



**RTV2517: Concepts of Visual  
Storytelling  
Spring 2026**

**Instructor:** Maria Esterline

**Location:** Online

**Class Times:** Self-paced

**Email:** esterlinemaria@ufl.edu

**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays, from 8:10 – 9:10 p.m. via Zoom

**Course Overview:**

At the intersection of storytelling and visual communication lies a powerful set of tools for engaging audiences, transmitting ideas, and encouraging new perspectives. In this course, you will discover how the human affinity for character and story can be used as a conduit for effective visual communication. You will also gain experience with some of the essential software tools used by professional visual storytellers.

**Required Textbooks:**

- *The Science of Storytelling: Why Stories Make Us Human and How to Tell Them Better*, by Will Storr
- *Storynomics: Story-Driven Marketing in the Post-Advertising World*, by Robert McKee and Thomas Gerace

**Course Objectives:**

Students will develop comprehension in the following

- The elements of story
- The science of great storytelling
- The psychology behind compelling characters
- Engaging audiences with story
- Digital tools for storytelling and content creation
- Fundamentals of composition and color
- Fundamentals of audio-visual editing

\*NOTICE: this course requires reliable internet access as well as access to the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of software (primarily Photoshop and Premiere Pro.) If you cannot meet these requirements, you should not take this course.

A discounted subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud specifically for University of Florida students can be accessed at <https://software.ufl.edu/>.

In addition, there are many open computer lab spaces on UF campus that have the Adobe Creative Cloud suite of software. For more information check <https://labs.at.ufl.edu/>.

### **College of Journalism and Communications Objectives:**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located.
- demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and service to all people and communities.
- present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences, and purposes they serve.
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.
- apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **College Professionalism:**

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school, and professional etiquette is always expected. I expect you to adhere to workplace norms of collegial and respectful interactions. I will adhere to the same.

Students will conduct themselves in an honest, ethical, and courteous manner with other students and the instructor, abiding by the UF Student Conduct and Honor Codes.

### **Academic Honesty:**

The work you submit for this course must be your own. It must be original for this course. Without attribution, you must never use direct or paraphrased material from any source, including websites. Attribution means citing the source of your facts within the text. Ideas that come from others must be credited.

You may not submit anything you wrote for a prior class, organization, or institution. You may not submit anything that was written for any purpose other than the given assignment.

I will handle any incident of academic dishonesty in accordance with the University of Florida policies that address cheating and unethical academic behavior, specifically the UF Honor Code and the Academic Honesty Guidelines.

Any time you complete an assignment for this course, you will clearly attribute the source of your information. You cannot copy anything word for word, regardless of the source, without putting quotes around it and citing the source.

#### **AI Policy for Student Work:**

AI is commonly used in the profession, so familiarity with generative AI tools is important. However, do not let your creative thinking and editing skills lapse! When AI is allowed or encouraged in assignments, you will need to document how AI was used. This could include providing your original prompts, showing the editing that you did to the created content, or using appropriate citation of information obtained via generative AI. If you are using AI when not explicitly allowed, that is considered a violation of the honor code as you are presenting content as your own that was not fully created by you. There are various AI detection tools available (built within Canvas and externally such as ZeroGPT), and many AI platforms follow very formulaic response patterns. If I am concerned that your work is not your own, I will try to verify the originality of your work. If unable to do so, I may ask you to resubmit the assignment detailing how you arrived at your submission.

#### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students requesting classroom 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 requesting accommodation.

#### **Late Assignments:**

In this profession, it is crucial to meet your deadlines. While I understand the stress of being a student, it is your responsibility to turn your assignments in on time. If you have a conflict, please contact me 24 hours or more before the deadline. If you have an emergency, be prepared to provide documentation.

If you ultimately forget or miss an assignment, 10 points will be deducted per day. That means if an assignment is due on Monday at 11:59 p.m. and you turn it in at midnight Tuesday morning, the highest grade you can receive on that assignment is a 90. You will receive a zero once an assignment reaches day five without being turned in.

#### **Quizzes and Assignments:**

Check the online modules for “complete by” dates for quizzes and assignments. Please note that although all of the assignments will be available for you to complete from the start of the semester, the due dates are staggered throughout the semester. Assignments submitted late will be assessed a 20% penalty for each 24 hour period (or portion thereof) past the due date.

The quizzes are short (5 question) comprehension checks for the readings and lecture/tutorial viewings. The **two lowest quiz scores will be dropped** at the end of the course; if you miss a quiz for ANY reason, this will count as one of the dropped quizzes. This includes technical

reasons such as unreliable internet or low computer battery, so plan accordingly. You do not need to contact your instructor if you miss a quiz.

**Grading Scale:**

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A	93.50-100
A-	89.50-93.49
B+	87.50-89.49
B	83.50-87.49
B-	79.50-83.49
C+	77.50-79.49
C	73.50-77.49
C-	69.50-73.49
D	64.50-69.49
E	0-64.49

**Point Distribution:**

Quizzes	25 Percent
Exercises	50 Percent
Discussion Posts	15 Percent
Final Project	10 Percent

## **Course Schedule:**

### **Module 1: The Power of Storytelling**

**Assignments Due:** Introduce Yourself on Video Discussion Post and Quiz 1

### **Module 2: Crafting Story for your Audience**

**Assignments Due:** Photo Analysis Discussion Post and Quiz 2

### **Module 3: Photography Aesthetics**

**Assignments Due:** Photography Exercise 1, Photoshop Exercise 1, and Quiz 3

### **Module 4: Photography Post-Production**

**Assignments Due:** Photoshop Exercise 2 and Quiz 4

### **Module 5: Photography in Practice**

**Assignments Due:** Photography Exercise 2, Photoshop Exercise 3, Photoshop Exercise 4, and Quiz 5

### **Module 6: An Introduction to Editing the Moving Image**

**Assignments Due:** Premiere Pro Exercise 1, Pictures at an Exhibition Discussion Post, and Quiz 6

### **Module 7: Editing Video Continued**

**Assignments Due:** Premiere Pro Exercise 2 and Quiz 7

### **Module 8: Editing for Continuity**

**Assignments Due:** Quiz 8

### **Module 9: Editing for Continuity (Continued)**

**Assignments Due:** Continuity Practice Edit and Quiz 9

### **Module 10: Editing the Interview**

**Assignments Due:** Interview Practice Edit and Quiz 10

### **Module 11: Editing Dialog**

**Assignments Due:** Dialog Practice Edit and Quiz 11

### **Module 12: The Camera in Motion**

**Assignments Due:** Final Project and Quiz 12