Fall 9-1-2019

JRNL 505.01: Journalism and the Environment Seminar

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Meets: Mondays and Wednesdays, 5-6:20 p.m., in DAH 401

Instructor

Associate Professor Nadia White
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Office Hours

Monday, Wednesday 1-2:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Thursday 4-5 p.m.
Or by appointment

UM Holidays (no class):

Monday, Sept. 2 (Labor Day;)
Monday, Nov. 11 (Veterans Day;)
Wednesday, Nov. 27 (Thanksgiving travel day;)
Last day of class: Wednesday, Dec. 4.

Textbook:

Simbio Climate Change chapter (Online. Purchase link coming soon;)
Various climate assessments, posted to Moodle
Relevant examples of journalistic coverage of climate issues, posted to Moodle

Exams: No exams are associated with this seminar.

Course description

This course is a topical inquiry into challenges and opportunities facing environmental journalists today. The course is primarily structured for graduate students enrolled in the Master’s Program in Environmental Science & Natural Resource Journalism though other students are welcome. For Fall 2019, the course will focus strongly on climate change. Roughly two thirds of the course will focus strongly on small-group inquiries into climate change reporting challenges and opportunities in Montana. These inquiries aim to sharpen curiosity and news sense by develop an eye for high impact stories related to climate mitigation and adaptation opportunities. They will also engage the watchdog function of the press as it relates to climate change by asking what communities are investing in and whether those investments are proving effective and what communities are not investing in? Why not and at what cost. The additional one third of the class will be dedicated to preparing students to develop proposals for their master’s work in journalism. These projects are not required to focus on climate change. Students from other disciplines may use the project time to develop proposal for master’s work in their disciplines or to prepare pitches for significant journalistic stories. As with all courses at the School of Journalism, the direction of this course may change in whole or in part in response to breaking news opportunities.

Course Structure

Class will meet twice a week and work as a group to develop a strategy for producing two final reports: 1) How the media covers climate change in the Rocky Mountain West and 2) A reporter’s guide to stories of mitigation and adaptation in the region. The goal of these two reports is not to report the stories but to identify and pre-report stories that are in need of doing, climate actions that
are wanting or unrecognized. Students will work in small groups and lead conversations related to their group work. Guest speakers early in the semester will introduce issues related to climate action at various scales in the region.

Learning outcomes

Successful students in this class will:

- Gain a nuanced understanding of anticipated climate change impacts in the Rocky Mountain West
- Review and affirm their understanding of climate science basics
- Practice identifying and pre-reporting stories
- Gain small group working skills
- Hone public speaking and presentation skills
- Sharpen their journalistic curiosity skills
- Produce research reports for a public audience

Assessment

Together, we will develop our approach to these reports and refine the role of individuals in the development and production of the two reports. Students will be graded on their participation in class, in group production efforts and in the completion of their draft master’s work proposal.

Each student will co-lead the production of a report section and participate in writing and editing reports
Each student will draft and revise a master’s work proposal (portfolio or project)

Grading

Attendance and participation: 20%
Report on the media: 25%
Report on climate action: 30%
Proposal: 25% (Draft = 15% Revision = 10%)

The grading scale is:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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Professionalism

Journalism is competitive; you must act professionally at all times to succeed. What’s true for the newsroom is true for this classroom: 

Don’t be late. 
Mute your mobile devices during class and abstain from using them during class. 
Laptops and tablets in class may be used only for note taking (evidence strongly suggests you retain more if you take notes by hand.) 
Notify me in advance if you are ill or need to miss a class for other valid reasons. 
Acting professionally at all times will positively affect your final grade. 
Unexcused absences and showing up late will negatively affect your grade. 
If you are uncommunicative or uncooperative in scheduling or meeting with classmates it will severely and negatively affect your presentation grade. 
Missing one third of classes will automatically result in failing the course regardless of why you missed class. 

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

This course is accessible to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process.

Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code.

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This syllabus is subject to change.

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