

J463 Top Audio Storytelling

School of Journalism and Communication

University of Oregon

Winter 2015-16

Instructor	Professor Damian Radcliffe <damianr@uoregon.edu>
Office	201 Allen Hall
Office hours	3pm-5pm Friday, but feel free to drop by or make a separate appointment for other times.
Telephone	541-346-7643
Materials	Please bring lots of enthusiasm, your laptop and your phone to class.
Timing	12pm – 1.50pm Monday and Wednesday, 302 Allen Hall

Course Background

Podcasting and audio is enjoying a global renaissance. Driven by new digital technologies, it's never been so easy to create, distribute and consume high quality audio content.

New players, legacy media operators and non-media brands, are all moving into this space, creating content across a wide variety of genres. This offers exciting opportunities for new graduates with strong audio, storytelling and critical thinking skills.

The course aims to provide a strong foundation – in terms of skills and knowledge - which will enable students to benefit from some of these emerging opportunities.

Learning outcomes

Through lessons, group and individual assignments, by the end of this term you will be able to:

1. Understand and describe the current audio and podcasting market (*players, drivers for growth etc.*)
2. Critically evaluate a wide range of audio content.
3. Generate your own audio content and ideas.
4. Confidently pitch your ideas to peers and industry professionals.
5. Create your own content using a number of industry standard tools.

Approach

Learning methods will include:

- Class lectures and guest speakers
- Listening to – and critically evaluating – audio content
- In-class assignments and tasks (listening, pitching etc.)
- Out of class assignments (content creation, content review and online learning modules)

Estimated student workload

The course features two classes a week (Mon and Weds) as well as a range of home assignments. Out of class work will typically take 2-4 hours a week to complete, although sometimes this will be greater.

In a typical week, non-class work may include:

- A listening task
- A (non-graded) tech task
- Online learning modules / Reading
- Preparing for class *and/or* work on your core (graded) assignments

Listening tasks

This will typically involve listening to a podcast, or radio program, in your own time. Many weeks there will be a short quiz to test that you've listened to this content, as well as a class discussion about the audio.

Class discussions will typically focus on: format, content, style, likes/dislikes and lessons learned/takeaways.

Before hearing from guest speakers, students will also be encouraged to listen to content related to our guest's areas of expertise/experience. This will provide useful context and enable students to ask informed questions. This is an audio class, so you can expect to do a fair amount of listening – and critiquing – of audio!

Tech tasks

J463 is not a tech class, but having strong technical skills will enable you to produce higher quality work. You will therefore be encouraged to take equipment home with you and to experiment with it. This will enable you to develop your tech skills. A number of required online learning tasks will also focus on technical areas.

Online learning modules

Organizations such as Poynter have produced a wide range of online learning materials, many of which are relevant to this class. Students will be asked to complete a number of these modules, in their own time, to further deepen their understanding of the subjects being explored in class.

Class prep / Reading and Research

Ahead of some classes students will have some reading/research to do. This might include researching market developments and speakers, preparing a content pitch or working on a major assignment.

Grading/Weighting

Activity	Points	% of total grade
1. Class attendance	100	10%
2. Class participation	100	10%
3. Quizzes	50	5%
4. Historical news piece	100	10%
5. Field reporting exercise	100	10%
6. A Day in the Life	150	15%
7. The next "Big Thing"	300	30%
8. End of term essay	100	10%
TOTAL	1,000	100%

Major Assignments

You will be given more detailed assignment notes ahead of each task. But, broadly speaking, this term you will produce five pieces of graded work. This includes three pieces of audio, a podcast concept and one essay.

1. Historical news piece

Students will produce a 2-3 minute report – submitting both audio and script – covering an historical event of their choosing. The account can be contemporaneous or reflective, with plenty of scope for different styles to be deployed, depending on your subject, technical skills and preferred approach.

2. Field reporting exercise

We will go off-site to a venue where – in the space of the class - you will be produce a 60-90 second report. Should you wish to do so, there will be an opportunity to reproduce this, following feedback from the class.

3. A Day in the Life

Eugene and Springfield have a population of over 200,000 people. These inhabitants cover a multitude of ages, backgrounds and jobs. Each student will pitch – and produce – a 2 minute vignette telling the story of a person, or place, within the area. These will then be designed to tell the story of the city over a 24-hour period.

4. The next “Big Thing”

Anyone can make a podcast. Successful shows are produced by major media companies, as well as enthusiasts working from their bedroom using day-to-day equipment.

Can you identify a gap in the market and be the next podcasting poster-boy (or girl)?

Students will be asked to pitch initial concepts to class and to develop the best idea further. To do this you will need to undertake market/gap analysis, identify your potential audience and some sample stories, as well as outline how you will promote your product. Afterall, there’s no point producing great content if no one hears it!

5. End of term essay

In lieu of an exam, you’ll be asked to write 1,200-1,800 words telling me what you’ve learned during the term. This should reference various tasks, assignments and content that you have listened to. In short, I’ll be looking for an essay which says “this is what makes top audio storytelling.”

Other assessment criteria

6. Attendance is compulsory

And this is reflected in the grading structure for the term.

7. You’re expected to be active in class

This means commenting on content we have listened to, asking questions of me and our guest speakers, giving feedback on ideas pitched by other students and developing your skills at pitching ideas too.

8. Quizzes

Roughly every couple of weeks there will be a short quiz to test your knowledge and recall of the lessons/content found in the non-class assignments e.g. online modules, home listening etc.

Grading criteria

You work will be judged in the same way as any Editor would review the content submitted to them. I will be looking for good writing, strong imagery, interesting stories, clarity of message and good use of sound formats.

Broadly speaking for written and audio assignments:

- 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.

Participation grade

Class meetings will focus on introductions to topics, guest speakers, opportunities to pitch ideas, discussions on homework and in-class audio assignments, as well as providing supportive feedback to your peers.

Your active participation is vital. And this is reflected in the grade structure for the term.

Our classroom is a newsroom and a production office. This means that you need to be comfortable pitching ideas, receiving – and giving – feedback, and treating everyone in the room with due respect.

There are no wrong answers and bad ideas, only answers and ideas which could be developed better. It's our job to work together to enable everyone to deliver the best possible outputs from the course.

A word on audio/tech skills

This is not a technical class, although you will need to develop – and deploy - some technical skills. Elements of this are factored into the syllabus, for both in-class and home assignments.

You are encouraged to take home equipment and experiment with it, so that you become more aware of how this technology works and how to use it effectively. Arguably the three areas to focus on are:

- 1) Using microphones
- 2) Background noise/atmos
- 3) Sound editing

You should tailor your approach to making stories based on your technical skills and confidence. Yes, push yourself, but don't try and produce something so ambitious that it is unlistenable.

Shows like [RadioLab](#) use lots of layers (background music, actuality etc.) to tell stories. But great audio storytelling doesn't always need this. [*Whilst conversely shows like [The Message](#) show the power of good stories being able to transcend weaker technical / sound production.*]

Try the BBC's [From Our Own Correspondent](#) or the [Great Lives](#) biography program as examples of simple audio techniques (presenter/presenter and contributors) typically with little or nothing, but their own voices. Closer to home, look at the [NPR hourly news summary](#) or the [Stuff You Missed in History Class](#) podcast. Each of these examples is technically "simple" but effective in terms of format and storytelling.

Grading criteria is consistent with any reporting assignment/class, but with an audio dimension.

Grading Grid:					
Category	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). Sounds 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 sound and sound formats.	Uses the best/effective format to tell a story.	Solid, but with some scope for improvement in tech/format.	Listenable. But not ground-breaking.	Hard to listen to e.g. off mic, echo, atmos too loud etc.	Unlistenable.

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 a 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 Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 346- 1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu.

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.

Part I: Purpose and Context

Week 1 (1/4, 1/6)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: Overview of the course, your listening habits, getting to know each other. • Discussion about major audio projects for term: historical news piece, “A Day in the Life” and The Next “Big Thing”.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation: The audio and podcasting markets. • Critical appreciation: In-class listening assignments. <i>> Guest speaker: Abigail Edge, former Technology Editor journalism.co.uk</i>
Homework (c. 3 hours)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading: Tow Center report (Dec 2015): Guide to Podcasting, Vanessa Quirk: http://towcenter.org/research/guide-to-podcasting/ 2. Listening task (1): Listen to as much of KLCC (89.7FM) as possible prior to our station visit next Monday (1/11). Recommended. local programs are Morning Edition (4am-9am) and/or All Things Considered (4pm-6.30pm) 3. Listening task (2): Origins of Podcasting – the first ten years. Part One: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03zdkk5 and Part Two: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b040015q (60 mins in total) 4. Online learning: Writing for the Ear, Part 1: Introduction to audio stories http://www.newsu.org/courses/writing-ear <p><i>Optional: “Bill Siemering, author of NPR’s 1970 mission statement”</i> <i>Current’s podcast from Dec 17, 2015 about news and trends in public and nonprofit media:</i> http://currentpubmedia.libsyn.com/bill-siemering-author-of-nprs-1970-mission-statement</p>

Week 2 (1/11, 1/13)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to KLCC, the primary NPR member station in Eugene/Springfield area, 12.30 - 13.30. <i>> Meet with: Tripp Sommer, News Director and Don Hein, Program Director</i> <p><i>KLCC is at 136 W 8th Ave, Eugene OR 97401. It is 1.2 miles from Allen Hall if you want to walk. Or it’s three blocks (0.3m) from Eugene Station if you take the EmX. <u>Please don’t be late!</u></i></p>
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Technical Skills. <i>> Tour of Allen Hall facilities and intro to equipment</i>

Homework (3-4 hours)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading: Transom articles on Podcasting Basics, Part 1: Voice Recording Gear, Part 2: Software, Part 3: Audio Levels and Processing 2. Listening task: BBC Radio 4 Today program, any recent 8-9am segment (<i>for Monday 1/25 class</i>). http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qj9z 3. Online learning: Writing for the Ear, Part 2: Picking and pitching stories http://www.newsu.org/courses/writing-ear 4. Tech prep: spend an hour playing with loaned audio recording equipment.
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Part II: News and Current Affairs

Week 3 (1/18, 1/20)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Luther King Day. No classes held.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: Live radio and the importance of audio in developing countries. <i>> Guest speaker: Wendy Pilmer, consultant, BBC Media Action / BBC Radio</i> • Quiz on Tow Center podcasting report and listening tasks (Weeks 1-2). • Close listen to a recent NPR Planet Money podcast: http://www.npr.org/sections/money/2015/11/27/457404184/episode-666-the-hoverboard-life
Homework (2.5-3 hours tasks 1-3.)	<p><i>After Weds (and before next Monday)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading: “Pitching Story Ideas” - http://transom.org/2015/pitching-story-ideas/ - also listen to the three NPR pieces featured in this article. They total less than 15 mins. 2. Student Prep: Prepare 2 x 60 second (or less) pitches for an historical news event which you will recreate. These will be pitched to class on Weds. You will make one of them. 3. Online learning: Writing for the Ear, Part 3: Writing the story http://www.newsu.org/courses/writing-ear

Week 4 (1/25, 1/27)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speaker: Catherine Miller, Producer, BBC Radio 4 Today program. • Student presentations: Historical news piece pitches. • Critical appreciation: In-class listening; news genres, basic tips and case studies. • Discussion: Potential formats for historical news pieces.
Homework (1.5 hours)	<p>Before Weds</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listening task: To be confirmed BBC World Service documentary, <u>plus</u> Serial, Series 2, Episode 1: https://serialpodcast.org/season-two/1/dustwun

Part III: People and Place

Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling Stories with Sound: http://www.newsu.org/courses/telling-stories-sound • Case studies (Criminal, Serial and BBC World Service documentary) • Discussion: What have we learned so far?
Homework (1.5-2 hours) Plus: Production: historical news report.	<p>After Weds (and before next Monday)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading: "How To Start A Great Podcast: Top Tips" http://www.wannabehacks.co.uk/2014/02/12/how-to-start-a-great-podcast-top-tips/ 2. Student Prep: Prepare 2 x 90-120 second (or less) pitches for a new podcast, which you will pitch to class on Monday 1/2. Explain your idea, broadcast style, why this topic and initial gap analysis. 3. Online learning: Writing for the Ear, Part 4: Revising the story http://www.newsu.org/courses/writing-ear 4. Production: historical news report. Due date 11.59pm 5th Feb.

Week 5 (2/1, 2/3)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student presentation 1: Pitch 2 x top-level ideas for a new podcast. > <i>Guest judges: TBC.</i> • Planning for field reporting assignment.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Reporting assignment: we will go off-site to a venue where – in the space of the class - you will be produce a 60-90 second report from a mystery location.
Homework	Before Weds

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Prep: Familiarize yourself (practice, practice, practice) with the equipment you will be using for the Field Reporting exercise on Wednesday. <p>After Weds</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Online learning: Writing for the Ear, Part 5: Voicing and special topics http://www.newsu.org/courses/writing-ear 3. Develop agreed proposition for The next “Big Thing” assignment: concept, mission statement, audience, competition analysis and sample contents. Due 11:59pm 28th Feb. 4. Listening task: Islamophonic (presenter Riazat Butt will do a pre-rec AMA with us, to play in Week 8) http://www.theguardian.com/world/audio/2007/oct/12/islamophonic 5. Research and preparation for guest speaker Kim Fox, in class 8/2. 6. Come armed with any technical questions you might have for Sung on Monday.
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Part IV: Student Showcase

Week 6 (2/8, 2/10)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speaker: Kim Fox. Radio Journalism Professor at The American University in Cairo, and former reporter/host @WOSU. • Technical surgery with Sung Park.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student presentations: “A Day in a Life” pitches. Each student will pitch – and produce – a 2-minute vignette telling the story of a person, or place, within the area. These will tell the story of the city over a 24-hour period. • Vox Pops task: timed exercise (<i>optional given that I originally promised you there would be no class this day.</i>)
Homework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Online learning: Complete the “Writing for the Ear” program. Email your course completion certificate when done to damianr@uoregon.edu 2. Student Prep: focus on the two major assignments you now have in play; “A Day in a Life” and The next “Big Thing.” 3. Submit questions for AMA with Riazat Butt, based on last weeks listening by 23:59 2/12.

Part V: Honing your craft

Week 7 (2/15, 2/17)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiz 2: Timed listening and Critical Appreciation assignment (1 hour 10 mins).• Exercise: “Blind Taste test” – please bring recording equipment with you for this exercise. You should also record on a device which can be used for playback, without file transfer e.g. recommend using Voice Memo or AudioBoom on your smartphone.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guest speaker: Professor Rob Quicke, Founder College Radio Day, Associate Professor of Communication at William Paterson University General Manager of the award-winning WPSC 88.7 FM in Wayne, New Jersey (NYC market).• Quiz 3: Writing for the Ear (10 mins)• Exercise: “My first memory” – you’ll work in pairs for this assignment. Please bring recording equipment with you on a device which can be used for playback in class.
Homework	<p>Before Weds</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Listening task: listen to the two most recent episodes of This American Life and RadioLab: http://www.thisamericanlife.org/ and/or http://www.radiolab.org/ <p>After Weds</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Other: To be confirmed, based on progress, ideas which have arisen in term.

Part VI: Brand extension

Week 8 (2/22, 2/24)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guest speaker: Riazat Butt, AFP ex Guardian, Al Jazeera etc. (Pre-recorded)• Quiz 4: Timed Group exercise (1 hour). Why are traditional print media companies such as <i>BuzzFeed, The New Yorker, The Economist</i> and others moving into audio? Research and produce a case study in 60 minutes. Share conclusions with the class.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiz 5: Timed listening and Critical Appreciation assignment (45 mins). Non-media companies moving into audio/podcasts: e.g. Red Bull, Slack. Why and how are they doing this? And are they any good?• Exercise: Write and record a 60 second review of a TV show, movie, album etc.

	You have 30 minutes to do this, before playing it back to the class. Again, record this on your smartphone – or other device – for class playback.
Homework	Focus on completing your “Next Big Thing” assignment.

Part VI: Student showcase

Week 9 (2/29, 2/3)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation/discussion of student work: The Next “Big Thing”.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student presentations: Historical news pieces. • Other: to be confirmed.
Homework	<i>To be confirmed, but related to Studio Sessions.</i>

Part VII: Makerthon and Close

Week 10 (3/7, 3/9)

Mon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studio session: Making 5-10 minute pilots of the Top 3 new podcast ideas.
Wed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demo playback. • Feedback and lessons learned. Instructor and student takeaways. • Next steps.
Homework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Essay: defining top audio storytelling. In lieu of a final exam, you’ll be asked to write 1,200-1,800 words telling me what you’ve learned during the term. This should reference various tasks, assignments and content that you have listened to. In short, an essay which says “this is what constitute top audio storytelling.” <i>Due March 16th 23:59</i>

About me

Damian Radcliffe is the Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism at the University of Oregon, an Honorary Research Fellow at Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies, and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA).

He is an experienced digital analyst, consultant, journalist, and researcher who has worked in senior and mid-level editorial, research, and policy positions for the past two decades in the UK, Middle East, and now the USA.

A life-long digital intrapaneur, Damian has led new creative and research initiatives at the BBC, Ofcom (the UK Communications Regulator), CSV—a volunteering and social action charity—and Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR).

Damian is a regular contributor to major media outlets such as the BBC, CBS Interactive (ZDNet), and The Huffington Post, as well as a number of other outlets.

Damian has visited more than 50 countries around the world and travel is one of his great passions. He spent nearly three years setting up and running the *Rassed* research program for Qatar's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ictQATAR); this content has been viewed over a quarter of a million times.

He is originally from the UK and retains his British accent and teeth.

Key audio experience

- **10+ years experience** in radio for the **BBC** and UK **commercial radio**.
- UK's **youngest ever Program Controller** for a full-time FM radio station.
- Led a **multi-award winning radio-led partnership** between BBC and a UK NGO.
 - *70 staff (6 direct reports) and 300 volunteers, across 40 project locations.*
 - *33,285 broadcasts, worked with 3,672 partners to engage 165,190 citizens*
- Member: **College Radio Day Advisory Board**.

Blog: <http://digijournalism.tumblr.com/>

Website: www.damianradcliffe.com

Twitter: [@damianradcliffe](https://twitter.com/damianradcliffe)

Course #tag #topaudio and/or #J463 #TopAudio

For more information, please contact Damian Radcliffe, Carolyn S. Chambers Professor in Journalism, 201 Allen Hall. Email: damianr@uoregon.edu