

## **New York University**

Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute Syllabus JOUR-GA 1042 001 **WRR I: Audience-Centric Journalism Fall 2021**

Professor: Dirmaier, Derick

Office hours: TBD

### **Course Description**

WRR I is a studio class built around project-based learning with a focus on audience-centric journalism. The class is designed to help students build out their core journalistic skill sets while also learning the tools and methods used to determine and meet the needs of their audience.

Functioning partly like a newsroom, and partly like a classroom, this course requires students to work together to tackle problems, share skills, propose new and innovative solutions, and produce original and impactful journalism. Working in a media environment increasingly dependent on defining and providing value to readers, students will confront real issues publications are facing and become immersed in an audience-centric way of thinking that has become a prerequisite to innovation across much of the industry.

Over the course of the semester, students will complete 3 core projects. The first will be a partnership with Talking Points Memo where students will be given access to TPM's audience data and reader forums in order to build a reporting tool related to the upcoming US elections. For the second, students will work with a local news outlet to propose an innovative way for them to engage with their community. Proposals will be entered into a contest put on by Missouri's Reynolds Journalism Institute where there is a potential prize of \$10,000. The final project will ask each student to produce a piece of audience-centric reporting for a community/audience of their choosing.

In completing these projects, students will collaborate with industry professionals, work with real audiences, learn how to take an idea from concept to product, and produce great journalism that provides meaningful value.

### **Learning Objectives**

In this course students will:

- ○ Think critically and collaborate with peers to propose innovative solutions to real industry problems.
- ○ Immerse themselves in audience-centric thinking so that determining and meeting audience needs becomes almost second-nature.
- ○ Learn how to provide value to readers. And be able to describe the value they provide.
- ○ Create high-quality, original journalism in a variety of different forms.

- ○ Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values.
- ○ Write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner.
- ○ Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives.
- ○ Bring skills, share skills, learn new skills, and leave with more skills.

## Course Structure

This course will feature a mix of lecture, discussion, project workshopping, skill-sharing, and when possible, a guest speaker.

A typical class will include:

- ○ Spotlight on an innovative or successful piece of audience-centric journalism.
- ○ A discussion of class readings and/or case studies.
- ○ The introduction of a core audience competency (e.g. Engaging Your Audience).
- ○ Mini Master Class -- a short, instructional course on a valuable journalistic skill taught by a student possessing that skill.
- ○ Project Workshop – a space for discussing, workshopping, problem solving, and providing updates on all reporting and strategy related to core projects.
- ○ An occasional guest with professional expertise relevant to an audience competency or journalistic skill.

## Readings & Case Studies

In order to remain both current and flexible, all readings and case studies will be assigned a minimum of one week before class discussions. Readings and case studies will be available online unless otherwise noted and will be distributed through our “Class Readings” Slack channel. No textbook is required for this course.

## Course Requirements

It is expected that all students:

- ○ Complete course reading, case studies, and assignments and come prepared to participate in class discussions.
- ○ Submit assignments on time. Unless otherwise noted, class assignments are **due the Monday before class by 6pm EST**. Late assignments will be deducted one letter grade (10%).
- ○ Attend class. While the COVID pandemic will undoubtedly make it difficult for everyone to meet at NYU, and it is unlikely that our remote class schedule will be

optimal for all timezones, it is expected that students do their best to be present during class time. If you are unable to make a class, please contact me beforehand and we can work out alternative options.

- ○ Be a self-starter. The initiative you put forth with your partners outside of class will greatly determine your success in this program.
- ○ Produce original work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.
- ○ Be a team player. Being able to work collaboratively will be a key component of this

course.

## **Grading**

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- **Participation: 15%**

- Your participation grade will be determined by the quality, not the quantity, of

your participation in class discussions and group projects. In addition to being present and engaged, each student will be expected to come to class with one example of audience-centric journalism they find to be either innovative or exemplary. At least once over the course of the semester, each student will be

asked to present this piece of journalism to the class and the reasons for choosing it.

- ○ **Mini Master Class (MMC): 5%**

- At the beginning of the semester, each student will volunteer to teach one

journalistically relevant skill to the class. Presentations should be no more than

10-15mins. Students will meet with me before class to review their presentations.

- ○ **Classmate Interview: 5%**

- You will interview one of your classmates and present the interview to the class.

- **Local News “Audience Expert/s” Interview: 10%**

- You will interview the person or team in charge of audience engagement at your

local news partner and present the interview to the class.

- **TPM Election Project: 25%**

- This is a group project where each student will hold a distinct role and be given an

individual grade based on execution of that role, participation in class workshops,

and teamwork.

- **Local News Engagement Innovation Project: 25%**

- This may be an individual or group project. Your grade will depend on a number

of factors including understanding of your partner's audience and needs, your ability to incorporate audience competencies/strategies into your proposal, the originality of your idea, and the presentation of your proposal to the class.

- **Audience Reporting Project: 25%**

- You will choose a community/audience to report for and employ the audience

competencies/strategies learned in this class to produce a reported piece of journalism. On the last day of class you will give a short presentation highlighting any insights/challenges/best practices you experienced during the reporting process. Your grade will be determined on the quality of your reported piece and your final presentation.

## **Schedule**

Due to the COVID pandemic, classes will meet in-person every other week unless otherwise noted. Our first in-person class will be 9/16. This is subject to change and all changes to class meetings times and/or location will be communicated to students through our Slack channel.

### **9/2 Class Intro and Survey Results**

#### **9/9 No Class**

-Finalize local news partner

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### **9/16 Who Is Your Audience?**

-Mini Master Class→ Interviewing -Classmate Interview due 9/14 at 6pm

### **9/23 Listening To Your Audience 9/30 Engaging Your Audience**

-Audience "Expert/s" Interview due 9/28 at 6pm

### **10/7 Workshop I: TPM Election Project Pitch**

### **10/14 Building Trust**

-First draft of Local News Engagement Project Proposal due 10/12 at 6pm -Mini Master Class→  
Verifying information on social media

### **10/21 Measuring And Evaluating Success**

-Mini Master Class→ Producing an audio news story

### **10/28 Workshop II: Local News Engagement Project Presentation**

-Presentation due 10/26 at 6pm  
-Mini Master Class→ Pitching story ideas

### **10/31 Local News Engagement Project Submissions Due**

### **11/4 Reporting With Your Audience**

-Pitch for Audience Reporting Project due in class

### **11/11 Empathizing With Your Audience**

-Mini Master Class→ Producing a data-based visualization

### **11/18 Speaking Your Audience's Language**

-Mini Master Class→ Creating platform-specific content

### **11/25 Workshop III: First Draft of Audience Reporting Project**

-First draft of Audience Reporting Project due 11/23 at 6pm

### **12/2 Growing Your Audience**

-Mini Master Class→ Promoting work on social media

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### **12/9 Final Presentations**

-Final draft of Audience Reporting Project due in class

### **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](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu). Information about the Moses Center can be found at [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://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.