COURSE DESCRIPTION

We are living in a golden age for audio journalism. Podcasting is a special medium that lends itself to communicating the news in an immediate and intimate way. It also affords a unique form of storytelling. It’s also a meaningful entry point for new and diverse voices with platforms that can grow quickly and widely. This online course will provide you with the tools to tell your own audio stories while learning practical skills to help you build your career.

We’ll cover the basic concepts of audio storytelling, including pitching, story structure, reporting and producing, finding tape, and editing. You will produce individually-reported audio stories and work together on a final group production suitable for the serialized form. By the end of the course, you will have the skills necessary to identify, pitch, and report professional audio stories as well as understand how to develop and pilot new podcasts.

OUTCOMES

By the end of this course you will have:

- Strong foundational grasp of reporting and producing fact-based audio stories
- Basic technical skills for recording gear and editing software
- An understanding of how key journalistic principles fit into the audio form
- Polished audio and writing samples to build your professional portfolio

COURSE STRUCTURE

Each week our class will meet over Zoom to discuss and workshop assignments and explore an aspect of audio journalism through case studies, discussion, listening, exercises and editing sessions. You will sometimes be put into breakout rooms on Zoom to engage in peer editing and criticism. Periodically we will have guests to discuss their work in audio journalism and podcasts. Students will be asked to actively participate in guest visits by listening to the guests’ work in advance, submitting questions for discussion, and helping moderate the visit.
A typical class will include a mix of the following elements:

1. Discuss past week’s assignments (reading, listening, and creating)
2. Listening, lecture, discussion, and/or exercises
3. Group workshopping, peer editing and/or individual 1-1 with instructor
4. Review of upcoming projects and assignments

GEAR AND SOFTWARE

- Headphones – A pair of quality multimedia headphones is *required*. I recommend the Sony 7506 which cost about $100 new or are easily findable on resale sites. *Please be cautious about fakes masquerading as the real thing, esp on Ebay and Amazon, etc. The struggle is real.* For cheaper headphones, other options include the Koss Porta Pro, Sennheiser HD 202 II or the KZ ATE in-ear monitors, which are $15 and supposedly fantastic. I can only speak from my experience but I’m happy to help answer questions.

- Shure MV88 Microphone – The AJO program will send you a microphone that is smartphone compatible. More information about the microphone, including the compatible Shure Plus Motiv apps, is here.

- Hindenburg Software – Code provided to you. 30-day trial also available on their website if/when your code runs out. Hindenburg How-To videos are here.

Why are we using Hindenburg? I want you to master new software without getting bogged down in technical struggles. Hindy is relatively easy and quick to learn. The techniques applied here are applicable to other professional software (such as Pro Tools) It is also file format compatible with Pro Tools (.aaf). Do people use Hindenburg professionally? Yes. Is it the only option out there? No. There are lots of Pro Tools tutorials available on Lynda and LinkedIn Learning.

Final audio sessions will not be due to the professor, so students can use the software of their preference. However, students are encouraged to broaden their technical skills and challenge themselves in a new software. Troubleshooting will be limited to Hindenburg, Pro Tools, and Adobe Audition.

- Recommended: Seagate 2TB harddrive

This course will also rely on the following collaboration tools:

- Your personal computer with software capabilities
- NYU Google Drive
- NYU Slack
- NYU Zoom Account
If you need technical assistance with your software or gear there are many options available to you. NYU students have free access to Lynda.com and LinkedIn Learning.

- For Lynda: https://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/multimedia-resources/outside-resources/
- LinkedIn Learning: log in information provided to you through AJO program.
- NYU guides on various audio equipment and Adobe software (including Audition) are available here: https://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/multimedia-resources/guides-and-faqs/

PROFESSOR CONTACT

In addition to our weekly Zoom class meetings, I will engage with the class through Slack group messages, DMs, email, and phone (by request). All-class messages will be sent through NYU email and posted to the Slack channel #podcast.

I will do my best to honor a 24-hour turnaround on emails and Slack DMs. You are also welcome to ask for time to speak by phone and we will make time! As part of this agreement please know that breaking news may create scheduling challenges but we will find time for you.

A note about Office Hours: please feel encouraged to come by to talk about your projects, career, goals, etc, even if you don’t have “one thing” you want to troubleshoot or discuss. Aim to come by at least 1-2 times during the semester. Not required, but highly encouraged.

GRADING

Overall course grades will reflect three main areas:

1. On-time attendance and meaningful participation in class
2. Quality of attempt and journalistic rigor in final assignments
3. Productive collaboration and development with peers

For class participation, points will reflect punctuality, verbal contributions and feedback, as well as engagement through Zoom. It is required that cameras must be turned on. This class moves fast, especially at the beginning of the semester. Attendance for the first three classes is mandatory, without exception. Every day of class is crucial to this course, any absences must be approved in advance, and will count against your grade. Points will be deducted from your final attendance grade for unexcused absences, excessive tardiness, and poor participation.

Each class (with the exception of January 28) one student will lead a very short class “icebreaker” to help stoke the energy of the group.
For assignments, I am grading based on the quality and content of your attempt as much as the quality of the final products. Group assignments are not easy but few audio productions are completed by just one person. The best audio reporters and producers can communicate and collaborate productively with others. Plagiarism and dishonest or unethical reporting will not be tolerated. Please review the NYU Journalism Handbook for other ethics guidelines.

The grading scale is as follows:

- Attendance and Class Participation - 20% (One point per class)
- Assignment 1 - 2%
- Assignment 2 - 13%
- Assignment 3 - 15%
- Assignments 4 and 5 - 30%

All grades are final.

CLASS PARTICIPATION / ZOOM ETIQUETTE

Please be advised that per NYU guidelines, our Zoom classes will be recorded. Students should assume all classes are recording at all times unless otherwise notified. Each week recordings of our class will be uploaded to our Podcasting folder.

- By now, you have a basic understanding of Zoom. You know enough to sit within range of your router and to dress appropriately for class. Treat classes held on Zoom like you would in-person classes. Don’t forget that while you are watching your professor and classmates on Zoom, we can also see and hear you (hi). Don’t do anything in a Zoom class you wouldn’t do in an in-person classroom.

- **Your video camera must be switched on while class is in session.** If your camera is not on, it’s like you are not there. It’s fine to turn it off temporarily while you go to the bathroom, but it’s not ok to keep it off for any extended period of time to do other things.

- **Be judicious about your use of the mute button. Please use it out of respect for others BUT be mindful that you are still verbally participating in discussions.**

- Good lighting is key. Choose a well-lit area so everyone can see your face.

- Don’t multitask during class. We can tell if you’re not paying attention. While it may seem no one will know if you pull up a fresh browser window to shop for shoes on Amazon, text with friends, or post pics to Instagram, your eyes give you away.
- Don’t overexpose your life. You can choose a background image so that people don’t have to see your messy bedroom. We don’t regulate these, but please be respectful of your classmates and professor. We understand that partners, children, roommates, families and pets may briefly pass through your screen. But be aware of distracting the class.

EVENTS

The NYU Journalism School offers many free topical events throughout the semester. Attendance to at least one is highly encouraged. As the schedule develops to include audio-specific events, attendance (or watching the recorded version) may be required as a part of each week’s assignments. Please visit https://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/events/ for an updated schedule as the semester progresses.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Audio Playground (02/04)
   This is a very low stakes creative exercise. Take a risk and try something in one or very few takes. The total run time should be between 40 seconds and 1 minute. No editing or full episode description necessary (just title and one sentence summary). Options here.

2. Vox Pop (02/18)
   Choose one question or story to ask strangers about. Assemble their responses into a rich waterfall and include voiceover tracking as intro and outro. The total run time should hover around two to three minutes. Submissions must include title, deck, and episode description.

3. News Feature (Due 03/11)
   Building on your vox pop, expand your story to a longer feature about one person, place, thing, or trend/story. Final submissions must include at least two voices (yours and a guest or two guests with option for your tracking). They can be an expert or a “character expert.” You may choose to use tape from your vox pop to expand the depth of the piece (not required). The ideal run time here is 5-8 minutes, max. Submissions must include title, deck, and episode description.

4. Podcast Treatment and Deck (Due 04/15)
   A written description and class-based pitch, including production plan, for one podcast concept.

5. Final Pilot Episode (Due 05/13)
   One pilot episode of your concept, total run time between 5 and 20 minutes (concept dependent). The final submission must include at least one voice, one additional piece of
tape, and some kind of host intro. Submissions must include title, deck, and episode description.

Please note: Pitches, prep sheets, and rough cuts will not be graded individually, but will be factored into the final grade of that respective project. Please be aware that completion of those steps contribute to your ability to collaborate and participate in class.

Per the encouragement of the American Journalism Online program, students should file their final assignments (assignments 2-5) on The Click. Students may wish to take a photo for their stories to include on the digital website. Please use guidance from AJO to submit for The Click.

Each week students will be required to listen to a podcast episode or episodes, as well as complete readings. Additional readings and listening will be recommended but not required.

It is strongly recommended that students make a daily or ongoing weekly habit of news podcasts like Morning Edition, Up First (the short version of Morning Edition), Today Explained, and of course, The Daily.

Final submissions for audio assignments must always include:

1. The final mp3 uploaded to the appropriate Google Drive folder, labeled LastnamesFirstName_Assignment1.mp3.

2. A matching Google Doc with the same naming convention with an episode description including title, one sentence “dek” or summary, and a description including links to optional reading. For Assignment 1 just a title and one-sentence dek are necessary, no description.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment, and embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions. For more information about NYU Journalism’s efforts as well as professional development resources please visit: https://journalism.nyu.edu/about-us/diversity/.

ACCOMODATIONS – MOSES CENTER

If you anticipate any challenges with completing the assignments, readings, exams and other work required in this course, I encourage you to contact and register with the Moses Center in advance so that you may be granted the proper academic accommodations. Contact by phone
(212) 998-4980 or by email mosescsd@nyu.edu. More information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd.

COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, it intersects with all areas of our personal lives and work. If you are experiencing extenuating circumstances as a result of COVID-19 (directly or indirectly), please do not hesitate to reach out for accommodations.

A set of best practices from NYU Journalism for reporting and producing assignments during COVID-19 is available here. Please review them as you progress through the semester.

Please make sure you have reviewed and signed the Student Reporting Guide sent to you by AJO in Google Forms.

COUNSELING AND WELLNESS SERVICES

If you are experiencing undue personal and/or academic stress during the semester that may be interfering with your ability to perform academically, the NYU Wellness Exchange (212-443-9999) offers a range of services to assist and support you. I am available to speak with you about stresses related to your work in my course, and I can assist you in connecting with the Wellness Exchange.

From the NYU Wellness Exchange: “With the coronavirus outbreak disrupting academics, travel, housing, and daily life, many people are feeling uneasy, anxious, or stressed. Here are some strategies for maintaining your health and well-being”: Mental Health During COVID-19 – Tips and Resources for Students

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Podcasts about Podcasting: How Sounds (Transom), The Werk It Podcast, Third Coast Pocket Conference, Out on the Wire (podcast), Servant of Pod

Books: Out on the Wire by Jessica Abel, Sound Reporting by Jonathan Kern

Digital Publications and Newsletters: Transom.org, NPR Training, Bello Collective, Hot Pod Newsletter, Pacific Content Newsletter, Transmitter.fm Newsletter, Poynter Institute, Columbia Journalism Review.
Networking and Conferences: AIR Media (professional network, listserv, workshops, mentorship), POC in Audio Directory, On Air Fest, HearSay Audio Festival, Missouri Review Miller Audio Prize.

Learning: Maine College of Art Salt Institute, Transom Story Workshop, BRIC Media Center, UnionDocs, Made in NY Media Center.

Jobs, Gigs, and Internships: Various listservs, podcastjobs.net, Study Hall, NYU listservs and Career Services. Check related association newsletters and online portals as well as websites for specific outlets and stations. Don’t forget about your AJO program mentors!