Topics in Writing/Storytelling

Audio Documentaries

In this class we will work with the archives of the Iowa Labor History Project to develop 20-minute, This American Life-style, short audio documentaries. We'll also learn about audio/documentary writing, recording technique and audio editing.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course you will be able to:

- write an (audio) documentary
- record, edit and produce high-quality audio
- conduct research in an archive

Course structure

We meet twice per week. Some sessions will be hands on, others will involve lectures, sharing your work, guest speakers, etc.

Over the course of the semester each of you will develop a 22-minute audio documentary.

Reading, listening and viewing

This class has weekly, non-optional assignments to read, view and listen to material outside class.

Each week you will submit (for credit) five good questions about the material by Monday night

A schedule of these assignments is on ICON.
Grading

This class is graded on a full letter scale based, with grades awarded based on earning points for your successful work.

There are 425 points available from the regular assignments, of which I expect each of you should earn about 400.

Points
- Auditing transcripts of four recordings from the archive (25 points)
- Summarizing four recordings you intend to use (25 points)
- Writing a reporting plan (50 points)
- Preparing an annotated list of sources (50 points)
- Writing a script (100 points)
- Producing/editing/mixing the piece (100 points)
- Weekly reading questions (5 points each, 70 points total)
- Syllabus quiz (5 points)

I may give you additional opportunities to excel (sometimes called “extra credit”). You can lose points for absences and for violating course policies.

Grades

It takes 360 points to level up to an “A.” Points needed to earn other grades are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points needed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>360 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>320 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>280 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>240 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>less than that</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This is a very generous grading scale (you can earn an “A” with an average of less than 85% on each assignment). That should make up for both the lack of precision and the difficulty of some assignments.
Assignments

In addition to specific guidelines for your individual assignments, please pay attention to the following policies.

Details and deadlines for your specific assignments are available on ICON.

Following instructions

It’s easy to do well on my assignments if you follow the instructions. Please read them and follow them.

NPR Style

This course is on audio, and you are expected at all times to write based on NPR’s style guide (which borrows from AP’s broadcast guidelines) and follow NPR’s editorial standards. These are available in Sound Reporting supplemented by the AP Stylebook.

Deadlines

Deadlines mean that work is due when it’s due. Many of you have had me in the past and I’ve been lax about this. This semester I’ll be strict.

If you don’t think you’ll be able to turn it in on time, contact me well in advance to ask for a pushed back deadline. Let me know how long you need your deadline pushed back.

If you ask more than 48 hours in advance, I’ll generally say yes. If you ask less than 48 hours in advance, I’ll generally say no.

When in doubt, submit what you have. Something is better than nothing.

The deadlines are listed on ICON, but you should note that your reading questions are due at 11:59 p.m. the night before class.
Attendance

Your classes are your job. Do your job.

PTO

You are given 3 absences as "paid time off". These are to accommodate simple sicknesses (colds, flus), life events (death of grandparent), and using your time in a way other than this class (skipping, job interview, mental health day).

I ask that you email me in advance about these absences. You absolutely should email if you miss 2 classes in a row as I really am concerned about you and would like to know why you are not in class multiple times in a row.

You should not take these for the sake of taking them.

There is no need to bring notes from student health for simple things like a cold or flu. You will not be given additional absences for doing so.

Work Days are NOT Optional

When a work day is included in our schedule, it is because your instructor has deemed it helpful to provide a co-working space where you have the safety net of the instructor for questions that may arise in producing your project. They are not optional days. Missing one counts as any other missed class.

If you think you are completed with whatever project we are working on, you should review it with me as I can help you make your work stronger. You can then use the class to implement those suggestions.

In my experience, when students think they are done, they are not done. Done (in our context) would mean you get all the points in the rubric.

Excused Absences

There are absences that allow for mitigation of the above policy. These are major items that require documentation which should be sent to me. This should come before the event where possible. These are:
- Accommodations requested by a University office (Student Counseling, Student Disability Services, Athletics, etc)

- SJMC-sanctioned activities (with advance notice)

- Out-of-town travel for sports, The Daily Iowan or a class (with advance notice)

- Hospitalization (please provide documentation)

- Mandatory Religious Obligations (discuss with me at beginning of the semester)

- Death of a parent or sibling (email me as soon as possible)

You should reconsider taking "paid time off" absences if you have taken excused absences, but it is understood that these things may come after you have already taken some PTO days.

These will always be a case-by-case basis. But, if you know you missed 3 days when excused absences happen, you should not think you have carte blanche (skipping) to add the 3 PTO days on top of them. Of course, you may get sick or something and have to take a day or two.

If you know you will miss class, come to my office beforehand to discuss any material you will miss. Depending on the situation, you

A Note from the Writing Center

Visit the Writing Center this semester and take the stress out of writing assignments.

- Book a 30 minute appointment when you need it.
- Reserve a regular weekly meeting for the entire semester—register now through our website: writingcenter.uiowa.edu.
- Upload a draft to our online system and get comments and suggestions by email.
- Sign up for graduate student programs and professional development opportunities.

All our services are free (it’s the best deal in town). Check out our website at writingcenter.uiowa.edu or stop by to see us in 110 EPB. The Writing Center is hosted by the Department of Rhetoric and supported by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

may be granted an extension for any work due, but assume the original due date.
Regarding SDS: Students who have documentation from Student Disability Services (SDS) for accommodations must present the documents and meet with the professor before the third week of classes. Simply emailing the forms to your TA and professor is not sufficient.

For more information, please see the section titled Accommodations for Disabilities under The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources page at the end of the syllabus.

If you have other health or personal circumstances (not covered by SDS) that might affect your ability to be successful in this course, please speak with the professor as soon as possible.

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**Point deductions for excessive absences**

Your PTO days mean you can miss up to 1 1/2 weeks of class without penalty. That’s 10% of the class.

Should you exceed your 3 "paid time off" absences, your final grade will be reduced on a sliding scale for each absence over 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Deduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 absences (2 weeks missed)</td>
<td>8 points (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 absences (2.5 weeks missed)</td>
<td>20 points (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 absences (3 weeks missed)</td>
<td>40 points (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 absences (3.5 weeks missed)</td>
<td>60 points (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 absences (4 weeks missed)</td>
<td>400 points (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That mean 8 Absences = Automatic Failure.

If you miss 8 classes, you've missed 4 weeks of class (more than 25%). That's ridiculous and unacceptable in a workshop-type class. You automatically will receive an F for the semester. This is non-negotiable.

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**Finals**

We will have a group listening session during the assigned finals period for this class. Please be there. It counts towards your attendance.
Other policies

Below are the other major policies for this course.

__Courtesy and common sense__

In general I expect you to conduct yourself with courtesy (towards the class) and common sense.

__Conduct__

You are expected to conduct yourself in a manner befitting a professional. You are expected to follow two rules: courtesy and common sense. Repeated or egregious failure to do so can result in a significant deduction in points on your final grade at the sole discretion of the instructor.

All journalistic work must be conducted in accord with NPR’s Code of Ethics and Conduct (see Sound Reporting). Failure to do so will result in an F on the relevant assignment and possibly the course.

__Plagiarism__

Plagiarism is a capitol crime in journalism. Therefore plagiarism or cheating will result in an F in the course.

__Email policy__

Any email you send to me should be considered a professional communication. That means it should be:

- addressed Dear Professor Lathrop:
- written in complete sentences
- written in a work-appropriate tone
- signed with your full name

(These are good guidelines to follow with your other professors.)

In addition, university policy dictates that all email communication with instructors must come from your @uiowa.edu email address to be official.

__Changes in grades__

If you believe a specific grade has been given in error or otherwise should be changed, you need to notify me by email within 48 hours of the grade being posted and schedule a meeting within the following
week to discuss it in person. Those meetings should happen during office hours unless you have class or other academic obligations during those times.

No changes or discussions of changes will be handled in email. (I will check to make sure there has not been data entry or similar error immediately.)

If you believe your semester grade has been given in error or otherwise should be changed, you need to notify me within one week of grades being published and schedule a time to meet with me in person before the beginning of the next semester.

No changes or discussions of changes will be handled in email. (I will check to make sure there has not been data entry or similar error immediately.)

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**Technology policy**

There is ample evidence that the use of laptops, phones and other devices in class leads to poorer learning outcomes and poorer grades for students.

On the other hand, this is a technology class and as future journalists you will be expected to be fully connected during your career.

So I expect you to pay attention and be present regardless of what’s going on in your phone, email, social feeds, etc.

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**Right to Change the Course and Schedule as Needed**

I reserve the right to change the course and schedule as I deem fit. I only do it with your best interest in mind such as when I think the class needs to learn slightly different material or needs more time on a project.
School of Journalism and Mass Communication Learning Goals

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn their degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here at clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/sjmc-assessment-plan.

We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

This course contributes to these learning outcomes by reinforcing elements of the writing and storytelling, media literacy, media history goals, law and ethics and multiculturalism learning goals. Achieving these outcomes for this class means students will:

- demonstrate the ability to gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences. (Writing and Storytelling Learning Objective 1)

- display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards. (Writing and Storytelling Learning Objective 2)

- demonstrate the ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media. (Writing and Storytelling Learning Objective 3)

- learn how to create and disseminate media messages in various forms. (Media Literacy Learning Objective 3)

- demonstrate knowledge of the main areas of media law, including libel, invasion of privacy, obscenity, commercial speech, intellectual property, and the freedom of the press. (Law & Ethics Learning Objective 2)

- demonstrate knowledge of technological innovations in print and electronic communication and their impact on media publishing industries for mass audiences, showing an awareness of their distinct political, social, and economic contexts and uses. (Media History Learning Objective 1)

- demonstrate sensitivity to and understanding of the cultures, histories, perspectives, and socio-economic and political situations of diverse groups. (Multiculturalism Learning Objective 2)
Absences and Attendance
Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/ABSENCE%20EXPLANATION%20FORM2019.pdf).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/.

Administrative Home of the Course
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Communication and the Required Use of UI Email
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Complaints
Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of
the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities.

**Final Examination Policies**
The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies.

**Nondiscrimination in the Classroom**
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

**Sexual Harassment**
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.