

ONLINE NEWS PRODUCTION

COMM 621
Tuesday 11:20 a.m. - 2:10 p.m.
McKinley 100, T12, T14
Fall 2017

HELLO!

Terry Bryant is a Professorial Lecturer in the AU School of Communication. He spent 14 years teaching broadcasting and media writing classes at the University of Kansas. At KU, he was the general manager of KUJH-TV, the student TV station. He trained KU School of Journalism students and faculty in video and audio editing.

He worked as a reporter, videographer, meteorologist and sports anchor at TV stations in Kansas, Mississippi and California from 1985 to 1997. He also has experience working live sporting events with CBS Sports, ESPN and Fox Sports.

Jeremiah Patterson teaches a variety of multimedia and broadcast courses in American University's School of Communication.

He serves as SOC's liaison to the Online News Association, where he was previously the digital manager. He was responsible for ONA's collection of websites, including journalists.org, conference websites, awards platforms and more. An Ohio native and media enthusiast, Jeremiah grew up with a deep interest in video production and graphic design.

CONTACT

Please identify yourself with first and last name when emailing or texting. And include **[COMM 621]** in the subject line of any class-related email you send us.

TERRY BRYANT

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(785) 979-0345

OFFICE HOURS

McKinley 320
Tue 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Wed 1:30 - 4 p.m.
Thur 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
& by appointment

JEREMIAH PATTERSON

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(202) 643-1662

OFFICE HOURS

McKinley 240
Tue 9-11 a.m.
Wed 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
& by appointment

PURPOSE

This is an advanced level digital journalism course focused in multimedia storytelling, online writing and production. It will teach you the fundamentals of running a digital newsroom, organizing a story budget and publishing online content.

This class covers how digital technology has transformed the media landscape, while providing hands-on experience with multimedia literacy and the use of new technologies in the practice of journalism.

During the course of the class, students will:

- Understand the new media industry landscape
- Become proficient in visual and multimedia literacy for journalistic storytelling
- Study the operation of digital newsrooms and the modern journalist's toolkit
- Become knowledgeable about revenue models, funding, entrepreneurship and innovation in journalism

We will be creating a series of packages and a final website in teams and individually to experience the wide-ranging world of online journalism and multimedia storytelling. The course consists of lectures, discussion, critiques and hands-on work.

Students will be doing their own reporting as well as soliciting work from others involved with COMM 621 and COMM 724. On occasion, we will partner with other classes on projects and also work with publications, news outlets and websites.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After successful completion of this class, you should have a grasp of core concepts of multimedia literacy, including still photography, video, audio and other emerging platforms. You will be able to speak knowledgeably about contemporary digital storytelling, and the legal, ethical and business implications of digital media on the journalistic craft. Other objectives include how to:

- Be an effective newsroom contributor in content and multimedia.
- Develop, write and edit online packages.
- Conceive and develop an online publication.
- Tell stories with emerging technology.
- Manage online journalism content and an online community.
- Work with social media tools and platforms.
- Negotiate ethical and legal decision making in online journalism.

SOFTWARE

It is important to recognize the difference between a skill and knowledge in a given software package. Software packages are tools where your skills and talent are used to create a product. We will use and gain knowledge in a number of software packages and programs in the course of our work including, but not limited to:

- Content Management Systems: WordPress
- Cloud services: Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, et al.
- Adobe Creative Cloud (CC): Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, Audacity, Dreamweaver
- Other Interactive Tools: Mapping and Timeline Tools, 360° Video Software

MATERIALS

- Online readings, assignments and resources (including this syllabus) will be posted on our class website at beltwaynews.com/onp2017. We'll refer to this site regularly. We'll also use it to publish our weekly issues.
- Special equipment rented from the Media Production Center.
- Headphones to listen to your video when you edit in the lab.
- Private GroupMe group used for quick communication and class announcements.
- Portfolio site. In lieu of a formal text for the class, you will be required to purchase a domain name and site hosting package, if you do not already have one. We recommend considering Reclaim Hosting, which is \$30 a year. (reclaimhosting.com/shared-hosting/)

EQUIPMENT RENTAL

You'll be checking out equipment from the Media Production Center to use for field reporting — including video cameras, digital audio records, point and shoot cameras and more. The equipment rental room is located in the lower level of MPC. Sign out the equipment using your name and valid university ID. You are liable for any equipment damage or loss, which will be traced back to the last ID used to check it out. That said, you are encouraged to use your own mobile device for certain assignments, such as those for photography and audio.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This class will run much like a local, digital newsroom of a commercial multimedia publication with the professors serving as the editors in chief. You will work individually and in teams to write, report and produce web stories and packages. The work of this course involves planning assignments, field reporting, editing, writing, formatting, rewriting, creating graphics, shooting photos or video or embedding other multimedia, publishing content and interpreting analytics. All of the reporting happens outside of Production Days, while production and publishing happens on those days in class.

COURSE STRUCTURE, CONT'D

During the introductory phase of this course (the first two weeks), we will review the computer and multimedia editing systems and do a great deal of sample web writing, producing, reporting and planning. We will work on web style and creating story budgets. Then, for the remainder of the semester, each section will alternate between Production Days and Skills Days — one week your section will publish a digital issue and the next week you will learn and practice a new or emerging digital storytelling skill.

On Production Days, you will be assigned various tasks and roles on these days. On Skills Days, you will learn and practice as a class (individually or in small groups).

You will have both professors during this course. We will alternate between serving as your editor in chief (Production Days) and as the instructor teaching you a new skill (Skill Days). Refer to the schedule to see who you report to on what day. While you, as a student, alternate between production and skills, and while we, as professors, alternate between roles, you will still travel together as a section.

Only during the first two weeks will the two sections be together. At the end of the semester, you will evaluate both professors.

ASSIGNMENTS

We'll complete six writing and producing assignments, meant to help you polish the material you learn on Skills Days. Some assignments are technical in nature, so be sure to follow any examples given (scripts, videos or otherwise). Also pay attention to submission guidelines: some will be printed or emailed and others may get uploaded to the web. **No late assignments will be accepted.** (See Deadlines, below.)

The professor who instructs you on a given skill will be the same professor who grades the corresponding assignment.

PRODUCING

As a section, you'll produce six scheduled issues of our news website (and potentially 1-2 special editions that are not scheduled). Most will be thematic, but some might focus on breaking or general news. Everyone will be assigned a task/role for these days and we will rotate positions throughout the semester. You are expected to contribute to the news team each week and — when serving as the managing editor — to lead your teammates. It's ultimately everyone's responsibility, as a team, to create a successful issue each week.

The entire issue must go live by 2 p.m. Any work that fails to be published by that time is considered late, and no late work is accepted. (See Deadlines, below.) The professor who serves as the editor in chief on a given issue will be the same professor who evaluates your contribution to that issue.

ROLES

On production days, your section will be broken out into the following:

- Managing Editors (2)
- Copy Editors (2)
- Multimedia Editors (2)
- Reporters (8)

DEADLINES

Journalists live and die by deadlines in the newsroom. So, this is simple: **nothing late will be accepted**. Failure to complete an assignment on time or produce your story in time for publication will result in a grade of zero for that particular assignment/day. There is no flexibility with this policy, except for excused absences (see below). Check the schedule now to understand what is expected of you and when it's expected.

ATTENDANCE

This course will simulate a professional work environment — one that fosters the skills and discipline needed to produce online news. A news team requires all of its members to be present and active to create successful news site. For that reason, classroom attendance is vital.

We will take attendance at the beginning of each class, at exactly 11:20 a.m. Showing up late and/or leaving early without a legitimate, pre-approved excuse will be counted as an **unexcused absence**. If a medical problem, illness, religious observance or personal emergency requires you to miss class, let your assigned professor know by email prior to the start of class. (It's best to talk with us as soon as you know you'll be missing class.) Assignments are still due when they are listed despite having an excused absence. Again, **late assignments will not be accepted**.

Every class missed (excused or unexcused) will result in a **2.5 percentage-point reduction** from your overall grade. If you have an excused absence, you will be able to make up that 2.5 with another assignment. If you have an unexcused absence, you will not be allowed to make it up. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to figure out what you missed. During Tuesday newsroom hours, you are expected to check out of the classroom with the professor and the managing editors.

VALIDATION

Please save all graded work, whether hard copy or digital, in case there is a problem with our grading spreadsheets or Blackboard. There's a lot of movement in this class — sections rotating and professors rotating. We are grading different things at different times, so it's vital for you to be organized (and we will be too). If there is any question regarding your final grade for the class, we'll ask you to produce your papers for proof of submission and grade.

GRADING GUIDELINES

Accuracy and deadlines are of the utmost importance. If you misspell someone's name, organization or title, the professor will have to assume that all other material is questionable as well.

Any basic errors such as misspellings of names and places will cause the student to have the material returned for rechecking and rewriting and may delay publication or cause a story or multimedia package, such as a slideshow, not to be published. Deadlines matter and do affect your grade.

You should note well — and always keep in mind — that the average grade for average performance is a C, but you are expected to earn a B or higher in order to pass a graduate course in your major. The grade of A is not earned for simply attending class and turning in assignments. Excellence not only requires significant effort, but also successful demonstration that you have completely mastered the subject matter, skills and materials required in any assignment.

GRADING: SKILLS VS PRODUCTION DAYS

For assignments you complete as part of Skills Days, we will give you a rubric in advance and grade you on a traditional 100-point scale.

For Production Days, we will evaluate your input and work based on a 5-point scale. A score of 3 is considered average, where you produce average work and contribute exactly what you were responsible for and nothing more. A score of 4 denotes quality work and contributions nominally greater than what is expected. A score of 5 denotes professional-level work and above-and-beyond contributions to the team.

At the end of the semester, we will convert each of these scores to a 100-point scale.

GRADES

60%	Six Issues (Production Days)
30%	Six Skills Assignments (Skills Days)
10%	Attendance and Professionalism

POINT CONVERSION

0%	0 Points
50%	1 Point
62.5%	2 Points
75%	3 Points
87.5%	4 Points
100%	5 Points

GRADING CONSIDERATIONS

The point of this course is to learn to produce digital news. Therefore, points are deducted for problems. Here are some examples:

Minor Problems

Small layout issues with text and embedded media, small producing issues with multimedia, wordy writing, missed leads.

Somewhat Significant Problems

Over/underexposed video or distracting audio, shaky video, spelling errors or grammatical mistakes, missing attributions, insertion of opinions, inaccurate quotes, sloppy writing.

Major Problems

Disorganized layout, missing/poorly captured audio or video, jump cuts and gaps in video, factual errors, disorganized/incomplete story budgets, incoherent writing.

A High-quality professional work that's suitable for publication on a reputable media channel/site. Or professional quality work with insignificant, minor errors.

A- 90-93

A 94-100

B Good quality work but some minor problems exist. Or work that meets assignment requirements but problems exist. Or work that fulfilled the assignment but had significant problems.

B- 80-82

B 83-85

B+ 86-89

C Incomplete work that does not meet portions of the assignment and has significant or major problems.

C- 70-72

C 73-75

C+ 75-79

D Incomplete work that has excessive problems, indicating a lack of effort and attention to the assignment.

D 60-69

F Incomplete work that missed assignment deadline or had major errors.

F 59 and below

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

There is a wide range of university services available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements, including:

Academic Support Center (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals and services for students with learning disabilities. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.

Counseling Center (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

Disability Support Services (x3315, MCG 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical or psychological disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the Academic Support Center or Disability Support Services so we can make arrangements to address your needs.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please don't even think about cheating on your work. Plagiarism is to present any information or language that was prepared and written by someone else as if it were your own work. This would include copying and pasting information from the Internet without attributing the source. It would also include passing off another student's work as your own. For this course, plagiarism also includes using photos, audio, video or code from the Internet that you are presenting as original work. In other words, don't do it.

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur.

The Academic Integrity Code includes but is not limited to: plagiarism; inappropriate collaboration; dishonesty in exams, papers; work done for one course and submitted for another; deliberate falsification of data; interference with other students' work; misrepresenting yourself (or having someone misrepresent you) as present during roll call; and copyright violations.

Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of an emergency, American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community.

Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency.

Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU email and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU email regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies.

In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

INTEGRITY & PROFESSIONALISM

Specific to this class, it is a violation of the Integrity Code to manufacture information — such as scripting quotes for an interview, making up names or other information or staging multimedia to represent any news event. **No reenactments are allowed.** Other potential violations include using someone else's writing, video or audio as your own.

All work for this class must be original and must be completed specifically for this class. No duplicate work will be accepted. If there is ever a question, please ask us before you hand it in.

You will not be able to get a grade in this class for work completed in your Reporting of Public Affairs course. While we may end up using material from that class on our website, you may not get a grade for them in COMM 621. Additionally, on Production Days, while you may end up using material from the six assignments, you will still be expected to contribute additional stories. For example, if you're assigned to be a reporter for a particular Production Day, your most recent assignment could be published, but you would still need to report, write and produce an additional story.

You are expected to act in a professional manner to meet deadlines, solve problems, cooperate with your peers and generally contribute to a positive class environment. We will evaluate you on your professional demeanor in the classroom. As such, you should not disrupt class with personal conversations, by accepting phone calls or by completing homework for other classes.

LAPTOP & DEVICE POLICY

Students are welcome and encouraged to use laptop computers and other devices in classroom **for purposes relevant to the class lesson** and furthering discussion. Please do not disrupt the classroom or be a distraction. Out of consideration for the learning environment and fellow classmates, we respectfully ask that you refrain from extraneous activities such as instant messaging, gaming or other online services that detract from the class. On the occasions when the professor asks for laptops and devices to be put away in the classroom, such as with guest speakers or engaging in other intensive activity, please honor those requests.

HOW TO SUCCEED

- Actively contribute to the team and complete the job you're responsible for.
- Find a way to get your story done.
- Show up with a good attitude and be ready to work under deadline pressure.
- Backup your work — corrupted/lost files aren't an excuse.
- Come to class, participate and turn in work on time.
- Keep us informed if you're struggling, behind or need to miss class.
- And, let us know if you have comments, issues or suggestions.

SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change. We will post updated versions on our website and also announce changes in class when they happen. *Assignments/readings* are due the day they're listed.

AUG. 29

WELCOME

SECTIONS 1 & 2 (MIL): Syllabus review, multimedia packages, writing for the web, prep for Week 3

SEPT. 5

PRODUCTION DAY PLANNING

SECTIONS 1 & 2 (MIL): Creating a story budget, using Edit Flow in WordPress, continue prep for Week 3

Section 1 & 2: Read Yahoo! Style Guide Chapter 1, WordPress Production Exercise

SEPT. 12

WEB & MOBILE VIDEO

Section 1 (T12): Skills Day, Bryant

Section 2 (T14): Production Day, Patterson

Section 1 & 2: Story Budget Exercise

SEPT. 19

WEB & MOBILE VIDEO

Section 1 (T12): Production Day, Patterson

Section 2 (T14): Skills Day, Bryant

Section 1: Web & Mobile Video Assignment (graded by Bryant)

SEPT. 26

IG MULTI-PHOTO POSTS / SNAPCHAT STORIES

Section 1 (T12): Skills Day, Patterson

Section 2 (T14): Production Day, Bryant

Section 2: Web & Mobile Video Assignment (graded by Bryant)

OCT. 3

IG MULTI-PHOTO POSTS / SNAPCHAT STORIES

Section 1 (T12): Production Day, Bryant

Section 2 (T14): Skills Day, Patterson

Section 1: IG Multi-Photo Posts / Snapchat Stories Assignment (graded by Patterson)

OCT. 10

PODCASTING

Section 1 (T12): Skills Day, Bryant

Section 2 (T14): Production Day, Patterson

Section 2: IG Multi-Photo Posts / Snapchat Stories Assignment (graded by Patterson)

OCT. 17

PODCASTING

Section 1 (T12): Production Day, Patterson

Section 2 (T14): Skills Day, Bryant

Section 1: Podcasting Assignment (graded by Bryant)

OCT. 24

FACEBOOK LIVE

Section 1 (T12): Skills Day, Patterson

Section 2 (T14): Production Day, Bryant

Section 2: Podcasting Assignment (graded by Bryant)

OCT. 31

FACEBOOK LIVE

Section 1 (T12): Production Day, Bryant

Section 2 (T14): Skills Day, Patterson

Section 1: Facebook Live Assignment (graded by Patterson)

NOV. 7

LIVE TWEETING / MICROBLOGGING

Section 1 (T12): Skills Day, Bryant

Section 2 (T14): Production Day, Patterson

Section 2: Facebook Live Assignment (graded by Patterson)

NOV. 14

LIVE TWEETING / MICROBLOGGING

Section 1 (T12): Production Day, Patterson

Section 2 (T14): Skills Day, Bryant

Section 1: Live Tweeting / Microblogging Assignment (graded by Bryant)

NOV. 21

NO CLASS

FRIDAY CLASSES MEET

Section 2: Live Tweeting / Microblogging Assignment (graded by Bryant)

NOV. 28

360° VIDEO

Section 1 (T12): Skills Day, Patterson

Section 2 (T14): Production Day, Bryant

DEC. 5

360° VIDEO

Section 1 (T12): Production Day, Bryant

Section 2 (T14): Skills Day, Patterson

Section 1: 360° Video Assignment (graded by Patterson)

TBD

FINAL

11:20 a.m.

Section 1: 360° Video Assignment (graded by Patterson)

NOT SCHEDULED

Section 1: At least one additional special issue.

Section 2: At least one additional special issue.