

1-2014

JRNL 575.01: Story Lab

Alison E. Perkins

University of Montana - Missoula, alison.perkins@mso.umt.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

Recommended Citation

Perkins, Alison E., "JRNL 575.01: Story Lab" (2014). *Syllabi*. 750.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/750>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

Story Lab Syllabus **2:10-3:30, T-Th, Room 310**

Dr. Alison Perkins
432 DAH

243-4854 (office)
241-9130 (cell)

Office Hours:

11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays (or anytime by appointment)

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, successful students will:

- Have developed an enhanced ability to evaluate scientific claims.
- Have developed a deep understanding of the nature of the scientific process.
- Be familiar with the operational realities of scientific research.
- Know how to develop relationships of respect, trust, and integrity with scientists.
- Understand the differences and similarities between the culture of science and the culture of journalism.
- Be able to determine the newsworthiness of scientific findings.
- Be able to apply journalistic skills to tell the stories of science.

Course Overview

This course aims to develop a deep understanding of the culture of science to enhance journalistic abilities when reporting on issues related to the environment. Ultimately, the goal is to improve your capacity to assess the claims made in the public arena. We will be examining issues related to the culture of science and the culture of journalism, discussing where those cultures parallel each other, where they depart, and where they clash. Because this course is highly interdisciplinary, your participation is vital. I hope to create a collaborative and collegial environment where discussions of the variety of disciplines and experiences we all bring to the course converge.

Course Structure

Culture of Science

With the explosion of scientific knowledge since the 20th century, understanding the nature of the scientific endeavor is critical to assessing the public debates that involve science, like environmental issues. The scientific process is not a precise methodology, as so many of us have learned. It is a creative human endeavor that produces a distinct type of knowledge – whether and how that knowledge approaches “truth” is hotly debated. We will explore the nature of science as a context for the culture of science using classroom investigations, discussion, research paper reviews, and observations in the lab.

Students will be required to establish a working, professional relationship with a lab group doing scientific research on the UM campus. Students will act as “participant observers” in their labs to learn about the operational realities of the scientific endeavor – how the lab functions and the relationships and hierarchy of those relationships in the lab, how knowledge is created, and how questions are asked. This particular lab relationship should be mutual and reciprocal – students are expected to help lab members understand how to approach journalists as

well. Students are expected to invite their scientist/lab partners to participate in any discussion in this class.

Integrating Science and Journalism

Journalism routines are often at odds with the culture of science. We will use discussions of recent scientific publications and observations of the operational realities of the lab to address relationships and obstacles in environmental science journalism. Discussions will include the ethical responsibilities of journalists related to scientific research. In addition, students will produce a variety of stories related to the science produced in their labs.

For this course, students are expected to produce stories of publishable/broadcast quality. Publication is the expectation. Students are encouraged to submit draft versions of any work prior to the deadline. I will help find sources for publication for any cleared report (see Story Lab Partnership Agreement).

Assignments

Journal

Each student will be required to keep a journal tracking his/her experiences in the lab. Students must visit their lab at least once a week to observe the operation of the lab and to inquire about current findings. Observations may include the interactions/community of the lab, processes for generating knowledge, experimental designs, and profile material. During the course of the semester, specific journaling tasks related to understanding the process of science also will be assigned. Journals will be evaluated for completeness at the end of the semester. Content is not for publication, unless approved by the Professor/Scientist/Lab Group Manager (refer to Story Lab Partnership Agreement).

Value: 200 pts

Due: Last day of class – Wednesday, 8 May 2014.

Profile of a Lab Member

Each student will write a profile (800-1000 words) of a member of the lab in which they are working. The profile will require *at least* one interview with the subject, **plus** additional interviews with members of the lab, university, or discipline. Although the purpose of any profile is to present a vivid and engaging story of the subject, this profile has the added benefit of helping develop your lab relationship. Students should seriously consider publication options for these profiles. Profiles should be publishable on the Cinnabar Foundation Conservation Stories website.

Value: 100 pts

Due: 14 March 2014, 12:00 p.m.

Group Discussion

Each student will lead a group discussion about a peer-reviewed article related to science journalism. A list of articles will be provided by me with associated dates for the date of discussion. Students can choose which article/date to lead the discussion. Students will be

responsible for organizing the discussion, relating the paper to key topics covered in the course, and maintaining active engagement. Preparation may involve additional reading. Students will meet with me **one week prior** to their scheduled group discussion with an outline of their direction for the discussion.

Value: 100 pts

Due: Student sign up

Tumblr Explainer & News Brief

Each student will design a short-form blog on Tumblr that includes an explainer and a news brief. The goal of the Tumblr log is to explain an important area of research done in the lab in which they are working, especially as it relates to their current published research. The purpose of this activity is not only to expose students to the primary literature related to their lab's research, but to facilitate discussions about the evidence and uncertainty surrounding the journal article's claims. Besides an explanatory text and an "about" section, the blog should include an audio segment, a video segment (help will be provided to those that need it), one or more highlighted quotes, one or more hyperlinks and any original or copyright free photographs, infographics, and/or animations that function to add clarity. As social media is based on networking and interaction, students will also need to follow similar Tumblr logs and enable replies and comments.

Value: 100 pts

Due: 7 May 2014, 12:00 p.m.

Exam

Students will be required to respond to a summative essay question given in class or as a take home exam (class vote). Written responses are due at the end of the official exam period.

Value: 100 pts

Due: 6 May 2014, 2:10-3:30 p.m.

Final Project Pitch / Final Project

Students will produce one publishable story related to their lab. The story can be news, a feature, or a profile not already covered in the course.

- Students will have their choice of medium for the project. Final Projects will be 1000-1200 words, a 3:00 radio production, a 2:00 video production, or a 20-25 photo package.
- Students will be required to present a formal pitch of their story to a panel of journalists the **week of 18 March**.
- A written statement outlining your Final Project is **due on 27 March**.
- Students are expected to produce stories of publishable/broadcast quality. I will help find sources for publication for any cleared report (see Story Lab Partnership Agreement).

Value: 400 pts

Due: Finals Week Meeting Time – Tuesday, 13 May 2014, 1:10 p.m.

The Retreat

Graduate students in the Environmental Resources and Natural Resource reporting program are **required** to participate in the weekend-long retreat this spring. The retreat is designed to bring together journalism graduate students, environmental scientists, and landscape conservation leaders to:

1. Identify critical policy issues;
2. Isolate the scientific underpinnings and implications inherent in those issues;
3. Articulate hurdles to media coverage of those issues; and
4. Construct a multi-disciplinary approach to reporting that results in a more capable public.

The retreat will be either **18-20 April 2014** or **2-4 May 2014**. Please keep those weekends available. The scientist partners included in the list sent out in January have already indicated a willingness to participate. You are required to apprise them of updates in scheduling and events and help ensure their participation.

Professionalism

Attendance

I expect punctuality and attendance. Missing one third of classes will automatically result in a failing grade in this course.

Deadlines

Deadlines are critical. All assignments must be handed in on time. I will not grade late assignments. Assignments must be posted to my email (and dropped in my dropbox) by the deadline assigned – this is your responsibility. In case of emergency, contact me to negotiate 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. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

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 for this course. To do so without permission will result in an “F” for the assignment and could result in an “F” for the course.

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 at www.umt.edu/dss/.

After Hours Access

For after hours access to Don Anderson Hall, complete and submit this form online: <http://jour.umi.edu/after-hours/> by **February 3**. 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.

Requirements

Readings

Numerous readings will be assigned during the course of the semester. In addition, two books will be required:

Rambunctious Garden: Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World by Emma Marris
Proofiness: The Dark Arts of Mathematical Deception by Charles Seife.

Journal

A bound writing journal large enough to handle notes for the entire semester.

GRADING

Profile	100 pts
Group Discussion	100 pts
Tumblr Explainer	200 pts
Exam	100 pts
Journal	200 pts
Final Project	300 pts
TOTAL	1000 pts