

COMM 2344: Digital Video and Audio and Production

CRN: 11295

Fall 2023

Room 104 Cotton Memorial Building

Mondays 1:30-2:50 p.m.

Weds 1:30-4:20 p.m.

(Lecture + Lab)

Professor Kate Gannon

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Virtual office hours: Tue & Thurs. 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. and Weds. 10 a.m. - noon or by appointment. I can also be reached through our course Slack channel or via text messaging.

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the basics of producing video and audio stories for multimedia news outlets and communication organizations. The main goal is to help you understand the digital media aesthetics involved in planning and producing multimedia content and packages for publication. Your assignments will involve covering real-life stories for potential publication in Borderzine.com. You will learn about a variety of mediums (audio, video, photos and graphics) and reporting styles used in digital storytelling and be able to identify which approach would be best for a particular story or platform. You will also maintain a course blog where you will post your assignments and demonstrate the ability to use a content management system (CMS), a basic web skill. We will cover how to make a website for your blog using WordPress. This will serve as the start of your professional portfolio.

This course can be a lot of fun, but it is production intensive. It will require good planning and organization on your part to gather appropriate audio and visuals as well as arrange timely interviews with sources. You will complete the editing of your projects on your own outside of class.

You will learn professional standards for working with audio recorders, dslr cameras, microphones and other tools. Primarily we will focus on reporting using your mobile devices and free digital apps. Limited quantities of equipment may be available for checking out through the Communication department/Borderzine Lab. But, given the number of students enrolled in production classes, you are strongly encouraged to obtain your own equipment, such as tripods and audio recorders.

Training in this course will emphasize concepts of non-linear editing regardless of software platforms. Lessons will include the Adobe suite of products, as they are the industry standard. We will cover how to produce multimedia using the Adobe CC programs Audition, Photoshop, Premiere and After Effects, but will also include other apps and programs that may be more accessible for devices with limited processing power.

How this course works

This is a hands-on reporting and production course with a journalism foundation. You will experience the news production process in every exercise and assignment. You will be trained in the use of technology, but I will also emphasize the professional storytelling and newsgathering principles behind the techniques. This is important because technology changes rapidly, but the concepts and goals behind media production and good storytelling do not.

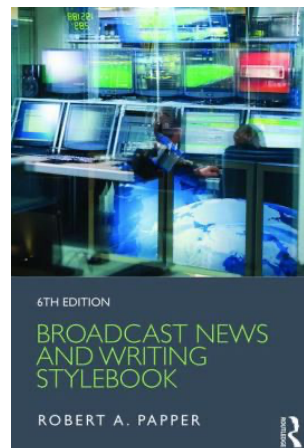
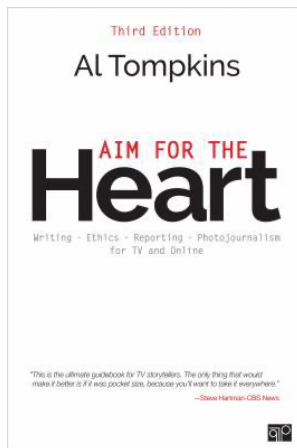
Think of the assignments as building blocks. Each is designed to teach you key skills that will be required in subsequent assignments as requirements are added.

Course Objectives or Expected Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will:

- Understand what digital storytelling involves and how to apply it to the different media (stills, audio, video).
- Demonstrate an understanding of news characteristics to be able to develop strong story ideas and successful pitches.
- Produce a portfolio of four reported journalism stories (projects). Stories that meet the highest professional standards may be published on Borderzine.com for extra credit.
- Understand the basic features of DSLR cameras and apps and their uses in photo and video journalism.
- Know how to work with lighting and audio and video recording equipment in the field.
- Gain experience using multimedia storytelling applications.
- Be able to log tape, transcribe interviews and write scripts on deadline.
- Be proficient in finding expert sources and relevant voices for your stories.
- Be knowledgeable on the best practices for reporting with accuracy, avoiding plagiarism, censorship and respecting copyright. We will follow AP (Associated Press) style.
- Demonstrate an understanding of basic multimedia web content management (CMS).

Required Materials



Aim for the Heart: Write, Shoot, Report and Produce for TV and Multimedia 3rd ed by Al Tompkins, CQ Press College. ISBN-10: 1506315259 | ISBN-13: 9781506315263

Broadcast News and Writing Stylebook, 6th edition by Robert A. Papper, Routledge, ISBN 9781138682610

Other course readings will be available on Blackboard.

Portable USB Flash drive or hard drive, minimum 32GB (for saving project files and assets)
16GB SD memory card (for camera) or enough storage space on mobile device to film video files

Regular access to a computer, Blackboard, Slack and your UTEP email account.

I will use Blackboard to post some lessons, reference readings, evaluations, assignments, grades, announcements and other relevant information.

Your multimedia files will be turned in on Google Drive and on your individual blogs (I will show you how to set up Wordpress). Pitches and some exercises may be turned in to me by email as assigned.

Course Assignments and Grading

Grade Distribution:

1000-900 = A 899-800 = B 799-700 = C 699-600 = D 599 and Below = F

- 50 Points: Soundscape assignment (How It Sounds)
- 50 Points: Photo composition assignment
- 50 Points: Video sequences assignment (A to B)
- 300 Points: 3 story projects (best two out of three, but all required)
- 200 Points: Final project
- 100 Points: Reading quizzes (lowest score dropped)
- 100 Points: Wordpress Blog /Portfolio
- 150 Points: Participation

Grading Scale:

A = 900-1000 pts An "A" grade is designated for assignments that go beyond the requirements of the assignment; exceptional and outstanding work, well reported, edited, produced and narrated.

B = 800 – 899 A "B" grade is designated for assignments that go beyond some of the requirements of the assignment; better than average work, for the most part, well reported and narrated, but with a few errors in production and editing.

C = 700 – 790 A "C" grade is designated for assignments that meet requirements of the assignment, but is average work; average production, story lacks clarity, sources are insufficient, or errors in editing.

D = 600 – 690 A "D" grade is designated for assignments that do not meet all requirements of the assignment; generally less than average work, less than average production, no clear angle for the story, sources are faulty, or substantial errors in editing.

F = 0 – 590 An "F" grade fails to meet most of the requirements of the assignment; far below average work, faulty production, insufficient reporting and massive errors in editing.

Multimedia Rubric

A: Ready for publication or broadcast. Shows mastery of facts and elements and good understanding of the language of the image. Story is compelling, original, makes good use of audio and video components to tell it.

A-/B+: Accurate, contains all relevant material but may lack maximum precision and clarity in storytelling and some minor production errors. May have minor lighting and sound problems in images and footage. The difference between an A- and B+ is the degree to which these occur.

B: Needs some editing, rewriting and production editing. All the elements of a good story are generally included.

B-/C+: A significant problem or two somewhere in the analysis, focus, organization, shooting and production. The difference between a B- and C+ is the degree to which these problems appear.

C: Meet most requirements of the assignment, but is average work Missing facts and key information. Major reshooting or post production editing necessary. Missing crucial B-roll footage, poor audio, too many people just talking, not enough action.

C-: Weak effort, story lacks clarity, sources are insufficient, or errors in editing

D: Overhaul required. Poor organization, reporting, shooting, production. Major storytelling issues (including sourcing, imaging) and absence of critical thinking.

F: Failure to meet assignment requirements and standards. Missed deadline

Soundscape – How it sounds? (50 points)

A soundscape is a sense of place that you build through sound. In this assignment you will choose a theme and will create a soundscape to illustrate it. For example, you can decide to work on How it sounds to be 23 years old, How it sounds to be a student from Juarez, How it sounds to be an aspiring singer, How it sounds to be a Star Wars fanatic, etc.

Once you have selected the theme you will need to collect Natural sounds (Nats and ambient) to build your soundscape. You need at least four (4) natural sounds and your soundscape should be 1 to 2 minutes long. Once you have collected your sounds, you will work on a voice over to help describe what those sounds mean to you and how is it that they are part of the theme. Try to choose your sounds in a way that you don't need to explain them too much.

Photography (50 points) – Composition

This is an assignment where you will practice image gathering by collecting a series of still shots that demonstrate principles of good composition and creativity (a list with the specific shots will be provided at the time of assignment)

Videography (50 points) – Shooting sequences

You will gain familiarity with the basic shot types used in the construction of storytelling sequences. This is fundamental for planning and shooting professional video stories.

Stories (300 points): (The best two out of these three projects will be considered for your final grade. All must be completed.)

You may be expected to come up with your own story ideas and be able to craft a strong pitch to your instructor (editor) on how and why the story should be done.

- Story 1: Produce a 3-5 minute Audio news feature + pitch + transcript + script (150 points)
This is a news enterprise piece for radio. The story must have news value but is somewhat timeless because the topic/issue is ongoing. An audio feature includes a script with an anchor intro, your reporter track (with a lead and transitions to connect the most interesting, informative and relevant actualities from sources). It also includes natural and ambient sounds from the locations/activities to help illustrate the story. The piece should be 1- 3 minutes long and must include interviews with at least two sources.
- Story 2: Produce a 1:30 – 2 minute video package or mini doc + pitch (150 points). You can choose from two options for this assignment:
 - News enterprise piece. The story must have news value but is somewhat timeless because the topic or issue is ongoing. One of your sources should be someone affected by the topic. Your secondary sources should be experts or authorities on the topic or issue that can provide insight or perspective.
 - Profile. Similar to the first assignment. Find a subject that is interesting and relevant to your community and work on a video profile. That would be your first source. Your secondary sources should be other people who can provide insight and context about the first source. The idea is that the second source explains, complements, and or expands the profile.
- Story 3: Produce a 1-3-minute video explainer with interview + pitch (150 points) You will demonstrate how to use a mix of video techniques and animation to make a compelling news explainer. Break down a news topic or issue for the public. This is an informative

piece. It should be based on facts, not opinion. But, it can have a personal voice. It requires original reporting, video.

Final Project package (200 points): Your multimedia story for the web must include these mandatory elements:

- Multimedia story + pitch. Choose from one of the following formats: audio, video, explainer.
- All the elements of your story should be complimentary to each other NOT a repetition of content.
- Open captioning version
- Script
- Web Text block (Min. 200 words)
- Feature Photo (horizontal)

Online quizzes (100 points): Quizzes on weekly readings.

Blog website / E-Portfolio(100 points): You will create and maintain a website that presents your work from the semester. You will demonstrate an understanding of working with content management systems and web management by effectively posting your course work and commentary on the exercises on your blog. The site you create can be used as your online portfolio that you can use to showcase your talent when applying for jobs and internships.

Extra points:

Extra credit will be added to the student's final grade per story that is approved to be published on Borderzine.com.

Attendance Policy

Because this is primarily an online course, attendance is determined by class participation. Students must be prepared, participate in discussions and exercises and complete the course modules to understand and incorporate the strategies and processes used to complete the final projects. Participation is worth 15 percent of the final grade.

You will be able to make up missed or unsatisfactory assignments to make up points (but not unexcused absences for scheduled classes). However, you can't earn more than the 150 points total for this category. That is, your grade for attendance and participation won't improve your grade on your projects or quizzes.

Technology Requirements

This class meets in the Multimedia Journalism Lab, which has the Adobe CC software we will be training on. You will also receive a license for Adobe CC for your use outside of class during the semester. Course content is also shared through the Blackboard learning management system (LMS). In case we need to provide any training online, please ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the internet. You may use any of the primary web browsers—Explorer, Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, etc. When having technical difficulties, try switching to another browser.

ILLNESS PRECAUTIONS

Please stay home if you have symptoms of a communicable illness. If you are feeling unwell, please let us know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations.

Drop Policy

Students wishing to withdraw from the course with a grade of “W” must do so before the official college deadline, **Friday, Nov. 3.**

I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the [Registrar's Office](#) to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course

Scholastic Integrity

It is expected that you will research and report all of your own work and that you will know how to properly attribute sources and quote people accurately.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student or falsifying source material. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Self-plagiarism involves “recycling” assignments from other classes or publications. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative AI tools such as Chat GPT is permitted in this course for the following activities, which must be noted or cited:

- Generating ideas for stories

- Research on a topic that is then verified by fact-checking
- Assistance with summarizing content from credible, verifiable sources (such as government reports). Needs to be fact-checked thoroughly.
- Experimenting with creating visualizations that might be used with stories AFTER getting approval from your instructor and discussing appropriate use.

However, you may not use AI tools to complete the following activities:

- Writing your stories
- Creating visualizations without prior instructor approval

Students must cite any borrowed content sources to comply with all applicable citation guidelines, copyright law, and avoid plagiarism. Instances that violate these guidelines will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

CASS:

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. *CASS Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.*

Accommodations Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the [UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#).

Student Resources

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

- [UTEP Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.

- [Help Desk](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- [Online AP Stylebook and AP Writing lab](#): Link and instructions on how to use the UTEP VPN to access the Associated Press Stylebook online free.
- [Military Student Success Center](#): UTEP welcomes military-affiliated students to its degree programs, and the Military Student Success Center and its dedicated staff (many of whom are veterans and students themselves) are here to help personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [A Miners Guide](#): Help with Time Management, Stress
- [UTEP Counseling Services](#): Including hotline helpline