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JRNL 440.01: Advanced Audio

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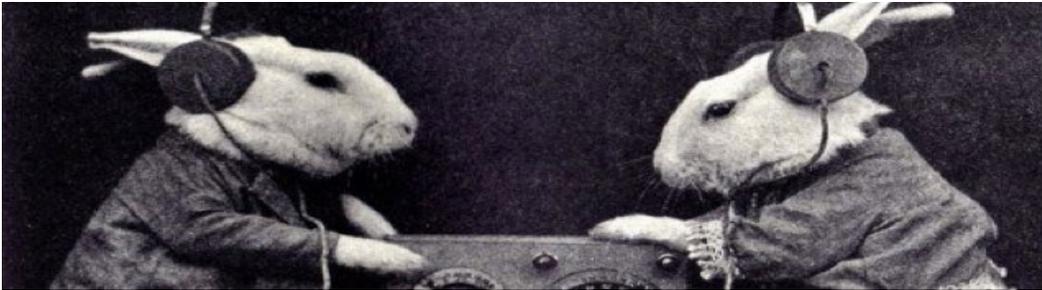
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advanced audio



JRNL 440 / SPRING 2018 / TT / 9:30-10:50 / DAH 210

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People are hungry for stories. It's part of our very being. Storytelling is a form of history, of immortality too. It goes from one generation to another.

–**Studs Terkel**, legendary interviewer and radio dude

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Possibly, there has never been a more exciting, opportunistic time in the history of audio journalism than now. In this course, you'll begin to understand that thorough a crazy amount of production – finding stories and people and facts, recording, writing, voicing, mixing. This is a capstone class and, as such, will be project-focused. This semester, our project involves you creating a podcast called “Willard” about Missoula County's one alternative public high school. You'll tell its story through its people – students, teachers, administrators, families, alums. The best of what you do will air as part of a 30- or 60-minute documentary on Montana Public Radio in May.

In addition to this ambitious project, you'll go beyond production to really learn about podcasting and the audio industry through listening, reading and smart discussions, some of which you will lead and will count toward your grade.

If you choose to stay here, in a 400-level audio class, I expect you're serious and not just dabbling. Doing advanced-level audio stories and launching an ambitious project takes dedication and time. I will challenge you. I will make you better. You will do work you're proud of. But you should be prepared to either meet my high expectations or fail the course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester, successful students will:

- Produce complex, air-worthy short and long features that blend creativity and the rigors of good reporting.
- Meet all deadlines.
- Complete all assigned tasks that come with launching and feeding a podcast. And there are a lot!
- Present and lead discussion on radio industry topics. Each student will lead class at least once this semester.
- Get better at editing tight, flawless audio mixes.
- Read, listen and research in advance of both student- and instructor-led discussions.
- Get that radio 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 permission from the instructor. Students are expected to know Adobe Audition editing software, how to gather quality audio and how to write and format scripts.

ABOUT MOODLE/UM ONLINE

I use it ALL THE TIME and it is the running record of this course. Listening and reading assignments will be posted on our class page. It will also be where you'll find deadlines, class announcements and links I use in class. I'll also email you regularly on your university account through Moodle. Your grades will post there as you receive them. 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 because you couldn't get out of bed when you were supposed to.
- 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. I promise.
- 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 social feeds. Got it?

LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS

The bulk of your “textbook” for this course will be listening assignments. You’ll be taking time outside of my class to listen to and learn things I can’t get to in our limited time. These will often include episodes of “HowSound: The Backstory to Great Radio,” a worthy podcast for learning audio skills. You’ll also listen to stories and episodes of other shows and will come to class prepared to discuss them.

QUIZZES AND MINOR ASSIGNMENTS

Quizzes and minor assignments will be graded accordingly: Did you do the listening or reading, as evident by your answers on a short quiz or your engagement in class? Did you do tasks I assigned that are not as involved as producing major assignments? Great! You get 100. Did you blow that stuff off? Sorry! You get a zero.

STUDENT-LED DISCUSSIONS

Each of you will introduce and lead at least one class discussion. You’ll pick from a list of topics chosen by me. You will be graded on your ability to engage your fellow students for at least 30 minutes. Prezzy graphics are optional; preparation is not. You’ll need to research and do your homework on your topic so that you can inform and educate each other. Topics will be announced and assigned in class following the turmoil of the first week. This will be 10 percent of your grade.

PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENTS

This is a 400-level class, so expect to produce. You should always be working on one or, more likely, more than one story for this class.

Individual assignments will wrap by March 30 to leave the month of April and the first week of May for production of podcast episodes and the MTPR doc special. You will all be expected to work as a team and perform assigned tasks.

We’ll work collaboratively in this class and you’ll get and give feedback from me and from your peers prior to voicing and mixing pieces. You may also be producing work in collaboration with students at Willard.

All scripts will need a final edit from me **prior** to voicing and mixing a piece. If you push your deadline beyond that being possible, you will fail the assignment.

Writing and choosing the right tape matters. Your script will count as 50 percent of your grade. I’ll grade your script – narrated or not -- and then your mix, which includes your delivery, volume levels and all other aspects of how your story sounds. I’ll average the two for your final assignment grade.

All production assignments **must include a photograph**, either taken by you or contributed by a source with permission to publish. It’s possible that a fellow

student who plans a career in photography will be assigned this task in lieu of a production assignment. TBD.

Mixes must be sent via email or shared via Google as an attached mp3.

Please note: Via your reporting and your stories, you must demonstrate willingness and enthusiasm for including sources from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities.

Production assignments are subject to change as the project gets off the ground, but will include the following:

- **Vox**
You'll each do a quick and fun voxpop we'll use as opening and interstitial material for the podcast episodes. Creativity is encouraged/rewarded.
- **Narrated Profile**
You'll produce a traditional-yet-creative profile of someone associated with Willard School. You'll work with the tape to voice the story. Length: 3-5 minutes.
- **Non-narrated Profile**
You'll learn the art of producing a non-narrated profile, where you figure out how to let the tape you gather tell the complete story. Length: 3ish minutes.
- **Big Feature**
You'll produce a multisourced news feature (read: not fluff) about something real and important and tied to Willard School. Length: 4-8 minutes.
- **Instructor's Choice**
Based on your reporting and collaborations with Willard students, each of you will produce one more story we will figure out together. This will likely be a short/small story.
- **Overall Teamwork and Class Attendance**
Your overall willingness to pitch in beyond your individual stories to put this project out to the world will be a major grade in this class. You'll need to show up to class and work as a team. If you check out of this project and its process, your grade here will reflect that. If you do a lot of heavy-lifting to make this happen, that will also be reflected here.

All deadlines: TBA. They will be announced in class and posted to Moodle. Some of you will work on one type of story while others in the class work on another type. Purpose: We'll need a variety of content for episodes as the semester progresses.

GRADING

Major Assignments: 80 percent
Student-led Discussion: 10 percent
Quizzes and Minor Assignments: 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. 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 memory cards: You can install your own into your machine, but please plug in your machine to download the files. Yanking the cards in and out of the recorders has taken its toll, so please do your part.

ATTENDANCE

This is a small, 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 overall 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.
- 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 when that person is acting a part 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.