

# WEB NARRATIVES

362

Tuesdays 2:20-5:05 pm MMTH  
127

## INSTRUCTOR

Josh Meltzer  
Photojournalist-in-Residence

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## OFFICE HOURS

Tuesdays – 9:30-10:30 a.m.  
Wednesdays – 1:30-2:30 p.m.  
Fridays – 1:30-2:30 p.m.

*I'll be happy to make an appointment with you if you cannot see me during the above hours.*

*I'll also be scheduling one-on-one meetings with you during the term for intensive edits.*

## ATTENDANCE

It is vital to success in this class. Each class is equal to one week of regular classes. There will be discussions and critiques that cannot be redone. You must be on time. You **MUST** be present to have your assignments accepted for a grade.

## CELL PHONES

Do not use your cell phones at all in class. Please leave them in your bag or pocket. You will have a break each class to check them. End of story.

## MISSION

This course will continue your studies from previous storytelling courses, such as Picture Stories and Introduction to Multimedia, to learn to better tell online narratives in linear forms. We will explore the benefits of different types of mediums, including animation, still images, audio, video and design as elements of multimedia journalism, and learn when video works best for certain types of stories. More importantly we will learn when video does not work well for your audiences.

While the web is oversaturated with bad video, we will recognize that our audience has no patience for anything but top-notch production quality, story structure and visuals. Though I understand this may be your first time shooting and editing video stories, we must agree that subpar work in this medium just will not cut it. I will help you through this steep learning curve.

In addition to our own storytelling we will critique and examine other online video and true multimedia storytelling online today.

## GOALS

1. Understand and put to use the classic narrative arc story structure into documentary visual and audio linear storytelling.
2. Develop your story research skills to allow you to find compelling narratives that work in a linear storytelling medium.
3. Learn to proficiently and efficiently operate an HDSLR camera as your primary storytelling tool to the point at which it doesn't get in the way of your storytelling work.
4. Develop your audio gathering techniques and study of sound journalism.
5. Identify and examine current trends in online multimedia storytelling and critique online projects.
6. Find and develop characters that will become the primary voices in your stories.
7. Continued study of shooting stills for a linear narrative story structure.
8. Advanced knowledge of Final Cut Pro editing techniques
9. Working in teams to tell a story.
10. Writing accompanying text for your online video stories.
11. To find, research and tell stories of diverse topics including those that foster understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

## DEADLINES

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. End of story.

Each assignment must be in two places at the start of class of the day it is due. It will need to be on the [www.vimeo.com](http://www.vimeo.com) WKU page (details to follow) and on the server. For every 24 hours it is late in either place, starting right after the start of class, you will be deducted a full letter grade. This will be enforced with no exceptions. There is plenty of time to complete each assignment and there are no reshoots. Remember that it takes time to upload files both to Vimeo and the server so plan accordingly. Uploading right before class won't work.

Every assignment must also be accompanied with a series of textual information that I will give prior to the assignments. Not turning this part in will also result in a late grade. All assignments must be named accordingly when saved.

**lastname\_assignmentName.mov**

**GRADE BREAKDOWN**

Assignments 850 points  
 Blog 50 points  
 Participation 100 points

You will be able to earn 1000 points this semester. You start with zero, so remember you have to earn the points.

Each assignment may be broken down into smaller deadlines and graded sections which I will explain to you.

Participation in class is worth 100 pts. Coming late or missing class will not help you in this category.

**900-1000 pts = A**

**800-899 pts = B**

**700-799 pts = C**

600-699 pts = D

0-599 pts = F

**GRADING**

Grading your assignments will be based on the following criteria.

- Content
- Creativity
- Technical superiority
- Editing Technique
- Fulfilment of the Assignment
- Written materials

**IMPORTANT DATES:**

3/11-15 - Spring Break

3/18 - Last day to drop a class with a W

May 7 @3:45pm - Final project due

**RSS FEED**

You will be required to set up, maintain and check weekly an RSS feed of blogs. I will give you a list of blogs to start out with but you will be asked to bring new blogs to class that you find online that deal with this medium of storytelling.

**WEEKLY BLOG**

You will be required to set up, maintain and post at a minimum once weekly to a blog, where you will do three things each week.

- Reflect on your assignments and your own work you've turned in. Discuss the successes and shortcomings honestly. Where can you improve?
- Write about your plans for future assignments
- Post links and respond to inspiring online video storytelling

**ASSIGNMENTS**

All assignments must be produced with your own material, though at times you may be asked or encouraged to work in teams. I will explain this more in class.

*Assignment 1 - Journey (DUE February 12) 50 points*

This project will introduce you to the idea of taking your audience on a journey through time. This is the only project which may be fictional, though it certainly can be non-fiction. You may use music, but the story is driven with visuals. It is your chance to practice sequencing in your shooting and become accustomed to the video camera and its required accessories.

*Assignment 2 - Truth and Lies (DUE February 19) 50 points*

Interview a partner on camera. This is an exercise in questioning your subjects, setting up and lighting an interview, and revealing the truth.

*Assignment 3 - Documentary Case Study (DUE February 26) 50 points*

We will analyze and critique the story structure of a feature length documentary film and you will create a re-edit of the film's trailer and write a textual synopsis and review.

*Assignment 4 - Sense of Place (DUE March 19) 125points*

This is your first fully shot story. Time to put together the pieces and produce a story driven by interview and tied to one's sense of place. You will work in pairs for this assignment, though you will share material and edit your own piece to turn in. Your topic can be of your choice, but must follow some of the storytelling principles that we're learning this semester, and must be tied to one's sense of place. We will discuss how to work in teams in the field.

*Assignment 5 - Social Advocacy Documentary (DUE April 9) 225 points*

You will choose a non-profit or advocacy program in the region and identify how they help their clientèle. Talk to the group's employees or volunteers to identify a person who benefits from their services and write a proposal about how you might build a visual narrative from what they do in the community. You will not produce a video that is only about the organization nor for the organization, but rather on a person who directly benefits from their important work. Emphasis on character development is key in this assignment.

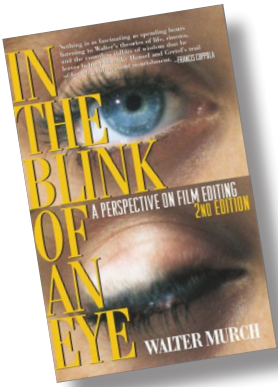
*Assignment 6 - Issue Based Storytelling (DUE May 7 @3:45pm) 350 points*

This will be a precursor to what you'll do in your APJ projects class your Senior year, but on a much smaller scale. For this project, choose an issue important to you and use your reporting and research skills to locate a subject or subjects that will become your characters. Use storytelling techniques raised in class and found in projects watched to use suspense, compelling introductions, the reveal of story, and of course top-notch shooting and sound gathering techniques.

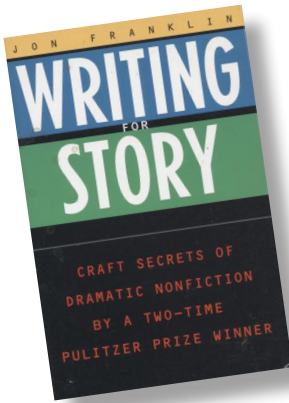
For each of these six assignments you can use stills, audio, video, text or other mediums that are appropriate for your stories and some combination of those. You may NOT use previous material shot for other classes. Get out in the field, meet new subjects and tell new stories.

To be successful in this course, you must work on each project consistently for each assignment's allotted time. You cannot procrastinate and be successful. These stories take time to research, time to shoot, and more time to edit than you can imagine at this point.

For each project assignment you may be asked to show your work midway through the deadline period, and having nothing to show will result in a lower grade on that project.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*In the Blink of an Eye*  
By Walter Murch



*Writing for Story*  
By Jon Franklin

**CRITIQUES AND CLASS PARTICIPATION**

One reminder about critiques in class. I want involvement from everyone. The critiques need to be honest and constructive. You can be tough without tearing people apart. A thin line often separates what is perceived to be constructive versus destructive feedback. Find the balance, and when in doubt, take the higher road. Likewise, feedback that is full of hot air and praise does little to help one another grow. Speak positively when you really feel something is great, and critique when you have constructive feedback and suggestions. Participate, participate, participate. This will be part of your grade.

When receiving a critique, you need a similar balance. There is a fine line between defending your position and making excuses. Be a good listener. Don't be so connected to your work that you lose sight of how it could be better. You need to develop a thick skin and an open mind. We will use our time to focus on solutions instead of problems. I want you all to be successful.

Harsh and honest critiques aren't easy, and I understand that, but we have a limited time together and I want to use this time to make our work stronger and more compelling. Liken it to an athlete who has to suffer through training in order to perform at his or her best. My word is only one person's opinion (though I write your grade) so please don't take it as the only way.

**GUEST SPEAKERS**

I will bring in some guest speakers to talk about their work and to critique yours. Whenever possible, I will schedule these during our class time, but if this isn't possible my expectation is that you will make every effort to still attend.

**EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES**

This is a video intensive course and you will need access to a video camera. The gear checkout has a limited amount of gear so if you do not own your own camera (and I do recommend that you own your own), you must plan ahead to check out gear when you need it and realize that it may not be available whenever you want.

We will use HD/SLR Canon and Nikon gear and I'm happy to help you shop for gear and we will spend time in class talking about building a personal kit.

The gear checkout does NOT provide cables, so prepare to buy your own cables for whatever audio and visual setup you may be using. Again, I'll answer any questions in class or one-on-one. The key is to **PLAN AHEAD** for your equipment needs.

**Required Materials**

- Digital Camera(s), lenses and Flash
- Digital Audio Recorder / Shotgun Microphone/Headphones/Cables
- At least two 8GB or higher compact flash cards (16GB or 32GB are recommended)
- One ream (500 sheets) of HP® Premium Choice Laser Paper, Smooth, 8 1/2" x 11", 32 Lb
- Portable external hard drive 500GB minimum and 7200 rpm (Backing up your projects is highly recommended so plan on buying a second drive to mirror the first.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES** who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in Downing University Center, A-200. The phone number is 270 745 5004.

Please **DO NOT** request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Preparation is key to your success in this class. If you come up with story ideas in advance that you're interested, you have a better chance of shooting better AND enjoying your work. Preserve your subject's dignity. Treat yourself and others with respect. There will be challenges. There will be obstacles. There will be setbacks, but remember that all of these will help you grow and become the storyteller I know you all can. I am looking forward to working with you this semester!

## PLAGIARISM

To represent ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his or her own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is also plagiarism. Disposition of Offenses - Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without possibility of withdrawal.

## PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES

*Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC)*

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.