

**MMC6936 (15185) DIGITAL STORYTELLING**

Section 3615 • Spring 2026

**CLASSROOM INFORMATION**

All Classes Held in Weimer Hall, Room 3324

Meets Tuesdays • Jan. 13 to April 21

4:05 to 7:05 p.m. • Period 9-11

No Class on Feb. 3 and March 17

**INSTRUCTOR**

Professor Joanna Hernandez, MPA

*Senior Lecturer*

*Director of Community & Culture*

[jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu)

Office Hours

In-Person @ Weimer 3046 / or on Zoom

1-3 p.m. Tuesdays | 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m. Thursdays

And By Appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

**Welcome to Digital Storytelling**, where we explore journalism's truth-based storytelling structure and use it to tell both non-fiction stories as well as those with points of view. During the 15-week semester, students produce multimedia packages that are anchored by written words and include audio and visuals.

**This spring 2026 semester**, you'll work on two packages. For the first package (the midterm), the professor will guide you through the assignment, which is to share your own personal narrative detailing a pivotal moment in your life. The second package (the final) is to be styled toward the communication discipline of your choosing (i.e. journalism, marketing, advertising, public relations) and include combinations of the written word, visuals, audio, data viz and other media to create a professional digital package ready for publication.

**No worries if you don't have a journalism background.** We'll start the semester focusing on journalism basics — research, writing, reporting and thinking like a journalist. We'll have hands-on learning opportunities with audio, cellphone reporting and video production. We'll experiment with several digital-storytelling platforms, explore narrative traditions and work on writing to the visual.

**Students with a journalism** background may find some parts of this course as more of a review. But for everyone, it'll serve as a paradigm shift away from academic writing.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students of this graduate-level course acquire a basic understanding of:

- **Journalistic writing structure** and how to transfer these skills for other storytelling opportunities in the field of communications.
- **Gathering, producing, publishing** digital content and using the written word, images, audio, video, data, social media to complement storytelling.
- **Why fairness, credibility** and other ethical considerations matter in all forms of storytelling.
- **Key industry trends**, fundamental reporting and storytelling concepts.
- **Working to produce stories** designed primarily for online consumption.
- **Using social media** to distribute stories, build a following and “brand” oneself as a digital storyteller.

## COURSE GOALS

- Students think critically, creatively and independently.
- Students conduct research, evaluate information using journalistic methods.
- Students write clearly in journalistic styles appropriate for their audiences.

## COURSE OUTCOMES: MULTIPLATFORM PROJECTS

1. Students learn journalism structure, produce compelling digital stories.
2. Students focus on telling non-fiction stories as well as those with points of view (such as in the disciplines of advertising, marketing, public relations).
3. Students reinforce transferable production and communication skills.

## COURSE TEXT, READINGS and RESOURCES

A digital version of this book is on reserve at the Smathers Libraries:

**“On Bullshit,”** Harry G. Franklin (Princeton University Press)

Other required reading material will be made available via links to online stories and articles as well as digital handouts, including chapters from:

- **“Digital Storytelling Cookbook,”** Joe Lambert (Routledge)
- **“Inside Reporting”** 3rd Edition, Tim Harrower (McGraw Hill)
- **“Aim for the Heart: Write, Shoot, Report, Produce for TV and Multimedia”** (3rd Ed.) Al Tompkins (CQ Press)
- **“How to Tape Instant Oral Biographies,”** William Zimmerman (Bantam Books)

## Other Reading and Viewing

I’ll be emailing you plenty of links and reading materials and uploading PDFs to Canvas. Some readings will be of

- Journalism websites, including those of national, regional, local, alternative and campus newspapers
- National, regional, local and campus publications; broadcast outlets
- Those created specifically to produce and present digital storytelling

## THE POINT

Please subscribe to The Point newsletter. <https://www.wuft.org/the-point>

## **PRODUCTION TOOLS, DATA STORAGE, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES**

This course requires use of digital production equipment and editing software for graphics, audio, photography and videography.

### **Students in this course will need:**

- A laptop – though our classroom (Weimer 3324) is equipped with iMacs desktops installed with editing-software.
- A capable camera – smartphones take great still photography and video.
- Set of headphones – use headphones when working on your projects; it's a sign of respect for others. In a pinch, headphones may make great ad hoc mics.

### **Editing Platforms – Adobe Premiere and/or iMovie:**

- Classroom desktops have access to Apple and Adobe editing software.

### **Equipment And Supplies:**

- **Students can** use cellphone-reporting gear available from the G020 Equipment Room. There are five kits set aside for this class.
- Additional digital-storage equipment is recommended as a backup plan for cloud storage; a flash or thumb drives could work as a temporary solution.

## **HOW-TO-REACH-THE-PROFESSOR TIP**

WRITE “MMC6936” in the Subject line. Why? Because when the professor scans her emails, this will help your message to pop out.

## **UF GRADING POLICIES**

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/#gradingpolicies>

## **JOU4950 GRADING SCALE**

**Excellent.** Copy/media is usually publishable with little or no editing.

**A** = 94-100

**A-** = 90-93

**Good.** Copy/media is usually publishable with minor editing and revision.

**B+** = 87-89

**B** = 84-86

**B-** = 80-83

**Average.** Copy/media needs revision and additional reporting.

**C+** = 77-79

**C** = 74 -76

**Unacceptable work.** Copy contains major factual, structural, writing flaws.

**C-** = 70-73

**D+** = 67-69

**D** = 64-66

**D-** = 60-63

**E** = 59 and below

### **ADDITIONAL GRADING PENALTIES**

**Spelling, grammar, punctuation** and style errors will be penalized accordingly: 5 points for every spelling, grammar, punctuation and style error.

**Fact errors:** 10 points for every fact error. Some errors in fact can result in failure of the assignment/project.

**Misrepresentation:** Grades can be lowered to O if students misrepresent themselves or act unprofessionally while committing the act of journalism.

**Factual math:** No “rounding up.” An 89.99 is still a B+; it takes a full 90 earned points to receive an A-.

**We are all human.** If you believe I have made a mistake in a grade, or you do not understand something about your grade, please see me within one week of receiving your grade. No grade changes will be considered after this deadline.

### **GRADING BREAKDOWN**

*Have questions about your grade? Talk with the professor within seven days of receiving it; after that, it's permanent. No exceptions.*

#### **10% – Mobile scenes & soundbites.**

This is a cellphone-reporting exercise. We will spend class time focused on mobile usage for interviewing, filming and editing.

#### **10% – Audio postcard/interview**

This is an audio exercise where you'll profile either a place or a person. We will spend class time covering the basics of sound/audio reporting.

#### **15% – Weekly Learning Journal (on Adobe Express)**

This is a place for contemplation, reflection and sharing what's on your mind concerning class or anything in general. Deadline is 9 a.m. every Monday.

#### **15% – Attendance/Class Participation/Assignments**

Attendance is taken at 4:05 p.m. Late arrivers, see me during the break.

Class Participation is expected.

Assignments, in-class and homework, also factor into your grade. Hand in your work ahead of time if you anticipate missing class. Need an extension? Ask the professor BEFORE you miss deadline. Five points deducted for every day assignment is late.

#### **25% – Midterm Project**

The midterm project will be a digitally produced video story that focuses on communicating a pivotal moment in your life. Elements of this package includes the written word, visuals, audio and data visualization/graphic.

#### **25% – Final Project**

The final project is comprised of a 500-800 word professional feature that involves reporting/research and package production. Contents of the package include audio, photos, interviews with at least three sources and at least one educational graphic component.

## **MMC6936 SPRING 2026 COURSE SCHEDULE**

*— This course schedule could change — it's at the professors' discretion. —*

**Week 1      Jan 13**

Welcome! Syllabus, Expectations, The Interview

**Week 2      Jan 20**

Research Tools, Pre-Reporting

**Week 3      Jan 27**

Journalism Basics, Viewpoints, Story Structure, Audio Postcard

**Week 4      Feb 3      NO CLASS**

Professor is on an ACEJMC site visit accreditation team

**Week 5      Feb 10**

Audio Voiceover, Storyboarding

**Week 6      Feb 17**

Story Circle; Scriptwriting

**Week 7      Feb 24**

Lab Day — Midterm Production

**Week 8      Mar 3**

The Show — Digital Story Screenings / Midterm

**Week 9      Mar 10**

Pitch Fest; Intro to Digital Storytelling Cookbook

**Week 10      Mar 17      NO CLASS**

**Spring Break** | March 14-21

**Week 11      Mar 24**

Interview Part II, Writing Scenes

**Week 12      Mar 31**

Art of Digital Organizing: Scans, Visuals, Editing

**Week 13      Apr 7**

Stories/Images That Transform & Empower; Ethical Concerns

**Week 14      Apr 14**

Lab Day — Final Project Production

**Week 15      Apr 21**

The Finale — Digital Story Screening / Final Project

## **YOUR CONDUCT AS A STUDENT**

### **UF Student Honor Code**

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

### **ZOOM PROFESSIONALISM**

- Please maintain professional conduct when our class meets online. in the
- Have your camera on during Zoom sessions. Points deducted if not.
- Use virtual backgrounds to protect the privacy of your environment or surroundings.
- Some Zoom lectures might be recorded.

### **WHEN YOU ARE FEELING SICK, USE YOUR BEST JUDGMENT**

- If you are experiencing any illness symptoms, DON'T COME TO CLASS. And email both professors. REMEMBER: Absent or not, you still have to turn in the work that is due to get credit for doing the work.
- Check out [the university attendance and illness policies](#) for more information.

### **ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>

### **GATOR EVALUATIONS**

It's appreciated when students provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluation. You will be notified by email and/or Canvas when the evaluations are open, typically in the last two or three weeks of the semester. Summary results are available to you and the public.