



## **MPJO-723-01: AUDIO STORYTELLING**

### **GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM**

Tuesdays, 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. | Spring 2015

Instructor: Rolando Arrieta

Downtown campus, room C226 (Mac lab)

- Office hours by appointment

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Audio storytelling is an art form that when mastered is one of the most effective methods of communicating to a mass audience. In the evolving world of multimedia presentations, the principles of storytelling through compelling characters and natural sound have remained unchanged - from human-interest stories and profiles to audio postcards and podcasts. It's a craft mastered by journalists and communicators in public radio for decades. Content generators must consider audio production as part of their communication arsenal, as it may – at times – be a fairly inexpensive method of delivering messages to groups of people.

In this course, journalists and communication specialists will learn the fundamental principles of how to put together audio pieces that tells an interesting story by using a strong narrative and recorded sounds. Students will develop interviewing skills, field recording techniques and the use of multi-track audio production software. They will learn the different stages of putting together sound-rich audio stories and how to publish their work on multimedia outlets.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Identify compelling story ideas that would make for effective use of the audio medium
- Know the foundations of character-driven stories.
- Record sound-rich audio, incorporating best practices in the field or indoors
- Write concisely for the ear, using standard practices, narrative and style
- Use digital audio editing software to edit, combine and mix elements of an audio story, including voice narration, ambient sound and interviews
- Finalize and render publishable audio content
- Know the essentials of professional grade recording techniques
- Incorporate production fundamentals for producing interesting podcasts
- Understand fairness and ethical standards of audio storytelling for broadcast or web publishing

### **REQUIRED READING/LISTENING**



There is no required text for this course. Instead, the instructor will assign specific articles to read or audio projects to listen to as part of the homework. Students must be prepared to discuss any of those assigned readings and audio projects in class.

Students are strongly encouraged to regularly listen to public radio programming or podcasts to help develop an ear for the type of storytelling we will mostly focus on in the class. Examples include the RadioLab, Snap Judgment, Political Junkies, Planet Money and Serial.

## EQUIPMENT

You are expected to bring your own external hard drive to every class so you can save your lab work and other projects throughout the semester. All files saved to the computer's local drive will be wiped out during routine computer maintenance.

Your external hard drive must be formatted to Mac OS Extended and USB 2.0 or Firewire compatible. Some external hard drives models include LaCie, Western Digital, Iomega and OWC. Although we do not endorse any particular make or model, you may contact me if you need help with selecting a drive.

The recording quality standards for this course will be high. To that end, it is recommended students use recording equipment that will help them realize that goal. Some professional grade models include the Zoom H2/H4, Olympus LS-10, Marantz 620, Tascam DR-07, to name a few. We will discuss possible smartphone options in class.

Dictation devices are *not* acceptable. You are also expected to use good quality headphones when recording. We can further discuss additional gear details if you own or are interested in purchasing high-end audio recording equipment for future use.

A limited number of audio recorders is available at the Digital Media Center. In order to check out equipment from the DMC, students must first sign a Usage Agreement form and receive training from the manager of the DMC on how to use the gear. For more information on the DMC, including hours, see <http://scs.georgetown.edu/students/student-resources/digital-media-center>.

You may also check out equipment from the Gelardin New Media Center in the Lauinger library on Main Campus. For a list of the equipment the center has and its policies, you can get information on the website: [http://www.library.georgetown.edu/gelardin?quicktabs\\_3=2](http://www.library.georgetown.edu/gelardin?quicktabs_3=2). Gelardin also has editing suites that come equipped with iMovie and Final Cut, in case you need access to those programs: <http://www.library.georgetown.edu/carrels-lockers-space/multimedia>.

## ATTENDANCE



As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). **Absences for classes beyond the initial two will result in further reduction of the final grade.** If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

If you have a legitimate reason for missing class (emergency or illness, for example), please let the instructor know prior to the class period to be missed. Make-up work will be assigned.

### CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions.

Punctuality, attendance, homework and in-class assignments are all factored into your Class Participation Grade. You are expected to arrive to class on time, and assignments must be turned in at the *beginning* of the class. Tardiness and absences will result in points being deducted from your Class Participation Grade.

Points will also be deducted if you do not come to class prepared with the necessary equipment, including recording equipment, external drives and connecting cables.

A late assignment will result in an automatic **.5-point** deduction for each day it is late -- up to seven days. An assignment more than seven days late will not be accepted. If you have difficulties meeting an assignment deadline, you must let me know with as much advance notice as possible.

Students may tweet about their class experiences outside of class time and should use #audiostories. We will revisit additional social media policies for live tweeting from class sessions on a case-by-case basis. However, tweeting and other social media activities should not get in the way of classwork, participation and engagement in class with your classmates, instructor or guest speakers.

All recording assignments must be original material. Use of other sound or special effects must be approved in advance prior to including them in an audio project. Recordings, scenes or interviews may not be staged, directed, falsified, coerced or otherwise manipulated. Recordings made for other classes are not acceptable without prior professor approval.

Students may not rely on friends or family members for recording interviews or producing an audio project. Students must keep a contact sheet for each person interviewed and provide the contact information to the professor when requested. The subject should always state his/her first and last name during a recording.

Students will have the opportunity to resubmit **one** assignment for an improved grade. The new grade will be the average of the two grades. The redo deadline will be determined by the professor. It is not guaranteed, however, that a revision automatically means a higher grade.



Instructional continuity: In the event of a weather emergency (or any other widespread emergency) that would close the Georgetown Downtown building, we will plan to meet virtually through online videoconferencing tools. More information will be provided on how this will work later in the semester.

## ASSIGNMENTS

This class consists of four assignments and a final project. All assignments require hands-on audio work as well as a writing component.

### **Assignment #1: Gear Readiness/Audio Storytelling Listening Session**

**Deadline: 8 p.m., January 20**

Bring to class the equipment you plan to use to record audio though out the semester. Please make prior arrangements to check out equipment at the Digital Media Center if necessary. We will spend time getting comfortable with the gear and knowing how it works inside and out, understanding mic placement and other troubleshooting aspects. We will then do a brief test recording on location.

On the first day of class, you will listen to two audio stories and write a brief summary of what you heard, the narrative approach, the various sound elements and the writing style.

#### **Assignment #1: Sample grading assessment**

Gear Check:	5 points
Story Summaries:	5 points
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>10 points</b>

### **Assignment #2: Active Sounds & Scenes Recording**

**Deadline: 8 p.m., January 27**

Record five active sounds or scenes that are immediately identifiable when played back or that tell a story. Record approximately two minutes of each sound. Include a recording log with the exact counter time to where the audio should be played. Be prepared to play these recordings in class in an open critique forum.

#### **Assignment #2: Sample grading assessment**

Active Sound 1:	3 points
Active Sound 2:	3 points
Active Sound 3:	3 points
Active Sound 4:	3 points
Active Sound 5:	3 point
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>15 points</b>



### **Assignment #3: Audio Profile**

**Deadline: See specific due dates below.**

The 4-minute audio profile must contain at least two different interviews with compelling characters and ambient sound sources. No sound effects or recorded music is acceptable unless they are recorded by you. The profile must also include a written script that helps tell the story. You will have to record your narration then assemble the story elements in an Audition project and export a sound file to be turned in on March 3.

#### **Due February 3**

Audio profile pitch

#### **Due February 17**

Audio profile script layout

#### **Due March 3**

Audio profile final mixdown and script

#### **Assignment #3: Sample grading assessment**

Story Pitch:	2.5 points
Script layout:	2.5 points
Writing style:	2.5 points
Recording quality:	2.5 points
Active scenes usage:	2.5 points
Post production editing:	2.5 points
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>15 points</b>

### **Assignment #4: Audio Postcard**

**Deadline: See specific due dates below.**

The 4-minute audio postcard must include active sounds and characters. It must be effective enough to take the listener there. No sound effects or recorded music is acceptable unless they are recorded by you on site and as part of the story. The postcard must also include a written script that helps tell the story. You will then have to assemble all story elements in an Audition project and export a sound file to be turned in on April 14.

#### **Due March 17**

Audio postcard pitch

#### **Due March 31**

Audio postcard script layout



**Due April 14**

Audio postcard final mixdown and script

**Assignment #4: Sample grading assessment**

Story Pitch:	2.5 points
Script layout	2.5 points
Writing style:	2.5 points
Recording quality:	2.5 points
Active scenes usage:	2.5 points
Post production editing:	2.5 points
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>15 points</b>

**Final Project: Podcast Pilot**

**Due May 5**

Students will be placed in groups to produce a 10-minute podcast pilot:

The pilot may be structured as a multi-segment program with stories that share a common theme. The program should have a name and include a host narration, introducing the show and each story.

You should include theme music and other instrumental (public domain) music recordings to transition from one story to the next.

The podcast may include a round table discussion, recorded at GU, and any additional elements to make it interesting and engaging.

You may use an artistic RadioLab style approach or come up with your own creative sound design ideas.

**Your podcast pilot proposal is due February 24. Each student must submit a one-page pitch in writing and present their idea to the class.**

The class will collectively agree on the four best proposals. The instructor will be the tie-breaker and will have the final say in cases where there is disagreement.

The students whose ideas are selected will choose their own teams by drawing three names from a hat.

Each team will have assigned roles. An example includes, but is not limited to:

- Content Producer
- Content Editor
- Logistics Producer



### Content Producer

- Actively participates in group meetings outside of class and provides project ideas. **5 points**
- Manages all audio files, making sure they are all in one place. **5 points**
- Ensures all recordings are done in the best quality possible. **5 points**
- Handles the audio production, editing and rendering of final project file for delivery. **5 points**
- Assists with other tasks as needed to complete the project. **5 points**
- Overall final project results. **5 points**
- Works well under pressure and in a team environment. (Affects overall class participation)

### Content Editor

- Actively participates in group meetings outside of class and provides project ideas. **5 points**
- Manages and writes narration and continuity between segments. **5 points**
- Edits scripts written by other teammates making sure there is continuity and focus. **5 point**
- Assists the producer with narration recordings and editing. Coaches narration. **5 points**
- Assists with other tasks as needed to complete the project. **5 points**
- Overall final project results. **5 points**
- Works well under pressure and in a team environment. (Affects overall class participation)

### Logistics Producer

- Actively participates in group meetings outside of class and provides project ideas. **5 points**
- Manages the team's production schedules, making sure deadlines are met. **5 points**
- Researches potential guests and interviews and coordinates their schedules for recordings at GU. **5 point**
- Coordinates with instructor on use of space to do recordings. **5 points**
- Assists with other tasks as needed to complete the project. **5 points**
- Overall final project results. **5 points**
- Works well under pressure and in a team environment. (Affects overall class participation)

In addition to submitting the final project, each student must write a self-reflection (750 words) of what piece of the project they completed, their role on the team and what they learned.

The team is responsible for scheduling regular check-in meetings with the professor. It is up to the individual student to share any team conflicts with the instructor sooner rather than later. Do not hesitate to ask the professor for final project guidance. The instructor is allowed to make modifications to these final project guidelines where needed, in order to help each student excel and realize his/her true potential. **Final Projects cannot be re-submitted for a higher grade.**

### GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Participation:	15 points
Assignment #1: Gear Readiness & Story Summaries	10 points



Assignment #2: Active Sound Recording	15 points
Assignment #3: Audio Profile	15 points
Assignment #4: Audio Postcard	15 points
Final Project: Podcast Pilot	30 points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100 points</b>

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

A	100-93	B-	82.99-80
A-	92.99-90	C	79.99-70
B+	89.99-88	F	69.99-0
B	87.99-83		

The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

### UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program  
202-687-4246  
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center  
202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)  
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
202-687-6985  
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

### STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.





## GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

## PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

## SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of our agenda. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



## CLASS SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1 (TUESDAY, JANUARY 13)

Introductions

Syllabus review

What is audio storytelling?

Audio stories listening session

**Homework due 1/20:** Bring recording equipment to class. Listen to assigned audio stories (TBD) and write summary.

### WEEK 2 (TUESDAY, JANUARY 20)

Gear check and training (Zan)

Active sounds

Intro to Audition – importing, listening & file management

Logging audio

#### **Homework due 1/27:**

- Record five active sounds and prepare a log for each recording

- Read 1) Kern, Sound Reporting Chapter 4: Reporting, University of Chicago Press, 2008 and 2) Rosenbaum, Dinges, Sound Reporting Chapter 7: Interviewing.

### WEEK 3 (TUESDAY, JANUARY 27)

Active sounds listening session

Discuss reading assignment - interview/reporting

Story pitching

Audition editing part 1: organizing elements

#### **Homework due 2/3:**

- Audio profile story pitch. Submit a story idea in writing for a four-minute audio profile, including approach, targeted interviews and scenes.

- Read 1) Kern, Sound Reporting Chapter 3: Writing For Broadcast and 2) Clark, How To Write Short: Word Craft For Fast Times, (select chapters TBD)

### WEEK 4 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3)

Turn in audio profile story pitch

Discuss reading assignment - writing

Writing part 1: writing for the ear

Script layouts

Audition editing part 2: making internal edits and clipboards

#### **Homework due 2/10:**

-Read 1) Kern, Sound Reporting Chapter 8: Reading On The Air and 2) Rosenbaum, Dinges,



Sound Reporting Chapter 7: Delivery: Using Your Voice.

**WEEK 5 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10)**

Discuss reading assignment - delivery

Writing part 2 with **guest speaker – TBA**

Audition editing part 3: multi-panel assembly

Copy & Audio edits

**Homework due 2/17:**

- Audio Profile script and audio. Turn in a script with all audio elements transcribed for a copy & audio edit

- Read Rosenbaum, Dinges, Sound Reporting Chapter 8: Conceiving Features: One Reporter's Style

**WEEK 6 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17)**

Turn in your Audio Profile script

Audition editing part 4: multi-panel mixing, transitions and posts

Writing exercise: News Spots

**Homework due 2/24:**

Final Project proposals. Be prepared to present your podcast pilot idea to the class. The class will select the best four proposals. All written proposals must be turned in.

**WEEK 7 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24)**

Final Project pilot proposal presentations, selection and pairings

Delivery exercise: News Spots

**Homework due 3/3:**

- Final Audio Profile mixdown and script

**WEEK 8 (TUESDAY, MARCH 3)**

Turn in final Audio Profile mixdown and script

Audio Profile listening session

In-class Podcast Pilot production meeting

**Homework due 3/17:**

- Audio Postcard story pitch. Submit a story idea in writing for a four-minute Audio Postcard, including approach, targeted interviews and scenes.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 10 - NO CLASS DURING SPRING BREAK**



**WEEK 9 (TUESDAY, MARCH 17)**

Turn in Audio Postcard story pitch.

**Guest Speaker – TBA**

**WEEK 10 (TUESDAY, MARCH 24)**

Advanced audio recording techniques

Advanced post production techniques

**Homework due 3/31:**

- Audio Postcard script and audio. Turn in a script with all audio elements transcribed for a copy & audio edit

**WEEK 11 (TUESDAY, MARCH 31)**

Turn in your Audio Postcard script.

Copy & audio editing during class

**WEEK 12 (TUESDAY, APRIL 7)**

**Guest Speaker TBA or NPR tour w/ guest speaker**

Elements for producing compelling podcasts

**Homework due 4/14:**

- Final Audio Postcard mixdown and script

**WEEK 13 (TUESDAY, APRIL 14)**

Turn in final Audio Profile mixdown and script

Audio Profile listening session

In-class Podcast Pilot production meeting

**WEEK 14 (TUESDAY, APRIL 21)**

**Guest Speaker TBA or NPR tour w/ guest speaker**

**Homework due 5/5:**

- Podcast Pilots

**TUESDAY, APRIL 28 – NO CLASS DURING STUDY WEEK**

**WEEK 15 (TUESDAY, MAY 5)**

Podcast Pilot presentation and in-class discussion