Multimedia Storytelling
JOUR-GA.1080.002 (Fall 2021)

Instructor: Jason D. Maloney
Time: Fridays, 11:00 a.m. to 2:40 p.m.
Room: 653
Office Hours: Room 726, Fridays 10:00a-1:00pm and by appointment.

Course Requirements: The basic requirement of the course is to learn how to produce multi-media content. Over the semester, students will significantly develop their abilities in basic photography, audio production and video production. At the same time students will constantly expand their capacity for journalism – focusing on the core skills of research, interviewing, digesting and presenting important information.

This course is not just an academic exercise, we will be actively reporting. We will use New York City as our assignment area and produce real audiovisual content on a regular basis. As students will own their media, they will have the option to place it on any news site or blog they wish. They will also benefit from having the ability to produce content for Bedford+Bowery, the hyperlocal news blog that is a joint venture between the New York Magazine and NYU.

Class time will be divided into theoretical lessons, technical skills training and in-class exercises, but we will also focus on discussing and improving ongoing class assignments. By providing timely and constructive feedback on projects underway we will sharpen skills and production fluency. Students will therefore be expected to contribute to the editorial process of each other’s projects.

While much of what we will learn will be of a technical skills nature, for example practicing how to shoot sequences, learning basic effects in Adobe Premiere, our main priority will be to learn and practice the essential elements of visual storytelling and reporting. While the basics can be discussed in our classroom setting, and we will devote a certain amount of our time to watching examples of excellence in visual storytelling, this is a skill that is best learned by doing (and critique).

At the successful conclusion of the course, students will have learned how to develop, produce, edit and deliver multi-media stories. This includes demonstrated proficiency in:

- Basic stills photography;
- Acquisition of professional audio and use of different microphones;
- Shooting video;
- Editing video and audio; encoding projects for final delivery to a variety of outlets;
- Use of basic video titling, manipulating and editing still photographs for use in video projects or creating audio slideshows;
• Introductory audio and video effects;
• Audio and video storytelling techniques: how to produce visual narratives.

This course represents a rare, exciting and meaningful opportunity for professional growth. These multi-media production abilities are the kinds of skills that will be required to be competitive for many jobs. Students will leave the course with not only new skills and knowledge, but with at least the start of a “clip reel”.

As detailed further in the class schedule below, a multimedia class assignment will be due every few weeks. **There are five assignments in the semester.** Due dates are listed in the schedule.

Subject matter for class assignments will be determined through an in-class pitch process intended to emulate real world conditions. We will work together to refine pitches, seek clarifications, identify potential problems and provide an overall reality check on whether any pitched assignment is both doable and publishable.

**Assignments:**

• Sense of place photo assignment (Teams of two)
• Produce original audio slideshow, 2 minutes (Teams of two)
• Produce video profile piece, approx. 2 minutes (Teams of two)
• Produce video event-based piece, approx. 2 minutes (Teams)
• Final project: narrated news report, approx. 2-4 minutes (Individual assignment)

**Detailed multimedia assignment descriptions (with percentage of final class grade):**

**Sense of place photo series: 5%**
To practice photography skills, students will embark on a documentation exercise in one of New York’s iconic neighborhoods. Without the ability to use words, students will take pictures of these locations to help convey a sense of place. A series of five images will be used to create a gallery. Each image will need to tell a story on its own AND the combination of images should deepen the story of the assigned location.

**Produce original audio slideshow: 15%**
Using original photos and recorded audio, students will assemble a 2 minute audio slideshow. For this assignment students will use Adobe Premiere. Students will integrate basic on-screen titling and will add various basic moves on the still images (pushes, pulls). The audio should be interview and natural sound. Students will record their audio using dedicated audio recorders and take photos with DSLR cameras. Music may be used but since this and any other classroom assignment in the semester is intended for publication, students must acquire appropriate clearances for anything used. Similarly, students may use archive or handout photos for up to 20% of the visual content,
providing they also obtain clearances to use the images. Deliver assignment as Youtube or Vimeo link.

**Produce short profile video: 20%**

Students will produce a short video profiling either a person, group or place. This report will likely contain a set-up, well-shot interview and broll video of things relevant to the story (in particular any visual depictions of what was discussed in the interview). If the interview subject is actually engaged in something relevant to the issue they are facing, say attending a rally or meeting, incorporate video images of that activity. Note that the subject of the profile may also be a thing – for example, the store itself as opposed to the owner.

For this assignment, students may not use narration. Special attention should be paid to finding ways to take advantage of the moving picture medium to tell this story – it must have something that makes it work more as a video piece than as a simple written piece. Deliver assignment as Youtube or Vimeo link.

**Produce event coverage video report for Bedford+Bowery: 15%**

The neighborhoods B+B covers are full of events. Openings, performances, protests, readings, talks, parties, you name it. For this assignment students will cover a neighborhood event and turn it into a short video report. Students may use narration if they wish, or may just use natural sound and interview. IMPORTANT: though students have two weeks to complete this assignment, it is entirely likely that the piece will need to be shot, edited and delivered in a MUCH shorter timeframe so that the subject remains fresh for the blog. This will also be a team project. Deliver assignment as Youtube or Vimeo link.

**Final project: narrated, complete news report, multiple elements: 25%**

The final project for the course will be to develop, write, shoot and edit a short video news report in a fairly traditional television news style, using narration. Students can record their own voiceover or recruit a colleague to read it. If they wish, students may use a correspondent for this piece and may include a standup, but this is not mandatory. This report should include at least two interviews and go beyond a simple profile. As part of delivery of this assignment, students will be required to submit scripts. Script templates will be emailed to students and discussed in class. Deliver assignment as Youtube or Vimeo link.

In determining final grades, the above assignments will carry the indicated weights. An additional 20% of the grade will be based on overall class participation.

**SCHEDULE (Subject to change and update as semester progresses)**
Class sessions will be fluid and include a mix of editorial discussion and more technical-oriented skills training. Classroom exercises will be interspersed. Participation and discussion will be encouraged. In addition, because skills training requires repetition, there will be dedicated periods of each class session to review previous skills sections and discuss issues that arise through practical experience and from homework preparation.

***Make sure you have insurance to be able to check out equipment and an SD card for the first class (details on this at end of syllabus)! Those students notified should check out and bring a Vixia camera to class on Sept. 9

Session 1 – Introduction

• Our first class session will be dedicated to a video scavenger hunt;
• Teams and neighborhoods for first assignments will be determined.

Assignment: Scout your NYC neighborhood to look for visuals and a story for your audio slideshow.
(East Village; Lower East Side; Williamsburg; Bushwick; Greenpoint; plus Chinatown and Little Italy/NoLita)

*One member of each team must check out and bring Rebel Camera for class, Session 2

Session 2 – Introduction to Digital Photography

• Class roadmap and orientation;
• Visit with B+B Editor Daniel Maurer;
• Photographers’ rights;
• Overview of digital photography;
• Rebel XS technical tutorial;
• Angles, focus, foreground, background;
• Importing and optimizing photos;
• Photo editing and slideshow production.

Assignment: Take photos, edit 5 images; be ready to pitch story – your audio slideshow assignment must take place in your assigned neighborhood.

*One member of each team must check out and bring Edirol or Zoom recorder for class Session 3

Session 3 – Working with Audio/AV Interviewing
• Watch and discuss photo shows;
• Pitches;

• Interviews and natural sound;
• How to record good sound;
• Identifying good AV elements;
• Intro to thinking visually: using interview cues;
• Gathering and monitoring audio;
• Recorders overview and demo;
• Using different microphones;
• Saving and working with audio files;
• Review of past projects that have worked (slideshow, profile, narrated).

Assignment: Audio slideshow, due in 2 weeks, shoot pictures, do interview.

Session 4 -- Intro to Editing

• Fundamentals of edited content;
• Media management;
• Intro to Premiere;
• Importing audio and stills workflow;
• Editing audio slideshows;
• The mechanics of the timeline;
• Edit tools: razor, roll, move;
• Transitions;
• Manipulating audio levels;
• Manipulating stills in Premiere;
• Making text slates, basic graphics;
• Exporting files for distribution, publication.

Assignment: Have slideshow ready for edit next week – all photos must be taken, all interviews conducted and transcribed (or best bites pulled). Come in with your edit prepared!

Session 5 -- In class edit session

Class time will be used to edit audio slideshow assignments. Make sure to arrive ready to edit, or have your edit already underway.

Assignment: Any finishing touches to slideshow
Session 6 – Ethics and Research

- Review of audio slideshows and discussion;
- Music use;
- Photo rights and archive;
- Releases;
- AV ethics;
- Ethics of editing;
- In class photo archive assignment.

Assignment: Finish in class assignment; Start developing video profile assignment, due in three weeks, research, develop and book. Pitch in next class.

*One member of each team must check out and bring Vixia camera for class Session 7.*

Session 7 – Shooting Video 1 (Basic Camera functions and Camera moves)

- Introduction to the core concepts of AV production;
- Becoming an educated news consumer;
- Pitch profile pieces;
- Hand out Vixia work sheets and review camera, all functions;
- Fundamentals of shooting video, an overview;
- Intro to camera terms (pans, zoom, tilt);
- Using tripod;
- Using microphones on camera;
- Possible in class exercise: essential broll: “guilty buildings”

Assignment: Video profile assignment, due in two weeks, shoot video

Benchmark: Develop topic for narrated video

Session 8 – Shooting Video 2 (Practical shooting)

- Video dissection and how to apply it to shoot;
- Shoot to writing/Write to picture;
- Action/Reaction;
- Axis;
- Importance of cutaways;
- Changing angle and focal length to shoot sequence;
• In-class sequence exercise.

**Assignment:** Profile video, due for edit next week

**Benchmark:** Have access negotiated for event-based video.

**Session 9 – Editing Video**

We will combine learning video editing with the in-class editing of our assignments. Like the earlier in-class edit, all your media must be shot and ready for edit.

**Assignment:** Finish video profiles; Complete event coverage video, WITHIN two weeks

**Benchmark:** Planning and booking for final video

**Session 10 – Interviewing and Being Interviewed**

• Screen pieces;
• Who to interview, why and what to ask;
• Overview of interview types/techniques;
• Eyeline;
• Background and fundamentals of light;
• Active settings: car, walk and talk;
• Process interview;
• Editorial lighting and backgrounds;
• Translation issues;
• Set up shots;
• Wide shots & cutaways;
• Working with a correspondent;
• Debriefs;
• Multiple camera interviews;
• Correspondent on scene and walk and talk interviews;
• Working with multiple audio inputs;
• Being interviewed.

**Assignment:** Event coverage video, due by next week; be ready to pitch final assignment.

**Session 11 – Shooting to Script and Narration**
•Review, screen event pieces;
•Pitch final projects;
•Working with Transcripts;
•Selects;
•Scripting;
•Intros;
•Invoking visuals;
•“Dramatic Journalism”, deconstructed news – tell what you did;
•Paraphrase to save time;
•Avoid writing into bites with half sentences;
•Narration booth tutorial;
•Scripted piece exercise

Assignment: Final narrated video, due in four weeks

****Thanksgiving Break****

**Session 12 – Mobile Videography**

•Using only smartphones, students will report, edit and deliver short pieces from the neighborhood. Students must complete all work from the area they are covering and cannot return to school until the piece is delivered.

Assignment: Final narrated video, due for edit in two weeks

**Session 13 – Advanced Shooting: Events, Broll and Following Action, Standups**

•Screen and discuss assignments;
•360/Virtual Reality reporting demo;
•Lighting demo;
•Standups, shooting and doing;
•Advanced video shooting concepts;
•Transitions (in camera not in edit);
•Capturing events on video;
•Press conferences 101;
•Following action;
•Advanced shooting: handheld, manual settings intro, shutter tricks; rack focus;
•Run and gun;
•Radio microphones.
Assignment: Final narrated video, due next week, focus on writing/edit prep

Session 14 -- Final Day

• In class edit and delivery of final assignments.

Tools of the Trade:
The focus of this class is to learn the skills to produce multimedia content, not to master one or another piece of technical equipment. Nonetheless, by necessity we will focus on the following gear for instruction, since it is what the Institute has chosen and has stocked. If you own your own more advanced equipment or software and wish to use it, please arrange to discuss with instructor. Do not expect to discuss interface particulars or menu settings as part of class review. Also note that instructor and multimedia support staff may have only limited knowledge of some camera systems.
• For photos, we will be using the Canon Rebel cameras. Other still cameras with full manual settings will be acceptable for assignments provided student knows how to operate them. Point and shoot cameras and smartphones may not be used as primary camera.
• For audio, students will record with Edirol or Zoom recorders. Audio editing will be carried out on Adobe Premiere since proficiency with this program is prioritized for the class and because it is particularly useful for audio slideshows.
• The institute has opted to use Canon Vixia S20 cameras for video instruction. The camera is a wise choice for being affordable enough to allow procurement of many units, and yet still represents a fully customizable camera with a very advanced set of manual commands. The lens and recording guts limit this camera to web use for the most part, but it is an excellent learning unit (the basic operation and editing workflow are in line with industry standards). Students who wish to shoot with their own video camera for assignments must check with instructor first and cannot expect individualized tech support. Bear in mind that many current stills cameras permit excellent video acquisition (some even better than dedicated video cameras), but almost all of them present significant hurdles for audio and zoom function.
• Editing will be taught on Adobe Premiere. The focus will be on the main concepts of editing and the majority of these skills are easily transferable from Final Cut to Premiere or Avid with some technical instruction. All institute computers have Adobe Premiere installed on them. Adobe offers a student cloud subscription package at $20/monthly for a one-year minimum subscription (or $220 for the year, if you pay upfront), which might make sense for students who expect to use Adobe products extensively and outside of campus. There is also a Premiere-only subscription available on a month-to-month basis for $30/month.

Required Multi-media Tools
• A 500 GB (or higher), 7200rpm, USB 3 hard drive – Lacie Rugged, G-Drive or OWC (around $100 or less). These specifications are important. If you purchase a USB 2 or 5400rpm speed drive you may encounter playback difficulties when working with video. Thunderbolt- or Firewire-connected drives offer professional speed but not all institute edit computers are equipped with these ports.

For example:

http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/800153-REG/LaCie_301983_1TB_Rugged_Triple_Interface.html (perhaps the most popular) $95

https://www.amazon.com/LaCie-Rugged-Triple-Firewire-301983/dp/B005COZ9D2/ (same model, from Amazon) $95

http://eshop.macsales.com/item/Other%20World%20Computing/MS8U7500GB16/ $120

http://www.adorama.com/gte0g04105.html (USB 3 only) $85

• 16GB or 32GB Class 10 SDHC Card for audio and video recording. Recommend 32GB Class 10 card (less than $15).
• Personal Vimeo or Youtube account for uploading class assignments (free)

Multi-media Tools That Are Available Through The Carter Institute
(***Students are required to purchase a rental insurance policy to borrow equipment, information available from equipment counter)
• Canon Vixia S20 video cameras
• Canon Rebel XS (still cameras)
• Edirol or Zoom H4N (audio recorder)
• Video accessories/tripods
• Video lights
• Desktop Macs
• Adobe Studio (Premiere, Photoshop, After Effects, Illustrator)
• Final Cut Pro 7 (some work stations only)

Optional Multi-media Tools:
• MacBook Pro laptop
• iPhone 4/4S/5/5S/6 with iMovie app installed
• Adobe Creative Cloud subscription

Mandatory Reading (in advance of class):
• RTNDA’s Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
• RTNDA’s Guidelines for Ethical Video and Audio Editing
http://www.rtdna.org/pages/media_items/guidelines-for-ethical-video-and-audio-editing152.php?g=37?id=152