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JRNL 575.01: Story Lab

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Story Lab Syllabus

JRNL 575 (CRN32790)
5:30-8:20 p.m., Tuesdays, Room 410 Don Anderson Hall

Associate Professor Nadia White
Phone: 406-243-2227
Office: DAH 408

Office Hours:
Mondays 9:30-11:30,
Thursdays 3-5
or by appointment

Books:
3. One non-fiction book about scientific discovery, controversy or a biography. (Optional.)

This syllabus has not been formatted to be accessed using an eReader. A syllabus containing the same information adapted for eReaders is posted on the Moodle supplement for this course, adjacent to this document.

Learning Outcomes
By the end of the semester, successful students will:
- Be comfortable applying journalistic skills to the stories of science.
- Have an enhanced ability to assess the news value of scientific claims.
- Know how to develop relationships as working journalists with scientists.
- Have a deeper understanding of the nature and processes of science.
- Understand the differences and similarities between the culture of science and the culture of journalism.
- Be familiar with the pragmatic as well as theoretical approaches scientists use to seek new knowledge, and what those approaches mean for journalists seeking access and accountability for reporting science-based news.
- Understand the business behind scientific research – how it is funded and how that affects the questions pursued and published by researchers and research journals.
- Have experience facilitating thoughtful peer discussions about the challenges of covering science for a general audience.

Course Overview
This course will allow students to explore the culture of science, forge relationships with scientists and practice, through application and repetition, applying journalistic skills to stories about science.

Laboratory partnerships are central to this course. Each journalism student will embed with a team of scientists for the duration of the semester. This time spent by journalists in the company of scientists should inform the class time conversations and the stories pitched and pursued as part of class (and, perhaps, beyond.) It is important that journalism students bring the lessons of the labs
Students who successfully complete this course will better understand the challenges and opportunities of telling journalistic stories about scientific research, findings and the people and systems that support scientific inquiry in the United States. You will be able to engage in a broad conversation about the relevance of science to civil society.

You will spend time with scientists and professional science journalists (in person and via Skype) and reflect in practical ways on the values that scientists and journalists share and the culture and traditions that can affect opportunities for storytelling about science.

You will practice the fundamental skills of journalism within constraints peculiar to the science beat. You will focus on translating and simplifying scientific communications for a general news audience; applying news values as you evaluate and interpret scientific studies; developing relationships with scientists; and critically evaluating science news as it appears in the general media. Special attention will be paid to ethical concerns raised in the practice of science and science journalism.

Presented as a weekly, three-hour seminar, this course requires students to prepare for and vigorously participate in class each week.

**Course Structure**

1. **The lab: Exploring the culture of science**

Scientists and journalists are both concerned with verifying facts, sharing information and developing lines of evidence that allow fresh understanding of the world. The quests inherent in each profession are creative undertakings, though scientists and journalists alike are guided by the rules and cultures of their respective discipline.

But the tools and processes each group uses in each pursuit of facts – and new knowledge and understanding -- are quite different, as are the obstacles encountered or perceived along the way. In order to cover the search for scientific knowledge, journalists need to understand the culture of science and scientists – and how it mixes with the culture of journalism that they are more familiar with.

With that in mind, each student in this class will establish a working, professional relationship with a lab group doing scientific research on the UM campus. Students will act as “participant observers” in the labs as they learn about the practical realities of how science happens – how the lab functions, the relationships of lab members and hierarchy of that community, how knowledge is created, and how questions are asked, answers evaluated and findings shared.

The relationships established for this class between the lab group and the journalism students is special. Unlike many professional relationships you enter into as journalists, elements of mutual interest and prior restraint are explicitly built into these relationships. Journalism students should help lab members understand the culture of journalism and seek opportunities to help lab members improve the way they engage with journalists. Moreover, the Principal Investigator of each lab – or his or her designee -- must explicitly approve any stories you produce about the lab, work being done in the lab or members of the lab, prior to publication. This is spelled out in the Story Lab Partnership Agreement.
Ideally, learning how to operate in each other’s spheres is reciprocal. Just as students have been welcomed into a lab, so, too, are members of the lab welcome to join the Tuesday evening classes to participate in any of the class discussions or lectures that might interest them. Students should convey this invitation to their lab members as part of introducing themselves and the intent of this class.

Each week a different student enrolled in JRNL575 will lead a discussion based on the “lab prompt” assigned for that week. In that week, each Journalism student will learn from the lab experience of their peers.

II. The craft: Telling stories about science
This class takes up where JRNL 570 -- Covering Environmental Science and Natural Resource Issues ended. The fundamentals established in that class will be applied specifically to the nuanced challenges of telling journalistic stories on the science beat.

This class will use examples of best practices, as well as pitfalls, to guide exercises that allow students to practice identifying, translating, simplifying, reporting and structuring scientific news stories for a general audience. Students will routinely apply news judgment to peer-reviewed publications, evaluating which studies are newsworthy (which is to say, accurate, timely, engaging, meaningful,) to a general audience.

Several assignments will ask students to draw directly from their lab team. For these assignments, students will apply the practical lessons of the lab experience – the ability to forge relationships of trust and respect with scientists, the ability to understand the things that scientists value from communicating their work. Part of the challenge is to work within the availability of the members of the lab.

Journalism craft assignments for this class aim to help students sharpen their interviewing and note-taking skills and develop the ability to translate jargon, compress and simplify technical or scientific information and work on presenting stories about science in an active voice and engaging context.

Each student will work to publish or broadcast at least one piece from this class. The goal, as always at the University of Montana School of Journalism’s Master’s Program in Environmental Science and Natural Resource Journalism, is to share your professional journalism work with a broader audience.

(more)
Assignments & Grades

Stories 60% total grade
1. Controversy that affects the work of your lab in some way (750 to 1,250 wds)
2. Book review or profile of a scientist (750-1,250)
3. Final project (3,000-4,500 wds)

Briefs/Shorts 25% total grade
1. Weekly lab prompt reflection (200-500 wds)
2. Translation: Hanta Virus briefs (250-400 wds each)
3. Translation: Your lab briefs (250-400 wds each)
4. Interview practice. Notes only

Attendance and Participation 15%
Includes but is not limited to attendance, readiness, discussion leadership and participation, in-class exercises, critiques, Rowdy Conversation organization and execution.

The grade scale is:
A 93-100
A- 90-92
B+ 88-89
B 83-87
B- 80-82
C+ 78-79
C 73-77
C- 70-72
D 60-69
F <59

*All assignments are due by the time class meets of the day due, unless otherwise noted

Reading
Weekly reading should be completed by class. In addition to the two required books – Barron and Hayden/Nijhuis – links to contemporary readings will be posted on Moodle.

Other matters
Professionalism
Attendance
Course attendance is required. Missing more two classes will result in a full grade reduction (B becomes C,) missing three or more classes without prior permission automatically results in a failing grade in this course.
Deadlines
Deadlines are critical. Assignments are due by the time class meets except where otherwise specified. All assignments must be handed in on time. Detailed feedback will not be given on assignments submitted late. Late assignments will receive a failing grade but not necessarily a zero. Assignments should be uploaded via Moodle. In case of impending deadline failure, contact me to discuss a solution prior to missing a deadline.

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, which is available online.

Same Work for Multiple Classes in J-School
You may not submit for this course any assignment that has previously or will be concurrently submitted for another class unless you receive prior approval from the professor of both courses. To do so without permission will result in an “F” for the assignment and could result in an “F” for the course.

Issues of accessibility
Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
This course is accessible to and usable by 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. For more information, visit the Disability Services website.

After Hours Access
For after hours access to Don Anderson Hall, complete and submit the appropriate after-hours access form online by February 6. NO after hours access requests will be processed after that date. Complete only one request form per semester – be sure to list all courses you are taking. Codes will remain active until the last day of the semester.

-- This syllabus may change --
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing assignments</th>
<th>Assign, due, discuss</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Weekly lab prompt reflection (200-500 wds)</td>
<td>Weekly, Mondays by 8 p.m.</td>
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<td>2. Translation: Hanta Virus briefs (250-350 wds each)</td>
<td>Assign: Jan. 15&lt;br&gt;Due: Friday, Jan. 18, 8 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Discuss: Jan. 22</td>
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<td>4. Translation: Your lab briefs (250-350 wds each)</td>
<td>Assign: Jan. 22&lt;br&gt;Due: Friday, Jan. 25, 8 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Discuss: Jan. 29</td>
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<td>5. Short profiles of grad student researcher. (Interviewing in three parts.)</td>
<td>We partner with research students and discuss the goals and challenges of interviewing and being interviewed.&lt;br&gt;Interviews in class: Feb. 26&lt;br&gt;Discuss outcomes: March 5</td>
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<td>6. Controversy that affects the work of your lab in some way (750 to 1,250 wds)</td>
<td>Assign: Feb. 5&lt;br&gt;Due: Friday, March 1, 5 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Discuss: March 12</td>
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<td>7. Book review or profile of a scientist (750-1,250)</td>
<td>Assign: March 12&lt;br&gt;Due: Friday, April 12, 8 p.m.&lt;br&gt;Discuss: April 26</td>
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<td>8. Final project (3,000-4,500 wds)</td>
<td>Assign: Feb. 26&lt;br&gt;Due: a) Pitch: Sunday, March 17, 5 p.m. (Discuss March 19)&lt;br&gt;b) Draft: Sunday, April 7, 5 p.m. (Discuss April 16)&lt;br&gt;Final: Due April 28, 11:59 p.m</td>
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Story Lab Partnership Agreement

For the purposes **OF THIS COURSE ONLY** (JRNL 575-01: Story Lab, 2019), no written report, radio package, television package, photography package, Internet posting, or any other public presentation will be made by the student signed below about information related to the research, results, work process or personnel of the lab specified below, without consent of the professor/scientists/leader of the lab group indicated below.

__________________________

Student enrolled in JRNL575:

_________________________________________
Signature

__________________________
Date

Lab in which the above student is embedded for Spring 2019: ____________________________

Professor/Scientist/Lab Group Manager:

_________________________________________
Signature

__________________________
Date