

INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL STORYTELLING

UNC-Chapel Hill | Hussman School of Journalism and Media | MEJO 121 |

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 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 media and journalism.

Classroom and meeting time

TR 12:30 - 1:45 pm
Carroll Hall Room 268

Instructor

Scott Geier

scgeier@live.unc.edu

Office Hours: MWF 12-4 pm or by appointment

Required Supplies

There are no textbooks for this class, but there are required purchases. Be aware that financial aid funds can be used for these items. If you believe you will have a challenge with these purchases, please contact Stephanie Willen Brown (swbrown@unc.edu), the director of the Hussman School's Park Library.

Your required supplies include:

Smartphone



For your video assignments, you will record with your smartphone. Please let the instructor know 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 and pictured at left) to be able to use the lavalier microphone.

MoviePro app (iPhone) or ProShot (Android): I highly recommend MoviePro (if you're using an iPhone) or ProShot (if you're on Android) for shooting your videos. These apps allow you to shoot 24 frames per second and give you much greater control over the video features in your smartphone. Cost: \$7.99 for MoviePro \$6.99 for ProShot.

Note: If you use the built-in smartphone camera instead of one of the two apps listed above, you will not be able to adjust audio levels on the fly or see the levels in an audio meter. This will likely result in your audio being too loud and distorted, and that will ruin your work. The built-in camera app on iPhone only shoots 24 fps at 4K resolution, so the files will be huge and quickly fill your storage.

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).



Many tripod/phone mount packages now also come with an adjustable **ring light**. The light will improve your A-roll interview shots, so if you don't already have a tripod, I recommend that you get one that comes with the light. Here's an example.

Hardship

Students with financial hardship can borrow some equipment from the Park Library, including an iPod, lav mic, tripod, and smartphone mount. Please let me know if you need assistance. Unfortunately, the library cannot loan out laptops.

Domain name & hosting space.

You will need to purchase these products for the Web portion of this class for approximately \$40 for your first year. More details will be provided in class. You should not purchase these items until directed. NOTE: *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.**

Equipment guides

For more information and tutorials related to the 121 class equipment, please see these tutorials on the Park Library website: <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/mejo-equipment-room/videos>

Recommended Supplies

USB 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 Pro

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.

Course Goals and Accreditation

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media 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 will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on the "Professional values and competencies" listed below.

- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Late Assignments

Accepting late assignments is unfair to the students who have sacrificed to turn their work in on time. An automatic **10-point deduction** will be applied to each assignment turned in after the deadline. This deduction applies to the first 24-hour period. After that point, you will lose **an additional 15 points per day**. For example, if an assignment is due at 2:00 pm on Monday and you submit at 2:05 pm on Tuesday, you will have lost 25 points.

Extensions will only be granted because of extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness, etc.), and you must notify me as soon as you are aware of the problem. Your workload -- either in this class or in combination with others -- is not an extenuating circumstance.

Independent Online Research

To teach you the necessary software tools to create your stories, this course will combine in-class demonstrations 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 “why 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.

Grading

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A = 93-100%, • A- = 90-92%, • B+ = 87-89%, • B = 83-86%, • B- = 80-82%, • C+ = 77-79%, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C = 73-76%, • C- = 70-72%, • D+ = 67-69%, • D = 60-66% • 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 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 an understanding of the basics but tried
- **F:** did not demonstrate effort or understanding of basics, incomplete

Grading Criteria

| | |
|---|------------|
| In-class participation (see description below) | 5% |
| Video course work (includes exercises, quizzes, and video project) | 45% |
| Web/Design course work (includes exercises, quizzes and portfolio project) | 30% |
| Final project (includes final web page design and story/package integration) | 20% |

In-class participation is your contribution within the scope of each class period, including arriving to live or online class meetings on time, asking questions, offering insights during class discussions, sharing feedback with peers, and general engagement with the material. 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 and quizzes 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).

Please note that the Canvas system **does not round up** (e.g. an 89.9 is a B+), so neither do I. The letter grade you see in Sakai will be the one transferred into ConnectCarolina at the end of the semester.

Also, as a matter of policy, **I do not re-grade** individual assignments except in cases of clerical error. If this were a workplace, we could collaborate on your work and iterate through several drafts. But this is an educational environment that requires an accurate assessment of your understanding

and abilities. I will teach the material, provide opportunities to practice the skills with exercises, and offer help outside of class, before each deadline. After the deadline, I will grade what you've submitted, and that number is final.

Also, while there is some element of subjectivity in any creative endeavor, please note that I do not grade your work based on my personal tastes. Rather, I approach the situation as if I were your editor at a reputable media outlet. I consider the audience's needs and interests when assessing your work, and grade it based on well-established principles that we discuss in class (e.g., composition, lighting, narrative structure).

Finally, please keep in mind that digital content creation requires resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to try to solve problems on your own. I take these factors into account when considering your participation grade.

Attendance

University Policy:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Class Policy:

I will understand if you must miss class for a reason other than one of the two listed above (e.g., job interview), but please let me know as soon as you realize that you will be absent. And please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence.

We will be attending class in person. Zoom is primarily for recording purposes, and you should only attend remotely when you cannot be in the classroom. Please let me know as soon as you become aware that you will need to be on Zoom. **Attending via Zoom without notice or explanation will adversely affect your participation grade.**

Honor Code

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the

high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Julie Dixon-Green, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Generative AI

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are now widely available and incredibly powerful. These new tools are important for you to master; however, they must be used appropriately and ethically, and you must understand their limitations. The university's campus-wide guidelines for AI use are available [here](#).

MEJO 121 presents unique opportunities and challenges for AI use. For example, during production of your micro-documentary in our class, you will be asked to read the transcript from a long, often rambling interview and condense it into a 90-second "radio cut," e.g., a series of interview soundbites that tell the story and evoke a theme, with a hook, middle and conclusion. ChatGPT can essentially do this for you. But chances are, it will not produce results worthy of a good grade (yet). This is because AI bots are not sentient, they do not have emotions, and they do not understand what they are creating. So can you use them? Absolutely. In fact, I encourage it. But AI should be used honestly and ethically. In short, AI should only help you think, not do the thinking for you. And you must document your use of AI when submitting your work. For example, you might add the following caveat in your Canvas submission: "ChatGPT was used to generate ideas for the radio cut and B-roll shots."

Also, please do not copy and paste any personal data into an AI chatbot while working on your projects. This includes any information that might identify yourself or your interview subject.

Syllabus Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

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.

ARS

The University of North Carolina at 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 barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Title IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

Diversity

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion [mission and vision statements](#) with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on [prohibiting harrassment and discrimination](#). In summary, 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. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

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. 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.

SCHEDULE - FALL 2023

Note: Schedule is subject to change.

WEEK 1 – Premiere Pro basics & media forms

WEEK 2 – Composition & the Documentary Workflow

WEEK 3 – Lighting & Audio

WEEK 4 – Finding the Story & Finding the Theme

WEEK 5 - Radio Cuts & Types of Micro-documentaries

WEEK 6 - B-roll

WEEK 7 - Essential Editing Techniques

WEEK 8 - Music, Lower Thirds & Posters

WEEK 9 - Final video lab time

PROJECT 1 - Final Video - DUE

WEEK 10 - Digital Packages, Domains & Web Hosting

WEEK 11 - HTML & CSS

WEEK 12 - CSS & Putting Your Work on the Internet

WEEK 13 - WordPress & CRAP Design

WEEK 14 - Infographics & Branding

WEEK 15 - Final Project lab time

PROJECT 2 - Portfolio Website - DUE LAST DAY OF CLASS

FINAL PROJECT (Digital Package) - Due at final exam period on May 3 at 12:00 pm