

Digital Newsroom

Spring 2009 Course Syllabus

JOUR 4872.002/5872.001
8 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. F
Armory #201

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Course Description:

The primary goal of this course is to prepare journalism students to work for news enterprises on the Internet, taking advantage of its multimedia presentation capabilities. Most of the traditional media outlets around the world have started editions on the World Wide Web, while new start-up publications are creating Web-only operations. The impact of the digital language on journalism (both the industry and the social function) cannot be overstated.

This course is designed to instruct students in Web site construction and design. Students will learn HTML coding and will be introduced to popular Web design and graphics programs including Adobe's Dreamweaver, Flash and Photoshop.

Our main focus is the understanding of digital journalism, with special attention to the search for a new style of narrative – one that could take advantage of the simultaneous use of text, hypertext, photos, images in motion, audio and databases. Students will work on several small Web site projects and will produce a news package that draws upon their multimedia capabilities. The goal is to emphasize not just the skills associated with individual programs, but the integration of several programs into designing effective and attractive digital journalism products.

In addition to working on the production of digital projects, students will analyze and discuss the origins of digital journalism and its current trends. Themes will include the history of online/digital journalism, the pre-Web forms, the structure and evolution of the Internet, the adaptation process from traditional media to the online environment, the search for an industry business model, the emergence of Web 2.0 news experiments, the new relationship with journalism audiences, new legal and ethical concerns, and several other topics of industry and cultural interest.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will develop an understanding of the structure of news and the historical and cultural location of the news industry;
2. Students will develop an understanding of the structure and history of the Internet;
3. Students will develop the basic skill sets needed for online authoring;
4. Students will learn to use software packages and design principles appropriate to digital forms of journalism;
5. Students will learn to plan for the development integrated technology products and will learn to work in groups to implement these plans;
6. Students will learn how to frame and tell stories in an online environment using a variety of media forms;
7. Students will learn how to capture and present the diverse voices of those routinely excluded from the democratic process;
8. Students will examine the ethical and legal tensions faced by journalists incorporating user-generated content in news coverage;
9. Students will examine and reflect on the field of journalism and how new technology is changing its practices, conventions and implementations.

Course Requirements:

Grades will be determined based on a variety of criteria, including:

Reading assignments and quizzes:

Students will be expected to keep up with the reading materials assigned in class. Each week, an in-class quiz or out-of-class writing assignment (or applied project) on the week's materials will be administered. A student's performance on these quizzes will account for 30% of his or her overall course grade.

Attendance and participation:

Students will be evaluated in terms of their class attendance and participation in class discussions. Participation includes classroom discussions and assigned postings to personal blogs. This evaluation will make up 10% of each student's overall course grade.

Digital News Projects:

Students will be divided into project teams to create digital news projects. These projects will serve as an outlet for the students' new skill sets. The grades assigned to these projects will account for 25% of the final average.

Exams:

There are two examinations in this class: one midterm and one final exam. The midterm will count as 15% of a student's overall grade and

the final will count for 20%. Combined, the exam scores account for 35% of a student's overall grade for the course.

Grading:

The overall course score will be assigned based on the following criteria:

Class attendance and participation	10 percent
Weekly quizzes and assignments	30 percent
Digital news projects	25 percent
Exams	35 percent
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FINAL SCORE	100 percent

When it comes to the grade reports, students should understand that an “A” is considered outstanding. Students who earn an “A” are students who have gone well beyond the class requirements and who have outperformed their fellow students. By contrast, a “B” is an above average performance. A “B” indicates that a student have displayed due diligence and standards of excellence while completing their requirements. A “C” represents an average performance. A “C” indicates that the class requirements have been adequately completed. A “D” indicates a below average performance by a student who completes the class requirements. An “F” indicates a student has not met the course requirements and so will not receive credit for having done so.

The overall course grade will be generally assigned in accordance with the following criteria:

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	60-69
F	00-59

(NOTE: Students are warned that a D in any journalism class will not deliver credit to their program of study).

Text Books:

There are two required textbooks assigned for this class.

The required texts are:

James C. Foust, *Online Journalism: Principles and Practices of News for the Web*, 2 (Scottsdale, AZ: Holcomb Hathaway, 2009).

Mindy McAdams, *Flash Journalism: How to Create Multimedia News Packages*, (New York: Focal Press, 2005).

Readings from these texts (and other assigned reading sources) will be announced on the online course schedule. There is no assigned course packet for this class. Additional readings will be distributed in class either in hard copy form or will be available on the course Web site.

In addition, there are two suggested text for this class:

Elizabeth Castro, *HTML, XHTML, and CSS, Sixth Edition (Visual Quickstart Guide)*, (Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press, 2005).

Tom Negrino and Dori Smith, *Dreamweaver CS3 for Windows and Macintosh (Visual QuickStart Guide)*, (Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press, 2007).

These texts are suggested as a resource for the software skills taught in this class. No reading assignments will be made from these books, but we may refer to them from time to time as a resource for outside work.

Additional Required/Recommended Resources:

Students will need to acquire Web space, either from CU or from an external vendor. Because of the nature of our work, students are strongly encouraged to purchase a portable USB flash media drive and/or a FireWire external hard drive capable of storing data and personal files.

Additional Suggested Reading List:

In addition, here is a list of books that may help students explore additional areas at greater length.

Janet E. Alexander and Martha Ann Tate, *Web Wisdom: How to Evaluate and Create Information Quality on the Web* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1999).

Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

Irving Fang, *A History of Mass Communication: Six Information Revolutions* (New York: Focal Press, 1997).

Jakob Nielsen, *Designing Web Usability* (Indianapolis, Indiana: New Riders Publishing, 2000).

Robin Williams and John Tollet, *The Non-Designer's Web Book* (Berkeley, Ca.: Peachpit Press, 1998).

Course policies

Below are the specific class policies for this course. When in doubt, refer to the CU Handbook for university regulations.

CU Honor Code

Honesty and intellectual integrity are at the heart of the learning process as well as the journalism industry. It is your responsibility to read and understand the CU Honor Code.

Students who violate university rules on academic dishonesty (the CU Honor Code) are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or the dismissal from the university. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the university, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career.

There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. It is perfectly acceptable to use the ideas and words of other people, but we must never submit someone else's work as if it were our own, without giving appropriate credit to the originator.

Here are some specific guidelines to follow:

* **Quotations.** Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material. This applies also to quotations you have altered.

* **Paraphrasing another's language.** Avoid closely paraphrasing another's words: substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, just changing the tenses of verbs, and so on. Either quote the material directly, using quotation marks, or put the ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.

* **Facts.** In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) However, if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify the source for the facts.

* **Ideas.** If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.

In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor.

Lateness, tardiness, and making up assignments

This class is training students to be professional journalists. In the journalism industry, deadlines are of paramount importance and often determine whether the public sees a body of work or not. This class will be an attempt to reflect these norms.

Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Disability Services (303-492-8671, Willard 322, <http://www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices>) to verify the disability and

establish eligibility for accommodations. He/She should then schedule an appointment with the instructor to make appropriate arrangements.

Religious observances

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify the instructor in writing at the beginning of the semester and should discuss, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. Please consult

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/index.html> for additional information on the campus policy.

University Extracurricular Activities

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled university extracurricular activity will be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work.