Creative Storytelling

JOU 4930 Sect. 19H1

Class Meeting Time:
Tuesday from 4:05 p.m. to 7:05 p.m. in Weimer 3334 (INC Lab)
Professor Steve Johnson
sjohnson@jou.ufl.edu
@Journo2Go
Office Hours:
> **Location:** Weimer 3040D, Skype, FaceTime, iMessage
> **Times:** Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. or by appointment 24/7/365

Three things you need to know about this course:

1) It's open to everyone at UF
2) It is a safe environment to test ideas
3) Woah boy, we will have some fun

Readings*

Creativity Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration by Ed Catmull, Amy Wallace
http://www.amazon.com/Creativity-Inc-Overcoming-Unseen-Inspiration/dp/0812993012
How to Write Short: Word Craft for Fast Times by Roy Peter Clark
http://www.amazon.com/How-Write-Short-Craft-Times/dp/0316204358
The Media Equation by David Carr
http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/columns/media_equation/index.html
PBS Media Shift
http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/
Colossal - Art, Design, and Visual Culture
http://www.thisiscolossal.com
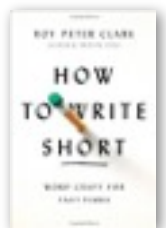
*Please budget $10 - $25 for iOS and Android apps that we will be using in class. These will be required for execution of some stories.

Course Overview

Hello, by now you have probably glossed over this portion of the syllabus to get to the grades and requirements... How sad, because this is the most important part of our story this semester.

If you're still here, congratulations, you have broken the first of many stereotypes of our generation. Let's celebrate, grab a drink (alcoholic if you're of the legal age) and come back in a few...

...

Ok, good to have you back. Now onto the good stuff.

You might be thinking if this is the class for you... Well, do you enjoy stories? (Yes) Ok, that's the first step. Do you like the Internet? (I guess) Me, too I am a little skeptical of where all those pipes actually go, but I like it. Are you creative? (No freaking clue) Few! That makes two of us.

This class will stretch our idea of what a story is. We want to push the boundaries past the front lines of the Civil War's inverted pyramid and melt down the reactor that is Web 2.0.

Is an animated GIF a story? I think so, and I think we should prove that it can be a means of communication in a "serious" news environment. I apologize for using such language as "serious."

I will try to avoid these words at all costs this semester:

- Serious
- Professional
- Convergence
- Innovation
- Entrepreneurial
- Click bait
- Future
- And many more... We can have a Google Doc with a list of punishable offenses.

In a nutshell, this course is an open, safe environment for you to test the idea of what a story is. You will report on topics and issues that we think matter to our 19 county audience of WUFT.org. We will work with some really cool folks at Tumblr who will help us along our journey, and (hopefully) no one will get injured in the process.

I want to stress again the safe environment that you will be entering. Our classroom is exactly that, ours, and I want us to feel like we can share, learn and experiment without judgement.. unless your idea involves cats... then I might judge a little, but laugh a little, too.

What will you learn?

A lot.

We will be experimenting throughout the semester and keeping journals of our successes and failures. This will be the core of how we learn.

What do I need to know before I jump in?

Writing skills are a must. I don't require any prerequisites but ask that you have some writing experience before you join us. We need to know the rules before we can break them. If you are worried, please see me before class and we can work it out.

Visual skills help. Good photography and videography skills are always a plus in our world of storytelling. We will be going over a lot on how to shoot and produce with smartphones.

Curiosity. If you are looking for a place to fill time, this is probably not your class. Do you often wonder how people consume news? Why stories go "viral," and how to influence the entire world with a few clicks on your smartphone? Come join us now! In fact, if you're reading this ahead of time, come by my office and give me a high five.

Evaluation

Ah... This is the part that I bet a bunch of you jumped to. Well, we will evaluate ourselves in a few different areas.

You will produce four stories in a group setting.

You will keep a log of your experiences on Tumblr. These include critiques, reviews and findings.

You will also present once to the class on a great idea that you either had or found, why it is important and how do you think will evolve.

So here is the part that everyone's eyes go to first... Numbers!

> Four projects (50 each): **200 points**
> 10 Tumblr posts (15 each): **150 points**
> Great Ideas Presentation: **50 points**
> Participation: **100 points**
> **Total: 500 points**

Grading scale
94-100: **A**
90-93: **A-**
87-89: **B+**
84-86: **B**
80-83: **B-**
77-79: **C+**
74-76: **C**
70-73: **C-**
67-69: **D+**
64-66: **D**
60-63: **D-**
59 or lower: **E**

More about those stories...

You will have three weeks to produce each story. Week one will be planning. Week two will be gathering content. Week three will be production.

The stories must be relevant to our market (19 counties surrounding Gainesville).

The stories will have to stretch and test the idea of a "conventional" news story.

I hope you will fail. Because that will lead to the best results.

You will not be graded on traditional successes of a story. You will be graded on originality, creativity, engagement and execution. More about this when we assign our first stories.

Ok... Here is all of that stuff that you should know, but we have to put in the syllabus because it is law punishable by flogging.

Attendance

You are expected to attend each class. The course is built around earning points for group critiques and in-class exercises. Also, material taken from the lectures, discussions, examples shown in class, readings and any guest speakers will appear on the quizzes. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out from a classmate what you missed and get any notes from this person. The professor will not field "what-did-I-miss?" questions. Three or more unexcused absences — based on missed quizzes, exercises, critiques, drafts and/or projects — and you will be dropped from this course.

Tardiness

Being late to class is unacceptable and rude. Treat this class as if it were a job. Be on time. I will note repeated tardiness and points will be deducted from your participation grade.

Missed assignments and late work

No make-ups will be given for group critiques, in-class group exercises, quizzes, drafts, homework assignments and projects.

* Note: Only extenuating circumstances (such as a serious illness, accident, or death of a loved one, etc.) will be considered for a time extension on a project, missed quiz or critique. The professor will make that call on a case-by-case basis. The rare excused absence must be cleared with the professor prior to the class missed, not afterward. In-class exercises cannot be made up. Only two make-ups, based on extenuating circumstances, will be permitted in the semester. Any requests for make-ups made after a class is missed, without prior notification and clearance, will not be granted.

Examples of excuses not permissible are: work/project conflict; missed bus or parking issues; printing/saving/uploading issues; couldn't find agreed-upon time with subject; stress; etc.

Projects must be handed in on time to be evaluated for full credit. Deadlines are posted on the course site as well as on each assignment. Projects handed in after the posted deadline will drop a letter grade every hour up until two hours. For example, if a project worth 100 points is due at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, a project turned in at 1:05 p.m. cannot receive a grade higher than an 89. At 2:05 p.m., it cannot receive a grade higher than a 79. No work will be accepted after the two-hour late window.

Class policies

Give your classmates, the professor and guest speakers your undivided attention when they are speaking. I have no issues with the use of cell phones and laptops when relevant to the class. If you feel the need to tweet/post information discussed in class - go for it. Please be respectful and smart with your usage of these devices (silence is golden). It is your responsibility to pay attention in class.

Fact errors

Making a fact error(s) on a project – this includes, but is not limited to, wrong facts and statistics; misspellings of proper names; and misquotes – will result in a letter grade off for that project. Please proofread and fact check your information.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty of any kind is not tolerated in this course. It will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs, and it will result in a failing grade. Academic dishonesty includes using others' work that is not yours without permission and proper credit. This includes copying and using text, artwork, design, video, photographs, music, sound and visuals, etc., you find online or elsewhere. You must obtain formal permission to use third-party material from the author/publisher and properly credit the material in assignments. And you must rewrite and attribute information you find online and in print.
If you use someone else's words, image(s), artwork or video, permission must be obtained in writing (i.e. email) from an author/publisher and submitted to the professor along with your project. You must abide by the university's honor code as well as the department of journalism's policy on academic honesty found at www.jou.ufl.edu/academic/jou/honesty on the college site.

Students with disabilities

Students requesting accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when making a request for accommodations. Please see me within the first two weeks of class to request accommodations.