AJ 311 Media Storytelling (3)

Instructor Information
Dr. Jillian Saint Jacques, Senior Instructor I
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Office Phone: (541) 737-1662
Office Hours: Mondays from 1500-1700, or by appointment
Skype Office Hours: Fridays at 1600

Class Meeting Times: MWF 0900-0950 in Moreland 206 or 3X/week, 2.5 hours

Course Description:
Introduction to community journalism, with a focus on developing storytelling methodologies for a variety of media in firsthand reporting praxis. Prerequisite: Grade B or higher in WR121.

Required Texts:
- Selected readings and film criticisms of the week (provided on Canvas)

Overview:
Participants in AJ 311 Media Storytelling will develop bedrock skills in crafting successful narratives for publication across a broad array of media, including print, television, radio and internet platforms. In addition to conducting interviews, gathering facts, checking for accuracy, writing compelling body copy and assembling accurate stories by deadline, students will concentrate on editing with a strong hand to prepare copy for publication in high-circulation markets. As our course title implies, the central skill set for AJ 311 revolves around the ability to produce a dynamic news package your readers can’t put down until it’s finished. Within peer-to-peer workshops and meetings with professionals in the Orange Media Network, students will hone their ability to generate stories within fluid and demanding spatial and temporal constraints, producing multi-media packages in short and long feature formats.

Outcomes and Assessments:
Through successful participation, AJ 311 students will learn to:
- Plan and pitch story ideas that generate the interest of a potential editor/publisher, as assessed by the student’s performance on:
  - Constructing three story ideas for the course instructor and a representative from OSU Student Media
  - Refining those ideas so the story is streamlined from the beginning
  - Listing interview contacts and research sources even in a pitch stage
- Compose a compelling story that pulls the reader through from beginning to end, no matter how dry, technical or “small” the subject matter appears to be. This outcome will be assessed by student performance on:
  - Producing three feature-length stories on real-time news events with the intent of publication in OSU student media
  - Summarizing all required readings from textbook and online resources
  - Assessing class presentations by seasoned journalists

- Create a best-practices news article by using the Internet to produce verifiable research and conducting in-depth interviews with expert sources on a wide variety of (often complex) topics, as assessed by student performance at:
  - Interviewing numerous expert and non-professional sources for stories
  - Using digital and library databases to add factual muscle to stories through research
  - Combining ample interview information and research in the finalized body copy for three feature stories, with the intent of publication
  - Planning balanced and multi-sourced interviews, striving to get all sides of the story, never being content with producing anything less than balanced copy

- Use critical thinking skills to navigate basic media law and actualize your story in a larger framework of global diversity and culture:
  - Critically assessing each story in team workshop scenarios

Assignment Types
Assignments in AJ311 consist of the following medley:

- **Reporting.** In order to generate compelling news stories, AJ311 participants are expected to carry out numerous assignments in the field. This involves doing investigative footwork, attending unfamiliar events, and conducting interviews with strangers. Needless to say, this type of writing involves an intensive degree of time management skills. Getting interviews done on time and copy delivered by deadline is the responsibility of the student.

- **AP Style.** To write good copy, media writers must be proficient at editing and proofreading in Associated Press style. All AP style assignments in AJ311 require the use of the Associated Press Stylebook, the ultimate source for questions about editing copy.

- **Homework and Fieldwork** will complement the instruction provided in class. Such assignments reinforce key learning concepts; writing leads, using news values, utilizing the inverted pyramid, creating a story budget, punctuating quotes, developing backstory and flavor notes, conducting research, delivering a successful “pitch,” etc.

- **Exams.** This class will have two important exams, a midterm in Week 5 and a final during Finals Week. The exams typically appear on Canvas on Wednesday at noon and remain open until Friday noon, at which point they close and grades are tallied. The exams will test how much you understand about story structure, leads, the inverted pyramid and other important media terminology. The majority of the exam questions are taken from in-class lectures, powerpoints, and the other materials on our Canvas site. Exam questions typically consist of multiple choice, multiple answer, true/false and short essay questions.

- **Workshops.** Based on team-generated reports, you will be assigned a grade for your performance in a series of workshops designed to help you consider all angles of your story and improve it with key audiences in mind.

- **Publication Process.** Please keep in mind that the ultimate target of this course is enabling you to produce publishable work — and then to see it hit the light of day, and be regarded by thousands of people. To achieve this aim, this course will engage in active collaboration with the folks at OSU Student Media. You will have a variety of venues to choose from, but it is a
requisite of the course that you must publish at least two (2) of your four featured pieces in OSU student publications – and it is the responsibility of the student to put in the leg-work to make sure this happens. See course grading details for further information.

Other Requirements

◊ **Canvas.** We rely heavily on the use of Canvas. Students should be familiar with Canvas and understand that getting the job done on time is their responsibility. Because Canvas might “crash” from time to time, it’s incumbent on students to download assignments and instructions from Canvas as soon as possible.

◊ **Late work.** In journalism, the most important requirement of our job is the ability to turn in copy by deadline. In this course, there will be no provisions given for late work, as hitting your deadline is absolutely intrinsic to journalistic praxis. Similarly, there will be no “make up” assignments given for in-class homework under any circumstances, with the exception of athletes who are away at games (coach’s letter mandatory). If you cannot land an assignment by deadline for whatever reason, have a friend, relative, or fellow student bring it in for you.

◊ **Format requirements.** All writing assignments must be typed using either a Times 12-point font or a Helvetica 10-point font (like this syllabus). Assignments written in overlarge or exotic fonts will be downgraded. Typing in colored ink or on colored or scented papers will also result in lowered grades for an assignment, as will generally dishevelled work. Unless otherwise advised, all assignments that run more than one page in length must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner (do not use paper clips or origami-style folding techniques). All assignments should have one-inch margins at the top, bottom and sides, and be typed on letter-sized white bond paper. The standard point deduction for neglecting any of the above conventions is two (2) full points per error, with a standard three-point deduction for neglecting to use spellchecker. Assignments that do not meet format requirements will be returned to the writer, and the rules for late work will apply. This particularly applies to double-spaced copy – and the lack thereof.

◊ **Improvement.** I carefully evaluate whether your assignments improve along with your knowledge and ability in this course. As the term progresses, I adjust grades increasingly lower for coursework that continuously contains the same errors (a consistent failure to use spellchecker is a common culprit). Likewise, work that demonstrates concentration on areas of improvement receives a higher grade.

◊ **Grading.** Because we are working with a numeric grading system, I use “half points” on many assignments (1.5, 2.5, etc). Please refrain from asking questions about your grades by e-mail, as OSU discourages this practice for security reasons. Any questions about grades should be delivered in person during office hours or after class.

◊ **Attendance.** I take attendance at the beginning of every class. Learning your name is the first step in the process of finding out who you are as a human being. That said, if you miss more than three classes without a signed doctor’s excuse or other supporting evidence (coach’s note, letter from sponsor of academic event) you can anticipate your final grade will be lowered by one full grade. It is your responsibility to make sure you are marked present in the log book if you are late for class. It is my general policy to fail all students who do not attend at least 50 percent of the classes. *Athletes: make sure your coaches provide me with a list of your “away dates”; also be aware that I am pals with your academic/athletic advisors, and they regularly contact me to monitor your progress.

◊ **E-mail.** I am sure we all agree — e-mail has become a vital part of academic life in the 21st century. That said, I welcome all of your questions by e-mail, so long as they do not involve
issues of grading. Be aware, however, that I never “check out” assignments by e-mail, nor do I accept late work (or any work) by email.

◊ **Laptops.** Technology is nice, but laptops, smart phones, iPads and the rest can be distracting to other students if used for inappropriate purposes (e.g., browsing the Internet, checking Facebook, reading personal email, gossiping on Twitter). Out of courtesy to fellow students, do not use laptops for purposes other than taking notes. The use of smart phones in AJ311 is expressly forbidden, and there is a three-point deduction for their unwarranted use in class. **NOTE:** If student feedback indicates the use of laptops in the class distracts from learning, I will ban the use of laptops altogether.

◊ **Exams.** Taking a quiz on Canvas requires time and concentration. Remember to take Canvas quizzes at one sitting, no matter what Canvas says about logging out and “saving” your answers, etc. If you log out of a Canvas quiz, Canvas will submit your quiz with incomplete results and you will get a less than satisfactory grade. I only allow students to “re-take” a Canvas quiz if Canvas officially registers you as having a technical difficulty – otherwise, do not ask.

◊ **Revision.** I provide the opportunity to revise one (1) of the larger assignments in this class for “win-back points” at the end of the term. Moral Of The Story: **save your old work.** You cannot revise assignments if you no longer have the original copy. Revising a document is optional.

◊ **Teamwork.** At the beginning of the term, you will be assigned a **workshop group** to work with at least two (2) of your stories. Given the demands of class time, it is only reasonable to assume these teams will sometimes have to meet outside of class. Poor performance in team efforts will obviously result in a lowered class participation score (see below).

### Grade Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assorted style quizzes (cumulative)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assorted homework (cumulative)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Feature Story</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Feature Story</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Feature Story</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Score</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication Score</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 88-90, B = 83-87, B- = 80-82, C+ = 78-80, C = 73-77, C- = 70-72, D+ = 68-70, D = 63-68, D- = 60-62, F = anything below 60.**

**Docking points from cumulative score.** Be advised that in AJ311, there are several ways to lose points from your cumulative score other than poor performance on assignments. Neglecting to attend a peer review session will cost you five (5) points from your cumulative score, as will failure to successfully pitch your story on the assigned pitch day, and neglecting to attend a mandatory conference session.
Extra Credit for publication. The seven-point publication score will be given to each student who publishes two (2) stories in OSU student media – but an additional five points extra credit will be awarded to each student who publishes all three stories.

ALERT! Turn in all three stories for this course. Aside from the standard point deductions for turning in late work, I reserve the right to dock students cumulative score by a full letter grade for failing to submit all of the feature articles for the course by the end of term. I will also minimize the student’s class participation score, should this occur. In most cases, this results in a failing grade.

Class participation.
Do not take class participation points for granted; only the best academic performance will gain all five points. To gauge your class participation, I assess individual attentiveness, leadership and curiosity, the ability to engage in critical discourse, taking a leading edge in teamwork assignments – and, above all, scholarly maturity.

How Will My Writing Be Evaluated?
I assess the following factors when I evaluate (i.e., grade) your written work:

A. Getting the story
   1. Did the reporter follow assignment instructions?
   2. Did the reporter verify that their story idea was worth writing about?
   3. Did the reporter get all the required interviews?
   4. Did the reporter do the required research?
   5. Did the reporter compile their evidence into a handy file?
B. Organization, clarity of thought, and accuracy
   1. Did the reporter follow instructions?
   2. Did the reporter use an identifiable organizational style (inverted pyramid, hourglass)
   3. Did the reporter utilize an appropriate lead, body and kicker style?
   4. Did the reporter do the required research—and then some?
   5. Did the reporter properly attribute their sources?
   6. Were the above elements (quotes, facts) incorporated into the story in a meaningful manner, or were they just “plopped in” to achieve assignment minimums?
   7. Did the writer verify that all names, dates, titles and other facts were correct, and that such items were spelled correctly?
C. Style and grammar
   1. Were the appropriate resources used to fine-tune results? These include stylebook, spellchecker, dictionary, textbook, Canvas materials, etc.
D. Structural soundness
   1. Does the writing include all of the structural elements that were assigned in the tip sheet? (headline, dek, lead, quotes, kicker, etc.)
E. Formatting requirements
   1. Was assignment typed and spaced correctly?
   2. Was the assignment stapled, if necessary, or placed in the proper folder?
   3. Did the assignment have the correct word-count, page count, etc.?
   4. Did the reporter correctly slug their piece? (name, course number, etc.)
F. Originality
   1. Did the finished assignment show more than a passing interest in the topic,
as evidenced by research, depth and personal angle?
2. Did the assignment demonstrate an ability to gather more than the most obvious details and facts?

Expectations for Student Conduct/Academic Honesty

We will follow the ethical principles outlined in the OSU policy on academic honesty. It is your responsibility to know and follow this policy. A summary of this policy is located at http://oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/offenses-0

Academic dishonesty is defined as an intentional act of deception in one of the following means:
• Cheating (use or attempted use of unauthorized materials, information or study aids)
• Fabrication (falsification or invention of any information)
• Assisting (helping another commit an act of academic dishonesty)
• Tampering (altering or interfering with evaluation instruments and documents)
• Plagiarism (representing the words or ideas of another person as one’s own)

Any form of academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, will affect your grade and may lead to an “F” grade in this course. In order to avoid plagiarism, I suggest doing your work in a timely fashion, so you are not tempted to engage in combat “cut and paste” techniques. Attribute your sources, pay credit where credit is due.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities:

Accommodations for students with disabilities are determined and approved by Disability Access Services (DAS). If you, as a student, believe you are eligible for accommodations but have not obtained approval please contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098 or at http://ds.oregonstate.edu. DAS notifies students and faculty members of approved academic accommodations and coordinates implementation of those accommodations. While not required, students and faculty members are encouraged to discuss details of the implementation of individual accommodations.

Diversity Statement:

The School of Writing, Literature and Film strives to create an affirming climate for all students including underrepresented and marginalized individuals and groups. Diversity encompasses differences in age, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, physical or mental ability, religion, socioeconomic background, veteran status, sexual orientation and marginalized groups. We believe diversity is the synergy, connection, acceptance and mutual learning fostered by the interaction of different human characteristics.

Religious Holiday Statement:

Oregon State University strives to represent all religious practices. If you have religious holidays that are in conflict with any of the requirements of this class, please see your instructor immediately so we can make alternative arrangements.

AJ311 Course Calendar
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Concentration Areas (Lecture)</th>
<th>Weekly Assignments &amp; Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|       | Discussion of Syllabus & Canvas Media Forms  
Lead, Headline, Dek  
Elements of News Writing  
**Begin Reading Carole Rich** | Wednesday: Leads Homework Assigned |
|       | Pitching  
Visual Elements and Graphics  
Facts, Accuracy, Data Collection  
Body Styles | **Monday: Leads Homework Due**  
Wednesday: Style Quiz 1 Due  
**Friday: in-class assignment** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 2 | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 3 | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 4 | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 5 | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 6 | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 7 | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
|       | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 8 | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** | **Weekly Assignments & Due Dates** |
| Week 9 | Professional Life in the Media  
Where to Go from Here  
Finish Reading Al Tompkins | Monday: *Style Quiz 3 Due*  
Friday: *THIRD FEATURE DUE* |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 10 | **Dead Week**  
Mandatory Conferences Scheduled  
Critique Week & Workshops | Mandatory Workshops and Team Reports |
| Week 11 | **Finals Week** | Final Exam given on Canvas—can be taken anytime/anywhere |