New York University
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
Syllabus JOUR-UA-202
SPECIALIZED REPORTING: PODCASTING
Summer 2019
Professor: Kapelman, Alexander H
Date and Time TBD
20 Cooper Square, Room TBD

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Course Description
Much of the most groundbreaking, relevant, and creative journalism today is happening in podcasting. As popular and influential programs like The Daily, This American Life, and Radiolab show, podcasting isn’t simply your parents’ radio transferred online. It’s an increasingly important, often innovative journalistic art unto itself.

In this summer course, students will learn to craft compelling stories solely in sound. By the end of the summer session, they will complete two professional-quality podcasts to round out their news portfolios. They’ll learn essential hard skills like field recording and editing tape with software. Students will also analyze podcast story structure and learn how to pitch audio stories. They’ll report, plan and prep interviews, write their own scripts, mix and master audio, perform sound design and scoring, and be exposed to the business of podcasting. Along the way, students will find their own voices, offering their unique takes on the world strictly through sound.

Learning Objectives
In this course, students will:
● Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values
● Learn the elements of audio reportage.
● Produce clear, accurate and engaging audio stories in an audience-appropriate manner.
● Demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society.
● Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information.
● Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives.
● Use technological tools and apply quantitative concepts as appropriate.

Course Structure
A typical class will be structured as such:
1. Discuss past week's assignments.
2. Case studies, discussion, lecture, listening, and/or exercises.
3. Workshopping.
Readings
Outside of class, there will be additional course readings, fieldwork, and story production. There’s a good amount of homework, but by the end of the semester it starts to taper off so you can focus more fully on your projects.

- The required texts for the course are: *Out on the Wire: The Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio* by Jessica Abel, and *Sound Reporting: The NPR Guide to Audio Journalism and Production* by Jonathan Kern. Other required texts will be available for free online; all links are provided in the syllabus.
- Additional resources you may find helpful are: Podcast Love, Transom, HowSound, NPR Training, Third Coast Conference Audio, the NY Public Radio Listserv, and the NYU Audio Listserv.
- In addition to me, you have access to Devin Curry, who has an office in room #719. Devin is generally available M-F, 11 am-5 pm. The best way to meet up with him is to book a time by emailing him at: Devin.Curry@nyu.edu.

We’ll also use the following tools:
- **Google Drive**: You’ll upload all your homework to our Class Folder in Google Drive. Please add your own folder to the drive based on the naming convention “Firstname Lastname” before the first assignment is due.
- **Hindenburg**: The editing software we’ll use. I will send you codes for a free trial within the first week of class if you haven’t already been given them previously. In the meantime, you may download a trial version.
- A good pair of headphones to mix. (Seriously, you have to buy a pair so you don’t drive me crazy giving too many mix notes.) I strongly recommend the classic Sony 5706’s. For cheaper headphones, try the Koss Porta Pro Headphones, or reference this list.
- If you don’t own your own audio equipment, you must check out a field kit from NYU. They must be returned within 24 hours of rental. My suggested kit is:
  - Zoom H5 recorder (or H4N if the H5 is unavailable).
  - Omnidirectional mic.
  - XLR cable (3 feet).
  - USB cable (for charging/uploading).
  - Headphones.
  - *You must provide your own SD card. I recommend 8GB.*

Course Requirements
**Anecdote Piece**
- Due: TBD
- Description: 2-3 minute narrative piece, featuring an anecdote and reflection based on interviewees’ stories of their favorite vacation. The goal is to practice the fundamentals of anecdote/reflection.

**Your Choice Piece**
- Due: TBD
• Description: 3-5 minute narrative piece based on planned interviews and original reporting. Pieces must contain a conflict at the center of the narrative. The goal is to make a classic style audio reportage piece. (Note: All stories must be narrated. No exceptions.)

Weekly Assignments
• Due: The day before class at 9:00 am EST
• Description: Texts, listening, and prompts will be assigned each week. The goal is to build and reflect on class lectures. Prompts should be 2-3 paragraphs. I’m looking to understand your thoughts and reflections, rather than for high quality writing. (Though clarity and coherence are appreciated.)

Class Participation
• Due: Each class session
• Description: There will be extensive discussions and in-class workshopping. I will divide you into groups for these workshops. In the radio world, good editorial feedback and communication are prized commodities, so we’ll be developing them here. I know some of you are naturally shier and more introverted than others, but I’d encourage you to do your best to work those muscles.

Outside Workshops:
• Dates: TBD
• Description: There will be mandatory outside workshop sessions for additional mixing help.

Assignments are due no later than 9:00 am EST on the day of each class. Assignments handed in after 9:00 am EST or later will receive a grade of 0, and you will not receive feedback from me for that week. I’ll return feedback to you within 48 hours.

When uploading files, you must use the convention: YY.MM.DD_Audio Reportage Spring 2019_Firstname Lastname_Assignment Name. For example, if I were to upload my own piece for the first week’s homework assignment, it would be: 19.02.07_Audio Reportage Spring 2019_Alex Kapelman_Anecdote - Final Mix.

If you upload a file with an improper naming convention, I will give you a grade of 0 for that particular assignment and will not grade you that week. I know this is strict, but it’s often quite difficult for me to find a particular draft of a piece. That said, I’ll allow one unexcused use of the wrong naming convention for the semester before I apply a 0 to your grade.

There will also be a listening event at the end of the semester where you play your final pieces in a venue that’s open to the public.

Grading

1 Prompts are due on Thursday, so that I can review your prompts to highlight certain things before class.
Final grades will be calculated as follows (I’ll go deeper into each assignment in class):

- Anecdote Piece: 25%
- Your Choice Piece: 40%
- Prompts: 10%
- Class Participation: 20%
- Outside Workshops: 5%

Class 1  
**Introduction and Story Structure**

Texts:
- *Out on the Wire*, up to and including Chapter 3 (Keep or Kill: Story Structure)
- *Sound Reporting*, up to and including Chapter 2 (Fairness), Chapter 12 (Producing), Appendix 1 (Glossary)

Listening:
- *This American Life*, “Kindness of Strangers: Prologue”, “You Can't Go Home Again”, “Trends With Benefits”

Prompt:
- Why are you taking this class? What do you want to get out of it? You must write this down and submit it. (This is the only prompt you have to write down.)

Assignment:
- Create a folder in the Google Drive shared folder with your name in it. Just first name and last name.
- Check out gear from the gear shack the day before next week’s class.
- Prompt. (See above.)

Class 2  
**Good Tape, Field Reporting, Outlining, Writing, Story Editing, and Organization**

Texts:
- *Out on the Wire*, Chapter 5 (Your Baby’s Ugly: The Edit), Epilogue
- *Sound Reporting*, Chapter 3 (Writing for Broadcast), Chapter 4 (Reporting), Chapter 5 (Field Producing), Chapter 6 (Story Editing), Chapter 15 (Program Editing)

Listening:
- *Snap Judgment*, “Texas vs. Texas”
- “Tupperware,” by The Kitchen Sisters
- *This American Life*, “129 Cars”

Prompt:
How will you backup your files? Get specific.

Assignment:
- Collect vox stories with fantastic anecdotes/ reflections, log all your tape, outline your favorite story using the “barf draft” method.

Class 3  Mixing, Pt. 1: The Basics, and Tracking
Texts:
- *Sound Reporting*, Chapter 8 (Reading On The Air), Chapter 13 (Production Ethics)
- “Chenjerai Kumanika’s Manifesto” by Chenjerai Kumanika (Transom)

Listening:
- *Uncivil*, “The Raid”
- *This American Life*, “Freedom Fries”

Prompt:
- Pretend you’re a listener who hates your voice. Write yourself pretend hate mail. Then, write a pretend Facebook post defending yourself.

Assignment:
- Vox: Scratch Draft

Class 4  Mixing, Pt. 2: Going Deeper
Texts:
- “The ear training guide for audio producers” by Rob Byers (NPR Training)

Listening:
- “The Giant Pool of Money” by This American Life

Prompt:
- What’s something you learned from the Hindenburg manual that I didn’t cover in class? How do you think you may use this?

Assignment:
- Vox - Draft 2

Class 5  Mixing, Pt. 3: Music and Sound Design
Texts:
- *Out on the Wire*, Chapter 4 (The Deep Sea: Sound)
- Transom’s “Using Music” series (Transom)

Listening:
- *Snap Judgment*, “Night at the Rock Bar”
- *Radiolab*, “Out of Body, Roger”
- *The Heart*, “The Hurricane”

Prompt:
- Imagine that you work at Snap Judgment, Radiolab, The Heart, or Love + Radio. Your assignment is to re-do the sound design the hot dog story from the first day of class. How would you approach that?

Assignment:
- Vox - Penultimate Mix

**Class 6**
**Mixing, Part 4: Final Mix and Mastering**

Texts:
- “Basic EQ In Hindenburg” by Jeff Towne ([Transom](https://transom.org/))
- “A few notes on levels and mixing” by Whitney Jones ([Google Docs](https://docs.google.com))

Listening:
- “Zardulu,” by Alex Goldman and team ([Reply All](https://reply.all/))

Prompt:
- Pay attention to the mix when listening to “Zardulu.” Can you nitpick anything that could’ve been fixed during the process of the final mix? Provide time codes.
- Think about Zardulu in the context of *Chopped*. What’s the taste? What’s the creativity? What’s the presentation?

Assignment:
- Vox - Final Mix
- Conflict - Pitches

**Class 7**
**Pre-Production**

Texts:
- *Sound Reporting*, Chapter 9 (Hosting), Chapter 11 (Booking)
- “15 principles of show booking” by Jessica Deahl ([NPR Training](https://training.npr.org))
- “The Art Of The Pre-Interview” by Sally Herships ([HowSound](https://howsound.com))

Listening:
- “Hello, Hello,” by Tobin Low and Kathy Tu ([Nancy](https://nancy.npr.org))

Prompt:
- No prompt. Focus on your pitches and final mix.

Assignment:
- Conflict - Outline

**Class 8**
**Planned Interviewing, Active Tape, and Scenes**
Texts:
- “Before The First Question” by Rob Rosenthal (Transom)
- “NPR’s Howard Berkes: The fundamentals of field reporting” by Howard Berkes and Alison MacAdam (NPR Training)

Listening:
- Radio Diaries, “Teen Contender”
- “Today’s the Day” by Reply All
- “Haunted by ISIS,” by Rukmini Callimachi (The Daily)

Prompt:
- Imagine that you get to redo your first story — but this time, you can plan the interview. What approach would you take?

Assignment:
- Conflict - Scratch Track

Class 9    Story Structure, Part 2

Texts:
- NPR Training, “You asked: How do you tell a story in 3 acts?”
- Dan Harmon, “Story Structure” (101: Super Basic Shit-104: The Juicy Details)

Listening:
- “Ghetto Life 101,” by Dave Isay (Sound Portraits + WBEZ)

Prompt:
- Map Ghetto Life 101 onto a three-act structure AND onto Dan Harmon’s Story Circle. Feel free to imagine plot points to make it fit, or fit better.

Assignment:
- Conflict - Draft 2

Class 10    Writing for Radio, Part 2

Texts:
- Nancy Updike’s Manifesto (Transom)
- “Writing through sound: A toolbox for getting into and out of your tape” by Alison MacAdam (NPR Training)
- “Campfire tales: The essentials of writing for radio” by Chris Joyce (NPR Training)

Listening:
- "I'm from the Private Sector and I'm Here to Help" by Nancy Updike (This American Life)
- “Britney” by Starlee Kine (Mystery Show)
- “Buddy Picture” by Jonathan Goldstein (This American Life)
Prompt:
- Take any section of writing from one of these three stories. Explain why it’s great writing. Or explain why it’s bad writing.

Assignment:
- Conflict Penultimate Draft

Class 11 Story Editing, Part 2
Texts:
- “How to edit with your ears” by Alison MacAdam (NPR Training)
- “Cultivating the Editor in Your Brain” by Julia Barton (Transom)

Listening:
- “Just Another Fish Story” by Molly Menschel

Prompt:
- I’m making you cut “Just Another Fish Story” down from 8:26 to seven minutes. What would you subtract? You may also add imaginary ideal tape. (Don’t worry about getting it perfectly timed.)

Assignment:
- Conflict - Final Draft

Class 12 Pushing the Medium
Texts:
- “Invitation: PRPD Benediction” by Jay Allison (Transom)

Listening:
- “The Neighborhood” by Scott Carrier
- “Everything, Nothing, Harvey Keitel” by Pejk Malinovski

Prompt:
- Reimagine the hot dog story from the first day of class as a Scott Carrier or Pejk Malinovski piece. Create a beat-by-beat outline, or dive into a particular scene.

Assignment:

Accommodations
Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Diversity & Inclusion
The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. The Institute embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions.

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