

AUDIO VIDEO INFORMATION GATHERING

visual storytelling

*“Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die,
we can’t remember who we are or why we’re here.”*

-Sue Monk Kidd

PROFESSOR: CRISTINA FLETES-BOUTTÉ
OFFICE HOURS: T TH, 12-1:00, or by request
MOBILE: 901.489.4253
EMAIL: fletes@email.unc.edu, cristinamfletes@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce you to the tools and skills needed to engage in quality storytelling with audio and video. Emphasis is in mastering technical and aesthetic aspects of audio and video information gathering and editing. As this course is intended to give you insight into what you may expect as entry-level employees or interns in “the real world,” attention to detail is key, as is timeliness, thoroughness and active participation in course activities. This is a very hands-on course with a flexible syllabus and course schedule. Things are subject to change, so be open-minded and adaptable.

Course objectives: Learn the basic technical and aesthetic components of video and audio, learn how to identify and tell an engaging story, enhance video interviewing techniques, achieve proficiency in Adobe Premiere Pro.

PROJECTS & ASSIGNMENTS (% of final grade):

Project 1 – Poetry in Motion (15%)

What: This assignment is to get students to think visually. You will be given a series of adjectives and will be tasked with gathering shots that illustrate *one* of these words. *Remember to grab wide, medium and tight shots!* You will then edit a short video (~1 minute) set to music, showcasing your illustrated word.

Why: One of the challenges of visual journalism is having to illustrate complicated ideas – and being too literal can be boring. Challenge yourself to think outside the box here. Envision having to illustrate a poem. Above all, take creative risks and have fun!

Project 2 – Moment of Clarity (15%)

What: Everyone has had a moment in their lives where they’ve had some sort of revelation – big or small – where things just suddenly seemed clear. You will interview a classmate on one of these revelations and edit it into a piece that is between 2 -3 minutes long. You will be using your video camera to film the interview (so you can practice setting up interview shots and using your camera), but the final piece will be audio-only (so you can concentrate on just telling a good story).

Why: Another challenge in visual journalism is brevity. How do you tell a story that is not too long, but still makes an impact? This project will help you get to the core of storytelling – getting a good anecdote & reflection, then editing it

succinctly. It will also help you to learn good interviewing techniques – getting what you need, but not taking three hours of interviewing to do so.

Project 3 – Profile Piece (20%)

What: There are many interesting people in this world. Find one, then create a short (2-3 min) documentary-style piece that sums up what they are all about. This project is about capturing the essence of a person – what this person, thinks, believes, sees, feels, maybe even what he or she eats (if that adds to the story). You will need to pay attention to details that give away hints of personality.

Why: Doing a profile or a “day-in-the-life-of” is a common news feature assignment. This will help you learn to get the footage and interview material you need, while finding ways to add depth to an otherwise mundane assignment. Like a writer working on a feature, you will work to discover context clues that give a more complete picture of a person.

Project 4 – Sports Story (30%)

What: Sports are more fun when you have someone to cheer for or root against. The goal (no pun intended) of this project is to tell a great story about an athlete, a coach or a team, etc. Your subject can be any age, doing any sport (or retired from any sport), as long as it’s a good story and you can sell me on the pitch. If you locate your subject early on, you may even have the opportunity to document the person or team as they play throughout the semester, letting the story develop in real time (which is always exciting). In the end, you will have an approximately 3 minute documentary-style piece that will draw upon all the skills we learn throughout the semester.

Why: Sports are filled with great stories and fantastic life lessons. There’s a built-in conflict, both internal and external, with every game, season, career, etc. and there’s always some knowledge to gain from participating, regardless of the outcome. The problems you may run into are also common problems you may encounter when working in the field: athletes can sometimes be lousy interview subjects, sports are fast-paced and require lots of practice to shoot (good thing they’re repetitive), there’s often bad lighting and there are generally rules about where you can and can’t shoot.

Class Assignments (15%)

There will be weekly in-class exercises and/or take-home assignments throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, your grades for each of these assignments will be averaged into an overall course assignments grade. Course assignments are likely to include (but are not limited to):

- Match action assignment
- Interview shot assignment
- Video portrait assignment
- Color correction assignment
- Motion assignment
- TMW shot/building the scene assignment

Participation (5%)

Your participation grade will be heavily influenced by your participation in class discussions, critique sessions and your overall respectfulness of others in the classroom. Be engaged, be thoughtful, and be polite and constructive in your feedback.

CRITIQUES:

The goal of a critique is to discover what makes strong, innovative, communicative storytelling. To do so, we will uncover the highs and the lows, the good and the bad, and set you on a path to making better work each time. Critiques are essential to growth and are part of the editing process for even the top professionals in the field. You would never want to turn in a paper without having someone to proofread it first – this is the same thing.

Everyone needs to be active and involved in the critique process, and the critique needs to be constructive. You can be tough and honest without tearing someone apart. Find the balance and, when in doubt, take the higher road. Likewise, when you are receiving a critique of your work, you need to maintain a similar balance. Critiques are for providing helpful suggestions to improve your work. If you refrain from being defensive, you'll gain much more from the feedback. Don't be so connected to your work that you lose sight of how it could be better.

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES:

Required

- **Canon Vixia Kit** (includes mic and tripod). This can be checked out with Matt Bachman in the Equipment Room on the second floor of Carroll. **The rental fee is \$50/student for the semester.** This can be paid (with exact change or check) to Linda Peterson in the Dean's Suite. She will give you a receipt to present to Matt. Due to limited quantities, students will pair up and share kits. Coordinating shooting schedules will be left up to the partners. Be considerate and plan ahead!
- **Memory Card** for video camera. A SDHC 8GB class 6 (or higher) will work. If you can find a good deal, going up to a 16GB card will help you from running out of card space too quickly.
- **External Hard Drive** 250 – 500 GB (*Must be Mac Compatible so you can use the software in the classroom*). I personally use LaCie hard drives because they are pretty durable, but use whatever you are comfortable with. If you plan on using a drive you already own, know that it will need to be formatted/reformatted for Mac OS.
- **Headphones**

Suggested

- **Lynda.com subscription** (~\$30 a month). Really helpful tutorials if you forget how to do something or want to learn some more advanced techniques.

ATTENDANCE:

You get two freebie absences over the semester. You are allowed to utilize them as needed, and I do not need you to clear it with me first or bring in a doctor's note, etc. *If you go beyond two absences, you have one extra, but it must be cleared by me and deemed an excused absence* (i.e. illness, death in the family, etc.) I **must** have a doctor's note or some kind of formal documentation if you are absent a third time. If you miss more than your two freebie classes (or two freebies + one excused), your final grade will be docked **two full points for every day missed after that, whether excused or unexcused.**

Please do not come in late either. If you begin a habit of coming in late, I will mark you as absent.

If you are absent the day a project (not a class assignment) is due, then it **must** be an excused absence and you must inform me about the absence and be able to present documentation. Otherwise, your project will be deemed late and docked a letter grade each day that it is late (see above section). **You cannot use a freebie absence on a project due date.**

2 freebies = No grade docked

2 freebies + 1 excused absence = No grade docked

2 freebies + 1 **unexcused** absence = -2pts final grade

2 freebies + 1 excused absence + 1 extra absence = -2pts final grade

2 freebies + 2 unexcused absences = -4pts final grade

2 freebies + 1 excused absence + 2 extra absences = -4pts final grade

Y'all get the point...

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments (both Projects and Class Assignments) are always due **before** class starts. If a Project is turned in late – even by a few minutes – **it will be dropped a letter grade (-10pts)**. Every day that it is late after that, it will drop another letter grade.

If a Class Assignment is turned in late, it will be given only half credit at the most. **It will not be accepted the next day.** You get two drop grades for Class Assignments.

PROJECT REDOS

You are allowed to redo any of the four Projects (not Class Assignments) for a higher grade, but only if you turn in your original project on time. **Projects that are turned in late on the due date are not eligible to be redone.**

WORK DAYS

The class before each Project (not Class Assignment) is due will be an in-class work day. You *must* bring something to work on in class **or I will automatically take 3 points off your project grade**. The in-class work day is designed so that you have ample time to turn in a polished product. You are not allowed to use the work day to shoot unless I have already seen your rough edit and have agreed to let you use that time to shoot.

GRADING

Final grades are measured on a ten-point scale. I add up your total points on each project based on their percentage value, add on things like extra credit or taking off points for absences, etc. Since I allow for projects to be redone and offer extra credit opportunities, I do not round up for grades. If your final tally is an 89.9, your grade is a B.

- A 100 - 95
- A- 94 - 90
- B 89 - 85
- B- 84 - 80
- C 79 - 75
- C- 74 - 70
- D 69 - 65
- D- 64 - 60
- F 59 or below

BREAKDOWN OF GRADE VALUES

- 15% Poetry in Motion
- 15% Moment of Clarity
- 20% Profile
- 30% Sports Story (Final Project)
- 15% Class Assignments
- 5% Participation

PROJECTS are graded on a 100pt scale with the percentage value determined afterwards. For example, if you earned a 92 on your Moment of Clarity project, you earned a 13.8 out of 15, since the Moment of Clarity is 15% of your grade.

Please note that it is -10pts if it is late on the due date, then -10pts for every day it is late after that. If you did a project that would've earned a 92, but turned it in two days late, then your grade will be a 72.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS are graded on a full credit, half credit, no credit scale. Grading is as follows:

Full credit – well done

Half credit – needs improvement

No credit – poorly done or incomplete

Please note that it is an automatic half credit docked for turning in a Class Assignment late. Therefore, if it was well-done and would have earned full credit, but it was turned in 15 minutes late, your grade will be a half credit. **Class assignments may only be turned in before or on the day they are due, even if you are absent.** Assignments turned in the day after will be given a grade of 0. I will drop your two lowest grades on these assignments.

At the end of the semester, your Class Assignment grades will be totaled up, the two lowest grades will be dropped and your percentage will be calculated. These are worth 15% of your grade.

EXTRA CREDIT

Extra credit events are worth 2.5 points each and will be added onto whatever is your lowest Project grade at the end of the semester. Therefore, if you attend four extra credit events for a total of 10pts, and you earned an 84 on your Profile piece, you now have a 94 on your Profile piece – yay!!! If you had an 84 on both your Moment of Clarity *and* your Profile piece, then the 10pts will be added to your Moment of Clarity grade instead since it is worth fewer percentage points in your overall grade. But it's free points so it's still a yay... Yay!!!

EXTRA CREDIT EVENTS:

PhotoNight

Every month, usually on the last Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm, we invite prominent photographers and producers to speak to our students. Over the years some of the best in the industry have visited UNC: Ed Kashi, Ami Vitale, Chris Hondros, Sam Abell and Brian Storm to name a few. They are veritable rock stars of the photo/video world and to have them at our footsteps is an enormous opportunity.

Movie Night

I plan on having at least one movie screening in the MRC of a feature film.

HONOR CODE:

Students will operate within the requirements of the honor code. **All work must be your own, must be done specifically for this class**, and should be done with the high level of honesty and integrity that this University demands. Students that violate the honor code will be subject to University regulations regarding the specific violation.