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### JRNL 440.01: Advanced Audio

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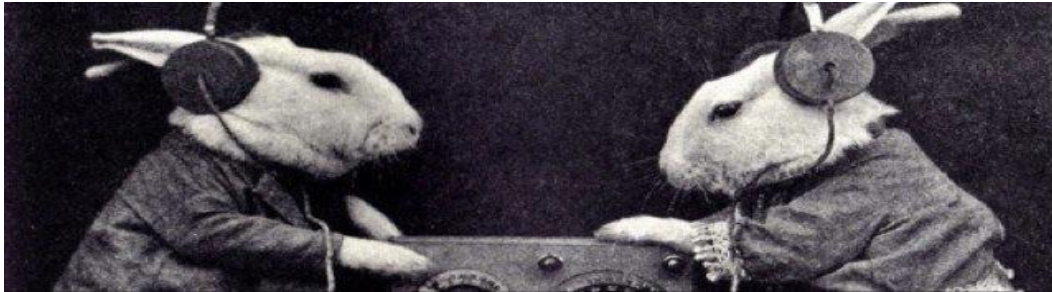
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# advanced audio



JRNL 440 / SPRING 2019 / TT / 11-12:20 / DAH 210

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*People are hungry for stories. It's part of our very being. Storytelling is a form of history, of immortality too. It goes from one generation to another.*

–**Studs Terkel**, legendary interviewer and radio dude

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

In this course, you'll become adept audio storytellers. What that means: Multiple assignments where you find good, compelling stories you impeccably record; scripts that are worked and reworked; mixes, the same. You'll dissect many, many audio stories to learn what makes them tick. You'll learn how to use music in your stories. All of your best stories will be posted to the Public Radio Exchange with the goal to license them for PRX Remix, a nationally syndicated show comprised of solid audio features. Some of your work may air as part of a documentary on Montana Public Radio.

In addition to completing assignments, you'll learn about podcasting and the audio industry through listening, reading and smart discussions, some of which you will lead and will count toward your grade.

If you choose to stay here, in a 400-level audio class, I expect you're serious. Doing advanced-level audio stories takes dedication and time. I will challenge you. I will make you better. You will do work you're proud of. But you should be prepared to either meet my high expectations or fail the course.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the semester, successful students will:

- Produce complex, air-worthy short and long features that blend creativity and the rigors of good reporting.
- Meet all deadlines.
- Complete all assigned tasks, some of them minor.
- Present and lead discussion on radio industry topics. Each student will lead class at least once this semester.
- Get better at editing tight, flawless audio mixes.
- Read, listen and research in advance of both student- and instructor-led discussions.
- Get that radio is probably the greatest medium, still, to tell stories and connect to other humans. Because it is.

### **PREREQUISITE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE**

Students in good standing as Journalism majors must have passed Intermediate Audio or received permission from the instructor. Students are expected to know Adobe Audition, how to gather quality audio and how to write and format scripts.

### **ABOUT MOODLE/UM ONLINE**

**I use it ALL THE TIME and it is the running record of this course.** Listening and reading assignments will be posted on our class page. It will also be where you'll find deadlines, class announcements and links I use in class. I'll also email you regularly on your university account through Moodle. Your grades will post there as you receive them. Be aware that you need to check Moodle by the end of the business day if you miss a class. **DO NOT EMAIL ME AND ASK WHAT YOU MISSED. I FREAKING HATE THAT.** Not checking Moodle will not suffice as an excuse for incomplete work.

### **OTHER THINGS I HATE**

- Coming late to class.
- Not turning in your assignments and expecting to pass. Practice now how to be a newsroom professional and figure out when and how to communicate with me if something drastic happens in your life and your reporting.
- Skipping classes.
- Checking your GD phone and doing what we both know is not note-taking on your laptop or tablet. You pay to be in my class. So BE in my class and quit clicking around when someone in the class, including me, has something to say. Also true when we are listening to stories in class. We need to be listening intelligently, not checking social feeds, doing homework and texting. Got it?

### **LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS**

The bulk of your "textbook" for this course will be listening assignments. You'll be taking time outside of my class to listen to and learn things I can't get to in our limited time. These will often include episodes of "HowSound: The Backstory to Great Radio," a worthy podcast for learning audio skills. You'll also listen to stories and episodes of podcasts and will come to class prepared to discuss them.

### **QUIZZES AND MINOR ASSIGNMENTS**

Quizzes and minor assignments will be graded accordingly: Did you do the listening or reading, as evident by your answers on a short quiz or your engagement in class? Did you

do complete small tasks I assigned that are not as involved as producing major assignments? Great! You get 100. Did you blow that stuff off? You earn a zero.

### **STUDENT-LED DISCUSSIONS**

Each of you will introduce and lead at least one class discussion. You'll pick from a list of topics important to modern audio storytelling and chosen by me. You will be graded on your ability to engage your fellow students for at least 30 minutes. Prezzy graphics are optional; preparation is not. You'll need to research and do your homework on your topic so that you can inform and educate each other and lead a lively discussion. Topics will be announced and assigned in class following the turmoil of the first week. This will be 10 percent of your grade.

### **PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENTS**

This is a 400-level class, so expect to produce. You should always be working on one or, more likely, more than one story for this class. Each story will have four elements factored into your grade:

Pitch  
Script  
Mix  
Remix

Deadlines for each element not listed here will be posted in Moodle and discussed in class. We'll work collaboratively and you'll get and give feedback from both me and from your peers at various stages of your stories. Expect to workshop.

All scripts will need a final edit from me **prior** to voicing and mixing a piece. If you push your deadline beyond that being possible, you will fail the assignment.

Writing and choosing the right tape matters. Your script will count as 50 percent of your grade. I'll grade your script – narrated or not -- and then your mix, which includes your delivery, volume levels and all other aspects of how your story sounds. I'll average the two for your final assignment grade.

All production assignments **must include art**, either a photo or other visual shot/drawn by you or contributed by a source with permission to publish.

Mixes must be shared or attached in mp3 format.

Please note: Via your reporting and your stories, you must demonstrate willingness and enthusiasm for including sources from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities.

Unless I instruct you otherwise, all production assignments will adhere to the guidelines established by PRX Remix.

Remix is a 24/7 channel of handpicked audio stories. It airs on XM 12, public radio stations [around the country](#) and [online](#).

### **Criteria for Pieces on Remix**

Because pieces go into the stream and are shuffled in a true remix for all eternity, to be considered for Remix, audio must be:

- Evergreen (not tied to a particular event). E.g., avoid the use of language like “yesterday” or “on next week’s episode.”
- Short (under 20 mins; ideally under 10).
- Charming or surprising or mysterious or profound, etc. Basically, it must be unique and story-driven.
- Clean audio or bleeped. Remix airs on broadcast radio stations in addition to XM, so we can’t have any ‘bad’ words or overtly sexual content.

### **MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS**

- **Narrated Profile**

You’ll each do a 4-minute profile of someone worthy. Creativity is encouraged/rewarded. This will follow a model established by the Transom Story Workshop and include the following: an approved pitch, scene tape, narration both scripted and with questions asked on tape, a scored version and an unscored version.

Pitch deadline: Tuesday, 1/15, in class

Script deadline: Friday, 1/25, midnight, via email

Mix deadline: Thursday, 1/31, in class

Remix deadline (with art): Monday, 2/4, midnight

- **The Something Definitely Happened Story**

You’ll produce a traditional-yet-creative story that digs into something significant that happened. Could be tragic. Could be uplifting. Could be historic or recent.

Must include multiple sources. Final story: 5-7 minutes.

Pitch deadline: Tuesday, 1/29, in class

Script deadline: Monday, 2/18, midnight

Mix deadline: Tuesday, 2/26, in class

Remix deadline (with art): TBD

- **Big Feature**

You’ll produce an 8-10 minute story after getting an approved pitch from me. It, like the above two assignments will follow the guidelines established for licensing by PRX Remix unless you’re a grad student. Grad students will produce features in keeping with environmental science and/or their Master’s portfolio or project.

- **Instructor’s Choice**

Based on your interests and skill level, each of you will produce one more story we will figure out together as the final in this class.

- **Overall Attitude and Class Attendance**

Your overall willingness to complete assignments large and small and show up as an engaged member of this class will be a major grade. If you check out during the semester, if the quality of your work reflects an obvious lack of effort, your grade here will reflect that. If you struggle with some of the above assignments, but put ample effort into them, meet your deadlines and come to class and contribute consistently, this grade will give you a boost.

### **GRADING**

Major Assignments: 80 percent

Student-led Discussion: 10 percent

Minor Assignments and Quizzes: 10 percent

Grades will be based on a scale of 100 percent and will use the University of Montana's plus/minus system. Letter grades will not be used in this course, although the final grade (per requirement) will be given as a letter grade. The equivalents are as follows:

90 - 100 percent: A

80 - 89 percent: B

70 - 79 percent: C

60 - 69 percent: D

50 - 59 percent: F

UM's plus/minus system also makes the following distinctions:

A+: 97-100

A: 93-96

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 63-66

D-: 60-62

F: 59 or lower

### **EQUIPMENT**

You may choose to purchase/use instructor-approved personal audio equipment.

Professional-grade kits will be issued to you individually for use this semester.

Equipment is to be used solely for the purpose of journalism classes, like this one.

You are responsible for damage or theft of equipment and for picking it up/returning it on time. You will be charged for damaged/lost equipment and will fill out a checkout form that acknowledges your understanding of that.

A note about headphones: Procure some good ones. Upgrade from earbuds.

A note about batteries: We don't provide them. Procure a crap ton of them.

A note about memory cards: You can install your own into your machine, but please plug in your machine to download the files. Yanking the cards in and out of the recorders takes its toll, so please do your part.

## **ATTENDANCE**

This is a small, upper-division, seminar-type class. Your absence will be obvious. If you must miss class because you are really sick (with more than the sniffles) or you have an unmovable conflict, you must notify me at least an hour before class via email.

Unexcused absences will be reflected in your overall grade.

## **ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES**

- The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, contact your instructor during the first week of the semester so that proper accommodations can be provided. Please contact [Disability Services for Students](#) if you have questions, or call Disability Services for Students (DSS) for voice/text 406.243.2243. You may also fax the Lommasson Center 154 for more information 406.243.5330.
- Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available from this link: <http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/default.php>
- PLAGIARIASM and ETHICS: Have pride in your work and banish the idea of turning in something written or recorded by someone else and presented as your own. Also note: *Coaching someone to read a prepared script or misrepresenting someone as a legitimate source when that person is acting a part is against the standards and practices of journalism and will not be tolerated. Penalties range from failing this class to expulsion from school.*
- CLASS WORK: You may not submit for this course any assignment or variation on an assignment that was, or will be concurrently, submitted for another class unless you receive prior, documented approval from the professor for this course. To do so without permission will result in an F for the course. That said, you may and are encouraged to submit any work you do in this class for any outside outlet.