

## **Comm 321-50-4175**

### **Digital Journalism**

#### **Instructor & class information**

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**Text:** Briggs, Mark Journalism Next: A Practical Guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing, 3rd ed. Los Angeles: CQ Press 2016.

#### **Course Description**

Welcome to Comm 321-50!

Years ago, the newsroom at a typical daily paper consisted of a staff of reporters, photographers, copy editors and senior editors. With the transition of many news operations to the Internet, a journalist may not only be expected to write stories, but to serve as a copy editor, photographer and video editor.

Comm 321 will focus on the skills necessary to work as a journalist in an online news organization. This course assumes that you already have basic skills as a journalist: You can gather information, organize it efficiently and write an acceptable story. Rather than repeat instruction in those skills, this course will concentrate on helping you transfer those skills to an online news outlet.

I envision this class as operating similar to a training program at an actual online news organization. I'll also periodically post audio clips of interviews with working online journalists. We'll try some new things, some of which may work and some of which may not. At the end of the semester, though, hopefully we will have learned some new skills while having fun in the process.

Prerequisite: Comm 201

In most cases, I will respond to emails within 24 hours. To ensure I receive your message, please send all communication from your Louisville.edu account and include Comm 321 in the subject line.

If there is an emergency, you may text or call my cell phone. If you text, make sure you identify yourself. I likely won't answer calls after 10 p.m. Eastern time.

## **Required Materials**

### **Hardware\*:**

Video-capable smartphone or similar

5MP or better digital camera (smartphone camera will suffice)

### **Software\***

Adobe Photoshop Elements or similar image editing software

Microsoft Movie Maker video editing software

**\*Check with me before spending any money on hardware or software. In most cases there is an alternative available at no cost.**

## **Readings**

Along with the text, readings will be a mix of journal articles and industry news sources. I will provide links to required readings.

Poynter.org is an online source of news and information for journalists. Please subscribe to Poynter's Digital Strategies [newsletter](#) (free) for the duration of the class.

JournalismJobs.com and MediaBistro.com are two of the best websites for people looking for jobs in the journalism field. If you're going to be looking for a job soon, take a look at these.

## **Social media**

Students should sign up for free accounts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. On Facebook, "like" the class Facebook page. On Twitter, sign up for the class Twitter feed, and on LinkedIn, connect to the instructor's account (rslawsky@outlook.com). Instructions will be provided if you are unfamiliar with any of these.

## **Course Overview/Objectives**

A student who successfully completes this course should be able to:

- Tell interesting stories and convey factual information more effectively over the Internet
- Write in a style appropriate for online media, in blogs, in online-only stories, and in multi-media news or public relations packages
- Search efficiently for credible information, documents and statistics on the Internet

- Think critically about issues involving online journalism

These skills will be assessed by the following assignments:

A: Ten graded assignments

B: Seven quizzes over readings

C: A final project encompassing the skills covered throughout the semester

D: Participation in class discussions

E: “Impromptu” assignments

### **Consider the following:**

Without lectures, you will be teaching yourself to learn. You will do most of your communicating by writing. So, as a result, there will be more writing, perhaps, than in a traditional, face-to-face setting.

Class communication is largely asynchronous meaning not occurring at the same time. The cyber classroom will not function in a single unit of time, like the traditional classroom. You can access the course and assignments at any time of day or night from any part of the world.

There is a student-teacher role reversal in this class. I am more a facilitator, guide, coach, or resource than source of information. My job is to create an environment that guides you to acquire and apply the information yourself. You assume a great deal more responsibility for your own learning—interacting with academic opportunities provided, constructing and sharing information, managing your time, and using that time for critical thinking/reflection/application.

Students depend on technology to submit work and to communicate. The key word here is “depend.” Please keep in mind, you might need to find alternate Internet sources if the computer at your home/work has an outage. University of Louisville and many public libraries offer access. Need help? Contact the HelpDesk at (502) 852-7997 or [helpdesk@louisville.edu](mailto:helpdesk@louisville.edu). Hours: Monday thru Thursday: 6am - 10pm; Friday: 6am - 5pm; Saturday: 7am - 5pm; Sunday: 10am - 10pm; Thanksgiving Day: Closed; Christmas Day: Closed. Need help more quickly? Use the Live Online Support button.

### **Course Requirements and Policies**

Plagiarism is strictly prohibited in any form! Familiarize yourself with the university’s policy regarding plagiarism and outcome of anyone who violates such policy.

Students are responsible for reading all of the assigned material.

**Assignments:** To the greatest extent possible, this course is broken into weekly segments. For each weekly discussion, you will be required to post at least two comments and respond to another poster's comments, for a total of three posts. At least two of those must be made at least 24 hours apart. For example, you might make an initial post on Tuesday and make your second post and respond to another poster's comments on Friday. Posts should contribute to that week's discussion and be more substantial than "Me too!" or "I agree."

I personally have taken at least a dozen online courses. In my experience, it will be much easier to succeed if you check in and make your initial post Monday or Tuesday, then check back in Thursday or Friday for your second post.

Other assignments will be due by 11:59 p.m. Sunday evenings at the end of the week in which they are assigned.

**Class Conduct:** It is imperative that you are respectful and courteous to your peers. Healthy discussion is encouraged, but please keep it civil.

No late work will be accepted!

### **Title IX/Clery Act Notification**

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain **confidential** support from the PEACC Program (852-2663), Counseling Center (852-6585), and Campus Health Services (852-6479). To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact the Dean of Students (852-5787) or University of Louisville Police (852-6111).

Disclosure to **University faculty or instructors** of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is **not confidential** under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

For more information, see the Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide

(<http://louisville.edu/hr/employeerelations/sexual-misconduct-brochure>).

### **Code of Student Conduct**

The Dean of Students Office (DOS) meets with students to assess situations of possible non-academic misconduct as described in the [Code of Student Conduct](#). The University's Code of Student Conduct is promulgated to give students general notice of non-academic prohibited conduct. The Code should be read broadly and is not designed to define non-academic misconduct in exhaustive terms. Students are responsible for adhering to the Code of Student Conduct and should familiarize themselves with the Code. In order to protect and preserve a

quality educational environment for the campus community, the DOS offers education and support for students struggling with a crisis, concern or behavioral issues.

### **Student Sexual Misconduct Policy**

The [Student Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) outlines options for a student who believes he/she may have been or currently is a victim of sexual misconduct by a student, university visitor or employee within the university community.

**\*Disabilities:** The University of Louisville is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. Students with disabilities, who need reasonable modifications to successfully complete assignments and otherwise satisfy course criteria, are encouraged to meet with the instructor as early in the course as possible to identify and plan specific accommodations. If you are a student with a disability and believe your require accommodation to participate in and complete requirements for this class, contact the Disability Resource Center (Robbins Hall, 852-6938) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations. Students may be asked to supply a letter from the Disability Resource Center or other documentation, which will assist in modification planning.

### **Counseling Center**

College can be a stressful experience. If you are feeling overwhelmed, troubled or just need to talk to someone, please contact the University of Louisville Counseling Center at (502) 852-6585

### **Dean of Students**

Please get acquainted with the Dean of Students' office. They "promote a positive learning experience and make available opportunities for students to achieve their full academic and personal potential." If you are having issues or need help and guidance academically please contact them.

W 301 Swain Student Activities Center

<http://louisville.edu/dos>

(502) 852-5787

### **Grading Scheme**

Discussion board	14 @ 10	140
Weekly assignments	10 @ 50	500
Quizzes:	7 @ 20	140
Final project	1 @ 200	200

Additional activities	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>

Total Points	Final Grade
1000	A +
930 – 999	A
900 – 929	A-
870 - 899	B+
830 – 869	B
800 – 829	B-
770 – 799	C+
730 – 769	C
700 – 729	C-
670 – 699	D+
630 – 669	D
600- 629	D-
Below 600	F

## **Class Schedule**

### **8/21: Introduction**

**Assignment:** Write a one-page paper on how you get your news. Upload to the link provided and post the text to the discussion board along with your introductory post.

#### **Readings:**

*Journalism Next: Introduction*

## **8/28: The online story**

### **Readings:**

[Writing for the Web](#)

Writing for the Web Versus Writing for Print: Are They Really So Different? (under Course Documents)

**Assignment:** News story TBD.

## **9/4: Search engine optimization**

### **Readings:**

*Journalism Next*: Chapter 9 – Building a digital audience for news

[Top 10 search engine optimization tips for online news start-ups](#)

**Assignment:** Keyword selection TBD

**Quiz:** Chapter 9

## **9/11: RSS feeds, email newsletters**

### **Readings:**

*Journalism Next*: Chapter 1 – We are all Web workers now

[What Is RSS? RSS Explained](#)

**Assignment:** Set up three Google news alerts on terms of your choice. Set up RSS feeds from at least three news organizations. Talk about your observations in this week's discussion.

**Quiz:** Chapter 1

## **9/18: Basic HTML commands in Wordpress**

### **Readings:**

[Basic HTML](#)

[Writing Code in Your Posts](#)

**Assignment:** Take your original news story and bold all subheads and proper names. In addition, link two words or phrases to outside sources.

## **9/25: Social media**

**Readings:**

*Journalism Next*: Chapter 2, Page 79-85 Start using Twitter

[Using Social Media in Journalism](#)

Social Media: Journalism's friend or foe? (under course documents)

**Assignment:** Subscribe to at least three Twitter feeds; two by news organizations and one by an individual reporter. Write a one-page paper discussing your observations and upload to the link provided.

**Quiz:** Chapter 2

**10/2: Photography and photo editing****Readings:**

*Journalism Next*: Chapter 5 – Visual storytelling with photographs

[Photojournalism: Journalists' Toolkit](#)

**Assignment:** Using your digital camera, take a photo to go along with your story. Edit your photo to a 150 x 150 square and add a 1-pixel black border. Post the photo with your story.

**Quiz:** Chapter 5

**10/9: Mid-term break (Mon-Tues.)** Discussion board.**10/16: Slideshows****Readings:**

[5 types of photos that make for strong photo essays, audio slideshows](#)

**Assignment:** Create a slideshow with a minimum of six images, including captions. Post to the class Wordpress site.

**10/23: Video****Readings:**

*Journalism Next*: Chapter 7 – Telling stories with video

[9 key elements that can help journalists be better video storytellers](#)

**Assignment:** Create a short (2 minutes or less) video and post to the class Wordpress site. Include a title.

**Quiz:** Chapter 7

**10/30: Computer aided reporting – Mining the Internet for statistics and sources**

**Resources:**

*Journalism Next:* Chapter 8 – Data-driven journalism and digitizing your life

[HARO](#)

[Profnet](#)

Quiz: Chapter 8

**11/6: Blogging**

**Readings:**

*Journalism Next:* Chapter 2 – Blogging and microblogging p 45-79

[When Journalists Blog: How It Changes What They Do](#)

**Assignment:** Choose a reporter's blog and write a one-page paper talking about how that blog differs from his or her news stories

**Quiz:** Chapter 2

**11/13: News aggregation**

**Readings:**

The Rise of the News Aggregator: Legal Implications and Best Practices (under Course Documents)

**11/20: Discussion board, Thanksgiving break (Wed-Sun.)**

**11/27: Ethical considerations in online journalism**

**Readings:**

[Utah mayor used alias to write upbeat news stories](#)

Journalism ethics amid structural change

**12/4: Wrap-up. Final projects and remaining work due by Dec. 8**

Please note that the syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

**Let's Have Fun!**