Syllabus - LitRep Intro to Audio Reporting, Fall 2017
Wednesdays 9:00 am - 1:00 pm in Room 659

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Through this course students will learn to produce documentary-style audio stories, as heard on Serial, This American Life, 99% Invisible, Planet Money, The Heart, Love and Radio, and Invisibilia. You will be encouraged to develop their own personal voice and style, while also learning practical skills necessary for finding work in both radio and podcasting.

After a quick introduction to audio equipment and a practice assignment, you'll create two broadcast-worthy audio features as if you were working for an actual show. You'll learn to identify what makes for good radio story subjects and sources, and how to pitch your idea to an outlet. You'll produce your stories through a formal edit process, and fine-tune your audio sensibilities by workshopping each other's stories. We'll cover how to best write for the ear, and you'll receive coaching to record narration in the NYU studio. There will also be an introduction to using music and sound design.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be four required outside-of-class sessions for this course. Attendance is required, so there are two time offerings to choose from for each session.

1. Hindenburg help session 1: Either the afternoon of Monday 9/18 4-7pm or the morning of Tuesday 9/19 9am-noon in Room 600
2. News story narration recording: Each student will have their own half hour time slot, either Monday 10/23 between 4-7pm or Tuesday 10/24 between 9am-noon in the small NYU studio
3. Hindenburg help session 2: Either the afternoon of Monday 10/23 4-8pm or the morning of Tuesday 10/24 9am-1pm in Room 600
4. Final story narration recording: Each student will have their own half hour time slot, either Monday 12/11 between 4-7pm or Tuesday 12/12 between 9am-noon in the small NYU studio

This class moves very quickly in the beginning, attendance in the first three classes is mandatory, without exception. Every day of class is crucial to this course, any absences must approved in advance, and will count against your grade. Plagiarism and dishonest or unethical reporting will not be tolerated.

GRADING
Your grade will reflect on-time attendance to class and outside sessions, and on-time submission of your assignments in accordance with directions. Extra credit (2 points each) may
be earned by emailing me a short write-up about an audio journalism-related event you attended. Your progress on the grade rubric can be tracked here throughout the semester. All grades are final.

**NECESSARY MATERIALS:**

- Laptop to edit audio and to bring to class
- Hindenburg audio editing software- Four-month free trial codes will be provided, students who wish to purchase the program can do so at a discounted $85
- Recording equipment (Zoom H4N, shotgun or omni microphone, and headphones) can be borrowed from the 7th floor gear cage, though I recommend having your own decent set of headphones
- **Students will need to provide their own AA batteries and SD card for the recorders.** SD cards must be 32 GB or smaller to work in these recorders.

**Resources:**

- Transom on the Zoom H4N
- An intro to Hindenburg
- We’ll cover how to use Hindenburg in class, but the software’s website goes pretty deep into tutorials.
- Using music
- AlR’s Pitch Page

**ASSIGNMENTS**

- **Vox Pop (due 9/20)**
  Choose a question to ask strangers on the street. Assemble their answers along with a recorded intro and outro. The total piece should be two minutes max.

- **Short news feature (due 10/25)**
  You will report on a recent trend and include scene tape and two extra expert voices. Features should be five minutes max.

- **Reported feature (due 12/13)**
  This is the assignment where you get a chance to make whatever kind of audio story you would like to hear. It can be another profile piece, a non-narrated documentary, a storytelling-rich take on current events, a retelling of a forgotten history, a personal story, or an investigation into what your neighbor really does all day- the only constraint is that you will need to pitch your story with a particular outlet in mind. Stories should run eight minutes max.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Class 1 9/6/17 (bring recording kit from gear locker, and your own SD card and batteries)
- Listening
- Introduction to course
- What is a story?
- Orient to recording equipment
- Discuss vox pop assignment, listen to a couple of examples
- Practice gathering vox pops

Homework:
- Finish gathering your vox pop tape. If you're looking for a number to aim for, try to talk to about a dozen people, and have at least six responses that you're happy with.

Class 2 9/13/17 (bring raw vox pop tape, good headphones, and your computer with Hindenburg on it)
- Listening
- How to edit using Hindenburg
- Edit sample vox pop with instructor
- Set up your own vox pop session
- Brief intro to writing for radio

Homework:
- Attend Reaper editing help session either Monday 9/18 4-7pm or Tuesday 9/19 9am-12
- Create a vox pop with a recorded intro, 2 minutes max in length

Class 3 9/20/17 (bring completed vox pop session)
- Listening
- How to finalize levels, export session
- Play vox pops for the class
- Discuss news story assignment
- How to pitch a news story

Homework:
- Book your interviews for your news story to occur between the afternoon of 9/27 and 10/3
- Write a pitch for your news story
Class 4 9/27/17 (bring your news story pitch)
- Listening
- Review pitches
- What is good tape?
- Interviewing for audio

Homework:
- Complete your news story interviews and scene tape

Class 5 10/4/17 (come ready to discuss your interviews)
- Listening
- Review how your interviews went
- Writing for audio
- Host intros

Homework:
- Write (and pull the quotes for) the first draft of your news story

Class 6 10/11/17 (email me your first draft of your news story by 9am)
- Listening
- How to be a good editor
- Peer-editing of first drafts

Homework:
- Write (and pull the quotes for) the second draft of your news story

Class 7 10/18/17 (email me your first draft of your news story by 9am)
- Listening
- Special guest
- Peer-editing of second drafts

Homework:
- Finalize your news story script
- Attend a (pre-scheduled) narration tracking session, either the afternoon/evening of 10/23 or the morning of 10/24
- Attend a Hindenburg help session either from 4-8pm on 10/23 or 9am-1pm 10/24

Class 8 10/25/17 (bring rendered news story)
- Listening
- Listen to everyone's news stories
- Discuss final story planning

**Homework:**
- *Book your interviews for your final story to occur between the afternoon of 11/1 and 11/8*
- *Write a pitch for your final story, email it to me by 9am 10/31*

**Class 9** 11/1/17 (email me your pitch for your final story by 9am 10/31)
- Listening
- Special guest
- Guest reviews everyone's pitches
- Interview prep

**Homework:**
- *Conduct your final story interviews*

**Class 10** 11/8/17 (come ready to discuss the tape you gathered)
- Listening
- Story beginnings
- Plot your story with your edit group

**Homework:**
- *Write (and pull the quotes for) the first draft of your final story*

**Class 11** 11/15/17 (email me the first draft of your final story by 9am)
- Listening to Sasheer Zamata's *It'll Make Sense When You're Older*
- Audio story structure
- Test your story's structure
- Peer-editing

**Homework:**
- *Write (and pull the quotes for) second draft of final story to email me by 7am 11/27*

**Class 12** 11/29/17 (2nd draft emailed to instructor by 7am 11/27)
- Listening
- More writing for radio
- How to score with music
Homework:
- **Edit your script again, then create a rough mix of your story- record your narration at home, and mix it in with your selected quotes. Again, this doesn’t need to be perfect, it will just give us a sense of roughly how your story will sound.**

**Class 13** 12/6/17 (bring rough mix)
- Workshop rough mixes
- Sound design discussion

Homework:
- **Make your final edits, record (if any) narration at the NYU studio at your assigned time, and mix your final piece, adding music and sound design if desired.**

**Class 14** 12/13/17 (bring rendered/bounced final story)
- Quality check final stories
- Prepare for listening night
- Discuss possible work in radio and podcasting

**FINAL LISTENING NIGHT**: Wednesday 12/13 at 6:30pm at the 7th floor stage. We’ll have a small reception and invite friends and family.