



uOttawa

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Syllabus JOU3100 Digital Journalism I

Winter 2020
Wednesday 8:30 - 11:20

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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Office Hours	Wednesday 11:30 - 13:30 Thursday 14:30 - 17:30

You have two options when it comes to my office hours: we can meet face-to-face in my office or virtually via Google Hangouts. I strongly encourage you to choose the in-person option. Bonus: I offer a complimentary selection of coffee, tea, and candy. Either way, please make an appointment using [the signup sheet](#) available on Virtual Campus.

Your success is my priority. If you are unable to meet me during my regular office hours or have a simple question, reach out via email. I will try to get back to you within 48 hours. Whenever you send me an email, please make sure to write "JOU3100" in the subject line of your message. I teach three courses and use Gmail filters to stay organized.

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OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to digital tools, modes of narration, spreadsheets, audio-visual software, journalistic use of social media, digital content production, use of databases, etc.

COURSE CONTENT

Like “traditional” journalists, digital reporters must first master the basics of journalism, such as lead-writing, storytelling, and fact-checking. As such, we will dedicate our first meetings to honing your reporting and writing skills. We will also learn to use Content Management Systems (CMS). The second part of this course will tackle multimedia production. We will learn photography, audio storytelling, and video-making techniques. Lastly, we will turn our attention to the journalistic use of social media, together with the research and validation of information and documents found online.

GENERAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Practical

This course will provide students with a thorough understanding of the tools and practices of digital journalism, and give them the skills and knowledge necessary to produce news stories which meet the standards of a modern newsroom. At the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Interview stakeholders using common interviewing techniques;
2. Write journalistic articles and publish them on the Internet;
3. Find and fact-check information found online, including User-Generated Content;
4. Use social media as storytelling tools in a professional manner;
5. Produce multimedia items such as photos, as well as audio and video elements.

Theoretical

This course also aims to foster discussions and reflections on the work of digital journalists. At the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand and apply “best practices” pertaining to digital journalism;
2. Defend your editorial decisions from both an ethical and a technical standpoint;
3. Discuss the main issues faced by digital journalism today;
4. Critically analyze digital news stories.

TEACHING METHODS

This course is based on the flipped classroom philosophy. This pedagogical approach calls for students to learn key concepts and techniques on their own before coming to class. In-class sessions will then be devoted to honing your skills through group discussions and practical workshops.

As such, it is your responsibility to complete online learning modules and mandatory readings before class in order to be ready. Expect to spend about 90 minutes to two hours on that each week.

I have planned a field trip the CBC Ottawa Broadcast Centre and Ottawa City Hall. At times, we might watch short videos or read thought-provoking news articles in class. We will then debate them. I will also try to invite a guest speaker or two during the course of the semester.

I have designed the assignments so that they closely match the general learning objectives for this course and the content seen in class. They will give you the opportunity to further develop your practical abilities and critical thinking skills.

Lastly, my door is always open should you have any questions or concerns. Send me an email or, even better, come see me during office hours.

OUR TEACHER-LEARNER CONTRACT (TLC)

My job as an instructor is not to impart knowledge on you. It is to help you develop professional competencies and critical thinking skills. As such, below are some of our shared responsibilities. It's just a partial list. The key message here is that you are responsible for your own learning process; I am only there to guide you.

Your Responsibilities

- The success of a “hands-on” course relies on everyone’s active participation in group activities and discussions. Only use electronic devices such as cell phones and laptop computers for class-related purposes.
- You must attend our weekly meetings and be punctual.
- You must proactively communicate with me. If you are sick, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need to miss class for a reason other than medical, please discuss it with me ahead of time. If you don't understand a concept, schedule an appointment during my office hours.
- It is normal to disagree with the instructor or other students. Nonetheless, we should be debating ideas, not attacking the character of the person whose argument with which we disagree. Therefore, I am expecting you to be respectful and considerate towards your classmates and me.

- You are responsible for your own learning. You must therefore complete the mandatory readings and assignments on time. To truly succeed, you need to commit time to this course outside the classroom. As per [Academic regulation I-8 - Courses](#), “a unit generally represents 45 hours of work, including class attendance (lectures, labs, practical training), online presence, personal work, practical assignments and exam preparation.” As such, the expected workload for a 3-unit university course represents roughly 135 hours, that is 36 contact hours in the classroom and up to 99 hours for readings, assignments, etc.

My Responsibilities

- Barring a major delay with our beloved O-Train or similar issues, I will start and end class on time.
- I will treat you fairly and with respect. This means that I will do my best to acknowledge your own learning style and to assist you. I will also evaluate your arguments and assignments based on their own merit, not on whether or not I agree with you.
- I will try to mark your assignment as soon as humanly possible. I like to be thorough when marking, which takes time. Nonetheless, I will do my best to hand back assignments within two weeks following the due date.
- I will clearly communicate my expectations and share the evaluation criteria for each assignment ahead of time.
- I will make myself available to you. I will be holding five office hours per week this semester. Additionally, I will try to find extra time to meet you if required.

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Attendance is compulsory. Each missed class will result in a 5% penalty on your final mark, unless you provide me with the proper paperwork and/or a valid reason ahead of time. **Additionally, if you miss five or more class meetings, you will receive a mark of EIN (Failure/Incomplete), which is equivalent to a failure mark (F).**

Send me an email before class if you will be late or unable to attend. I will take this into account when marking your participation and professionalism mark.

I designed the assignments so that they closely match the content seen in class. I will also be giving detailed instructions for them during our weekly meetings. Suffice to say, if you miss class, it is your responsibility to make sure to catch up.

REQUIRED READINGS

This semester, we will make good use of *The Canadian Press Stylebook* 18th edition (ISBN 9780920009543) and *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* 21st edition (ISBN 9780920009529). I encourage you to get a hard copy of each book or to subscribe to the [web-based searchable versions](#). These books will prove useful throughout your journalistic career. I have put copies in the course reserve at the Morisset Library.

We will also read a few chapters from *The Canadian reporter: news writing and reporting* 3rd edition (9780176407018), by McKercher, C., Cumming, C. & Thompson, A. (2011). It is not mandatory but encouraged to buy this book. It is available in the course reserve in the Morisset Library.

McCarten, J. (2018). *The Canadian Press stylebook: A guide for writers and editors*. Toronto, Ontario: The Canadian Press.

McCarten, J. (2018). *The Canadian Press caps and spelling*. Toronto, Ontario: The Canadian Press.

McKercher, C., Cumming, C., Thompson, A., & Cumming, C. (2011). *The Canadian reporter: News writing and reporting*. Toronto, Ontario: Nelson Education.

The United States' National Public Radio (NPR) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) offer free online resources through [NPR Training](#) and [BBC Academy](#). If you are left with an appetite for more after completing your mandatory readings, satisfy your craving by browsing those two websites!

I encourage you to consume without restraint the contents produced by leading digital journalism organizations such as [La Presse+](#), [Le Devoir](#), [BBC News](#), [CBC News](#), [NPR](#), [Radio-Canada](#), [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#).

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

You must bring a laptop to each of our meetings, since we will be doing practical exercises in class. We will be using Google tools and Virtual Campus, which are already linked to your University of Ottawa account. When possible, I will recommend free and/or open source software.

You will also need access to photo, audio, and video production equipment. You can borrow voice recorders, microphones, photo cameras, camcorders, and tripods from the [Multimedia Distribution Service](#), which is located in the basement of Morisset Hall.

You can also borrow multimedia equipment from the [library's facilities in the Learning Crossroads \(CRX\) building](#). In addition, the CRX offers a wealth of other resources, such as virtual reality equipment, how-to workshops, and study rooms.

The Morisset Library also features a [Media Centre](#), which includes a multimedia lab, a projection room, production workstations, scanning equipment, etc. Some of the computers run software such as Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign.

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

This course will be taught in English. As per [Academic Regulation I-2 - Bilingualism](#), assignments for journalism courses must be submitted in the course's language of instruction. As such, you must complete your assignments in English.

If you need help writing your assignments, please do not hesitate to visit the [Academic Writing Help Centre](#) (AWHC). I also encourage you to use software such as Antidote (installed on the computers in the Morisset Library) or Grammarly to spell check your work.

EVALUATION METHODS

Unless stated otherwise, you must submit each assignment on Virtual Campus and/or Google Drive **before 11:59 p.m. on the due date**. Detailed instructions and marking rubrics will be made available on Virtual Campus ahead of time.

Description	Due Date	Value
Online Learning Modules & Mandatory Readings	Weekly	10%
News Item 1: Web Story on a Local Issue	February 12	15%
News Item 2: Photo Essay	March 4	15%
News Item 3: Social Media Reporting Assignment	March 25	15%
Take-Home Exam: Analysis of a News Website or Mobile News App	April 24	30%
Active Participation & Professionalism	Throughout the term	15%

Online Learning Modules & Mandatory Readings

In order for the flipped classroom approach to work, you must study key concepts and techniques at home before coming to class. There are a total of 10 weeks for which a learning module and/or mandatory readings are assigned. Each week will be worth 1% point towards your final mark, for a total of 10%. The evaluation process will be pretty straight forward. I will use a “progress tracking tool” on Virtual Campus to confirm that you have completed a given online module. I will also ask you to answer short questions and/or to complete reading quizzes on Virtual Campus. I will use a “pass/fail” approach, which means that if you complete the assigned tasks in a satisfying manner, you get your point for that week.

News Item 1: Web Story on a Local Issue

Snow removal, water and sewer infrastructure, parks and recreation, emergency services, etc. Municipal governments deal with issues which have direct consequences on our daily lives. This means that journalists should strive to keep local elected officials accountable to the people they represent. This 450 to 500-word article should focus on a municipal issue in Ottawa or Gatineau. Your piece must include quotes from at least two sources: 1) a citizen directly affected by your issue and 2) a city councillor or city official knowledgeable about said issue. You will also need to include photos, hyperlinks, pull quotes, etc.

News Item 2: Photo Essay

It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Photography can also create a sense of proximity between the audience and the subject. Put together, a series of photos can tell a complex story. For this assignment, you will need to create a photo essay comprising 10-12 images on a newsworthy subject. You will also need to include 300-350 words of text.

News Item 3: Social Media Reporting Assignment

Love them or hate them, social media cannot be ignored. As journalists, we use them not only to gather information and interact with our audience, but also to report the news. For this assignment, you must report on an event using the social media platform of your choosing. For example, you could live-tweet during a city council meeting, do a Facebook Live interview during a protest or create an Instagram story about a social issue.

Take-Home Exam: Analysis of a News Website or Mobile News App

This assignment will consist of a 10-page analysis of a news website or mobile news app of your choosing. You must monitor this site or app during a full week, and discuss two of its strengths and two of its weaknesses in your paper. Your arguments must be supported by concrete examples and scholarly sources.

Active Participation & Professionalism

I believe that your participation and professionalism mark should not be based solely on attendance. As such, you must actively contribute to both your own learning and the learning of your peers. Among other things, I expect you to complete mandatory readings and to participate in our in-class discussions. Here are some of the criteria on which you will be evaluated:

- Frequency and relevance of in-class comments
- Professional behaviour and respect
- Attendance, punctuality, and proactive communication with the instructor
- Individual meeting during my office hours

I will post a detailed evaluation rubric on Virtual Campus. Please send me a self-evaluation (about 250 words) before the end of the exam period.

REMINDER: WHAT IS A NEWS STORY?

Do not forget that a good news story goes beyond writing the “minutes” of an event or meeting. A university-type essay on a social problem/issue is not, in itself, a news story either. Journalistic pieces must be fact-based storytelling endeavours tackling an issue of interest to your target audience. You must captivate your readers, listeners or viewers by telling them a story. Remember our senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. Make us “experience” your story. Also, don’t forget to answer the following questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why?, and How? And since we will be dealing with data journalism this term, we will add a seventh question: How much/many?

OFFICIAL GRADING SYSTEM

Grades are assigned using the official University of Ottawa grade scale.

Letter	%	Letter	%	Letter	%
A+	90-100	B	70-74	D	50-54
A	85-89	C+	65-69	E	40-49
A-	80-84	C	60-64	F	0-39
B+	75-79	D+	55-59		

List of Symbols	
ABS	Absent
EIN	Failure/Incomplete
NNR	Grade not available or not submitted because of an ongoing investigation over alleged academic fraud

See also [Academic regulation I-10 - Grading system](#).

LATE PENALTY

Assignments must be handed in by the deadline specified in this syllabus. If you do not hand in your assignment by the due date, I will deduct 5% from your grade for said assignment per day, unless you can produce the proper justification, as outlined in Article 9.5 of [Academic regulation I-9 - Evaluation of student learning](#).

ACADEMIC FRAUD

Although academics and journalists don't always see eye to eye, we do have one thing in common: we do not tolerate plagiarism. This includes using sentences, quotes, and ideas that are not yours without properly attributing them. In short: don't pass someone else's work off as your own.

In journalism more specifically, it would be fraudulent to invent quotes or statistics, to pretend that you witnessed a situation when you did not, to use images and sound captured by another person without giving them proper credit.

Asking a friend to copy edit your work for grammar and spelling is fair game. But hiring a third party to heavily edit or write an assignment on your behalf is unacceptable. I want to evaluate your writing, not theirs. When in doubt, come talk to me.

It is also prohibited to plagiarise yourself. Don't hand in an assignment that was already submitted in another course, for an internship application, for your job, etc. When in doubt, ask me first.

Myself and the University of Ottawa take this matter extremely seriously. If you plagiarize, you expose yourself to sanctions ranging from a written warning to expulsion. Please read [Academic regulation I-14 - Academic fraud](#) very carefully.

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Senate and the Board of Governors of the University of Ottawa recently adopted updated guidelines on the prevention of sexual violence. The latter includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment and sexual assault. I invite you to read [Policy 67b - Prevention of Sexual Violence](#). For more information, you can also consult the university's [Sexual Violence: Support and Prevention](#) page.

OTHER CONCERNS, ACCOMMODATIONS, MENTAL HEALTH, ETC.

This syllabus is already quite long and it is impossible to include guidelines for every single potential situation. As a reminder, the University of Ottawa has policies on [I-15 - Religious accommodations](#) and [I-16 - Academic Accommodations](#).

University can sometimes be a particularly stressful environment. Should you or someone you know require assistance — or just need to speak to someone — don't hesitate to ask for help. A list of on- and off-campus resources is available on the university's [Mental Health and Wellness](#) page.

Please feel free to get in touch with me as soon as possible should you have any concerns or questions. Your well-being and success are my priorities. I promise to do everything humanly possible to help you.

ABOUT ME

I have been a part-time professor at the University of Ottawa since 2016. When not teaching, I am a multiplatform producer and in-house trainer at CBC/Radio-Canada. I primarily work for the public broadcaster's French-language service but have also filed web, radio, and TV stories for the English-language network.

In past years, I also directed short independent documentary films, taught a spring course at a university in Burundi, and worked as a researcher for two TV series aired on TFO. My articles and photos have been published in *La Presse*, *The Montreal Gazette*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, and several student papers.

I hold a Master of Journalism degree from Carleton University and a Graduate Diploma in Public Ethics from Saint Paul University. I live in Ottawa with my wife Samantha.

CLASS CALENDAR

Below is an overview of the themes, topics, and activities to expect each week. The online learning modules and/or mandatory readings for the “at-home” component of the course will be made available on Virtual Campus ahead of time.

Date	Themes, Topics & Activities
Class 1 Jan. 8	Introduction to the Course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icebreaker • Presentation of the syllabus • Learning objectives • Q & A session
Class 2 Jan. 15	The Modern Digital Journalists & Their Toolbox <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Digital workflows and tools • Content Management Systems (CMS) • Creating and customizing a website • What’s in a reporter’s bag? • Finding a story idea • How to find stakeholders and information • Interviewing techniques
Class 3 Jan. 22	Field Trip: CBC/Radio-Canada & Ottawa City Hall <p>We will meet at 8:30 sharp in the lobby of the CBC Ottawa Broadcast Centre, located at 181 Queen Street. The nearest LRT station is Parliament. After our visit of CBC/Radio-Canada’s facilities, we will visit Ottawa City Hall. We should be back on campus around 11:00.</p>
Class 4 Jan. 29	Writing for the Web: Writing Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News writing 101 • Storytelling and story structure • Ethics and professional conduct • In-class writing workshop
Class 5 Feb. 5	Writing for the Web: Layout & Proofreading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting a story together in a CMS • Proofreading for factual mistakes and typos

Class 6 Feb. 12	Multimedia Reporting 101: Photojournalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camera settings and composition • IPTC metadata, captions and alternative text • Post-processing • In-class photo workshop <p>Due tonight: News Item 1: Web Story on a Local Issue</p>
----- Feb. 16 to 22 — Reading Week -----	
Class 7 Feb. 26	Multimedia Reporting 101: Audio Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group feedback on the web stories • The basics of audio storytelling • Microphone positioning • “Cutting” clips • Multitrack editing • In-class audio production workshop
Class 8 Mar. 4	Multimedia Reporting 101: Video Production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using images and audio together • Equipment • Multitrack editing • In-class video production workshop <p>Due tonight: News Item 2: Photo Essay</p>
Class 9 Mar. 11	Using Social Media as Storytelling Tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group feedback on the photo essays • Bringing a story to life on social media • Live reporting techniques • Ethical issues • In-class simulations
Class 10 Mar. 18	Advanced Internet Research Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding people on social media • Using online registries, databases, and spreadsheets to find people and information • Verifying and fact-checking User Generated Content (UGC) • Case studies

Class 11 Mar. 25	In-Class Simulation In order to give you a taste of what it is like to report on a breaking news story, I will organize an in-class simulation. We will discuss the details ahead of time. Due tonight: News Item 3: Social Media Reporting Assignment
Class 12 Apr. 1	Final Thoughts: Where Do We Go From Here? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group feedback on the social media reporting assignments• Quick recap of the semester• Questions about the take-home exam• What comes next?

**Take-Home Exam due
by 23:59 on April 24**