



MPJO-723-01: AUDIO STORYTELLING

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM

Tuesdays, 5:20 p.m. to 7:50 p.m. | Spring 2016

Instructor: Rolando Arrieta

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 tell an interesting story by using a strong narrative and recorded sounds. Students will also develop interviewing skills, field recording techniques and learn the fundamentals 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 arc and style
- Use digital audio editing software to edit and mix elements of an audio story; 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-podcasts
- Understand fairness and ethical standards of audio storytelling

REQUIRED READING/LISTENING

There is no required text for this course. Instead, the instructor will assign specific articles to read or audio stories to critique in-class or as 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: RadioLab, Snap Judgment, Invisibilia, Pop Culture Happy Hour, This American Life 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 drive 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 audio. 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 supply 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. 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. Your Class Participation Grade will also be affected if you are frequently on your mobile phone in class, on the computer doing non-class related work or if you do not actively participate in open class discussions.

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 recorded by you. 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 interview friends or family members as part of a class assignment. 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. Unidentified sources are not acceptable for any class assignment.

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: Audio Recording Tutorial & Audio Story Summaries – Part 1

Check-out an audio recording device from the Digital Media Center and bring to class for a tutorial and best recording practices session. We will spend time getting comfortable with the gear and knowing how it works inside and out, understanding microphone placement and other troubleshooting aspects. We will then do a brief test recording on location.

You will be asked to listen and critique two audio stories in a 300-word essay. Describe in detail what you heard, the technique used in telling the story, the narrative approach, the various sound elements and the writing style. The stories will be assigned in class.

Deadline: 5:20p.m., January 26

Assignment #1: Sample grading assessment

Gear Check:	5 points
Story summary 1:	2.5 points
Story summary 2:	2.5 points
Total Points:	10 points

Assignment #2: The Audio Profile & Audio Story Summaries – Part 2

The 4-minute audio profile must contain interview clips from at least two compelling characters



along with and ambient sounds recorded on the scene. You may not use sound effects or recorded music unless the audio is recorded by you on site and as part of the story. The sounds should have meaning and help tell the story. The profile must be turned in with a fully written script with all dialog fully transcribed. Your profile will include your voice as the narrator. It will be assemble in Adobe Audition and exported as a sound file to be completed and turned in on March 1.

You will be asked to listen and critique two additional audio stories in a 300-word essay. Describe in detail what you heard, the technique used in telling the story, the narrative approach, the various sound elements and the writing style. The stories will be assigned in class.

Deadlines: 5:20pm on:

February 2 – Profile Focus statement and Audio Story summaries

February 16 - Profile first draft script and edited audio clips (clip reel)

March 1 - Profile final mixdown and final script

Assignment #2: Sample grading assessment

Story Pitch due date:	2.5 points
Script due date:	2.5 points
Narrative flow:	2.5 points
Writing style:	2.5 points
Recording quality:	2.5 points
Post production editing:	2.5 points
Story summary 1:	2.5 points
Story summary 2:	2.5 points
Total Points:	20 points

Assignment #3: The Audio Postcard & Audio Story Summaries – Part 3

The 4-minute audio postcard must include active sounds and characters. It must be effective enough to take the listener there. You may not use sound effects or recorded music unless the audio is recorded by you on site and as part of the story. The sounds should have meaning and help tell the story. The postcard must be turned in with a fully written script with all dialog fully transcribed. Your postcard will include your voice as the narrator. It will be assemble in Adobe Audition and exported as a sound file to be completed and turned in on April 12.

You will be asked to listen and critique two additional audio stories in a 300-word essay. Describe in detail what you heard, the technique used in telling the story, the narrative approach, the various sound elements and the writing style. The stories will be assigned in class.



Deadline: 5:20pm on:

March 15 - Postcard Focus statement and Audio Story summaries

March 29 - Postcard script and edited audio clips (clip reel)

April 12 - Postcard final mixdown and final script

Assignment #3: Sample grading assessment

Story Pitch due date:	2.5 points
Script due date:	2.5 points
Narrative flow:	2.5 points
Writing style:	2.5 points
Recording quality:	2.5 points
Post production editing:	2.5 points
Story summary 1:	2.5 points
Story summary 2:	2.5 points
Total Points:	20 points

Final Project: Podcast Pilot

Due May 10

Students will be placed in groups to produce a ten to twelve-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.

To enhance the production, you may 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 and/or any additional elements to make it interesting and engaging.

Here's a chance to unleash your creative minds and approach to audio storytelling.

Your podcast pilot proposal is due February 23. Each student must submit a one-page pitch in writing and present the idea in front of the class.

The class will collectively agree on the four best proposals. The instructor will serve as a tie-breaker and will have the final say in cases where there is disagreement on which podcast ideas we accept.



The student whose idea is selected will form his/her production team 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 are due on the last day of the semester so they cannot be re-submitted for a higher grade.**

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Participation:	20 points
Assignment #1: Gear Readiness & Story Summaries 1	10 points
Assignment #2: Audio Profile & Story Summaries 2	20 points
Assignment #3: Audio Postcard & Story Summaries 3	20 points
Final Project: Podcast Pilot	30 points
Total:	100 points

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
<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;



<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 19)

- Introductions
- Syllabus review
- What is audio storytelling?
- Audio stories listening session

Homework due 1/26:

1. Bring recording equipment to class.
2. Audio story summaries part 1

WEEK 2 (TUESDAY, JANUARY 26)

- Turn in audio story summaries
- Listen to audio profile examples
- Gear check and training (Zan)
- Intro to Audition – importing, listening & file management
- Focus statements

Homework due 2/2:

1. Profile Focus Statement - Submit a story idea in writing for a four-minute audio profile, including approach, targeted interviews and scenes.
2. Audio story summaries part 2

WEEK 3 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2)

- Turn in audio profile story pitch
- Turn in audio story summaries
- Interviewing
- Audition editing part 1: organizing element, logging & internal edits

Homework due 2/9:

- Read Clark, How To Write Short: Word Craft For Fast Times, (select chapters TBD)



WEEK 4 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9)

Writing
Script layouts
Audition editing part 2: making a clip reel

Homework due 2/16:

Audio Profile first draft script and clip reel are due. Turn in your script with all narration and clips transcribed and the clip reel audio file.

WEEK 5 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16)

Turn in Audio Profile first draft script and clip reel
Writing part 2 with guest speaker – TBA
Active sound usage
Audio transitions
Audition editing part 3: multi-panel assembly; St. Patrick's Day Parade mix

Homework due 2/23:

Final Project proposals are due. 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 6 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23)

Final Project podcast pilot proposal presentations, selection and pairings
Work on audio profiles

Homework due 3/1:

Final Audio Profile mix and script are due.

WEEK 7 (TUESDAY, MARCH 1)

Turn in final Audio Profile mix and script.
In-class podcast pilot production meeting
Turn in a podcast progress report and meeting notes

Homework due 3/15:

1. Postcard Focus Statement - Submit a story idea in writing for a four-minute audio postcard, including approach, targeted interviews and scenes.
2. Audio story summaries part 3

TUESDAY, MARCH 8 - NO CLASS DURING SPRING BREAK



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WEEK 8 (TUESDAY, MARCH 15)

Turn in audio profile story pitch

Turn in audio story summaries

Guest Speaker TBA

Homework due 3/22:

Podcast progress report

WEEK 9 (TUESDAY, MARCH 22)

Submit a team podcast progress report

Advanced audio recording techniques

Advanced post production techniques

Homework due 3/29:

Audio Postcard first draft script and clip reel are due. Turn in your script with all narration and clips transcribed and the clip reel audio file.

WEEK 10 (TUESDAY, MARCH 29)

Turn in Audio Postcard first draft script and clip reel

NPR Tour & Guest - TBA

Homework due 4/5:

Podcast progress report

WEEK 11 (TUESDAY, APRIL 5)

Turn in podcast progress report

Work on audio postcards

Homework due 4/12:

Final Audio Postcard mix and script are due.

WEEK 12 (TUESDAY, APRIL 12)

Turn in final Audio Profile mix and script

Elements for producing compelling podcasts

Music usage

Homework due 4/19:

No homework



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WEEK 13 (TUESDAY, APRIL 19)

In-class Podcast Pilot production meeting

Turn in a podcast progress report and meeting notes

WEEK 14 (TUESDAY, APRIL 26)

Guest Speaker TBA

Re-do assignments are due

Homework due 5/10:

- work on podcasts

TUESDAY, MAY 3 – NO CLASS DURING STUDY WEEK

WEEK 15 (TUESDAY, MAY 10)

Podcast Pilot presentation and in-class discussion