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# JRNL 331.01: Intermediate Web and Digital Reporting

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# **JRNL 331 – *Intermediate Web and Digital Reporting***

## **Syllabus - Fall 2013 (subject to change)**

**Scope:** This course examines major trends in web, mobile and digital reporting and trains journalists how to report and produce content for various types of news outlets. Course includes a focus on understanding how people develop, produce, publish and consume news. Course will also prepare students to work on the digital/web teams in most newsrooms.

**Grading options:** This course must be taken for a traditional letter-grade. No credit grading is not permitted. The Montana University System’s plus/minus grading system will be used in this class.

**Class meets** Tuesdays and Thursday, 3:10-4:30 p.m., in DAH 306.

**Frequency of Offering:** This course is offered autumn semester.

**Instructor:** Lee Banville, Associate Professor, School of Journalism.

**Office:** Don Anderson Hall 406

**Office phone:** 243-2577.

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### **Successful JRNL 331 students will:**

- 1. Be able to report, edit and produce compelling content for a variety of news platforms.**
- 2. Discern the sources of online information and better be able to ascertain the validity.**
- 3. Assess the impact of on-demand technologies on both the creation and consumption of news content.**
- 4. Recognize news consumers' expectations for the online space and how news websites are organized to serve those needs.**
- 5. Understand how to use social media to report stories, develop personal brands and engage audience.**
- 6. Evaluate online story packages and explain why they work well in the medium, or why they do not.**
- 7. Effectively use blogs, links and content aggregation as part of digital reporting.**

**Course Grading** is made up of three finals and five in-class attendance/writing assignments:

Attendance and Participation .....	10%
Kaimin Blog.....	20%
Weekly Assignments/Aggregation .....	40%
Data Story/Visualization/Town Project .....	15%
Multimedia Story .....	15%

A/A-	90-100%
B+/B/B-	80-89%
C+/C/C-	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Below 59%

**Attendance and participation: Come to class and stay for the entire class period.** We cover vast amounts of material and there will not be a record of what we discuss. Several times during the semester I will give you in-class writing, editing exercises that will make up part of your Writing/In-class grade. Students WILL NOT be allowed to make these up unless you supply a note from Curry/your doctor or alert ahead of class via phone or email. If you have questions, talk to me after class, visit during office hours, or email or telephone me personally.

**Laptop Computers:** DAH 306 has desktop computers, but feel free to bring your own computer and you should be able to access the network and/or wireless.

**Cell phones** must be off or on vibrate while you are in class and must be off and totally out of your sight during examinations. Do not answer a call during class unless you discuss this with me before hand.

### **Academic Honesty**

I expect your honesty in presenting your own work for this course. Academic misconduct at The University of Montana is subject to an academic penalty ranging from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university. Students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code.

<http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>

### **Plagiarism**

As defined by “The University of Montana Student Conduct Code” plagiarism is: “Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own.” This is strictly prohibited in this class and any case of plagiarism in this course will be subject to the penalties outlines in the student code of conduct.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course. Your responsibilities are to request them from me with sufficient advance notice, and to be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from Disability Services. Please speak with me after class or during my office hours to discuss the details. For more information, visit the Disability Services for Students website at <http://life.umt.edu/dss>.

## **Weekly Topics and Assignments**

**SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

### **Week One: Web writing and producing**

This first week we will establish your blogs and social media plans. Each student will maintain a blog – public or private – to produce and publish to. Each week you will produce a piece for your blog that addresses the topic of the week. Blogs are due Wednesday at midnight, completed and posted with a timestamp. If you currently maintain a blog you may use that, but otherwise you will use blogspot, blogger, wordpress or a Moodle blog. You do not need to maintain this after class, but the idea is you would produce work that would be worth showing perspective employers, so it's your call.

In addition to a blog you will maintain a social media presence for the duration of this class. You may use Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Imgur, LinkedIn, Path or Google+. You must notify me of your feed of choice so I can subscribe to it. Publishing requirements kick in on Week Two, but I will go over requirements this first week.

For Thursday go over two chapters (web design and writing for the web) posted on Moodle.

### **Week Two: Researching Online**

"There was 5 exabytes of information created between the dawn of civilization through 2003, but that much information is now created every 2 days, and the pace is increasing." Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt.

There is a lot of stuff online. But there are also gaps. We will spend the week examining what can and can't be found online.

Blogging assignment: Report on what someone can find out about you and what major gaps are out there.

### **Week Three: Effective Searching**

Every semester I have students tell me they can't find anything online about a topic or (if you really want to tick me off) they can't come up with a story idea. This week we hammer home effective versus ineffective searching. This includes documents, databases, video, images as well as major search engines.

Blogging assignment: Effectively post material that cannot be discovered without metadata or alternative tags.

For Tuesday, read the two articles on content aggregation posted on Moodle.

### **Week Four: Aggregation**

Aggregation is a central concept to digital news production, but what makes good, value-added aggregation versus plagiarism? This week we understand the laws around aggregation and how to write aggregated copy.

Blogging Assignment: Aggregated print story.

### **Week Five: Social Media Writing, Producing**

Writers and journalists are now expected to help distribute their work through social channels that they are also tasked with building. The problem, though, is that many writers weren't trained to market themselves and their work. This

week we look at social media, how to handle it as a reporter, promote your stuff with being annoying and effectively harness the conversation.

Blogging Assignment: Develop a piece based on your social network.

### **Week Six: Live Event Coverage**

One of the things that digital reporting allows journalists to cover multi-location events live. This is Homecoming Week and we will be covering a variety of the events using CoverItLive to aggregate class reporting as well as others here in town.

Blogging Assignment: CoverItLive participation

### **Week Seven: Multimedia-ing**

Multimedia reporting means lots of different things to different news organizations. Generally newspapers think that means video, TV think that means audio slideshows and magazines get bolloxed up and have no idea what it means. We will hear from multimedia reporters in the field (Washington Post, Smithsonian and HBO) about how they seek to mix media.

We will also explore the evolution of multimedia storytelling by dissecting and critiquing "Snowfall."

Blogging Assignment: Critique a multimedia feature.

### **Week Eight: Multimedia Reporting Techniques**

This week we will split into multimedia story teams. Groups will be between 2 and 4 people, including producer/editor, reporter and editors. Pitches are due Wednesday and will be vetted in class on Thursday.

Blogging Assignment: TBA

### **Week Nine: Other storyforms – data, maps and memes (I am sort of serious about memes)**

Stories are not just broadcast, photo or print. More and more information can be conveyed in other forms.

Blogging Assignment: Data or map post.

### **Week Ten: Website Construction**

Read Chapter 8 of Digital Journalists Handbook. We will examine how the site we are working on is put together and how CMS's work.

### **Week Eleven: Website Design**

Take a look at these short articles to examine how people read and consume web design:

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/photo-content.html>, [http://www.useit.com/alertbox/reading\\_pattern.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/reading_pattern.html), <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/fancy-formatting.html>, and <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/scrolling-attention.html>.

**Week Twelve: Town Project**

We will storyboard a website makeover for the UM Towns Project.

**Week Thirteen-Fifteen: Town Project and Multimedia Reporting Assignment**