1-2015

JRNL 331.01: Intermediate Web and Digital Reporting

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JRNL 331: Intermediate Web and Digital Reporting

Syllabus – Spring 2015

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.

Learning Outcomes

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.

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 Meetings

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:40 — 5:00 p.m., in DAH 306.

Instructor Info

Lee Banville, Associate Professor, School of Journalism.
Office: Don Anderson Hall 406
Office hours: Mondays 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and Thursdays 2-3:30 p.m. I'm also available at other times by appointment.
Office phone: 243-2577.
My regular e-mail: lee.banville@umontana.edu.

Required Textbook

There is no required textbook

- Readings may be assigned and posted on Moodle.

Course Grading

- Attendance   10%
- Blog Entries   25%
- Website assignments   25%
- In-class writing/quizzes   15%
- Final Multimedia Story   25%

Attendance and participation

Trust me, I don't want to come to a class that lasts until 5 p.m. either, but such is life. Also, this class is not big enough for me to not notice your attendance. So…I will keep track of your attendance to this class. Three unexcused absences and you lose a full letter grade from your final grade. Excused absences need to be authorized ahead of time or come with documented evidence of an illness or family emergency. I am not a jerk, but this should be seen as a job and when you aren't coming to work, you let your boss know.

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. Anyone whose phone rings during class will be made fun of by me.

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 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.

Schedule (Subject to Change)

Week One: Web writing and producing

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 Thursday 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 Twitter presence for the duration of this class.

For Thursday, go over the Intro to Web Writing articles 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.

For Tuesday, you will develop a research file on me and come to class with key facts as well as pitches for possible stories based SOLELY on material you find online.

For Thursday, you will research yourself and then compose a blog for this week on what someone can find out about you or identify a knowledge gap on the web.

Week Three: Effective Sourcing

For Tuesday go over searching social media for experts and sources and we will discuss on class Tuesday. For Thursday, you will use social media to identify and contact sources for your Missoula-based story.

Blogging assignment: Examine the benefits and difficulties in finding sources in your subject area using social media.

For next Tuesday, read aggregation articles 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.

Assignment: Aggregate a specific news story in your topic area for your blog.

Aggregation should be more than just cobbling other people's work and content into something new… It needs to add something to the story through analyzing the facts or adding reporting. This week we will build on initial aggregation to push our writing to take on more of an analytical voice.

Assignment: Aggregate a story in your area and add analysis or additional reporting for your blog.

Week Five-Nine: Montanareport.org

Week Ten: SPRING BREAK

Week Eleven: Multimedia Reporting

What makes effective multimedia? How do you conceive of stories that are ripe for telling in different formats. 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" and another multimedia piece TBD

Blogging Assignment: Critique a multimedia feature.

Assignment: Pitches are due before class on Wednesday.

Week Twelve: Mapping Stories/Planning Reporting

Multimedia doesn't usually happen on the fly. Stories are planned, narrative flows outlined and reporting formats considered before you hit the pavement. This week you will consider your story elements, set up interviews and consider best ways to report your story.

By Wednesday you should have mapped out your tentative reporting plan.

Week Thirteen: REPORTING

You will workshop your reporting with another team in class on Tuesday and present where you are with your reporting by Thursday.

Week Fourteen: Producing Multimedia

So you have done all your reporting. This week we put it together as a story using the Creatavist publishing platform.

Blogging Assignment: Explore how a multimedia production system changed the way you reported and conceived of your story.

Week Fifteen: Review and Edits

This week will be review of what we have learned and a bit more on developing your own online reporting persona.