

# INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL STORYTELLING

MEJO 121 | UNC-Chapel Hill | Hussman School of Journalism and Media | Syllabus link: [go.unc.edu/mejo121](https://go.unc.edu/mejo121)

Course materials: [go.unc.edu/121materials](https://go.unc.edu/121materials) | Live class link: [go.unc.edu/121class](https://go.unc.edu/121class) (password: MEJO121)

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Welcome to this introductory media technology skills class at the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media. Our simple goals are to introduce you to some of the tools and skills needed to engage in multimedia storytelling in online environments. We aim to demystify the technical aspects of audiovisual information packaging by engaging in basic hands-on video, design and web exercises.

However, what distinguishes this class from a skills-only course is its focus on **storytelling**. We ultimately intend to provide familiarity with the tools and an understanding of how to develop a narrative story with all these tools. These are the skill sets needed for various professions in journalism and media.

For this semester,, let's look at these next 16 weeks as a time to create a video you are proud of, a design element that enhances a solid story and a basic website that will impress a potential employer. It is a lot to cover, but if we take it step-by-step ([see course calendar](#)), we can do this!

## Meeting time/dates

**Time:** 9:30-10:45 am

**Days:** Tuesday and Thursday (January 19 to May 4)

Our class will meet in **synchronous LIVE sessions** at this URL ([go.unc.edu/121class](https://go.unc.edu/121class). password: **MEJO121**).

## Asynchronous class meetings

At this point in the semester, you should plan on attending all class meetings live from January 19 through May 4. There may be occasions, however, where pre-recorded content is available in lieu of attending class. You will be informed about these days in advance and links to pre-recorded content will be provided.

## Instructor

Associate Professor Laura Ruel

[lrue@unc.edu](mailto:lrue@unc.edu)

919-448-8864

**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 9-10:30 am EST, and by appointment

**Zoom office:** [go.unc.edu/rue](https://go.unc.edu/rue) (password: UNC)

## Required supplies

There are no textbooks for this course. However, video recording supplies, a domain name and server space are among the required purchases. These supplies include:

### Smartphone

For your video assignments, you will record with your smartphone. Please contact the instructor if you do not own a smartphone. **NOTE:** If you will be using an iPhone 7 or higher, you also need a **3.5 mm headphone jack adapter** (usually included with your iPhone purchase) to be able to use the lavalier microphone.



### Headphones

Must have a standard mini jack (1/8"). Any **wired** (non-Bluetooth / not wireless) headphones you might use with your phone will work. [Here is a recommended option](#), although standard earbuds with a mini jack also will work.

### Wired lavalier microphone with headphone monitoring

A lavalier will be needed for the best audio quality. You will need to purchase a lavalier microphone with **headphone monitoring** (pictured below). Here is the link to an option on Amazon: [Lavalier microphone](#). The cost for this one is approximately \$25. [Additional microphone option here](#).

### Tripod with smartphone mount

You will need to purchase a tripod and mount for your phone. Cost: About \$20. You may find an [example here](#) (pictured below).



### Domain name & hosting space.

You will need to purchase these products for the Web portion of this class for approximately \$20-\$30 for your first year. More details will be provided in class. You should not purchase this before receiving in-class instruction about this. *If you already have these products, you may reuse them for this class. Please inform the instructor if this is the case.* **Also note that it is your responsibility to cancel this service once the course is complete.**

## Recommended Supplies

**FilMiCPro app (optional for Spring 2021):** The FilMiC Pro app provides the features of professional video cameras for iPhone and Android. The cost of this app is \$14.99.

More information here: <https://www.filmicpro.com/>

*When shooting videos (with or without FilMiC Pro), students will be expected to create high-quality videos; 1080p HD, good lighting and colors, and clear audio with adequate levels. Should a student choose not to use the FilMiC Pro app, it is their responsibility to achieve the expected standards using only their phone camera.*

## **SB external hard drive / flash drive**

**Specs:** Minimum 64GB flash drive, must be USB 3.0 for fastest file transfer speeds. *Recommended* to invest in a larger external hard drive to backup all files for this course and others.

[Click here for a link to a recommended flash drive \(64GB\).](#)

[Click here for a link to a recommended flash drive \(128GB\).](#)

[Click here for a link to a recommended external hard drive \(2TB\).](#)

## **Required Digital Access**

### **LinkedIn Learning**

Follow the instructions here to access LinkedIn Learning with your onyen. <https://software.sites.unc.edu/linkedin/>

### **Adobe Premiere**

Follow the instructions here to create an Adobe ID and install the required software for free:

<http://software.sites.unc.edu/software/adobe-creative-cloud/>

### **YouTube or Vimeo account**

You must use or create an account to publish your videos for this course. A YouTube account is included with any Gmail account, and there is no storage limit on YouTube accounts. A Vimeo account is free to create, but free accounts have restrictions on the total GB you can upload each week. Publishing your work on YouTube is easy and free, but Vimeo can have a more professional reputation.

You can download some of the required software to your own laptops for the projects required in this course. You may find that Adobe Premiere runs slowly on your laptop, depending on its hardware, so take this into account when planning your projects.

## **Course Goals and Accreditation Requirements**

The School of Media and Journalism accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML - vals&comps>.

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies, but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we place our emphasis on the last six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

In particular, we focus on the last competency listed, regarding the application of tools and technologies.

- You will become familiar with the functions and limits of the equipment and software introduced in class.
- You will develop an understanding of how to evaluate technical quality and story flow.
- You will be able to plan and execute a short, clean, logically-flowing video product.
- You will be able to understand the tools needed to create a graphic story
- You will be able to use a variety of strategies and tools to create a standards-based website .

## **Attendance**

Class will be handled like a job. You are responsible for being in class on time each day. Consistent late arrivals or early departures will be reflected in your in-class exercise grade. Timeliness matters in media and journalism.

**Attendance will be taken at the start of each live online class session, and occasionally at the end of each class.**

Similar to having personal time off (PTO) at work, you are allotted TWO absences without need to justify or explain your reasons for the missed classes. Similar to extending beyond one's allotted PTO, any additional absence past the two allotted days will result in a half-grade deduction (e.g., a B becomes a B- at three absences) for each additional day of absence. As this course is project-based and cumulative in its delivery of technical information, it is important to attend each scheduled course day to receive new information, work collaboratively and practice new skills. Students who choose to miss class are responsible for understanding the TOPICS taught that day. Bottom line, attendance is required.

**NOTE:** I do understand that -- in the age of COVID and remote learning -- connectivity issues and other problems may arise. I request that you keep in touch with me when these issues occur. In the case of any unforeseen circumstances or emergencies, please notify the instructor as soon as you can.

## Late Assignments

Completing assignments past the deadline will immediately put you behind in this fast-paced class. Accepting late assignments also is unfair to the students who have sacrificed to turn their work in on time. An automatic 10 percent deduction will be applied to any assignment turned in after the time it is due, provided the assignment is turned in on the same day it is due. An additional 10 percent deduction will be applied for each subsequent 24 hours that pass after the due date/time (i.e., 10 percent is taken off for each day).

## Independent Online Research

To teach you the necessary software tools to create your stories, this course will require learning with online tutorials and videos. As beginners, it is inevitable that questions and technical problems will arise as you work with these tools. It is also not possible to cover every detail of a tool through in-class demos or assigned videos. The assignments will require you to learn how to learn new things independently, outside of direct instruction. While your instructor is always available to answer your questions and clarify any topic, this course will challenge you to troubleshoot your technical problems and figure out answers to your questions through independent online research. Before asking your question a technical or software-related question like "how do I..." or "... isn't working", it is expected that you will research your question online. Invest some time looking at manuals, forums and documentation sites to see if someone else has addressed your question or problem before. If you have conducted independent research online and still can't find your answer, reach out to your instructor through email, in class, or during office hours. In addition to asking your question, share what you learned during your research, a description of your problem, and any relevant screenshots.

## Project Resubmission

The final project will contain your previous video project. This project will not be re-evaluated in the final project grade. However, you may choose to respond to graded feedback on the video project, and re-submit the updated version along with the rest of your final project -- along with a detailed log of your edits, an updated reflection on the project, and how you responded to the feedback. If you meet these requirements, I will re-grade your project, and I will update the score of that project to be an average of your new (hopefully-improved) score with the previously assigned score.

## Grading

Work is graded according to the highest professional standards. Grades in percentages are:

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A = 93-100%,</li><li>● A- = 90-92%,</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● B+ = 87-89%,</li><li>● B = 83-86%,</li></ul> |
|---|--|

- **B-** = 80-82%,
- **C+** = 77-79%,
- **C** = 73-76%,

- **C-** = 70-72%,
- **D** = 60-69%,
- **F** = 59% or below

Below is a guideline for how grades are described within this course:

- **A:** nearly perfect in execution, quality of work is professional and exceptional
- **A-:** work is impressive in quality, very few problems in any area
- **B+:** very good performance, did more than required, might struggle in one area only
- **B:** solid effort, met all requirements, solid application of skill
- **B-:** needs a bit more polish, pretty good handle on things overall
- **C+:** good in one area of work, but consistent problems with another area
- **C:** followed instructions, seems to understand basics but did the minimum to pass
- **C-:** has glimpses of potential in a limited range
- **D:** did not demonstrate understanding of the basics but tried
- **F:** did not demonstrate effort or understanding of basics, incomplete

## Grading Criteria

<b>In-class participation</b> (see description below)	<b>5%</b>
<b>Video course work</b> (includes 3 exercises and a video project)	<b>45%</b>
<b>Web/Design course work</b> (includes 1 graphic exercise and a portfolio)	<b>30%</b>
<b>Final project</b> (final web page design and story/package integration)	<b>20%</b>

**In-class participation** is your engagement and contribution within the scope of each live class period, including arriving to class on time, asking questions, offering insights during class discussions, sharing feedback with peers, and general engagement with the material during our live class sessions. The quality of your participation will be assigned a letter grade based on the guidelines above at the end of the course. You may check in with your instructor at any time during the course for individual feedback about the quality of your participation.

**Exercises** are assigned to familiarize you with skills needed to complete the projects and are graded on completion and execution quality. Engagement with the exercises and quizzes will prepare you to achieve better work on your projects.

**The video & web projects** are assigned for you to demonstrate a mastery of the skills and storytelling techniques learned in class and with the exercises.

The **final project** is an integrated package delivered via text, design and video and housed on your portfolio website. The package must contain integrated elements (story text, video and any additional elements you may choose).

## Honor Code

It is expected that each student in this class will conduct him/herself within the guidelines of the Honor System (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high level of honesty and integrity that this University demands. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under

the Honor Code, please feel able to see the course instructor, speak with the senior associate dean of undergraduate studies in this school, and/or speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

## Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem, whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness. Please feel able to contact the course instructor as soon as you perceive any warning signs of things that might adversely affect your class performance or final grade.

## Diversity

The [University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination](#) is outlined at on [UNC EOC webpage](#). UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

In this course, you are encouraged to represent diverse populations, diverse viewpoints, and diversity of perspective in your own work. You are also asked to be sensitive to the various backgrounds, perspectives, origins, and situations represented by the students in the course, the students, faculty, and staff at this university, and the residents of this state.

## Special Needs

The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) Office. In the first instance please visit their website at <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, call the office at 919-962-8300, or email [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu). A student is welcome to initiate the registration process at any time. However, the process can take time. ARS is particularly busy in the run-up to Finals and during Finals. Students submitting Self-ID forms at that time are unlikely to have accommodations set until the following semester.

Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

## Semester topics

Links to online readings, viewings, presentations, assignments and rubrics @ [go.unc.edu/121materials](http://go.unc.edu/121materials).

### UNIT 1: *Weeks of January 17 through February 14*

- Welcome, understanding course requirements.
- Thinking about final project ideas.
- Working in Adobe Premiere
- Audio and video storytelling
- Interviewing, a-roll, b-roll, sequences, etc.
- Final video project

**UNIT 2: *Weeks of February 21 through March 14***

- Researching and developing graphic story components.
- Structuring your ideas.
- Principles of design
- Final graphic design work

**UNIT 3: *Weeks of March 21 through April 4***

- Creating and designing websites
- Understanding how the web works
- Learning Wordpress.

**UNIT 4: FINAL PROJECT: *Weeks of April 11 through May 2***

- Creating your final project page from start to finish.
- Building an effective multimedia package
- Packaging your materials
- Selling and pitching your story

**FINAL PROJECT PITCH PRESENTATIONS** 8-11 am on Tuesday, May 11