COURSE SYLLABUS

Convergence Journalism (COMM 3555)
Department of Communication | The University of Utah
Fall Semester | MW, 8:05a – 9:25a | LNCO 2840

Instructor: Avery Holton
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Twitter: @averyholton
Office Hours: 1:00p – 3:00p or by appointment

WHAT’S THIS CLASS ABOUT?
Journalists and mass communicators are increasingly working within digitally innovative spaces to share news and information. This course is designed to help empower you as a journalist and as a communicator by introducing you to several key platforms that are being used to craft and share engaging stories. You will work collaboratively and individually with visual and digital reporting tools as well as social media and reporting apps, producing valuable content and sharing it with others.

Course Objectives
This course is designed to allow you creative expression while promoting critical thinking and the practical application of skills. Working collaboratively and individually, we will rely on readings, lectures, practical assignments, peer reviews and discussions, hands-on production, and digital and social media engagement.

By the end of this course you should be able to:
• Identify the news issues and areas you are most interested in
• Demonstrate effective visual, digital, and social media content production
• Effectively use visual and audio equipment for content creation
• Effectively use digital and social media for content distribution
• Select the most suitable platforms for crafting and sharing stories
• Conduct effective research and interviews
• Produce compelling collaborative and individual content
• Critically think about the current and future state of digital journalism and mass communication
• Feel comfortable exploring innovative technologies for news and information creation and sharing

COURSE MATERIALS

Hardware/Software
We will be working with audio and visual recording devices that can be checked out. You may choose to use your own equipment as well. You are required to bring your own flash
memory card to each class (an example). You should additionally bring your own USB or external hard drive and may want to set up a cloud storage system such as Dropbox. You may also want to purchase headphones for audio and video editing.

We will be using several social media and editing programs. Some of these are available in the labs and are not required for purchase, though you may find it useful to find free versions online. Please note that if you do use programs outside of the lab, they may not sync well with those in the lab. If you choose to work with programs other than those taught or assigned, please consult with me first.

Readings
There are not required textbooks for this course. All readings will be available through syllabus links, on Canvas, or will be shared via e-mail. Please note that you will be responsible for staying up to date with all readings, including those shared by your classmates as part of our Deep Thoughts assignments.

IMPORTANT NOTES
This is a course that follows a hospital model, which means we will be using most of the lab time to practice skills and produce products. Because time is short, you will need to work on many skills outside of class using the tutorials provided or through your own initiatives. We will review many of the basics for the technology we use, so you will find the tutorials and extra materials helpful.

We additionally will be working collaboratively for much of the semester. Please note that while your assignments and projects may often be the result of group work, your grade is your own.

Open Lab
Many of our projects will require extensive computer time in and out of our scheduled class time. While we will have some class periods devoted exclusively to lab time, you should plan on working outside of class as well. Lab access is available for all students enrolled in this class. You are responsible for obtaining proximity access on your Ucard for our classroom from Karen Klc in the Communication office.

As you work, be sure to save and back up your work often. Do not save files to your desktop. You are responsible for ensuring you have saved your work.

Equipment
Cameras and other equipment are each student’s responsibility. Any expense for damage comes out of the student’s resources. You may use your own equipment as well.

Feedback
This class requires a critical eye from everyone, so you should expect some debate and critique amongst your fellow students. Please remember to keep it thoughtful and professional. There will be times when I ask you to consider the comments or work of your classmates. Respect is key here, just as it is anywhere else. On assignments, I will
have feedback (and grades) back to as promptly as I can.

**Course Syllabus and Schedule**
As we go along during the semester, the course may take us in different directions. As such, I may change some assignments or deadlines. I will keep you informed of any changes.

**CLASS & UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Readings:** Readings for each class will be made available through Canvas or via e-mail at least one week before class. You are responsible for knowing them and will be expected to contribute to class discussions based on the readings.

**Attendance:** This is a high-paced class, so attendance is important. You have up to two (2) unexcused absences before your grade will be affected. For every unexcused or unapproved absence beyond that mark your final grade in this class will be reduced by five (5) points. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to make up any work for that day and to get the class notes from a classmate. Class material will not be repeated for students who do not attend.

**Due dates:** All assignments must be turned in on the day they are due. No exceptions will be made without proof of a university-approved activity or an emergency. Late projects assignments will be penalized one letter grade for each day they are late. Assignments turned in five days late or beyond will be recorded as a zero.

**Honesty:** Plagiarism, academic dishonesty or cheating of any sort will result in at least an E for the assignment, and possibly for the course, and may also include additional disciplinary action. If you are ever uncertain about any honesty policies, please consult the Student Handbook or visit with me.

**Original Materials:** In this class, we will gather, edit, produce, and share a variety of content. All materials included in your projects must be original materials gathered by you. You may not use materials found online, gathered from other classmates, or gathered by you for previous classes or from previous activities outside of our class. You may use open-source materials as long as it is properly cited.

**Accommodation:** The university recognizes that students’ core beliefs might make it difficult to fulfill some requirements of some courses or majors. Students must determine when course requirements conflict with their core beliefs. Please see the university policy for more information: [http://admin.utah.edu/facdev/pdf/accommodations-policy-background.pdf](http://admin.utah.edu/facdev/pdf/accommodations-policy-background.pdf).

**Communication policy:** This is an upper level course where we will work as colleagues in a collaborative environment. You should address each other with professionalism and respect. You may wish to collaborative via social media and/or e-mail. When e-mailing, please be sure to include the course number, a proper greeting, and a proper signature.
**Technology policy:** This class takes place in a computer lab. You are expected to use lab computers for class work during class time. Please do not use your phones during class unless they are included in an assignment.

**Registrar’s Note:** You may drop any class in the first week with no penalty. If you choose to drop this course, you are responsible for removing the course from your schedule. For drop/withdraw options after that, see the university handbook for official policies and dates.

**ADA Statement:** Students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning or psychiatric disabilities that might in any way affect their performance in the course should inform the instructor early in the semester to discuss any arrangements or accommodations necessary.

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD) or online at http://www.sa.utah.edu/ds/. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

**Food and drinks:** No food or drinks are allowed in the classroom.

**EVALUATIONS**
You will be evaluated on your participation in assignments and activities, the products you produce, and your contribution to the innovation of this course. There will be several opportunities for extra credit during the semester as well.

The following is a general guideline that may be updated during the semester. It is not a rubric for grading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>10%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep Thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Media Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Stories</td>
<td>60% (3 x 20%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>App Innovation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Deep Thoughts (10%)**
In groups of four, you will tackle one critical question from the list below and make a presentation to the class. Your presentation may be in any format you choose, though you should take between 20-30 minutes to detail your response. You may also want to include readings or handouts for your classmates to consider. At the end of your presentation, you
should pose several talking points or questions for your classmates to consider. You will be graded on thoroughness, creativity, and the ability to promote discussion among your classmates. Questions you will select from include, but are not limited to:

- What is convergent journalism? Is it an appropriate term?
- What are the key innovations journalists should be using?
- What are the best practices of digital journalism and/or social media?
- How can apps be useful tools for journalists?
- What roles do citizen journalists and user-generated content play in journalism?
- What are some of the ethical issues journalists today face?
- What does the future of journalism look like?

**Web Development (10%)**

Having a publishing space is one of the most critical ways to disseminate your content. There are a variety of publishing platforms and content management systems (CMSs) to choose from. I will show you two that you may consider for this class. Working within your groups, you will identify the platform that best fits yours ideas. You will create a collaborative web space where each of your three stories will be published. You will be able to use this space to create an identity for your group, to share other interesting content, to publish your group’s content, and to develop a landing spot for some of your social media efforts. You will be given an initial grade for this early in the semester and may improve on that grade throughout the course.

**Social Media Development (10%)**

Early in the semester we will examine several social media platforms. Based on your interests or expertise, you may engage in any number of social media platforms throughout the semester. For this course specifically, you will be graded only on the social media platform that you feel you used the best. You will be asked several times during the semester to provide an update on your social media progress, and you will be expected to share your work and the work of your classmates through the social media channel you choose. While there is no maximum number of postings, you should be engaging your social media platform with reasonable regularity. For some, this will mean daily engagement. For others, it will mean weekly engagement. I expect you to be able to defend the quality and quantity of your engagement in a final report.

**3 Stories (20% each)**

Working in groups, you will produce three digital news stories during the semester. You will use the skills we discuss and practice in class and the tutorials made available to you through this syllabus, Canvas, and e-mails to produce your stories. Your first story will more than likely incorporate Final Cut 10, though you can use Final Cut 10, Soundslides, Audacity, or any other program approved by the instructor for your final two projects. You must be able to defend your choice of platform. Stories will be graded using a general rubric, though your grade can be affected by the peer evaluations you and your group members provide. We will discuss each story assignment in more detail during our newsroom meetings.
App Innovation (10%)
Working individually, you have two options: to produce a story using a news-oriented app that we have covered during the semester or to introduce a new news-oriented app to the class. If you choose to create a story, you must select an app and an event or topic and have it approved by the instructor. You will use the app to create a news story or item and you will briefly present your experience to the class. If you choose to explore a new app, you will have your app approved by the instructor. You will then make a 5-minute presentation to the class on the app’s news capabilities.

Bonus Labs
You will have at least two opportunities during the semester to earn extra credit in class. You are invited to give a brief presentation (5-7 minutes) of an experience or skill that you believe your classmates can learn from. Each presentation must deal with the lessons and assignments we have been working through. For example, if you find an innovative way to edit natural sound or a cool video or visual app, you can lead the class in a discussion or a hands-on lesson. How you present is up to you. You will receive credit so long as you present something helpful or new. Be creative!

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.99</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>64-66.99</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Below 60.0</td>
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CLASS SCHEDULE

Much like the newsrooms of today, this is a high-paced, collaborative effort. As such, we may find the need to occasionally spend more or less time on certain areas and assignments. Thus, this schedule is flexible guideline that may change from time to time. I will work to make sure the schedule aligns with your progress and will let you know anytime there is a change.

WEEK 1: Introduction & Beats
8/26  Review of syllabus
       Class introductions
       Beat groups (breaking into groups based on areas of interest)
       HW: E-mail your beat partners; Search the web for news platforms that are designed well; Start thinking about which web publisher you want to use

8/28  Web publishing overview
       Beat group meeting to decide on web platform and name
       Discussion of platforms and names
       HW: Create a publishing space with your group and select a layout; Acquaint yourself with Twitter, Instagram, Wix, About.me, and Klout

WEEK 2: Social Media & The News
9/2   Labor Day Holiday!

9/4   Introduction to social media and personal branding websites
       Lab time to set-up social media and to continue working on your publishing space
       HW: Locate your SD card and your USB or external hard drive; Read “News Pioneers” and “What makes news innovative?”; E-mail me the link to your publishing website by 2 p.m. on Friday, September 6

*9/6 - Publishing website is due by 2 p.m.

WEEK 3: Collaborative Journalism
9/9   Brief presentation of publishing websites
       Defining collaborative journalism
       How audio and visual fit in
       HW: Check out video cameras and familiarize yourself with them; Read “How to shoot great video” and “iReport Toolkit”; Watch “30 for 30: Wilt Chamberlain: Borscht Bell Hop”
9/11 Exercise: First Shots (bring video camera)
   HW: Read and Store “IzzyVideo Final Cut Pro Tutorials”; View “10 best Final Cut tutorials” and “Final Cut tutorial”; E-mail me at least one question or concern you have at this point

WEEK 4: Video Shooting & Editing
9/16 Overview of Final Cut 10
   Uploading video (using First Shots)
   Exercise: Explore Final Cut
   HW: Continue walking through tutorials; Work with your group to identify Story 1 subject (Story 1 is due by 2 p.m. on Friday, October 4)

9/18 Story 1 newsroom
   HW: Meet with your group to identify tasks for Story 1; Work on Story 1; Continue walking through tutorials

WEEK 5: Production
9/23 Bonus Lab: Final Cut Tips
   Story 1 lab time

9/25 Deep Thoughts 1 presentation
   Story 1 lab time
   HW: Identify at least one (1) video or visual app that could be used for news reporting and be prepared to discuss

WEEK 6: Alternative Visuals
9/30 Introduction to visual alternatives
   Story 1 lab time

10/2 Story 1 lab time
   HW: Locate a still camera and bring next week; Download the free trial of Soundslides; Read and Store “Creating awesome multimedia presentations with Soundslides”

*10/4 – Story 1 due by 2 p.m. along with individual e-mail

WEEK 7: Visual Experimenting
10/7 Exercise: Second Shot
   HW: Continue working on Second Shot; Work with your group to identify second story; Ensure Story 1 is uploaded to your website
10/9  Discuss Second Shot
      Story 2 newsroom
      **HW:** Begin advancing your Story 2 (Story 2 is due by 2 p.m. on Friday, October 25); E-mail me at least one question or concern you have at this point; Ensure social media is being maintained

**WEEK 8: Fall Break**
10/14 – No Class
10/16 – No Class

**WEEK 9: Production**
10/21  Story 2 and social media updates
      Story 2 lab time
10/23  Story 2 lab time
      **HW:** View “Snowfall: The avalanche at Tunnel Creek”

**WEEK 10: Audio Alternatives**
10/28  **Deep Thoughts 2 presentation**
      Story 2 lab time
      **HW:** Research our guest speaker for Wednesday
10/30  Guest Speaker Max Thompson from Yahoo!

*11/1 - Story 2 due by 2 p.m. along with individual e-mail*

**WEEK 11: Audio Experimenting**
11/4   Audio editing
      Exercise: Audio One
      **HW:** Continue working on Audio One
11/6   **Deep Thoughts 3 Presentation**
      Reviewing visual and audio options
      **HW:** Solidify Story 3 with group; ensure that Stories 1 and 2 have been posted to your website; Ensure social media is being maintained and be prepared to discuss on Monday

**WEEK 12: The Final Push**
11/11  Social Media newsroom
      Story 3 newsroom
      **HW:** Work on Story 3 (Story 3 is due by 2 p.m. Friday, November 22)
11/13  Bonus Lab: Soundslides and audio tips
       Story 3 lab time
       **HW:** Reading assignment TBA

**WEEK 13: Production**

11/18  **Deep Thoughts 4 presentation**
       Story 3 lab time

11/20  Story 3 lab time
       **HW:** Story 3 is due by 2 p.m. Friday, November 22; View “No Country for Old Men dream sequence” and Storify’s “The Boston Marathon bombing”

*11/22 – Story 3 (20%) is due by 2 p.m.*

**WEEK 14: Telling Your Story**

11/25  Story 3 presentations
       Social media updates
       **Deep Thoughts 5 presentation**

11/27 – No class, Thanksgiving Break;
       **HW:** Ensure all stories are posted to your website; Begin finalizing your website; Signup for Meporter and explore

**WEEK 15: Protecting Convergence**

12/2  –  Guest Speaker Sean Lawson: How to protect your work
       **HW:** Be sure you have signed up for Meporter, have created a profile, and have begun to explore

12/4  –  App Innovation newsroom
       Exercise: Me Meporter
       **HW:** Work on your App Innovation project

**WEEK 16: App Innovation**

12/9  –  App Innovation lab time
       **HW:** Finalize App Innovation projects and presentations

12/11  –  **App Innovation presentations**
       Exit discussion

*12/13 – All revisions and extra credit due by 2 p.m.*