MCOM 4340.601 - Backpack Journalism-Fall 2020 BO 210 TR 12:30-1:45pm

INSTRUCTOR: Mr. Joseph Stepniewski (he/him)
Phone: Office 936-468-1050
Email: joseph.stepniewski@sfasu.edu (Subject line should state: Backpack Journalism)
Department: Mass Communication
Faculty Office: BO-204
Office Hours
MW:9-10:30am
TR: 2-3pm
Other times by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION (from SFA General Bulletin)
Mobile media production, including field reporting, editing, and distributing news for multiple platforms. This course trains students to report directly from the field for an online news web site.
Prerequisite: MCOM 2311- Media Writing. Incidental fee required.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (PLOs)
1. Demonstrate the ability to write effectively across a variety of platforms appropriate to the discipline.
2. Gather, organize and analyze discipline-appropriate research and communicate information about it.
3. Understand the role of media in society.
4. Comprehend legal and ethical principles relating to media.
5. Demonstrate the application of media technology, terminology and techniques.

JOURNALISM CONCENTRATION PLOS:
1. Demonstrate appropriate writing and editing skills across diverse multimedia platforms.
2. Gather, analyze, organize and synthesize information on contemporary topics to develop a news story.
3. Demonstrate the application of contemporary technology, terminology and techniques in the news gathering process.
4. Understand effective visual language and how to apply it to convey messages and enhance the communication process.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOs):
1. Students will utilize their combined skills in journalism to report stories using a variety of media platforms.
2. Demonstrate the ability to apply tools and technologies appropriate for the production,
editing, and presentation of journalistic storytelling.
3. Students will think critically, creatively, and independently by producing weekly stories for online distribution.
4. Students will conduct assignments outside of the traditional classroom setting.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:
- A reasonably up-to-date and fast computer.
- A digital audio recorder. Many smart phones have this ability and students have had success using them.
- A digital still camera. Again many smart phones may work OK but a DSLR is preferred.
- A video camera. Could be a DSLR with video or a handy cam. Smart phones have the ability to capture video but often lack the ability to capture professional quality as they typically cannot be stabilized. To avoid movement during recording, the video camera you use should have the ability to mount to a tripod.
- Tripod or ability to steady video camera during recording.

SOFTWARE:
This course uses common web browsers for access to D2L. Additional software to edit audio and video is required. There are many options but Adobe Audition or Audacity is recommended for editing audio. For editing video, Adobe Premiere, Apple iMovie, or Apple Final Cut X is recommended. Adobe software may also be downloaded from www.adobe.com. The downloads are typically 30 day trial versions.

EQUIPMENT CHECKOUT AND LABS:
All of the above equipment is available for daily checkout from the Mass Communication Journalism Lab. As well as equipment, the Mass Communication department has a dedicated computer lab with all the required software. Both are located on the second floor of the Boynton building. For current checkout or lab hours or to check availability of equipment, please call 936-468-1991. NOTE: The pandemic has affected checkout and lab processes. Please schedule appointments for equipment checkout and follow guidelines.

ASSIGNMENTS:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Multimedia Stories (6):</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<td>Editing</td>
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<td>Final Portfolio</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Biography Writing Assignment</td>
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<td>Class Assigned Reading</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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MULTIMEDIA SUBMISSION DETAILS (60%):  
At a minimum, EACH story submitted must include the following:  
1. Written story which must be 600 words or longer in length properly formatted. Must include strong lead with rest of story using inverted pyramid standard news style. Written story is not a transcript of the audio or video but rather a written story that could stand alone without media.  
2. Must include Headline, byline, dateline, email of reporter.  
3. **Photo** or graphic that is original and uploaded to the site as the feature graphic. Must be clear and edited for publication.  
4. **Second photo** or graphic that is original which is embedded within the story. It will be seen when reading the story. It must be clear and edited for publication. Must clearly relate to story and contain cutline.  
5. **Three relevant links.** Links should be related to your story and add value allowing reader to dig a little deeper into the subject. For example, this could include a link to an organizations web site, link to research, links to related articles. You can also include links to your raw interview and notes taken.  

And any ONE of the following:  
1. **Video package** (90-150 seconds, multiple shots, b-roll, lower third, stand-up optional.)  
2. **Audio package** (90-150 seconds, edited audio to include intro, outro, natural sound, and voice-overs  
3. **Soundslide package** (90-150 seconds edited audio and photos edited together into slide show. Audio must be recorded in first person and storytelling photos accompanying.  
4. **Additional story** types may be considered but must first be approved by instructor.  

REPORTER RESPONSIBILITIES  
As a reporter you will work to generate story ideas, gather information, write, photograph, capture audio and or video, edit and submit multimedia stories. Unlike traditional reporters who cover a beat, you will be free to generate stories that interest you. AT LEAST ONE STORY NEEDS COVER SOMETHING NON SFA RELATED.  

Every other Tuesday students will be expected to come to class with at least two story pitches. These pitches will be delivered to the class and are part of the overall grade of the assignment. Students should pitch ideas they know they can complete by the assigned deadline. If the student has to change story ideas after the pitch it is the students responsibility to notify the instructor of the change and suggest alternative story ideas.  

All stories MUST be with this focus of content in mind. All stories and content should be written and created using common journalistic techniques following AP Style. **Editorials and or opinion focused stories are NOT permitted.** (Use quotes to back up statements, otherwise you are simply giving YOUR opinion.).
All submissions must be original content created for MCM 440, not rewritten or repurposed from any other class or news entity. **ALL photos, video, audio MUST BE ORIGINAL created by YOU! Publishing any content that is not original is in violation of the ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY and subject to failure of course, failure of project and recording of violation within your academic record.**

Final grades will be posted to D2L every two weeks by Instructor. Editor assessments will be considered however the final grade for each story submission will be determined by Instructor.

**MULTIMEDIA STORY GRADING**

**EACH STORY USES THE FOLLOWING GRADING RUBRIC:**

**Excellent** or A = (100–94.5) Professional quality work. An insightful, relevant, newsworthy subject. Story involves the reader. Technique is flawless with perfect content, organization and mechanics. Information supporting the story is complete and accurate. Wording is precise. The writing/multimedia explores the story at different levels and does not simply make the same point from different perspectives. Publishable and distinguished. Very few submissions will fall into this category!

**Good** or B = (88–83) Competent, functional storytelling. Journeyman journalism. Publishable. Clean copy/multimedia that makes a significant point efficiently in support of the story. Appropriate expression of active, believable, moments that reveal a key person, place or event. Details are thorough and accurate. Writing mechanics and organizational technique are of a high order. The story is balanced. A 2.5 is the minimum grade if NOT promoted via social media, missing tags, relevant links or feature image.

**Acceptable** or C = (77-73) Average, run-of-the-mill story-telling. Probably publishable, but undistinguished. Properly written, but the content is average quality that may or may not be publishable. The article or story/multimedia offers little insight into why the subject is newsworthy. Content is adequate to identify the subject, but may be poorly organized. Mechanics are good.

**Poor** or D = (68 to 62) Unpublishable work. A combination of flaws in conceptualizing, researching, organizing and writing render the work unsatisfactory. This is work, which with better planning and extra effort, might have been publishable.

**Unacceptable** or F = (50-0) Not publishable. Editorial or opinion piece. Decidedly unprofessional. Weaknesses in journalistic thinking, puff piece, and/or professionalism have resulted in a failure on this assignment. Inaccuracies and other content errors, poor mechanics, unpublishable organization, and/or missed deadlines have reduced the assignment to failure.

**EDITING (12%)**: Students are required to edit two of their peers works each story cycle. This editing can take place in the Thursday lab the day before the story is due or online. The editors job is to look for obvious flaws in the writing or presentation of the story as well as suggesting minor edits to enhance the
story. Students will receive up to 10 points for their two edits based on the thoroughness of their critiques.

For something to be edited it must first be complete. The students that finish drafts of their stories earlier will benefit from being able to have a larger potential pool of editors. Those who wait until the deadline to complete their stories will not have the appropriate time needed to receive feedback on their work.

FINAL PORTFOLIO (10%):
During finals week students will assemble a personal online portfolio showcasing their work. This online portfolio will include the revised editions of each of the student’s multimedia stories. It will be published on the internet and act as a resume for the student’s work.

BIOGRAPHY WRITING ASSIGNMENT (2.5%):
During the first week of class the students will be randomly assigned a classmate to interview. Students will interview each other with questions of their own choosing and write up a short profile of their selected partner.

CLASS ASSIGNED READING (3%):
Students will be required to submit and lead discussion on a multimedia story. Students will be graded on the relevancy of their selection and on their ability to lead discussion.

CLASS PARTICIPATION (12.5%) (25x5):
After the first week we will have 26 class days together. You will be awarded participation points for 25 of those days. If you have to miss class due to a university sponsored event it is your responsibility for you to make the instructor aware BEFORE the event takes place.

REPORTER & EDITOR CODE OF CONDUCT
Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility. See handout SPJ Code of Ethics

MENTAL HEALTH:
SFASU values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
SFASU Counseling Services
www.sfasu.edu/counselingservices
3rd Floor Rusk Building
936-468-2401
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY (4.1)

Students in this class are expected to read and abide by the university policy on academic integrity. If a student is found in violation of this policy, he/she will be subject to receiving a failing grade for this course, and the violation will be reported to the proper university authorities. Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.
DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information including signing attendance sheets for another student, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

WITHHELD GRADES SEMESTER GRADES POLICY

At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Month</th>
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<th>In Class</th>
<th>Writing Assignment Due Dates</th>
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<td>Syllabus Day!!!</td>
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<td>Th</td>
<td>Aug.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Writing Exercise</td>
<td>Bio Due Friday Aug 27 by 5PM on D2L</td>
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<td>PITCH 1 - 12th class day</td>
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<td>Student Picked Readings</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Editing And Lab Time</td>
<td>STORY 1 DUE SEPT 17 BY 5PM</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5</strong></td>
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<td>Editing And Lab Time</td>
<td>STORY 2 DUE FRIDAY OCT 1 BY 5PM</td>
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<td><strong>Week 7</strong></td>
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<td>STORY 3 DUE FRIDAY OCT 15 BY 5PM</td>
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<td><strong>Week 9</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Week 13</strong></td>
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### Week 14

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<td>Nov. 25</td>
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### Week 15

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<td>T</td>
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<td>Th</td>
<td>Dec. 2</td>
<td>Editing And Lab Time</td>
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<td>STORY 6 DUE FRIDAY DEC 3 BY 5PM</td>
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Final Portfolio Due Thurs. Dec. 9 (10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.)