



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Journalism

MPJO-811-62: IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM

Immersion Program | Summer 2017

Trip Dates: June 18-24, 2017

Instructor: Steve Johnson

TA: Lauren Knapp

Downtown campus and study abroad location: room C226

- Office hours are by appointment only

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Immersive storytelling is nothing new — we've been doing it with great novels, monologues, plays and movies for centuries. However, as technology evolves journalists are embracing this type of news distribution that fully takes the user into a storytelling experience.

This elective course gives students the opportunity to travel to a new environment for seven days where they will immerse themselves in a story that they can then take to their readers, watchers, and users. Students will do this through 360 video, advanced video and photo production, audio stories, integrated social media and the written word.

Using these immersive storytelling techniques, students will build experiences to help their audiences better understand complex stories, bring them to difficult to find places and put them in the center of a story. With a design-first approach, we will plan, produce and distribute from the field to give students a hands on experience of building complex stories on deadline and in the field.

Prerequisite: MPJO 508 Video Journalism and MPJO 505 Digital Essentials

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Examine and collect a diverse amount of background research for a story that will be told during the term
- Develop several angles of a story to pitch to the team
- Plan and prepare work as a team using interpersonal and problem solving skills
- As a group, build editorial guidelines and ethics of producing content in a virtual environment
- Compose a comprehensive story with a variety of technologies that immerse the user in



the content

- Generate a final product for distribution through various channels

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Overall, the eight students will be divided into two groups and each group will produce a 360 story, photo slideshow various written articles and potentially an additional video based on the story angle selected. The story selection will be done after each student individually pitches their ideas to the class before the actual trip to Iceland. The top two will be chosen and the groups assembled from there. A lot of the interviews and travel plan will be set up before we take the trip in order to maximize the time in Iceland.

Major Assignments	Student Learning Outcome (Students will be able to do the following after taking this course)
Individual Story Pitch	Formulate an idea and generate a full report that can be turned into a fully realizable story which may be produced in Iceland
Case Study of 360 Immersive Story (News Oriented)	Critically evaluate professional news content to have a comparative level as they go out into the field
Outline/Story Planning (Group Assignment depending on assigned story) Sources, Initial Reporting, Interview Setup	Operate effectively in a group to produce meaningful content for the audience Demonstrate excellent news gathering skills through source acquisition, interviewing acumen and in the field location and source negotiation
Final Product (360 Video, Photo, Written Articles, Audio Elements)	Compose stories in various formats for distribution to professional news organizations

ICELAND SPECIFIC COURSE INFORMATION

The overarching story this course will take on is the Paris Climate Agreement which goes into effect November 2016. Iceland has taken on some of the most stringent climate change regulations and will be one of the nations most affected by the regulations the rest of the world is now agreeing to abide by.

Background Reading on Iceland

- Climate change and hydrology: Environmental and societal effects (<http://en.vedur.is/about-imo/news/nr/2910>)



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- Early work and an overview of measurements (<http://en.vedur.is/climatology/articles/nr/1138>)
- Iceland ratifies Paris climate deal (http://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/politics_and_society/2016/09/20/iceland_ratifies_paris_climate_deal/)
- Iceland, A leader in the use of renewable resources (http://www.nea.is/media/myndir/popup/Iceland_Leader_RenewableEnergy_Mynd.png)
- Short History of Iceland (<http://www.icelandontheweb.com/articles-on-iceland/history/short-history>)
- Iceland Pioneers Clean Energy (<http://icelandictimes.com/2014/10/17/icelands-pioneers-clean-energy/>)

REQUIRED READING

- **Various texts related to the travel location of choice**
 - How a Pixar Vet Is Shaping the Future of VR Storytelling | WIRED (<https://www.wired.com/2015/09/pixar-vet-writing-grammar-virtual-reality-stories/>)
 - Immersive Journalism: Immersive Virtual Reality for the First-Person Experience of News (http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/PRES_a_00005)
- **Blogs on interactive storytelling**
 - Your Brain on VR video: The New Chill Pill? (<https://medium.com/@sarahstories/your-brain-on-vr-video-the-new-chill-pill-79fec732f881#.19tiac3nw>)
 - Designing for VR (<https://medium.com/outlinevr/designing-for-vr-9206081a3f1#.q876hp9h1>)
 - BBC Planet Earth 2 360 Video (https://www.facebook.com/bbcearth/videos/1361120467254839/?autoplay_reason=gatekeeper&video_container_type=0&video_creator_product_type=7&app_id=2392950137&live_video_guests=0&_mref=message)

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, for whatever reason, you are unable to attend class, please obtain notes and assignments from other students for the material you missed. Please show up to class on time. If you repeatedly show up tardy, it will have a negative impact on your grade — and you'll look bad in front of your fellow students.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

Students should turn off all cell phones or other communication devices while in class. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions.

This is a class focused on teamwork. We're small in number, and we will rely on each other as we learn. Students are expected to be on time to class and punctual to any and all appointments tied to this class. Part of your participation grade will depend on how well you work together as a team.

It will be important to bring an external hard drive to class and on the trip, so that we can have multiple copies of the reporting, interviews, video, photos, audio, etc., that you collect along the way. We want to be prepared for any and all equipment failures, and a way to back up your work is essential. You should have an external hard drive that you purchased when you took Video Journalism.

Students are responsible for making arrangements to check out the equipment they need for the trip. We will work with the digital media manager of the DMC to extend check-out times if that is necessary.

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

- **Individual Story Pitch** -- you will be responsible to pitch a story idea to the class that builds upon lessons learned about 360/VR environments, story experiences and how audiences use new technologies to consume stories. The pitch must outline specifically the story angle, potential sources and a budget (time to produce).
- **Case Study of 360 Immersive News Story** -- You will take an existing 360 news story and break down what elements worked, where you think there is room for improvement and how the journalist used the technology to help audiences understand a topic better. This assignment must include comments from the journalist who produced the story and will be published on Medium.
- **Outline/Story Planning** -- working with your assigned teams you will build a story



outline before leaving for the study abroad trip. This outline is a more detailed version of the chosen story pitch. It must include specific locations needed to film, sources to be interviewed and have extensive background material written on the story topic. The purpose of this assignment is to prepare the groups as much as possible before producing in the field.

- **Final Product** -- your final group project will include multiple elements of storytelling: at least one 360/VR element, a written story, still photographs and optional flat (non-360) video. The stories will be carefully edited for grammar, AP style, quality of narrative and how well they build upon the lessons learned in our meetings, case studies and examples shared.

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Initial research and story pitch	10%
Evaluation/review of 360 example:	10%
Outline and story planning:	20%
Class attendance, participation and final project student evaluations:	20%
Final project and presentation of findings:	40%
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 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/>



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- 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>.



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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

Thursday, May 25- Meeting 1 at Georgetown SCS 5:15-8:15
Equipment Training + Group Planning

Thursday, June 1- Meeting 2 at Georgetown SCS 5:15-8:15
Equipment Training + Group Planning

Week of June 8- Group Meetings (Various) 3-5 hours

Trip:

June 18-24

40 hours (5, 10 hour days of gathering information, filming and editing)

Early July- Group Meetings to Edit Content 9 Hours

Thursday, July 13- Final Edit Session 1 5:15-8:15 (remote or in person)