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JRNL 440.01: Advanced Audio

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advanced audio



JRNL 440 / SPRING 2017 / TT / 11-12:20 / DAH 114 and 316

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course will co-convene with JRNL 431 Online Journalism taught by Associate Professor Lee Banville to produce pro-quality audio-visual content that explores Meth in Montana. In the last decade, Montana has seen drastic increases in meth use, meth seizures, meth cases in the criminal justice system, neglect and abuse cases linked to meth and children of meth-addicted parents in the foster care system. Although this particular drug has had a dramatic effect on all levels of Montana's criminal and social systems, to date there has not been great, in-depth journalism around the reasons and ramifications. You will change that. The audio stories you will produce exploring these and other angles will help you dig deep on all the skills necessary to do high-level audio work: pitching, reporting, wrangling tape, writing and scripting, voicing, mixing, thinking digitally, marketing and distributing your work to audiences. You'll work hard on your own and you'll learn to work with other student journalists and professionals to create not just audio for a class, but smart, multimedia stories for multiple audiences.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester, successful students will:

- Produce complex, air-worthy audio stories that blend creativity and the rigors of good reporting, including numeracy (use of numbers for context).
- Meet all deadlines.
- Participate fully in collaborations. These include but are not limited to:
 - pitching and, if successful, working with Reveal, the weekly radio program and podcast produced by the Center for Investigative Reporting. Reveal is aware of and interested in our project.
 - pitching and, if successful, working with Montana Public Radio, the NPR affiliate for Western Montana. MTPR is aware of and interested in our project.
 - working with and filing stories via the Public Radio Exchange, or PRX.org. PRX is aware of and interested in our project. We'll be consulting with PRX's Chief Content Officer John Barth.
 - working in collaboration with JRNL 431 Online Journalism to produce an independent website featuring your audio stories.
- Complete all listening, viewing and reading assignments
- Actively engage in all discussions around the places where audio and digital journalism intersect.
- Improve skills that include pitching, tape-gathering, scripting, voicing and editing tight, flawless audio mixes.
- Get that audio 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 a waiver from the instructor. Students are expected to know how to report and write news and have a working foundation in Adobe Audition editing software.

ABOUT MOODLE/UM ONLINE

I will use it ALL THE TIME for this class. You will too, or you will fall behind. All assignments, helpful links and assignments will be posted on our class page. I'll also email you regularly on your university account through Moodle. 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. Be here on time. It's not fair to anyone in the class, including me, if I need to repeat myself to get you up to speed.
- Not turning in your assignments and expecting to pass. You can't not do the work. In this class, I act as your editor. 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. This is a small, 400-level seminar-style class. You need to be here for it to work. Repeated unexcused absences (more than two) will be reflected in your final grade.
- Checking your GD phone and social networking in class. You pay to be in my class. So BE in my class and quit clicking around on that thing 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 Instagram. Got it?

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Keep a folder. You'll have multiple handouts that will act as your text for this class. All are fodder for unannounced quizzes.

LISTENING and MULTIMEDIA ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to reading about audio, you'll need to listen to it. At regular intervals, you'll be assigned to listen to and become familiar with audio and visual projects produced by other journalists for discussion. These discussions will sometimes happen with our class and sometimes in conjunction with JRNL 431 Online Journalism. Often, they'll be part of "Thieving Thursdays," where the two classes come together to discuss what other journalists have done or are doing. We'll dissect others' work and figure out how it might apply to our project.

MORE ABOUT WORKING WITH JRNL 431 ONLINE JOURNALISM

As a first of its kind co-convening class at the UM J-School, this collaboration will be a work in progress. But you can expect to team up with other multimedia journalists on stories from the idea stage through the finished presentation of your work. You'll need to provide whatever it takes to make this work – audio for promos, scheduling interviews and reporting trips with visual journalists in the other class, text and audio for aspects of the web presentation, etc. Your stories will never be "one and done" with you moving on to the next thing independent of the digital presentation and distribution to audiences. A big reason for co-convening these classes is for you to learn about how audio intersects with digital journalism. You'll be graded, in part, on how responsive and engaged you are with this collaboration.

PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENTS

This is a 400-level class, so expect to produce audio in several forms and, especially, to revise. Below is a brief description of the production assignments in this class. Note they are not necessarily in order of when you'll be expected to do them. Deadlines will be determined as the semester progresses and communicated both in class and on Moodle.

All assignments will require scripts submitted and edited prior to the deadline for the first mix. Missing a script deadline and then turning in a mix based on an unedited script will result in an automatic 30-point deduction. All mixed pieces will be remixed, with newer versions addressing all mix edits.

FAT, IMPORTANT NEWS FEATURE

Within the first few weeks of this semester, you'll pitch and land on a story under the Meth in Montana umbrella that will end up guiding most of what else you do in this class. It will be a multi-sourced, sound-rich, narrated, professional-quality audio story. Length 4 to 15 minutes, to be determined by instructor according to expectations of professional media partners. For consideration for air on Montana Public Radio, Reveal and/or others as the semester unwinds. This story will have several grades attached to it, including but not limited to:

- Written Pitch(es)
- Written Progress Report(s)
- Script, Drafts
- Script, Final
- Mix, Drafts
- Mix, Final
- Cooperation With JRNL 431

Your final grade on this assignment will be an average of all the parts described above.

AUDIO PORTRAIT I

Out of your big news feature, solid sources or "characters" should emerge who have a personal or engaging story to tell on their own. Everyone will produce, separately, a non-narrated story featuring one of your main sources. This story will be the first you file. The skills you'll learn and need: structuring and producing a non-narrated feature, reporting and interviewing that goes deeper than a quick sit-down, impeccable mixing skills.

AUDIO PORTRAIT II or NARRATED SIDEBAR TO FATTY FEATURE

It's possible you'll have more than one source who could make a good audio portrait. It's possible you won't. Either way, you'll do a third story connected to the angle you're following for the Fatty Feature. You will likely file this prior to your big story, but will work on it simultaneously.

CHOICE FEATURE

Grad students in this course will produce a fourth story connected to environmental science journalism with consent of instructor. The rest of you will produce a fourth story that will require an approved pitch. It can be but does not have to be related to your Fatty Feature, but it does have to be an actual story according to me.

NOTES ON FILING

Scripts must be filed via email as a document. Attachment .doc or .docx preferred.

Mixes will be in MP3 format unless otherwise instructed and should be attached as an email. Large files and final mixes in both .wav and MP3 formats may be shared via Google Drive.

All deadlines: TBA. They will be announced in class and posted to Moodle.

GRADING

Fatty Feature: 60 percent

Audio Portrait I: 10 percent

Audio Portrait II or Sidebar Feature: 10 percent

Choice Feature: 10 percent

Attendance and Participation: 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 Marantz kits will be issued to you individually for use this semester. J-school equipment is not to be used for any purpose other than J-school assignments. 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 swapping out memory cards: It's hard on the machines. Transfer audio by

plugging the machine into a USB port rather than yanking out the card and putting it into a card-reader.

ATTENDANCE

This is a small(ish), 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 final grade. More than two unexcused absences will result in an F for the attendance portion of your final 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.
- The value of diverse, non-white sources in your stories cannot be over-emphasized. You are expected and required to include these voices in your stories.
- 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 for review online at www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/Index.cfm/page/1321. And, more on academic honesty, is available here: http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.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 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.