

# **MCOM 4365 Online Journalism**

**Fall 2017 | Monday -7:50 | DRCB205 | 3 hours**

## **Instructor**

Andrea Alfaro

## **General Information**

### **Description**

### **Phone/Email**

208-357-8299 aya003@shsu.edu

### **Office Location & Hours**

Dan Rather 111 | M 3-5 or by appointment

In today's digital world, news organizations are seeking talented journalists who can produce an interactive and engaging multimedia package including articles, videos, pictures, graphics and social media. This course will provide you with the knowledge and experience in producing the content necessary to be successful in online journalism. The course is designed to allow students to gain hands-on experience in the field. Students are expected to read the textbook and material prior to class and be prepared to submit content to The Houstonian or another qualified news organization.

### **Objectives**

After successful completion of this course, you should know how to:

- Produce various types of online journalism content
- Use a Content Management System
- Write blogs
- Optimize your writing for Search Engines
- Use basic HTML
- Use social media

- Cover an event live through online journalism
- Create interactive multimedia packages
- Produce and edit photographs and videos
- Create slideshows
- Tell data-driven stories through the use of graphics
- Research and find information about stories online

## **Course Materials**

### **Required Materials**

A flash drive with 4gb of storage capacity

Micro SD memory card

### **Required Text**

**Online Journalism: The Essential Guide** First edition, Steve Hill and Paul Lashman, 2014, ISBN-13 978- 1446207352

**The Associated Press Stylebook** (any edition between 2013-2015)

## **Course Guidelines and Assessments**

### **Course Structure**

This course consists of in-class and take-home exercises, class presentation and four projects.

As a journalism student, it is important to be aware of the major news events of your city, state, country and world.

Each project will be discussed in detail at the time the project is assigned.

### **Grade Weight**

Attendance & Participation – 200 points

Class Exercises – 150 points

Class Presentation – 75 points

Multimedia Final Project – 200 points

Facebook Live Story – 100 points

Weekly Writing Assignment – 150 points

Audio/Visual Story – 75 points

## Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Point Ranges
A+	990-1000
A	910-989
A-	900-909
B+	890-899
B	810-889
B-	800-809
C+	790-799
C	710-789
C-	700-709
D+	690-699
D	610-679
D-	600-609
F	0-599

SHSU Student Handbook of University Policy states that regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at Sam Houston State University and that it is expected that each faculty member will keep a record of student attendance. A student will not be penalized for three absences or six tardies (defined as entering class after roll has been taken) when examinations or other assigned work has not been missed.

**The Department of Mass Communications has adopted the policy that every absence or two tardies over the allotted three absences or six tardies will result in the loss of one letter grade. For example, if your class grade is a B and you have five absences your final course grade will be a D.**

Additionally:

- Exceptions are for documented illnesses or family emergencies or for students attending SHSU activities in an official capacity. Documentation for illness or emergency should be presented upon the student's return to the classroom. Documentation for activities should be presented prior to the absence and contain the signature of the SHSU employee sponsor.

- Each semester hour of credit entails at least two additional hours of work outside the classroom per week: so for the three-hour course, you should expect to do at least an additional six hours of work per week beyond class time. This is on average; some weeks may require more, others less.

**Class Announcements** Class announcements will be emailed to your SHSU email account and posted on Blackboard. You will be responsible for any messages you miss. **Deadlines** Failure to meet assigned deadlines will negatively affect grades. Multiple deadline failures will result in failing the course.

## **SHSU Policies**

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honest and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of university policy, see: <https://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>

### **Rules of Conduct**

Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Please turn off or mute your cell phone before class begins. Students are prohibited from using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading, sleeping, eating and talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a directive to leave class or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with University policy.

### **Student Absences of Religious Holy Days Policy**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religion holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911(a)(2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation

under Section 11.20...” A student whose absence is excused under the subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<https://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/0953c7d0-7c04-4b29-a3fc-3bf0738e87d8.pdf>

## **Student with Disabilities Policy**

If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential.

NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<https://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

# Schedule

## Week 1 August 28th

Introduction

Syllabus

Assignments

Portfolio Instructions

Class Presentations signing sheet

Weekly writing assignment

Facebook Live Assignment

***Class Exercise:*** Building the online portfolio

## Week 2 September 4<sup>th</sup>

No Class – Labor Day

## Week 3 September 11th

Chapter 1 Foundations of Online Journalism

Chapter 2 Understanding Your Users Introduction

Ch. 3 Writing for the Web Introduction

***Class Exercise:*** About me page

***Due:*** Online Portfolio Website

Week 4 September 18<sup>th</sup>

Ch. 6 Working with Video

*Class Exercise:* Video shoot and editing during class, completed video due next week

*Assignment:* Multimedia Project, due **October 16<sup>th</sup>**

\*\*Week 5 September 25<sup>th</sup>

Ch. 7 Investigative Reporting

Ch. 10 Writing, reporting & Freelance

*Class Exercise:* Story writing

*Assignment:* Continue working on the Multimedia Project

*Due:* Edited Class Exercise Video Clip

Week 6 October 2<sup>nd</sup>

Lab Day

Work on the Multimedia Project

Week 7 October 9<sup>th</sup>

Lab Day

Work on the Multimedia Project

\*\*Week 8 October 16th

Ch. 4 Telling the Story with Images

Photo Editing

***Due:*** Multimedia Project due, presentation of the project for feedback

***Class Exercise:*** Professional photo taken and editing

***Due:*** Bring an un-edited picture of you next week

Week 9 October 23rd

Ch. 8 Social Media

Ch. 11 Outputting for Web, Smartphone, and Tablet Introduction

***Assignment:*** Facebook Live Assignment, **Due November 7<sup>th</sup> election day**

Bring an audio recorder or headphones with recorder to class next week

***Due:*** Edited photo in the about me page

Week 10 October 30th

Ch. 5 Using Audio and Podcasts

***Class Exercise:*** Audio recording and editing during class

***Assignment:*** Audio Slideshow, **Due November 13th**

Week 11 November 6th

Ch. 9 Blogging

Ch. 14 How the Internet Transformed Journalism



***Class Exercise:*** Time to work on Audio Slideshow during class period

***Due:*** Facebook Live assignment due MIDNIGHT, posts should be public and hash tag properly used

Week 12 November 13th

Ch. 12 Ethics and Good practice

13 Law and Regulation

***Due:*** Presentation of Audio Slideshow to class

*Thanksgiving Break 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>*

Week 13 November 27th

Lab day

Week 14 December 4th

Last Day of Class

***Due:*** Presentation of portfolio, portfolio needs to be completed and weekly writing assignments completed

## MCOM 4365 – Live Coverage Assignment –

### Due on November 6th Facebook & Twitter

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In this assignment you will provide live coverage while an event is taking place

Your live coverage should provide a near real-time, accurate account of the event from the point of view of the reporter.

Providing live coverage requires you to give a “play-by-play” account of the most important action that is unfolding at the event, provide context from research done before the event, and moderate comments from users who are following your event.

To complete the assignment:

- The biggest challenge is paying attention to the event while writing at the same time. Try to learn as much about the event as possible through research and talking to sources. This way you will have a sense of what to expect at the event and give you context to add in between descriptive entries.
- Try to find a location at the event that will not annoy others who may be distracted by your frantic typing or speech

#### Requirements

- Use the (#Hashtag) assigned by instructor
- Prepare to record yourself reporting live from Facebook. Pay close attention to the event. The live recording should take place after the game and report the viewer's reactions of the game. Recording should last min 3 minutes and max 5 minutes.
- Use Twitter throughout the event
- The Hashtag needs to be used the whole time

## MCOM 4365 Online Journalism – Audio Slideshow –

Due November 23th

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Create a two- to three minute audio slideshow about a news event or feature story. If a news event is chosen, the assignment must be turned in as close to the event's occurrence as possible for publication.

You will record either an audio voiceover from a script you write or interviews from subject(s) to create the audio background for your slideshow (or both). You can combine natural sound if you choose. You cannot use music as the primary sound for this slideshow. If music is the primary sound for the slideshow, each student will receive an automatic failing grade. Copyrighted music cannot be used unless written consent is granted from the copyright holder.

You will shoot related photographs to create a visual montage that coordinates with the audio. You cannot use photographs that you have not taken as your primary source of photographs. Copyrighted images cannot be used unless written consent is granted from the copyright holder.

Follow the six-step process from your class notes to complete the audio slideshow:

1. Form the idea
2. Write an outline for the script or determine who to interview/what to ask
3. Shoot and edit the photos (20-30 per minute, close-ups/mid-range/long)
4. Revise/edit the script
5. Record and edit the audio
6. Combine the audio with the pictures using Soundslides (free demo available online, and there is a full version available at the Houstonian newsroom).

To finish the project, export it as a movie or YouTube link and **attach all audio and visual files to Blackboard.**

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News organizations that have a large database of slideshows for inspiration:

- New York Times [http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/1-in-8-million/index.html#/joseph\\_cotton](http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/1-in-8-million/index.html#/joseph_cotton)
- Mishoka's story <https://vimeo.com/7868563>
- BBC: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/8518479.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/8518479.stm)
- CBC News <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/audio-slideshow-1.913828>

## Online Writing Assignment – Due December 4th

Write TEN online posts under the following guidelines:

- All posts must be newsworthy and timely.
- All posts need to include hyperlinks to information found online
- At least two (5) post needs to include embedded video
- At least one post needs to consist of new information you found about a story
  - a. You can find new information from:
    - i. Talking to a source with knowledge of the story
    - ii. Finding additional context from doing research online
- You cannot write more than two posts a day or the same week.

To complete the assignment: On the due date, submit the headlines for all stories completed in Blackboard

Please send topic proposals to instructor to be approved. This assignment can be started in advanced, but needs to be completed by due date

## MCOM 4365 Online Journalism – Multimedia Project –

Due October 16th

For this project, you will be creating a multimedia news story that combines digital audio-video, photographic images, and text.

The following points will help manage the process of creating a multimedia package.

- Discuss story ideas that can be practically done over the remainder of the semester. The story's main focus needs to be robust enough to be conveyed through audio-video, photographs and text without being redundant or overly repetitive. It has to be local so that your group can gather the appropriate materials.
- Decide what nonlinear story model best fits the story (hub and spoke, multi-nodal, decision tree/algorithm) and decide what aspects of the story should be captured through audio-video, photographs/graphics, and text.
- Collect the story elements. The class will have access to HD digital video cameras, tripods, DSLRs and audio recorders that can be checked out through the department. Give yourself plenty of time to manage the request for the equipment. Note: you will need your own SD Memory Cards.
- Create rough storyboards based upon the Flash template you selected or your own Flash design. You should have a storyboard for each page/frame of your project. Use the Storyboard template attached to this assignment sheet. Plan the storyboards in conjunction with the points above.
- Edit the story elements and put the story elements into Flash. This is a project for the web, which means you need to make sure you are optimizing images and videos so that you get the best quality at the lowest file size.
- Final Cut Pro for video editing is available in the editing booths and Mac lab on the third floor of Dan Rather. Adobe Premier for video editing is available in all PC labs. Microphones and professional audio recorders are available for voice over narration from the Dan Rather equipment room.

The final project will be turned into Blackboard by the due date.