

## Multimedia Journalism

Allegheny College  
COMRT 490, Fall 2011

Day/Time: T/Th 3:00 p.m.-4:15 p.m.  
Classroom: Murray 120

Instructor: Caley Cook

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Office location: Odd fellows 208

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Office hours: Tuesdays from 9:30-10:30 a.m. and 1:30-2:30 p.m., Wednesdays from 11:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. and by appointment

“A new medium is never an addition to an old one, nor does it leave the old one in peace. It never ceases to oppress the older media until it finds new, better shapes and positions for them.” - Marshall McLuhan

### Course Outline, Responsibilities and Policies

**About this course.** This class is a study of the process of creating multimedia and news storytelling on the Web. Students will develop a knowledge of convergent journalism and the integration of video, audio, text, visuals, and interactive digital content with traditional journalistic storytelling norms. We will address social responsibility and ethical frameworks in new technology by integrating them into practice. The prerequisite for this course is either English 207, Communication Arts 290 or permission of the instructor.

**Course objectives.** In this course you will train in the use of digital technologies to produce news stories that utilize and combine different formats of media. You will identify and analyze storytelling techniques and tools adopted by the news industry as well as the digital revolution's consequences for journalism, as new technologies have changed the ways we gather, produce, distribute and consume news around the world. We will endeavor to understand the craft of covering a community by weaving together compelling multimedia narratives. Please note that this is not a web design course.

**Course materials and reading.** To succeed in this class you will need all of the following:

- “Aim for the Heart” by Tompkins
- “Producing Online News: Digital Skills, Stronger Stories” by Thornburg
- “The Associated Press Stylebook” by the Associated Press
- To read *The Campus* every day online ([www.alleghenycampus.com](http://www.alleghenycampus.com)) and each week in print
- To read and keep up with your classmates' and professor's blog (<http://acrossmedia.tumblr.com/>)
- A laptop EVERY SINGLE CLASS MEETING DAY (if you do not have access to one for class times, please approach the professor on the first day of class for a loaned netbook. If you fail to bring a laptop to a class meeting, you will be unable to participate in activities and will lose points on your final grade.)
- Slides software on your class laptop
- Paper (a reporter's notepad is helpful) and a reliable pen

**Availability of the Professor.** Due to the nature of my appointment at the College, I am usually shuttling between Murray, Vukovich, Odd fellows and the Campus Center on any given day, but I am usually somewhere on campus from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays (and sometimes weekends) and am easily available with a prior appointment. To make an appointment with me, you may contact me using any of the information above, but the easiest way to

reach me is via email. Office hours are open for drop-in. Please feel free to talk to me about any issues relating to the course and don't hesitate to ask for my assistance. I truly care about your learning and I hope that office hours aren't simply a time to talk about problems, but also a space to brainstorm or develop academic, professional and personal interests.

**Deadlines.** Journalism is a deadline-oriented business. As a professional, if you miss a deadline, you should expect to clear out your desk sooner rather than later. As a student in this course, I will hold you to a similar standard. Meeting deadlines in this course is mandatory. If you don't turn in an assignment on time (that means not a minute after the deadline listed), you will NOT receive credit. Zero. Nada. Zilch. By meeting this course standard you will inevitably grow not only as a journalist, but also as a person.

**Attendance and Lateness.** Please come to class on time every scheduled class day. If there is a circumstance that may force you to miss class, please email or see me so we can discuss your alternatives. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to get notes from classmates. *Please do not contact the instructor for notes or lecture outlines unless you have exhausted all other options.* I will only allow late papers or makeup work in the case of extenuating circumstances, which can include death of a family member or a significant illness or injury that requires immediate bed rest, immobilization or treatment. All of these circumstances still require documentation for an excused absence. Sorry, headaches don't count. Students that plan to miss class due to a college-related activity or religious holiday should provide advance notice of the absence and you accept full responsibility for completing any work ahead of time.

**Electronic Devices.** While this is a technologically adapted course, texting during class isn't the best idea. You will quickly discover that cell phones and unapproved computer use in class are my biggest pet peeves. If I see you fiddling with your phone or on the web while we're having a class discussion or lecture, I will ask you to leave the classroom. Believe me, I can see you. You will find this course to be infinitely more rewarding if you are present both physically and mentally.

**Digital Distribution of Materials.** Course materials and announcements will be distributed to you via Sakai and through the professor's blog at <http://acrossmedia.tumblr.com/>. Check both (and/or your email) on a regular basis.

**Participation and In-Class Conduct.** Successful people, especially journalists, know how to ask questions – lots of questions. Those who refuse to be a part of the discussion will see that reflected in a lower final grade. Please note that there is a difference between quality of participation and quantity of participation. All discussions and interactions between class members during class time or team project situations should be respectful, professional and conducted with sensitivity. Any other type of behavior will not be tolerated.

**Course Writing Guidelines.** All assignments in this course will be turned in via your blog. All assignments should conform to AP Style and be free of spelling, grammar or style mistakes. I do not accept late assignments. I do not accept any handwritten work in this course.

**Accuracy and Integrity.** Please refer to your Honor Code pledge and behave accordingly in this class. Plagiarism in any form -- including not properly attributing information or quotes -- will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade. In an attempt to encourage accuracy and an attention to detail, any factual error, including misspelling of names of any kind, will result in an automatic half credit off on the assignment, exam or quiz.

**Disabilities.** Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disability Services at (814) 332-2898. Disability Services is part of the Learning Commons and is located in Pelletier Library. Please do this as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

## Course Grading

**Grades.** Your course grade is calculated out of 400 total points and will be decided as follows:

100 pts Blog

100 pts Research paper

50 pts Overall participation, engagement and attendance

50 pts Digital tool presentation

50 pts Soundslides assignment

50 pts Multimedia assignment

**Blog:** You will establish your own blog by Sept. 6 using Word Press or Tumblr. This will act as your cumulative individual portfolio and will be graded as a progressive, whole product at the end of the semester. This blog will include four weekly facets: 1) critical reaction to class material (reading, lectures, activities, ect.), 2) interaction between you and your classmates in the form of comments, linking or feedback posts, 3) a curation of outside links, stories, research and other work that applies to our class or that you find interesting in the digital realm. It will also include in-class and out-of-class activities. You should be posting at least twice per week on this blog.

**Research paper:** This will be a 10- to 15-page paper of original research about a phenomenon of digital journalism or media. It should be a substantial, sophisticated and well-researched paper that explores some significant or specific question or topic. Your digital tool presentation may serve as a foundation of research for the topic you ultimately choose. The purpose of this paper is not to regurgitate others' ideas but to develop a compelling thesis that ties into multimedia journalism and the future of digital media. Allow critical sources to serve as a catalyst for your argument and be sure to include a bibliography of your sources in whichever academic style you choose.

**Participation, engagement and attendance:** This grade is pretty simple... Attend class, get involved in the discussion and engage your classmates and your professor with thoughtful, well-read ideas about journalism. This grade will also include in-class assignments and small homework assignments that will help you develop your ideas and skills for your digital tool presentation, soundslides assignment and multimedia assignment.

**Digital tool presentation:** You will choose one digital tool from the list provided at Across Media (<http://acrossmedia.tumblr.com/>) and develop a 10- to 15-minute presentation about that tool for the class. Leave time for questions, discussion and comments. This presentation can include visual elements, demonstrations, examples of application and your commentary on the tool's usefulness in the scope of our class (especially applied to the final Multimedia assignment).

**Soundslides assignment:** This will be a 1- to 4-minute project that incorporates audio, photographs and text to tell a news story. You will use Soundslides software.

**Multimedia assignment:** This project will incorporate at least three media including (but not limited to) audio, video, photo, animation and other digital tools. It will demonstrate a significant journalistic undertaking and you will present the project at the end of the semester.

**Extra credit:** Each student can earn 15 points of extra credit for each story he or she publishes on [www.allegheycampus.com](http://www.allegheycampus.com) (for a maximum of 45 points).

**Grading scale.**

A 100-93 *You should be working for The New York Times.*

A- 92-90 *Outstanding work of publishable quality.*

B+ 89-87

B 86-83 *With some editing changes, your work could run somewhere.*

B- 82-80

C+ 79-77

C 76-73 *Your work is average for college-level media.*

C- 72-70

D 69-60 *Fundamental issues with the work.*

F 59 or less *Lacks basic skills or wasn't submitted on deadline.*

**Course Schedule \***

DAY	TOPIC	DUE
9/1	Class introduction; Syllabus review; What is news?	Blog due via email
9/6	Online News Is Different, But It's Still News	Thornburg Ch. 1-2
9/8	The Online News Audience	Thornburg Ch. 3
9/13	Multimedia Reporting	Thornburg Ch. 8
9/15	Independent photo assignment	
9/20	Digital tool presentation; Blogging	Thornburg Ch. 10; Photo assignment due
9/22	Digital tool presentation; Aiming for the Heart	Tompkins Ch. 1
9/27	Journalism as Conversation	Thornburg Ch. 11
9/29	Digital tool presentation; Shaping a Story and Using Memorable Characters; Audio journalism	Tompkins Ch. 2-3, 11
10/4	Working with Soundslides software	Must purchase and load Soundslides
10/6	Digital tool presentation; Writing Well	Tompkins Ch. 4-5
10/11	Digital tool presentation; Video journalism	Tompkins Ch. 7 and 9
10/13	Digital tool presentation; Remixing the News	Thornburg Ch. 12
10/18	NO CLASS (Fall Break)	
10/20	Digital tool presentation; Interviewing in the Digital Age	Tompkins Ch. 6
10/25	Digital tool presentation; Research paper topic proposal discussions	Research paper topic proposal due
10/27	Work day	
11/1	Digital tool presentation; Screening of Soundslides	Soundslides assignment due

	assignments	
11/3	Digital tool presentation; Screening of Soundslides assignments	
11/8	Digital tool presentation; One-Man-Band Journalism	Tompkins Ch. 12
11/10	Digital tool presentation; Telling a Story Online	Tompkins Ch. 13
11/15	Digital tool presentation; Enterprising	Tompkins Ch. 18
11/17	Digital tool presentation; Collecting and Using Data	Thornburg Ch. 9
11/22	TBD	TBD
11/24	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)	
11/29	Ethics of Multimedia Journalism	Tompkins Ch. 14-16
12/1	Critical Engagement	Tompkins Ch. 17
12/6	Screening of Multimedia assignments	Multimedia assignment due
12/8	Screening of Multimedia assignments	
12/13	Screening of Multimedia assignments	
12/17	Your paper is due before 4 p.m. in Professor Cook's box or in her office in Oddfellows 208)	Research paper due; Finished blog due

\* This schedule may change over the course of the semester. All changes will be announced.