations, and the two texts. The format will include multiple-choice questions, short answers and an essay. If you know that you will not be in class on the day of the exam, let me know as far in advance as possible and a make-up exam can be given early but no more than a week later. If you miss the exam due to unexcused absence, you will receive a 0.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

All assignments should be typed, double-spaced and turned in at the beginning of class. **ALL OUTSIDE CLASS ASSIGNMENTS MUST INCLUDE A CONTACT LIST WITH PHONE NUMBERS AND E-MAILS FROM YOUR SOURCES. I WILL CONTACT SOME OF THESE SOURCES THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.** No handwritten stories will be accepted. Please keep a file of your work so that you can look back at your old assignments and get an idea of progress you're making and areas you need to improve. Please bring that portfolio of your work whenever you meet with me to discuss progress.

FINAL PROJECT

Your final project will be completed using a 7-step process. Some parts of the process will be graded and will contribute to your final grade in the class.

1. Identify the community of interest. Use traditional print library resources, Web sites and social media like Facebook and Twitter to find a local person or group on which to focus.

2. Research. Using the sources above, along with in-person or telephone interviews, write a 1-2 page **outline** of the group selected. The outline should include local, national and international data points. For example, if the project's focus is World War II veterans, the outline could note how many of them live in the Columbus area, in the U.S. and worldwide. Census data and other sources like the VFW can help with this. The due **date for the project outline is Jan. 19 or before.**

You also will **review a book** used to prepare for this assignment and write it with the goal of publication in a national newspaper or a niche publication that serves the community you're researching. The review should be no more than 1,000 words and include specific examples/passages from the book to support whatever point you're trying to make. The **due date for the book review is March 2 or before.** You may review a second book for extra credit.

3. Report. Do in-depth interviews outside of class with one or more people in this group, as well as experts who study this community. All interviews should be recorded using audio or video equipment and fully transcribed. These notes will be invaluable for identifying the real story later on and for the blogs that you are required to keep to update your progress throughout the quarter. The blogs also should be used to showcase interesting interviews or research that don't make it into the final project.

4. Write/produce. Start putting everything together into a multimedia package that includes as many of the following as possible: text, photos, audio, video, graphics. Produce a short, written and/or video **profile** of someone who will play prominently in the final project. The **due date for the profile is Feb. 9.** A second profile can be done for extra credit.

5. Review/edit. You should be doing this constantly. Class time also will be used to do it in small groups...or as the "621 newsroom." If something comes up outside of class that you'd like to get some ideas or feedback on, the class can create its own Web site, chat room or even Facebook page to post ideas, questions, or problems.

6. Rewrite, re-record, re-shoot, re-research and redo anything needed to complete the final project. Interaction with the "diverse community" being studied, the blogs, as well as discussions with classmates and the instructor should aid this process.

7. Completion of **final project.** Put it all together in the most effective way possible using words, images, sights and sounds. The goal again is to get all or part of the project used by The Lantern or another media organization. **The due date for the final project is March 11.**

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

During many classes, two students will make a presentations of 5-10 minutes each on a Web site linked to the Society of Professional Journalists' "Journalist's Toolbox" at www.spjvideo.org/jtb. The topics and presentation dates will be assigned randomly. Presentations should include explanations of why the site is recommended by SPJ and why it would be useful for reporters working on projects like yours. Quickly walk the class through the site and then highlight the most useful function or tip gleaned from it. Before the presentation, the student should submit a short, typed report with your name, the date, the Web site's name, address and other details, and a brief summary of its highlights. (Additional presentations can be done for extra credit from the SPJ or other sites with my permission)

BLOGS

Each student will create a blog and refine it throughout the quarter. The blogs will be used to record your progress on the final project. You can link to articles/sites that produce stories on the communities that you or your classmates are exploring. You also may do entries after conducting interviews that highlight some of the most interesting aspects of that session. These entries can help you to best organize the final project later on as some things gain prominence and others fade out of the main picture. Photos, audio and video clips and other research you do can be posted on your blogs to enhance the site. You may also be asked to post your book reviews on the blogs as well as any extra-credit assignments. The style on these blogs can be a bit different than your finished print/multimedia projects to reflect breaking news, opinions and other nuances of writing for the Web so feel free to be creative. But ACCURACY AND FAIRNESS SHOULD NEVER BE SACRIFICED.

Discussion Groups/Participation:

Once your project topics are approved, the students will be divided into discussion groups that will meet during some class periods (and encouraged to meet outside of class or "online" as needed) to brainstorm ideas on those projects, as well as discuss required readings, lectures, examples of reporting on various communities, etc. Your input and participation in these groups and in general class periods will be the foundation of your participation grade.

DEADLINES

The importance of deadlines cannot be stressed enough. If the deadline for an assignment is Jan. 10, that means the copy must be in my hand at the BEGINNING of class on Jan. 10. Leave enough time to print and proofread your work. Self-editing is a skill many journalists (and writers in general) fail to maintain over the course of a semester...or a career.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

MISSED/LATE ASSIGNMENTS/STUDENT ABSENCES

Excused absences are rare and include emergency situations beyond your control (i.e., an urgent medical condition). In the unusual case of an emergency, it is your responsibility to inform me prior to class or as soon as possible after class to let me know about your absence. You also will need to provide official written documentation for the absence (e.g., a note from a doctor). Non-emergency excused absences may include university-sponsored activities (e.g., required travel for sporting events). Excuses for these kinds of absences must be presented in advance of the absence. No excuses or documentation will be accepted more than one week after the absence.

In-class assignments, such as news and AP Style quizzes, missed for an unexcused absence may not be made up and will mean an automatic 0 for those assignments. Homework assignments not submitted because of an unexcused absence may be turned in late, but will be marked down a minimum of one letter grade. Please contact me via e-mail, or by phone, as far in advance as possible if you know you will be late or absent. Unless I respond to you before that class starts, the absence will be considered unexcused. Nothing will be accepted more than one class late unless extreme circumstances are involved and documented, i.e. you are in the hospital.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: For journalists, being honest and ethical is fundamental. Academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or fabrication, will not be tolerated. The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process," Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct at http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). If COAM determines that you have violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact the instructor or visit the COAM web page at <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>.

NOTE CONCERNING ATTENDANCE WHILE HAVING FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS:

Students should NOT attend class while ill with influenza. Students with flu symptoms will be asked to leave class. The illness and self-isolation period will usually be about a week. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the flu to others.

Most students should be able to complete a successful quarter despite a flu-induced absence. If you are absent due to the flu, you will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. Completion of all assignments and exams assures the greatest chance for students to develop heightened understanding and content mastery that is unavailable through the weighting process. The opportunity to complete all assignments and exams supports the university's desire to enable students to make responsible situational decisions, including the decision to avoid spreading a contagious virus to other students, staff, and faculty, without endangering their academic work.

Students with the flu do not need to provide me with a physician's certification of illness. However, ill students should inform me (but not through personal contact in which there is a risk of exposing others to the virus) as soon as possible that they are absent because of the flu.

STATEMENT ABOUT DISABILITY SERVICES: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is

located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307,
TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>

DAILY SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS/EXERCISES	WHAT'S DUE
1	T 1/5	Introduction to Class. Reporting on diverse communities requires diversity of thought.	Review syllabus.	
	Th 1/7	State of newsrooms: are they diverse? Not nearly as much as their audiences are	Merritt intro and Ch. 1; Knight Foundation reports on newsroom diversity; discussion	
2	T 1/12	Tools: FOIA/Edgar/Census/etc.; Identifying groups to study.	Merritt Ch. 2-3; discussion	
	Th 1/14	Moving beyond basic research. Digging into the data and using social media.	Merritt Ch. 4-5, 19; SPJ presentations	
3	T 1/19	How social media can aid the reporting process and finding diverse sources.	Merritt Ch. 6-7; SPJ presentations; Peer review the outlines	Project outline due. Blogs begin.
	Th 1/21	How the 24/7 global news cycle has changed the game..mostly for the better.	Merritt Ch. 8-9; SPJ presentations	
4	T 1/26	How the 24/7 global news cycle has changed the game..sometimes for the worse.	Merritt Ch. 10-12; SPJ presentations	Bring in examples of stories/broadcasts/multimedia on your group
	Th 1/28	Telling stories in the Digital Age: more than ink on paper and still photographs.	Cropp Ch. 1-2; SPJ presentations	
5	T 2/2	Advanced interviewing techniques.	Cropp Ch. 3-4	
	Th 2/4	Government/politics –a very diverse community.	Cropp Ch. 5-6; Group discussions	
6	T 2/9	Possible guest speaker	Cropp 7-8; Group discussions	Profile due. Blogs updated.
	Th 2/11	The state of reporting on diverse communities. Who does it well and why?	Cropp 9-10; Group discussions	
7	T 2/16	Identifying and avoiding bias.	Cropp 11; Midway meeting of 621 newsroom	Study for midterm
	Th 2/18	Midterm	Midterm	Midterm
8	T 2/23	Possible guest speaker.	SPJ presentations; Group discussions; Blog work.	
	Th 2/25	Business reporting.	SPJ presentations; Group discussions; Edit the editor!	
9	T 3/2	Science/ health care reporting.	SPJ presentations; Meeting of 621 newsroom	Book review due. Blogs updated.
	Th 3-4	Sports reporting.	SPJ presentations; Group discussions	All extra credit assignments due.
10	T 3/9	Editing in various formats. Putting the finishing touches on those projects.	Edit the editor!	
	Th 3/11	Review of the semester.	Final meeting of the 621 newsroom.	Feature/Final project due.
FINALS WEEK				

