MPJO-505-01: DIGITAL ESSENTIALS
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM
Tuesdays, 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. | Spring 2017

Instructor: Angie Drobnic Holan
Class hashtag: #HoyaDigital
Georgetown Downtown, Room C226 (Mac Lab)
·   Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the digital skills needed in the field of journalism today. Students delve into the media landscape to understand how digital skills and sensibilities are integrated with reporting, content creation, information dissemination and audience-building efforts at news organizations of all sizes.

The course adds to students' fundamental reporting skills to broaden career opportunities and think entrepreneurially about how to shape journalism.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Develop practical, effective and applicable digital skills
- Create digital spaces for distribution of information
- Understand the digital career environment
- Summarize, track and discuss current trends in digital news media

This is a core course of the MPS Journalism program, and students must earn a "B" (83) or higher to pass the course. Please see the Graduate Student Handbook for more details.

READING

There is no required text for this course. Each week, by the end of Saturday, students are expected to write a brief summary of ideas and lessons drawn from *at least three* articles chosen by the student (news items, blog posts, videos, conference sessions, etc.), pertaining to digital news or the changing news industry. I may assign specific pieces of required reading some weeks. These short summaries (150-300 words total) must be posted to your personal website by Saturday night at 11:59 p.m. They will be graded as homework and must be clear, concise and free of errors. They will be part of the class discussion the following Monday. Useful resources:

- AmericanPressInstitute.org / Need to Know newsletter
- NiemanLab.org
- Poynter.org
- Journalism.org
- PewInternet.org
- CJR.org
- DigiDay.com
- cnn.com/shows/reliable-sources

ATTENDANCE

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.

In addition, any absence or lack of engagement will lower the portion of your grade determined by in-class participation. Attendance and active participation during class lectures and discussions are extremely important to the quality of the learning experience. In the case of an emergency or extreme circumstances that will require you to miss multiple classes, please contact us immediately.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND LATE WORK

Respect: You should treat your classmates with respect. I'll expect this both in your verbal communication but also in your non-verbal communication. This means: Pay attention and be empathetic.

Communication: I expect you to send all assignments via email (unless otherwise stated in the syllabus or during class). The preferred mode of communication is through email, but if we need to set up a time to talk by phone, we will do that as well. I expect you to communicate with me for any issues that arise.

Participation: Classes are long. We'll take a break each class, but I expect you to be attentive while we're in session. This means: If we're having discussion, you're participating. If we're working on our projects, you're engaged and interacting with your teammates or other classmates. Also: Park your phone and messaging apps unless instructed to use them for class purposes.

Late work: Deadlines matter. Late assignments will be marked down one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Work will not be accepted more than one day after it is due, but will receive a zero instead. Students may discuss with the instructors, in advance of a deadline, the possibility for extending an assignment deadline in the case of unforeseeable personal issues. Such requests may or may not be granted.

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 during the semester on how this will work.

ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments will be submitted to the instructors by email, or uploaded to a Google folder, depending on instructions. All should follow AP style; points may be deducted for spelling and grammar errors. Exams will be administered through a web-based platform.

1. Personal website (to be maintained throughout your time in the MPSJ)
2. Weekly analysis of current events readings (Due by 11:59 p.m. each Saturday prior to a class)
3. Paper: Career case study (Deadline: January 31)
4. Midterm exam (complete by February 21)
5. Paper: Personal brand audit (Deadline: March 14)
6. Paper: Mobile analysis (Deadline: April 4)
7. Final project (Deadline: May 9)
   o Create a small-group news website
   o Write an individual paper about the site, the group & your contributions
   o In-class presentation

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

In-class participation:	10%
Personal website:	10%
Weekly reading summaries:	20%
Papers:	20%
Midterm exam:	10%
Final project:	30%
Total:	**100%**

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 instructors 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 (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 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 instructor reserves the right to update the syllabus during the semester, especially as it pertains to the timing of guest speakers. In those instances, the instructors will provide ample warning of any changes.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (TUESDAY, JANUARY 17)
- Introductions
- Overview of digital journalism themes
- Course objectives and expectations
- Assignments and weekly news summaries
- Begin building your personal website

WEEK 2 (TUESDAY, JANUARY 24)
- Basic tenets of digital news
- Understanding audiences for your site
- Overview of digital news apps for audiences and publishers
- Social media strategies and tools
- Brands vs. platforms
- Search engine optimization

Assignment: Career case study. Find a journalist doing a job you want to do someday and interview him or her about how he or she got there. Submit a two-page paper telling his or her story and the lessons you learned.
Deadline: Beginning of class, January 31

WEEK 3 (TUESDAY, JANUARY 31)
- Overview of publishing platforms
- WordPress overview: Writing and editing, using themes and plugins, defining a taxonomy
- Analytics: What are the metrics and which ones matter?
- Emerging-media tools
- Your "About" page and disclosures

WEEK 4 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7)
- Storytelling on the web: how platforms shape the approach
- Blogging: How to curate, aggregate and cite, live blog and chat
- Copyright rules: Attribution, fair use principles, Creative Commons rules
- Expectations for your site and how it will be graded

WEEK 5 (TUESDAY, FEBURARY 14)
- Editorial content planning
- How to research and choose topics
- Forming project teams
- Collaboration and teamwork: Strategies and expectations
- Project management tools and execution strategies

- Begin building your site
- Midterm content review

WEEK 6 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21) -- Midterm exam due (available online starting February 10)
- Storytelling with photos and graphics
- Audio and video storytelling
- What is "interactive"
- University equipment overview.

WEEK 7 (TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28)
- Shaping your personal brand in a digital world
- Maintaining your online portfolio
- Interacting with audiences online
- Build your group site

Assignment: Complete your own personal brand audit. Email 1-2 pages.
Deadline: Beginning of class, March 14

TUESDAY, MARCH 7 - NO CLASS FOR SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8 (TUESDAY, MARCH 14)
- Business models
- Advertising trends
- Product development in newsrooms
- Evolution in news: a case study of digital newsletters

WEEK 9 (TUESDAY, MARCH 21)
- Design thinking
- Responsive and user-centered design
- Discussion of empathetic interview results and project focus

WEEK 10 (TUESDAY, MARCH 28)
- Mobile and tablets overview
- Device ownership & market overview / forecast
- Native apps vs. web apps
- Usage patterns
- Business models for mobile
- Mobile reporting

Assignment: Analyze mobile websites (or apps) of one news organization. Describe strengths and weaknesses. Analyze design, user experience, product strategy and business model. Suggest changes and new products that would benefit both the news org and the readers. Submit a two-page paper.
Deadline: Beginning of class, April 4.

WEEK 11 (TUESDAY, APRIL 4)

- In-class discussion: Your mobile analyses
- How to innovate
- How to create new opportunities for your content
- How to have impact

WEEK 12 (TUESDAY, APRIL 11) NO CLASS ON THIS DAY – FIELD TRIP DATE/PLACE TBA
We will do a session at some point this semester that will consist of a field trip offsite. The date, time and location are TBD and will be announced as soon as possible in class. Please be aware that the time will be outside of normal class hours. Once the date and time are set, please get in touch with the instructors individually if your work schedule will make it difficult to attend this session.

WEEK 13 (TUESDAY, APRIL 18)
- Introduction to data journalism.
- Crowdsourcing and user-generated content.
- Emerging content-contributor models.

WEEK 14 (TUESDAY, APRIL 25)
- Review of major course themes (to be demonstrated in your final project)
- How to manage change in newsrooms
- Forecasting the future in platforms and business models
- Final project preparation

Assignment: Finish the final project and paper outlining your contributions and group dynamic.
Deadline: Beginning of class, May 9

WEEK 15 (TUESDAY, MAY 9)
- Final project presentation
- Your site demo and elevator pitch
- Submit paper accounting for your individual contributions and the group dynamic of the project