

INTRODUCTION TO

DIGITAL STORYTELLING

MEJO 121.9 | MW 3:30 - 4:45 pm | 268 CA | UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media | SP 2024

Welcome to this introductory media technology skills class at the 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.

INSTRUCTOR

Parth Shah | shahp@unc.edu

Office Hours: By appointment on MW 2-3:30 pm

INSTRUCTION MODE

This course is in-person. If we cannot meet in person, the class will continue online via Zoom.

REQUIRED MATERIAL

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, you may be able to borrow some equipment from school. 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.

Tripod with smartphone mount

You will need to purchase a tripod and mount for your phone. Here is one example: [54 inch Tripod with Phone Mount](#).

If you have access to a regular camera tripod you can purchase a [Phone Mount](#) only.

Wired Lavalier Microphone

A lavalier will be needed for the best audio quality. You will need to purchase a lavalier microphone with headphone monitoring (pictured below). Using a wired or wireless mic is up to you. Here are a couple of options on Amazon: [Wired Lav Mic](#) + [Wireless Lav Mic](#).

If using a wired Lav mic with iPhone 7 or higher, you will also need a 3.5 mm headphone jack adapter, unless your mic uses lightening option. For this adapter, please ONLY purchase the Apple brand. The off-brand adapters usually don't work.



Web Hosting & Domain Name

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. (After this class, it is your responsibility to cancel this service.)

REQUIRED DIGITAL ACCESS

Adobe Premiere Pro

Follow the instructions here to create an Adobe ID with your UNC email and install the required software for free: <http://software.sites.unc.edu/software/adobe-creative-cloud/> - This process may take a few days; you may need to contact IT and since the campus IT is busy at the beginning of the semester, I strongly encourage you to get access to the software during the first week of classes.

YouTube or Vimeo Account

You will submit all the video assignments **as a link** not as a file. To do so, you must use an account to publish your videos. You can choose a free youtube or Vimeo account.

REQUIRED COMPUTER SPECS FOR VIDEO EDITING

Students must have a laptop that meets or exceeds [Carolina Computing Initiative](#) minimum specification. The Hussman School's laptop recommendations are available on [MEJO Major Admissions FAQ](#). **Tablets are not suitable for video editing.** Students must be familiar with basics of computer literacy and be comfortable using their laptop's operating systems.

RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES & ACCESS

USB External Hard Drive / Flash Drive

I highly recommend using an external drive for video editing. Editing directly from your laptop risks running into performance and storage issues. I also encourage using a second external drive to backup all your files consistently. **Specs: Minimum 64GB, must be USB 3.0 or USB-C for fast file transfer speeds.** Examples: **External hard drive (1TB)**. (For laptop with only USB-C ports, you will need a [USB C to USB Adapter](#).)

LinkedIn Learning

Use your onyen to access LinkedIn Learning: <https://software.sites.unc.edu/linkedin/>.

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.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

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).

Please be aware that you are bound by the [Honor Code](#) when making a request for a university approved absence. (source: <http://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/>)

Class Policy:

Attending classes and participating in a collaborative learning environment is critical. The primary method of instruction for the course is in person. Therefore, students must attend classes in person and on time to be counted as present. Zoom is used to record presentation sessions to provide additional asynchronous learning material available to all students.

Outside legitimate reasons, illness or emergencies, you are allowed TWO Unexcused absences. If you miss a session, please check the course schedule, watch the class recording, and review the asynchronous material.

INDEPENDENT LEARNING

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 impossible to cover every detail of a tool through in-class demos. Projects will require learning new things independently, outside of direct instruction. This is especially important about coding and WordPress. Searching and finding specific codes and troubleshooting are part of the learning experience. Please review the presentation documents, recorded class videos, and invest some time researching your question online before asking for help. In addition to asking your question, share what you learned during your research, a description of your problem, and any relevant screenshots. On the other hand, after spending a couple of hours on a technical problem, please take a break and ask for my help before investing more time on the issue.

GENERATIVE AI

The University has a set of [guidelines for the use of Generative AI](#). **Not following these guidelines may be a reportable violation to the UNC Honor Court.** *This section is from university guidelines.

Generative AI tools are widely available. **Be honest** about using them for any of your assignments. Keep in mind that **AI has limitations**: AI generated results lacks context, can be inaccurate or nonsensical even though it appears otherwise. The AI output may contain biases and AI raises a wide range of intellectual property concerns.

Usage Philosophy:

1. AI should help you think. Not think for you. Use AI to generate ideas or troubleshoot.
2. Use AI responsibly and ethically.
3. You are responsible for your final product.
4. The use of AI must be open and documented. When submitting the assignment acknowledge the use of AI.
Example: "I used ChatGPT to trouble shoot my CSS code for this assignment."
5. Do not enter confidential or personal Data into AI tools.

6. These guidelines are in effect unless I give you specific guidelines for an assignment.

It is your responsibility to review the full [Student Generative AI Usage guidelines](#), [available here](#), and carefully follow them correctly.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING POLICIES

Submission Format

Unless stated otherwise, all **video assignments must be** uploaded to YouTube/Vimeo and **submitted as a link**. Do not attempt to upload video files to the assignment folders, email them, or share them using file-transfer services.

Explanation Of Creative Work Assessment

Your grade will be based on objective and subjective criteria as it is in the industry where your delivered product, and not your efforts, are evaluated by supervisors and clients. Creative work is subjective and many of its components cannot be simply checked off. Parts of the assessment process will always be subjective, and learning to accept the outcome when it is not what we had hoped for is a necessary skill. I encourage you to shift your focus from grades to learning. The goal is not the grade but recognizing strengths and weaknesses and working toward growing as a professional.

In my classes, no assessment or grade starts from 100. I do not award or deduct points. Your work earns credit for each requirement to the culmination of 100.

Receiving Feedback

Class workshops, critique sessions, lab times, and ungraded exercises are opportunities to receive feedback and improve your work. Please attend these sessions to ask questions. I give improvement suggestions **up to 24 hours before the original due date**. After that, I will only help with technical issues. Please do not ask for your work to be reviewed for last-minute feedback before submission. [The graded assignments are like exams. They will not be pre-graded or re-graded.](#)

Late Assignments

All assignments have a 12-hour grace period unless stated otherwise. If the assignment is due by 11:59 pm, you may turn it in before noon on the following day without penalty. After the grace period, late assignments are subject **to an automatic 10% deduction per week. Assignments turned in later than a week won't receive comprehensive feedback.**

Assignments and drafts due at the start of the class do not have a grace period and must be on time.

You are always welcome to discuss legitimate circumstances. However, receiving an extension doesn't mean the work will be graded with no penalty. That wouldn't be fair to other students.



GRADING SCALE

Work is graded according to the highest professional standards. Each major assignment has an assignment sheet/rubric. Grades in percentages are:

- A = 93—100
- A- = 90—92.9
- B+ = 87—89.9
- B = 83—86.9
- B- = 80—82.9
- C+ = 77—79.9
- C = 73—76.9
- C- = 70—72.9
- D = 63—69.9
- F = 62 and below

GRADING CRITERIA

	E&P: Engagement & Professionalism	5%
	Exercises	5%
Video	A1: Video Project – Radio Cut	15%
	A2: Video Project – Final Cut	30%
Web	A3: Basic Coding (HTML & CSS)	10%
	A4: Portfolio Project (WordPress)	20%
Final	A5: Final Project (Digital Story)	15%
		100%

E&P: Attendance, engagement, participation, work ethics, ungraded exercises, and completing the course evaluations affect the E&P grade.

Note: The class sessions are designed for in-person, hands-on exercises, and collaborative learning. Only in-person attendance counts as present unless the session is designed as online for everyone.

You will earn an E&P grade at the end of the semester.

Exercises: Low-stake exercises designed for students to practice, receive feedback, and improve their work before moving on to major assignments.

Assignments(A1-A5): All major project coursework builds upon the previous assignment. Homework and exercises are designed to practice your skills and receive feedback. The major graded assignments require a mastery of the techniques learned in class. Checking the requirement boxes is sufficient to pass but does not demonstrate excellence. Excellent work shows high levels of engagement with the topic and exceeds expectations. Please review the grade definitions for each assignment.

A note on Final Exam: This course does not have a final exam. Instead, **A5: Final Project (Digital Story)** serves as such and is due on the scheduled Final Exam Day.

HONOR CODE

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.

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.

(source: <https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement>)

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.

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 STATEMENT

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 harassment 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.

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.

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.

SYLLABUS CHANGES

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