

**ONLINE JOURNALISM I – Spring 2012 (Tues/Thurs)**  
**Department of Journalism, Rowan University**

Online Journalism I – CRN 41690 - JRN CRSE 02321 - 1  
Tuesday and Thursday - 10:50 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. - Boz 134  
Instructor: Mark Berkey-Gerard  
Office: Bozorth 105E

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the online news landscape. Students learn which principles of traditional journalism can and should be applied to the web, and what makes online journalism unique. Students gain this knowledge through reading assignments, class discussion and activities, and a series of reporting, writing and multimedia production assignments.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- Explore the unique challenges and opportunities of digital journalism.
- Examine ethical and legal issues of online journalism.
- Maintain a website using a Content Management System.
- Author a news-oriented blog on a well-defined beat or coverage area.
- Write blog posts and news articles for the web with effective headlines, structure, links and key words.
- Use social media as a tool for reporting and audience engagement.
- Gain practical knowledge of basic XHTML/CSS.
- Become proficient in basic multimedia reporting and production including how to tell a story using text, links, photos, audio, video, information graphics and data visualizations.
- Produce an online publication with original reporting and multimedia content. If done well, this publication will be suitable for internship, freelance and job applications.

**TEACHING METHODS:**

Students will practice online journalism in this course. Practice, in this case, means *acting as a journalist* and covering a topic for a real audience, not just *pretending to do* journalism to fulfill a school assignment. Students will select a topic or beat to cover for the semester. Each student will create a blog and then report, write and create multimedia content to cover the topic. All assignments will be posted online for anyone to read. Students will build an online audience. I will serve as an editorial advisor and give the same responses, instruction and suggestions that I would give to professional journalists. This course stresses journalistic ethics, reporting and writing, and multimedia storytelling.

**TEXTS:**

All lecture notes, assignments, articles and tutorials will be posted on a blog for the course called “The South Jersey Line” at <http://mbgjournalism.wordpress.com/> It is also a portal to student work. Students should bookmark the class blog or subscribe to its RSS feed and read it regularly.

*JournalismNext: A Practical Guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing*  
By Mark Briggs, CQ Press, ISBN # 978-1-60426-560-6  
\$21.95 in Rowan bookstore, Amazon.com, and online at

<http://cqpress.com/product/Briggs.html>

*The Associated Press Stylebook* by Norm Goldstein (editor)

Note: All of your writing for this course must follow AP style.

I will also assign articles to read. They are posted under the “Reading” tab on the class blog.

#### ACADEMIC HONESTY AND JOURNALISTIC ETHICS:

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Do not use words, photos, or other kinds of content without proper attribution and copyright permission. This includes copying content from the Internet. Plagiarism also includes passing off another’s work as your own or giving your work to another student. For Rowan’s complete academic honesty policy, download the Student Information Guide from

<http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/infoguide/pdf/infoguide0809.pdf> (See pages 27-28 in guide.)

Anyone caught plagiarizing could receive an F for the course.

For this course, students are also expected to adhere to Cyberjournalist.net’s Blogger Code of Ethics at <http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>

#### ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856-256-4234. The Center is located on the 3rd floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations.

#### OFFICE HOURS:

I welcome conversations with students outside of class. My regular office hours are posted on my office door at Bozorth 105E. I may also be available other times as well. If you would like to make an appointment, email me.

I regularly email students between classes with updates on assignments, grades, and responses to your work. Please check your rowan.edu email throughout the week.

#### COMPUTER LAB ETIQUETTE:

We will often use the computers for in-class assignments. When we do use computers, please refrain from unrelated multi-tasking. Please turn off your cell phone and mobile device before class begins, and I will do the same.

#### ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES:

Online Journalism I is a required course for all Journalism majors and minors. Students must earn at least a C- for it to count toward major or minor requirements.

Student work will be assessed through a series of in-class activities, quizzes, and practical reporting assignments.

NOTE: Online news is a deadline driven industry and craft. Therefore, no late work will be accepted. If your work is not posted online by the deadline, you will receive a 0 for the assignment.

### **Attendance and Participation (10 percent of total grade)**

Attendance is graded and points are earned only if students arrive on time, attend and participate fully in the class. Each student receives two “free passes” during the semester. Beginning with the third instance, points will be deducted for absence, arriving late, leaving early, or failing to participate in class. Students who miss class are responsible for all material covered in that class and must meet all deadlines related to that material. Excused absences include religious observances, documented illness, death of family or loved-one and pre-approved school-related activities. Students must provide official written documentation to receive an excused absence.

### **Quizzes (12 percent of total grade)**

There will be four quizzes on the reading and in-class course work during the semester. They will be announced ahead of time. Quizzes cannot be made up or taken early, unless you have an excused absence (see attendance policy).

### **Beat Blog and Weekly Blog Posts (48 percent of overall grade)**

Each student will select a news beat (i.e., a subject, a neighborhood, or a focused topic). The topic must be something that student reporters can access on a weekly basis. You must be able to attend events, interview people, and create original audio, photographs and video related to your subject. The topic must be approved by the instructor. Students will then set up a blog with required elements. Each student is required to post to his or her blog at least once a week beginning the third of the semester. A total of 14 posts are required over the course of the semester. Some posts will be assigned (i.e., a news article, a photo essay, an audio clip, or video) and they must contain the required elements. Some blog posts will be “free choice” and students can select a format that is best suited for the content of the posts. Weekly blog posts are due by 8:00 p.m. each Saturday. Each post will be graded on content and execution. Each post must be substantive and free of errors.

### **Final Project (20 percent of overall grade)**

Students will create a final project that consists of a 500-word text article formatted for the web and an accompanying multimedia feature. Projects will be assessed on story content, original reporting, quality of the presentation, and completion of each required element. This project should demonstrate knowledge and skills gained over the course of the semester.

### **Overall Blog Assessment (10 percent of overall grade)**

At the end of the semester, each student will receive an overall assessment of his/her overall body of online work. Blogs will be assessed on breadth and depth of content, effort and initiative in covering the topic, and progress made over the course of the semester.

<b><u>Assignments</u></b>	<b><u>Points</u></b>
Quizzes (4 X 30 pts)	120
Blog Pitch/Set Up/Post 1 Introduction	30
Post 2: Aggregation	30
Post 3: Free Choice	30

Post 4: 300-500 word article with 2 sources	40
Post 5: Free Choice	30
Post 6: Q & A with Photo or Live Blog	30
Post 7: Photo Gallery (5+ photos)	40
Post 8: Audio Interview and Photo	40
Post 9: Free choice	30
Post 10: Video	50
Post 11: Free Choice	30
Post 12: With Graphic or Visualization	40
Post 13: Free Choice	30
Post 14: Farewell Post and Class Presentation	30
Final Project	200
Overall Blog Assessment	100
Attendance/Participation	100

**Total** **1000 points**

#### GRADING SCALE:

A	940-1000
A-	900-939
B+	870-899
B	830-869
B-	800-829
C+	770-799
C	730-769
C-	700-729
D+	670-699
D	600-669
F	0-599

#### EQUIPMENT:

Rowan University provides the lab computers installed with software needed for this course. The instructor will also recommend free software and programs that students can use on personal computers.

Students can check out some equipment (video cameras, microphones, tripods, chords, and other items) in the Journalism Department Office in Bozorth 105O. *Do not go to the RTF equipment room for this course, please!* The equipment room is open Monday to Friday 9:30-11:00 a.m. and 1:30-4:30 p.m. Equipment can be checked out on a first-come, first-serve basis and must be returned on time.

However, there is not enough equipment for each student. Therefore students are required to have their own equipment to gather simple audio, photos, and video. This equipment is essential for any journalist working today and is increasing used in other journalism courses as well. If you take Online Journalism II, you will need this equipment for that course. These items must be easy to carry so students can take them on all reporting assignments.

Your equipment must be able to capture:

1. Audio (preferably .wav, .wma or .mp3 format) that can be uploaded to a computer and edited.
2. Digital photographs (6 megapixels or better) that can be uploaded to a computer and edited.
3. Video (min. 640 X 480 at 300 fps) with audio that can be uploaded to a computer and edited.

If you have a **smart phone or mobile device** that captures audio, photos, and video, you may be able to use it. However, you must do research on your equipment, file types, and compatibility with editing software and test it out early in the semester. Do not assume that what you have will work.

If you are looking to purchase some equipment or figuring out if yours will work, I recommend the following:

### **Headphones**

Headphones or ear buds are required when we are working with audio and video. Over-the-ear headphones work best, but any will do.

### **Digital Audio Recorder**

Your audio recording device should:

- save files in .wav, .wma. or .mp3 format
- be capable of uploading files to a computer via USB or connector without installing additional software
- have a MIC jack
- have a headphone jack

Recommended models:

- *Olympus VN-5200 – Approx \$40 on Amazon*
- *Olympus VN-6200 – Approx \$40 on Amazon*
- *Olympus WS-600S – Approx \$65 on Amazon*

Note that the cheapest recorders (less than \$40) that require additional software or recorders made by Sony and RCA don't meet these requirements.

### **Digital Camera for Photos/Video**

Your digital camera should meet or exceed the following:

- 6 megapixels or better
- Image stabilization (essential)
- Video at 640 x 480 at 30 fps (essential); video must include audio
- 3x OPTICAL zoom or better
- USB 2 output
- 2GB+ memory card

If you have questions about equipment or do not have the means to purchase these items, please talk to me in person.

## **CLASS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE – SPRING 2012**

The following schedule is a guide for the semester. Specific assignments and dates are subject to change. Check the class blog for updates.

### Week 1

#### **Tues, Jan 17 and Thurs, Jan 19**

In Class:

- Course introduction and overview
- Equipment
- Unique aspects of online journalism
- Why has the Internet wreaked havoc on the news business?
- Picking your beat for the semester

Assignments:

- Browse the list of winners of the 2011 Online News Association Awards at <http://journalists.org/2011/09/25/2011-online-journalism-award-winners-announced/>
- Come to class ready to talk about one particular entry.
- Read "Out of Print" by Eric Alterman, *New Yorker Magazine* at <http://bit.ly/BWm1>
- Read JournalismNext - Forward (p.xiv to xix)
- Read JournalismNext - Intro (p. 1-8)

### Week 2

#### **Tues, Jan 24 and Thurs, Jan 26**

In Class:

- What do Lippman and Dewey have to do with me?
- Permission, Waivers, Plagiarism, Copyright, Fair Use and Creative Commons
- Why your friends make lousy sources.
- Blog as a news platform
- Pitch your beat
- Setting up your blog

Assignments:

- Pick a "beat" to cover for the semester
- Read JournalismNext Chapter 1 – We are all Web workers now (p. 9-22) but skip section on Web design (p. 23-39)
- Read the Cyberjournalist.net's Blogger Code of Ethics at <http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>
- Read JournalismNext Chapter 2 – Advanced blogging (p. 40-67)
- Blog Set up and Post 1 (Introduction) due by 8 p.m. on Saturday

### Week 3

#### **Tues, Jan 31 and Thurs, Feb 2**

In Class:

- Quiz 1 on reading and class material
- What does Andres Sullivan have to do with me?
- Writing for the Web – headlines, story formats, links, tags
- Common types of blog posts

Assignments:

- Read "Why I Blog" by Andrew Sullivan, *The Atlantic Magazine* at <http://bit.ly/blaY1q>
- Read JournalismNext Chap 10 – Managing news as a conversation (p. 277-309)
- Read JournalismNext Chap 11 – Building a digital audience for news (p. 310-334)
- Blog Post 2 (Aggregation) and Post 3 (Free Choice) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 4

#### **Tues, Feb 7 and Thurs, Feb 9**

##### In-Class:

- Building an audience, web analytics, SEO
- Social media as a reporting tool
- What does Brian Stelter have to do with me?

##### Assignments:

- Read JournalismNext Chapter 3 – Crowd-powered collaboration (p. 68-92)
- Read JournalismNext Chapter 4 – Microblogging (p. 93-118)
- Read “What I Learned in Joplin” by Brian Stelter at <http://bit.ly/j5FRiK>
- Blog Post 4 (300-500 words with 2 sources) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 5

#### **Tues, Feb 14 and Thurs, Feb 16**

##### In Class:

- Quiz 2 on reading and class material
- Really simple XHTML/CSS (2 days)

##### Assignments:

- Read JournalismNext Chap 1 - Section on Web design (p. 23-39)
- Blog Post 5 (Free Choice) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 6

#### **Tues, Feb 21 and Thurs, Feb 23**

##### In Class:

- Quiz 3 on XHTML/CSS
- Incorporating photography into your reporting (2 days). Bring camera to class.

##### Assignments:

- Read “Look at Me!” by Maureen Tkacik at <http://bit.ly/9Bf9IF>
- Read JournalismNext Chapter 5 – Visual storytelling with photographs
- Blog Post 6 (Text Q &A with Photo or Live Blog an Event) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday.

#### Week 7

#### **Tues, Feb 28 and Thurs, March 1**

##### In Class:

- What does Maureen Tkaik have to do with me?
- Audio gathering and editing (2 days). Bring audio recorder to class.

##### Assignments:

- Read JournalismNext Chapter 7 – Making audio journalism visible (p. 177-205)
- Blog Posts 7 (Photo Gallery) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 8

#### **Tues, March 6 and Thurs, March 8**

##### In Class:

- Audio day 3 and catch-up day.

##### Assignments:

-Post 8 (Audio Interview and Photo) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

### **SPRING BREAK – MARCH 12-16**

#### Week 9

**Tues, March 20 and Thurs, March 22**

In Class:

-Crash course in web video (2 days)

Assignments:

-Read JournalismNext Chapter 8 – Telling stories with video

-Blog Posts 9 (Free Choice) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 10

**Tues, March 27 and Thurs, March 29**

In Class:

-Quiz 4 on reading and class material

-Video workday

Assignments:

-Post 10 (Video) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 11

**Tues, April 3**

In Class:

-Info graphics, maps, timelines and other data visualization (2 days)

**Thurs, April 5 – NO CLASS –Let me know if you are interested in going to DC**

Assignment:

-Read JournalismNext Chap 9 – Data driven journalism and digitizing your life

-Blog Posts 11 (Free Choice) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 12

**Tues, April 10 and Thurs, April 12**

In Class

-Final Project Overview

Assignment:

-Blog Post 12 (With Graphic or Visualization) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

#### Week 13

**Tues, April 17 and Thurs, April 19**

In Class:

-Where do we go from here? The future of online journalism and you.

-Building an online portfolio

Assignments:

-Blog Post 13 (Free Choice) due by 8:00 p.m. on Saturday

-Prepare for blog presentations

Week 14

**Tues, April 24 and Thurs, April 26**

In Class:

-Blog Presentations (Session 1 and 2)

Assignment:

-Work on Final Project

Week 15

**Final Farewell Post 15 Due TBA**

**Final Project Due Date TBA**

**Final Week – May 1-5**

**Graduation, May 11**