

J408: Journalism Today

School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon
2 credit workshop, Spring 2016

Key information

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Class details: Friday, 8th April 2016, 12pm – 4.50pm, Allen 137
Saturday, 9th April 2016, 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303
Sunday, 10th April 2016, 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303

Website: <https://medium.com/journalism-today>

Please note that you will need to have accounts on Twitter, Google (for Google Drive) and Medium for this class.

Course Background

This three day, two credit, workshop will address many of the fundamental strategic questions that many news media organizations are grappling with today. These questions include:

- How do audiences find, consume and share news today?
- What are the implications for the business models of established companies and newer digital entities?
- How are news media organizations responding to these challenges?
- What does this mean for the type of journalism and stories they produce?
- What is the role of a journalist in 2016? And how is that role changing and evolving?

You will leave the workshop with a strong grasp these key issues, enabling you to hold your own in an interview situation; whilst ensuring that you can ask intelligent – informed – questions of your potential future employers.

Learning outcomes

The class will look at news media markets, strategies and trends in content consumption and creation. In doing this, the class will equip students with a rich understanding of the journalistic job market they are about to join.

By the end of this workshop you will be able to:

1. Understand and describe some of the major strategic challenges being faced by news outlets.
2. Demonstrate examples of your own written research and analysis in this space.
3. Know where to look for relevant industry information/data/analysis.

4. Use industry standard tools, such as Google Drive and Medium, for collaborative and individual work.
5. Have a working knowledge of the following 10 “hot” industry topics:

Business Models: Audiences, Income and Trends in Advertising

- *Audiences and circulation data/trends*
- *Income/revenue trends and innovations*
- *Ad blocking and Ad Fraud*

Distribution and Content Innovation

- *Distributed content and the new Gatekeepers*
- *Social Media*
- *Mobile*
- *Video*
- *VR/AR, drones, robo-journalism and other content innovations*

The changing industry

- *The changing role of the journalist*
- *New entrants vs. Established players*

6. Be able to critique your own ideas – and those of your peers – in this arena.

Approach

Learning methods will include:

- **Discussing** key market data and trends, developing your understanding of their implications.
- **Researching and analysing** emerging issues and players.
- **Presenting** your own research findings to your class peers and instructor.
- **Writing high quality journalistic work**, both in-class and in your own time.
- **Publishing** your work on a public facing class website: <https://medium.com/journalism-today>

Estimated student workload

Most of the work will be completed in class, but there will be three pieces of work which you will be expected to finish outside of class. Two of these – the Millennial Media profile and Company profile – have to be completed before class the next day. You will have two weeks after the final class to complete the end of course essay.

Extra credit will also be offered for a guest lecture on May 27th pertinent to this class.

Wider industry reading

Although much of this will be covered in class, you will be at an advantage if you have already begun to do some background reading on key developments in the media and journalism space. Recommended sites include: *Nieman Lab*, *Digiday*, *TheMediaBriefing*, *Poynter*, *MediaShift*, *daily emails from Pew Journalism Center* and the *American Press Institute*, these all cover the the types of topics we will be discussing in class.

Grading/Weighting

Activity	Points	% of total grade
1. Class participation	350	35%
2. Millennial media user profile	150	15%
3. Company Profiles + Preso	200	20%
4. Post-workshop "Hot Topic" article	300	30%
TOTAL	1,000	100%

- Extra credit will also be given for people attending the following talk later on in the term:

Demystifying: Journalism and Silicon Valley. Friday, May 27, 2016, 12-1 p.m. in Allen Hall
Claire Wardle, Director of Research, Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Columbia University

Assessment Criteria

You will be given more detailed assignment notes and explanations ahead of each task. But, broadly speaking, this term you will produce four pieces of graded work.

Three of these are written pieces (one of which also includes a presentation,) while the rest is based on your active participation in class. The latter is important, given that this class is designed to prepare you for employment. Throughout this program, you will be engaging in research, analysis, pitching and feedback sessions akin to those that you can expect to participate in within a newsroom or agency.

1. Class participation (35%)

You're expected to be very active in class. This is the single highest graded area of activity, which reflects the level of input and interaction you are expected to contribute during the course of 2.5 days.

This grade is made up of a number of components / tasks:

- **Active participation in class discussions**, including materials presented by your instructor and peers.
- **Page One meetings:** Newsrooms used to start each day with a discussion about the top stories that they would feature the following day. These stories would be identified through the wires, your contacts and other reading. Journalists would pitch ideas and discuss the merits of them.

We'll kick off the Saturday and Sunday with a similar process. You'll have 25 minutes to review your online sources (e.g. newsletters, websites, social media feeds etc.) before we have a 35-minute roundtable discussion to share your findings.

Each student will bring two news stories / developments to the table. You'll need to summarize each idea pithily (30 seconds or less) as this is a top-level pitch to the group to see whether this is a story we decide merits further investigation. We'll cover between 14-25 stories in 35 minutes, so expect to learn how to pitch ideas – and feedback – in a succinct and concise manner.

- **Team exercise and report back:** Ad Blocking and Ad Fraud have really emerged in the past year as huge issues for media companies, advertisers and audiences.

You will work in groups (for 30 minutes) to identify the size of the problem for these constituents, its impact on them, and the potential solutions being piloted across the industry.

Findings will be captured in a class Google doc, which will include your primary conclusions and links to further resources. Each group will then quickly share their findings with the rest of the class, helping to provide an overview of this issue, why it matters, and how it is being addressed.

- **Exemplars in social media, mobile and video:** These platforms and content types are increasingly key drivers for media consumption in 2016. I will outline the impact of this, how publishers are responding to these trends and highlight some examples of good (and possibly bad,) work.

After that, your job will be to identify further examples (one each) to share with the class. This might be something memorable that you've already seen/read/heard, or it could be something you discover during some dedicated research time in this workshop.

You will capture your example – citing what you like/don't like about it in a class Google doc – as well as sharing (in person) your example with the whole class. If it's a short video, we'll watch the video, if it's an article, you'll highlight a few key pieces of text (we can read the rest from the Google doc in our own time), if it's audio – we'll listen to an extract etc.

Content is still King; so this section of the workshop will help to remind us of that fact; and provide inspiration for our own creative work.

- **Media Interviews:** We will cover a lot of ground over the course of 2.5 days. You will be exposed to lots of ideas and information, across a broad range of topics, one of which you will explore in more depth as part of your end of course "hot topic" assignment.

A key aim of this course is to equip you with the ability to express knowledge and ideas about some of the major issues the media industry is facing today. You will demonstrate this through your written work, pitches and class presentations, as well as our media interviews exercise.

At the end of the final day, each student will be assigned a topic that we have covered. You will work in pairs to ask each other interview questions about this topic e.g. what's the biggest challenge that the *New York Times* faces. How are we addressing that challenge? What else could we do etc.

With your partner you will practice and hone your answers. After 20 minutes we'll come back together for a group interview where each student will answer three unscripted questions posed by members of the group on their assigned subject. This will test how much you have learned during the course, and help you practice for being asked these types of questions in a job interview.

2. Millennial media user profile (15%)

Your age group is leading the charge for new media habits. That's why media organizations are obsessed with understanding what content young people consume and how they consume it.

Using one of your class mates as a case study you'll write a 600-word profile (other formats can be used with instructor consent) which paints the picture of their media usage. What content do they consume / not consume, how, where, when, why?

The feature will be uploaded to our [Medium page](#). This task will demonstrate your ability to write quickly (it needs to be completed and published before class the next day,) your ability to identify an interview format whilst also putting your interview skills to good use.

In doing this, you'll learn more about your peers and the media likes/dislikes, finding areas of commonality and difference. It will also, perhaps, highlight some of the challenges faced by news and media organizations. As J-School students you're not necessarily a standard focus group, but the way that you consume media may well help to show how – and why – the traditional media model is broken; a key theme of this course.

3. Company profiles and presentation (20%)

Who are the big and/or emerging media players in news markets? What do you know about them? In this exercise you'll be required to go away and research a media organization or platform such as Vice, BuzzFeed, Blendle, Line, Snapchat or Vox.

You'll be given a template to complete (which you'll also upload online) which will act as a primer for you – and the whole class – on this company. Using the primer template, you'll be able to identify key questions like: what the company does, how it's funded, their audience, the types of stories/content they produce, how their offering differs from others, as well as potential strengths and weaknesses.

This task is to be completed overnight on Saturday, with each student providing a 4-minute presentation of their key findings on Sunday morning.

Through this exercise you will get to deploy your own research and analysis skills, whilst also demonstrating your ability to distil large amounts of information to an audience; both online (through the primer) and in-person (through your in-class presentation). You will also learn considerable amount about other industry players from the presentations offered by your classmates too!

4. "Hot topic" pitch and article (30%)

Showcasing what you have learned and building on it a stage further. Which of the myriad of topics that we've covered in this course has interested you the most? That's the subject which you will explore as part of a 1,000-1,200 word article that you will produce in the two weeks following class. The feature should include desk research and interviews with at least one relevant industry source. You will publish this to our Medium site.

You will pitch two ideas to the group on Sunday afternoon and the best of these will be commissioned to go ahead. Ideas may come from discussions in class (including our Page One meetings), your own reading or something you would like to explore but that, perhaps, we didn't have time to cover.

Grading criteria

I will be looking for good writing, strong imagery, interesting stories, clarity of message and good use of formats.

- A is reserved for professional quality work where all the elements successfully come together.
- B is excellent work that nears professional quality with a few flaws.
- C is average. Your work fulfills the requirements of the assignment.
- D is sub-standard work with multiple flaws that prevent it from being average quality.
- F is unacceptable quality with fatal flaws in either audio or writing. Also non-delivery.

GRADING	A	B	C	D	F
Strong lead: Informative hard (summary) news lead or compelling anecdotal opening.	Vivid, telling detail.	Provides essential information.	Essential information but lacking clarity, conciseness and/or detail.	Not a direct lead and/or important context and information missing.	Factual error(s). Sound / vision error(s).
Essential information covered. Story / Analysis logically organized.	Who, what, where, when and why (and the how if appropriate) answered.	5 Ws covered but story not organized clearly with most important information at the top.	Essential information provided but disorganized.	Essential information missing and/or disorganized.	Does not tell a story.
Appropriate use of quotes, actuality and attribution.	Strong use of quotes and/or actuality, with best high in story. Attribution provided when needed.	Appropriate use of quotes and attribution, including actuality.	Quotes and attribution provided.	Quotes or attribution missing.	Quotes and attribution missing.
Clear and concise writing. Appropriate style.	Clear and concise writing (for the ear or an essay). Appropriate style deployed.	Basically clear and concise.	Thorough editing needed to meet standards.	Writing style is inappropriate for a news story.	Unintelligible.
Factually accurate. Correct grammar, spelling and punctuation.	Mechanically sound, no errors.	1-2 minor errors. Style inconsistent.	1 major error such as a poor sound edit, or more than two minor errors.	2 major errors and multiple minor issues.	Fatal flaws: Factual errors, misspelling of proper names, multiple grammar, spelling errors.
Appropriate use of formats.	Uses the best/effective format to tell a story.	Solid, but with some scope for improvement in tech/format.	Readable/Viewable/Watchable. Not ground-breaking.	Hard to consume e.g. off mic, poorly written etc.	Unlistenable/Unwatchable/Unreadable

Course policies

Attendance

Non-attendance and/or failure to complete assignments on time will be graded with an F for that task.

Please notify me, with as much prior notice as possible, if you must miss part of the class.

Late work

If work will be delivered late, with good reason, or you're having problems with an assignment then let me know ASAP. I'm here to help and will always seek to be flexible where I can.

Accessibility

The University of Oregon seeks to create inclusive learning environments. If aspects of this course result in barriers to your participation, please notify me as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact the Accessible Education Center (AEC), Web: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/> - Phone: 541-346-1155.

Crisis Center

The University of Oregon Counseling Center provides students with confidential telephone crisis intervention 24/7. The number is 541-346-3227.

Diversity

Open inquiry, freedom of expression, and respect for differences are fundamental to a comprehensive and dynamic education. SOJC is committed to upholding these ideals by encouraging the exploration, engagement, and expression of divergent perspectives and diverse identities.

Discrimination of any kind, disrespect for others, and inequity in educational opportunity are not acceptable. Students, faculty, and staff are expected at all times to maintain the School of Journalism and Communication's high standards of ethical and compassionate conduct. Please see me if you need help or have any questions.

Academic integrity

The U of O policy on academic dishonesty will be observed throughout this course. Plagiarizing and/or cheating will result in an automatic failure of the course. To avoid this, you should read:

<http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>

We will also talk about the importance of proper attribution of your sources and providing credit where it is due. Careers can – and have been – destroyed as a result of breaking these rules. Don't make the same mistakes!

Technology

Papers should be submitted as Word Docs in Canvas so that they can be reviewed and graded through the "Track Changes" function in Microsoft Word. This is also more environmentally friendly than printed copies.

Mobile phones should be turned off in class, unless we're using them for a task.

Laptops are allowed, but there will be "lids down" moments throughout the course.

Questions

If you want to know more about anything mentioned here, or you think that there's a policy which is missing, then please do not hesitate to tell me.

Course Schedule

This schedule is a draft and is subject to change, depending on student interests, inclement weather and other unplanned – and currently unknown - factors. You will be made aware of any major changes if/when they arise.

Friday 8th April 2016: 12pm – 4.50pm, Allen 137

Afternoon

- **Introduction:** Overview of the course 12-1pm
- **Icebreaker:** Getting to know each other
- **Presentation and Discussion:** Understanding digital disruption in 2016 1-2.30pm
- *Break* To 3pm
- **Guest lecture and Discussion:** How journalism is changing (*Thomas Schmidt, UO PhD student*)
- **Written exercise:** Millennial Media Profiles (*to be completed as homework*) 4pm+

Saturday 9th April 2016: 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303

Morning

- **Group Exercise:** Page One meeting (*prep and discussion*) 9-10am
- **Presentation and Discussion:** Audiences and circulation data/trends + Income/revenue trends
- *Break* 11-11.15am
- **Team exercise and report back:** Ad Blocking + Ad Fraud (*size of problem, impact, solutions*) To 12pm
- **Presentation and Discussion:** 10 trends in social media, mobile and video 12-12.30pm
- **Individual research:** Finding great case studies in social media, mobile and video 12.30 – 1pm

LUNCH

Afternoon

- **Class Show and Tell:** Exemplars in social media, mobile and video 2 – 3.15pm
- **Presentation and Discussion:** 10 trends in content innovation 3.15 – 3.45pm
- **Written exercise:** Company profiles (*to be researched and completed as homework*). 3.45pm+

Sunday 10th April 2016: 9am – 4.50pm, Allen 303

Morning

- **Group Exercise:** Page One meeting (*prep and discussion*) 9-10am
- **Student Presentations:** Company profiles 10-11.30am

Break

- **Reading:** The new Gatekeepers 11.45am – 12.10pm
- **Discussion:** The new Gatekeepers – are they good or bad for journalism? 12.10-12.30pm

LUNCH

Afternoon

- **“Hot topic” pitches** 1.30-2.45pm

Break

- **Media Interviews** 3.00– 4.20pm
- **Evaluations and Next Steps** 4.20 – 4.45pm

After class

- Complete your “hot topic” assignment, a 1,200-1,500-word essay on a key area covered in the class.
- Extra credit will also be given for people attending the following talk later on in the term:

Demystifying: Journalism and Silicon Valley. Friday, May 27, 2016, 12-1 p.m. in Allen Hall
Claire Wardle, Director of Research, Tow Center for Digital Journalism, Columbia University

The past five years have seen the most significant shift in news publishing since the invention of the printing press. Large social media platforms are becoming the principal mechanisms for delivering news to global audiences. What does this new reality mean for the platforms, news organizations and audiences in terms of business models, algorithmic transparency, privacy and ethical frameworks?

Claire Wardle leads the Tow Center’s research exploring the intersection of journalism’s democratic function and the new tools of the digital age. Alongside this, she is the co-founder of Eyewitness Media Hub and a member of the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on Social Media.

Claire was previously director of News Services for Storyful, senior social media officer at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a lecturer at Cardiff University, and a consultant and trainer on social media. In 2009, Claire designed the social media training program for BBC news and rolled it out across the organization.