Advanced Media Workshop
Building a New Product: From Idea to Reality
4310:0001

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
The University of Iowa
Fall 2015

INSTRUCTORS: Professor Stephen G. Bloom and Forbes Chief Product Officer Lewis D’Vorkin

OFFICE AND HOURS: Bloom: Adler Journalism Building (AJB), Room W-313; Wednesday 2 p.m. — 5 p.m., or by appointment; D’Vorkin: by appointment.

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CLASS LOCATION AND TIMES: E-254 AJB, 5 – 8:20 p.m., Tuesday

CLASS GREETINGS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:
You are the chosen ones. Each of you has been handpicked to be a part of a new course team-taught by two seasoned journalists. Both instructors are absolute and complete website/media junkies. We’re suckers for riveting, future-forward websites that seek to move journalism to the next level and beyond. We go weak at the knees in the presence of smart, irreverent, prescient prognosticators of a profession that is changing minute-by-minute, day-by-day. The two instructors are hybrids. Trained as print journalists, both have worked for some of the largest media companies in the nation. They now find themselves in the position of saying, “We told you so!” For a long, long time, both instructors have realized there was no long-term future in paper-based print media. Conventional media are yesteryear’s media. Television (as we know it), paper-based magazines and newspapers are woefully antiquated; they appeal to an old, soon-to-be dead demographic.

But journalism is still very alive and very well. Today, there are more journalistic outlets than ever before in the history of the world. Journalism today is vibrant. It is exciting, bold, in-your-face, cutting-edge (and edgy), entertaining and informative. We are very much entering a golden age of journalism.

Is there a disconnect between the doom and gloom of old-time journalists and the fast and furious vision of today’s content providers.

Yes!

This course is meant to exploit that disconnect. And to place select students at the forefront of what is happening in journalism today — and tomorrow.

Storytelling is the oldest art form we humans know. Storytelling is still with us. Look around and notice what everyone is doing constantly: text-messaging stories. These stories may be short and abbreviated (some as few as ten characters), and they have become increasingly visual. They are told in multiple platforms. Storytelling is evolving, yes, but it flourishing all around us. That is exciting.
During the upcoming semester, we will harness students’ abilities to tell stories. We may tell these stories differently from how you’re accustomed to telling them, but we will still impart vital information, and impart it — we hope — with verve, panache and precision.

And isn’t that what great storytelling and journalism have always been all about?

Even though all the enrolled students are journalism majors, students will likely be entering a wholly new frontier of journalism in this course. Fasten your seatbelts.

By the end of the course, the instructors hope students will have created a prototype product for Forbes Media. To do this, students will have to create from scratch what that product will be, as well as its varying dimensions. Accordingly, the course will have multiple components. We likely will break into teams, based on student interest and expertise. Once we all agree on an editorial product, we will have the following tasks to accomplish:

1. Mapping out specifics of synergistic content: its parts and pieces, and how each connects to the other.
2. Format (or formats): podcast, web-based, gaming device, smartphone app, and more.
4. Promotion: partners, sponsors, means of outreach.
5. Distribution: integrating social networks, etc.
7. Metrics of success. PV’s, UV’s, likes, tweets, other stats.

Because we will meet just once a week, only 15 times during the semester, much material will be required to be mastered by students in a relatively short time. The readings are substantial, as are the products we hope students will envision, create, design, pitch, and seek to market and promote. We will front-end the readings, so students will complete four books in the first nine weeks of class. Read carefully, and be fully prepared to apply the wisdom in these books to the assignments at hand. We will also circulate readings, mostly blog posts, throughout the semester. Weeks four through 15 will be labor intensive, as students in their teams pursue creating and tweaking the elements of the product/products we hope to produce. The below breakdown, week-by-week, is by necessity loose. As we move along, we will all agree on tasks, critiques and deadlines. This is an advanced class and the instructors will treat students as such.

A NOTE ON CONTENT:
Since we will be partnering with Forbes Media this semester, we are aiming to develop the kind of product that would likely appeal to Forbes Media viewers. Forbes is about one thing: MONEY. That could broadly be translated into how to earn it, invest it, multiple it, conserve it, appreciate it, spend it, (even lose it). Since we hope to tailor our product towards young men and women 18 – 25, the instructors expect students to bring their own vibrant, personal vantage points to our discussions.

Example: Take one broad content topic relevant to students — careers. Below find a series of stories/applications within that single topic area. Here are examples of what students might want to explore under the topic of careers:

- Job interview dos and don’ts.
- Least profitable jobs: Why?
- Buying the interview suit or outfit.
- “What I didn’t need to learn in college.”
- How to negotiate salary for the first/second job.
- How to ask for a raise/better title/more vacation time.
- Work-time flextime: Is it bogus? How many hours am I actually supposed to work each week?
• Workplace culture & politics: Lessons on how the workplace is very different from college.
• Job benefits: What they mean, which are worth the investment.
• How to cull different job opportunities — social networking vs. person-to-person networking.
• Which jobs websites are worthwhile?
• Informational interviews: How to pursue them.
• Internships/fellowships vs. entry-level jobs: accepting a job that pays less — worth it?
• Crafting a singular and winning resume.
• Writing killer cover letters for the 21st Century.
• How to clean up your personal social-media history.
• Dating at the workplace.
• Living close to work ($$$) or commuting an hour or more for cheap ($): The smart choice.
  Subsets: • How to buy a car.
  • How to negotiate a better price on anything (including your lease).
• What to wear/what not to wear to work?
• Tax time: Now what? H&R Block, TurboTax/Quicken, private accountant.
• Salary: What to expect based on your profession, at 30, 40, 50, 60 years of age.
• Grad School: Worth it? Really?
• Trust: Who gets it in the workplace.
• Mentors: Who, why and how.
• When is it time to look for another job?
• Performance reviews: How to deal with negative ones?
• Curbing envy: When to do when someone else gets what you want.

With the above suggested abbreviated list, students would need to figure out the applications to showcase each: To develop a website, app, podcast, video, etc. And to figure how to blend all segments into one unified entity. Also, to pitch, promote, distribute, market, and pay for whatever the product containing the content will be.

That’s the goal of this course.

To get there, we will wrap two classes into one: a lecture and a seminar. We will spend time discussing the readings, and we will spend time freeform-discussing ideas. We will divide into groups. The main topics of discussions will flow from mutually agreed-upon tasks that students will undertake. In other words, the syllabus is scaffolding upon which to base a series of shifting elements. Note, though: Ten percent of your grade will be based on class participation. This is a small group; we will all be depending on each other for ideas, inspiration, and insight.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All books are available at Prairie Lights Books, in the course-books room, at 15 S. Dubuque Street.

GRADING:
Grading is an inexact science, particularly when it comes to writing. If students are distressed about their grades, please discuss with one of the instructors as the semester progresses. (It’s a good idea to
meet with us, even if you’re not distressed about your grades.) Don’t wait till the last week or the last month. Your assignments will be evaluated on several factors: originality, organization, enterprise, focus, clarity, precision, concision, spelling, punctuation and grammar. Don’t pad your assignments (we will notice). Every single word ought to be essential to the telling of your story. Time and brevity are of the essence.

Based on your performance, we will issue grades three times a semester. After the end of week 5, after week 10, and your final grade at the conclusion of the semester.

Below is a breakdown of standards used in evaluating student work, with pluses/minuses as indicators within each letter range. The designation of A+ will be awarded only in extraordinary cases:

A--Exceptionally well written; arresting and probing, thoroughly researched and analyzed. Publishable as is.

B--Basically clear, cohesive, well thought out and well researched, with minor problems of style and organization. Needs some further revision and/or additional material.

C--Superficial, with organizational, stylistic, punctuation, grammar problems; missing vital detail. A major rewrite and additional research required.

D--Serious problems in both form and content. Requires substantial additional research and thought before a successful rewrite can be attempted.

F--Incomplete, confusing, fatal grammatical and syntactic flaws, which makes the piece unacceptable.

Students should expect to spend at least two hours per week per semester hour preparing for this class and completing assignments. This means eight hours per week. As students prepare for longer, more complicated applications towards the end of the semester, the course workload will incrementally increase. This course is not for slackers.

Exceptional work is expected.

CLASS MANTRAS:
1) CLIPS, CLIPS, CLIPS
By the end of the course, students' work should be good enough to be produced. The bumpy road to employment is to develop an "I can't put this stuff down" portfolio of work published online. Editors seldom hire beginning content producers based on unpublished student articles. This course should help students create a body of work to demonstrate strong skills and the promise of professional excellence.

2) CHECK YOUR EGO AT THE DOOR
Hint: This is not easy. The class is neither therapy nor a love fest. It’s about learning to produce content and selling that content. Talent cannot be taught, but it sure can be nurtured. One of the objectives of this course is to give students the confidence and tools to produce content with clarity, edge, insight, verve, pizzazz, and humor (humor is good). This class aims to set a structure similar to that of the workplace. The process of idea generation, reporting and writing, and producing a viable media product does not take place in a vacuum. Anything that improves product outcomes is welcomed (and cherished) by enterprising content producers. In this class, your editors will be the instructor and fellow students.

Classmates will critique some student work. The idea is to identify what works and help build on the product’s strengths. Then we move to specific suggestions about what can be improved. The process leads to concrete suggestions and a better understanding of your work. We all learn from the process.

OTHER NOTES:
1) This is not a class in journal writing, poetry or creative nonfiction. We’re particularly interested in students presenting well-constructed, provocative, creative, well-reasoned ideas, and then translating those ideas into a sellable product. Students must always be aware of audience; the content producer’s
job is to snare, impress and otherwise wow users by making their products so compelling and vital that users won’t know what came over them as they devour the work. Think about this when tackling assignments.

2) Students must deliver their assignments by deadline — the beginning of the class when the assignment is due. NOTHING LATE. Students should keep a copy of their work. Proofread; use a spell-checker; read the work again. Then read it again. Then again. Polish it. Be your best editor.

3) ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY. IT IS NOT OPTIONAL. YOU MUST ATTEND EACH CLASS. ROLL WILL BE TAKEN. If you must miss a class because of illness, an emergency, or a University-sanctioned activity, you must e-mail Professor Bloom prior to the beginning of class. No kidding. If you miss two classes without notifying Professor Bloom, you are courting disaster. The class will be run as a small, intimate seminar, and as such, your ongoing attendance, engagement and participation will be vital to its success. Fellow students and I will be depending on you to bring clarity and enthusiasm to all of our discussions. If you don’t show up, we may worry about you, too. Since meaningful class participation is factored into your grade in a big way, missing classes will negatively affect your grade profoundly. Merely showing up for class and delivering the required assignments is not a substitution for active and significant participation.

4) Arrive on time. Late arrivals interrupt the class and are a discourtesy to other students and the instructors. Recurrent tardiness is a sign of immaturity, bad planning, personal transportation issues (all bad raps for writers, journalists, academics, anyone). Don’t be late. Since this course takes place over the dinner hour, you might want to eat beforehand. You can’t bring snacks into the seminar room.

5) Turn off your cell phone and portable computer during class. Note taking must be done by hand. No text messaging will be allowed during class. Ever. If you text message, you will be asked to leave on the spot. Stay off the grid; you may enjoy the experience.

6) Dress appropriately. No hats, no pajamas. Treat the class with respect, as you would a job. This is your job for the next 15 weeks.

7) Look, act, and be alert. Get enough sleep. Come to class prepared to engage. If you must yawn, cover your mouth. Please don’t smell your hair. If you must leave during class, have the courtesy not to do it in the first 30 minutes.

8) Discuss your work with the instructors. No questions are stupid. Given a couple of days, the instructors will be delighted to review drafts of an article or multimedia project. The instructors are here to serve you. If you’d like to talk about the readings or about a career in journalism/writing, the instructors would very much welcome a visit or chat.

9) Plagiarism, or the use of others' work as one's own, is a serious violation of university, academic, and journalistic standards. Anyone who plagiarizes will receive a grade of F in the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, ask. Students who commit academic fraud, dishonesty, or cheating will be subject to the rules and regulations of the School, College, and University. Students are expected to be honest and honorable in their fulfillment of assignments.

10) Students have a responsibility to the rest of the class to help create a classroom environment where everyone learns. Students are expected to follow guidelines set by the School, College, and University.

11) If students want to publish their work, seek to do so after the piece is submitted for this class.
12) All assignments for this course must be original and must be written by the student for this class. If students submit work not originated or written by them, they will receive an F for the course.

13) Students who have a disability that may require modification of course requirements in any way are encouraged to contact the instructors so that appropriate arrangements may be made. It is the student's responsibility to contact Student Disability Services. For more information, please visit www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ and obtain a Student Academic Accommodation Request form (SAAR). The site will specify what course accommodations are judged reasonable. The instructor will endeavor to make accommodations for students with physical or learning disabilities. Please meet privately with the instructor to discuss such accommodations. The instructor will welcome hearing from anyone who has a disability that may require seating modifications or accommodations of any other class requirements. The instructor will keep such requests confidential.

14) Students with suggestions or complaints about anything that happens in this course should not hesitate to contact the instructors. If a problem cannot be resolved within the structure of the course, students are encouraged to contact David Ryfe, Director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (335-3486) in AJB 305. If a satisfactory outcome is not obtained, students are then urged to discuss such issues with personnel in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (the administrative home of the School and this course) and submit a complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, 120 Schaeffer Hall, (335-2633). Please consult the Liberal Arts Bulletin for a full discussion of grievance procedures.

15) Sexual harassment undermines the mission of the University and threatens the wellbeing of students, faculty, and staff. Sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated.

16) University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondence sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Please check your university email several times a day.

17) In severe weather, class members should seek shelter in the basement of Adler Journalism Building.

The Iowa Dozen

Students in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication are expected to learn the following principles, which — when spelled out — become The Iowa Dozen. In this course, we will be particularly concerned with items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12.

We learn:
1. to write correctly and clearly
2. to conduct research and gather information responsibly
3. to edit and evaluate carefully
4. to use media technologies thoughtfully
5. to apply statistical concepts appropriately

We value:
6. First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups
7. a diverse global community
8. creativity and independence
9. truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
We explore:

10. mass communication theories and concepts  
11. media institutions and practices  
12. the role of media in shaping cultures

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

*Here is the tentative schedule as the course starts. Expect changes.*

**Class No. 1**  
Tuesday, August 25, 2015  
Introductions; course overview; expectations; assignments; grading.  
Lewis skypes from China.  
We look at EPIC 14 and 15, and discuss.  
• Assignment: Read first half of *The Filter Bubble*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 2**  
Tuesday, September 1, 2015  
Discuss *The Filter Bubble*.  
Brainstorming ideas.  
The myth of objectivity (Bloom).  
We look at:  
Newsroom: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMqcLUqYqrs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMqcLUqYqrs)  
Google: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnsSUqgkDwU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnsSUqgkDwU)  
Knife of Aristotle: [https://www.ethicalmedia.org/](https://www.ethicalmedia.org/)  
Lewis skypes from China.  
• Assignment: Read second half of *The Filter Bubble*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 3**  
Tuesday, September 8, 2015  
Discuss *The Filter Bubble*.  
Brainstorming ideas.  
Kylie Lang’s toe: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqMPB7Uzq5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqMPB7Uzq5c)  
Flash Mob: [http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=GBaHPND2QJg&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=GBaHPND2QJg&feature=youtu.be)  
Beat reporting in the age of social media (D’Vorkin).  
Breaking into teams, figuring out students’ strengths.  
• Assignment: Read first half of *Writing on the Wall*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 4**  
Tuesday, September 15, 2015  
Discuss *Writing on the Wall*.  
Brainstorming ideas.  
Werner Herzog texting while driving: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk1vCqfYpos](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xk1vCqfYpos)  
The collision between the newsroom and brand journalism — native advertising (D’Vorkin).  
• Assignment: Read second half of *Writing on the Wall*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 5**  
Tuesday, September 22, 2015  
Discuss *Writing on the Wall*. 
Brainstorming ideas.
The metrics of success in the age of digital publishing (D’Vorkin).
• Assignment: Read first half of *The Master Switch*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 6**
Tuesday, September 29, 2015
Discuss *The Master Switch*.
Brainstorming ideas.
Technology and the art of journalism (D’Vorkin).
• Assignment: Read second half of *The Master Switch*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 7**
Tuesday, October 6, 2015
Discuss *The Master Switch*.
Brainstorming ideas.
The new journalists: They're not who you think they are (Bloom and D’Vorkin).
• Assignment: Read first half of *Moneyball*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 8**
Tuesday, October 13, 2015
Discuss *Moneyball*
Brainstorming ideas.
Journalism: A pubic trust or a business like any other (Bloom and D’Vorkin)?
• Assignment: Read second half of *Moneyball*, and be prepared to discuss next week.

**Class No. 9**
Tuesday, October 20, 2015
Discuss *Moneyball*
Brainstorming ideas.

**Class No. 10**
Tuesday, October 27, 2015
Church vs. State: As the wall comes crumbling down, how will journalism survive (Bloom and D’Vorkin)?

**Class No. 11**
Tuesday, November 3, 2015

**Class No. 12**
Tuesday, November 10, 2015

**Class No. 13**
Tuesday, November 17, 2015

THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Class No. 14**
Tuesday, December 1, 2015

**Class No. 15**
Tuesday, December 8, 2015
27 Items All University of Iowa Students Need To Know (Bloom)
Where you fit in.

This schedule is tentative and subject to adjustment as the term unfolds.