Photojournalism - Spring 2019 Course Syllabus

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Course Number: MEDA-3340.001
Classroom: CCH 209 meets W 7:00-9:30 p.m.
Office Hours: MW 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.; W 4:50 p.m. - 6:50 p.m. and by appointment

Course Information and Description

Photojournalism is a rigorous program of practical exercises and academic study. Course material and assignments will give students an advanced and comprehensive understanding of photojournalism. Throughout the course, students are expected to:

- cover ethics, truth, and honesty in photojournalism;
- explore composition, content, and form with an emphasis on shooting storytelling photos;
- research issues and subjects and overcome technical problems while bringing their own personal vision to the assignment;
- explore questions of student interest and access to stories;
- investigate other photojournalists’ work that led to social or political change;
- meet deadlines;
- use digital journalistic photography to tell compelling stories;
- create and update digital portfolios to reflect ongoing work.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate proficiency in using newsgathering and photography skills in order to locate, evaluate, and present information to media audiences.
2. Demonstrate proficiency in identifying and utilizing various types of media platforms.
3. Demonstrate proficiency in visual communication appropriate for mass audiences.

Supplies Needed

- Flash Drive/SD Card
- Digital Recorder/Smartphone
- Reporter’s Notebook
- Digital camera (6 megapixel or bigger) with manually adjustable shutter speeds and apertures. DLSR strongly recommended.
  - We will have a limited number of Canon DLSR cameras available to students to check out.
Required and Recommended Readings

- There are no required textbooks for this class.

- **Recommended or Supplemental Reading**
  - The local daily newspaper – Corpus Christi Caller-Times
  - The campus newspaper – Island Waves
  - Major national news media - CNN, the New York Times, the Washington Post, etc.

- Additional handouts and supplemental readings may be assigned by the instructor throughout the semester.

Course Assignments and Grading

The core components of this course are photo story assignments, complemented by in-class quizzes and a final online portfolio. Story assignments will be completed outside of class, under deadline pressure. Additional assignments may be added as needed. Class attendance is required. Laptops will be permitted in class for note taking and reference. If a student abuses a laptop for non-class purposes, that student’s laptop privileges will be rescinded for the duration of the semester.

Class plans and deadline reminders will be posted on the course website as the semester unfolds. Because good journalism often involves responding to real-world events, dates may change at the instructor’s discretion. The grading scale will be based on these percentages:

- A: 90-100
- B: 80-89
- C: 70-79
- D: 60-69
- F: below 60

Your photo assignments will count for 55 percent of your grade, with increasing weight as the semester progresses, as follows:

- Photo Series assignments 1-4, cumulative – 40 percent
- Final Project – 15 percent

The remaining 45 percent comes from the following:

- 5 assignments, cumulative – 15 percent
- In-class critiques/presentations – 15 percent
- Personal Essay - 5 percent
- Attendance – 5 percent
- Final portfolio – 5 percent
**Photo Series Assignments**

The photo series assignments are considered a minimum requirement for passing the course. Except for the final project, each assignment should include 10-12 photos, composed appropriately, with descriptive cutlines. The final project will include 15-20 photos. Finally, each story must be accompanied with a cover sheet detailing the following:

- The “budget line” or topical description of the photo assignment.
- A list of source names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses
- A list of websites (or other “invisible” sources) used
- Three ideas for follow-up stories that relate to the assignment

Assignments should be turned in at the end of lecture on the due date.

**Online Portfolio**

All edited photo assignments should be posted to an online portfolio. Students will update and develop these portfolios throughout the semester and critique them in class. Submit the URL of your final portfolio to your instructor no later than the last class day.

**In-Class Critiques & Presentations**

In this class, we “learn by doing.” Student pictures will be critiqued in class. Please note that successful photojournalism is not about perfection, it is about problem solving, being proactive, and investing your time wisely. To do well in this class, you will need to devote time outside of class to photojournalism, as well as show up to class ready to present your work and critique the work of others. This semester students will also present on photo composition techniques, as well as notable photographers.

**Personal Essay**

Students will write a personal essay reflecting on their relationship to photojournalism and visual communication.
Academic Advising

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Dropping a Class

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

Late Work and Missed Assignments

Deadlines: In mass communication, and especially in journalism, deadlines are crucial. If an individual continually misses deadlines in a real-world work environment, that person risks losing his/her job. Treat this class as if it were a job. Stories are always due on the deadline specified. If a student sees there might be a problem meeting a deadline, let the instructor know early so a new plan can be drafted. Otherwise, there will be no exceptions for missing a deadline.

Attendance/Tardiness

Attendance in this class is mandatory. You are expected to be present for every class unless otherwise instructed. This is especially important given that much of the course involves regular discussion with peers about news leads, sources, reporting issues, etc. If you have a legitimate reason for not attending (illness, disaster, death), contact the instructor beforehand (by e-mail) and present a note from a physician or other official documentation at the next class. This is your responsibility; the professor will not remind you. At the end of the semester, if the instructor does not have supporting evidence of your excused absence it will be marked as unexcused and will affect your grade. If you have a religious holiday, please let the instructor know beforehand. The instructor is not responsible for repeating material covered in class. If you are late or absent, it is your responsibility to check with another student in the class to find out what you missed.
Excessive absences will affect your course grade. No more than TWO absences are allowed in this class. Each additional absence will result in deductions from your final course grade.

**Grade Appeals**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html).

**Statement of Civility**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is.
Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply.

In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a zero for that assignment that cannot be retaken or resubmitted. In this class, students must identify or attribute every source used in stories. Students must NEVER fabricate quotations, facts, sources or any other information in their stories, nor may they misrepresent any sources or information. Plagiarism and fabrication are major offenses in journalism and other writing professions. Students who plagiarize or fabricate sources for an assignment will receive a ZERO on the assignment.

All work in this class must be original. Students may not use assignments turned in for other classes previously or that are being submitted for another current class without permission from the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to give a failing grade for committing any of these offenses and to refer any academic dishonesty or misconduct to the University.

Disabilities Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.
Class Calendar

Week 1 - Jan. 16 - Course Overview
- Course overview - Photojournalism and Visual Communication
- Intro to the DSLR
- Camera availability and student work
- Submitting assignments
- Assignment #1 - intros & interests

Week 2 - Jan. 23 - The Pro Camera Bag & the “Exposure Triangle”
- Assignment #1 due
- Tips for success in journalism and photography
- Camera equipment: What’s in a pro camera bag (and what does the school offer)?
- The “Exposure Triangle” - shutter speed, aperture, and ISO
- Photo composition principles
- Assignment #2 - camera practice w/ “exposure triangle” & photo composition principles

Week 3 - Jan. 30 - Photo Composition & Writing Cutlines
- Assignment #2 due - in-class critiques
- Post-production tools
- Interviewing and identifying subjects in photos
- Cutlines and captioning
- Overview of Photo Assignment #1
- The vocabulary of photography and photo critique
- Assignment #3 - writing cutlines

Week 4 - Feb. 6 - Working in the Field
- Assignment #3 due - in-class critiques
- Photographing objects, places, and events
- Working with reporters
- Finding stories
- Navigating access
- Shooting the environmental portrait
- Shooting the self-portrait
Week 5 - Feb. 13 - Selecting Stories and Editing Your Work
- **Photo Series #1 Due** - in-class critiques
- Identifying photo essay / series projects
- Setting & lighting
- Overview of Photo Assignment #2
- Editing your own work
- Editing stories for publication
- Assignment #4 - Famous photographers

Week 6 - Feb. 20 - Famous Photographers and Showcasing Your Work Online
- **Assignment #4 due** - student presentations on famous photographers
- Talk about Web-based photo platforms - Flickr, Instagram, Tumblr, WordPress, Soundslides, etc.
- Further discussion of editing and presenting work
- Ideas and contact(s) for Photo Series #2 due

Week 7 - Feb. 27 - Work Day
- In-class critique / work day

Week 8 - March 6
- **Photo Series #2 Due** - in-class critiques
- Writing, storytelling, and photography
- Professional style and personal vision
- Overview of Photo Assignment #3

March 11-15 - Spring Break

Week 9 - March 20 - Political and Ethical Issues
- Photography and political / social issues
- Ethics of Photojournalism
- Copyright, Fair Use, and Intellectual Property
- Overview of Personal Essay
- Ideas and contact(s) for Photo Series #3 due

Week 10 - March 27 - Multimedia Photojournalism & Recording Audio
- Examples of audio slideshows
- Review of basic audio tools in the context of use with photos and audio editing
- Relevant audio recorders and microphones
- Overview of Photo Assignment #4
Week 11 - April 3 - Lighting
- **Photo Series #3 Due** - in-class critiques
- Review of basic three-point lighting and other photo techniques
- Specialized lighting equipment, tethering, and other studio techniques
- In-class lab/critique
- Ideas and contact(s) for Photo Series #4 due
- Assignment #5 - Lighting

** Friday, April 5 - last day to drop a class **

Week 12 - April 10 - Final Project Overview
- **Assignment #5 due** - in-class critiques
- **Personal Essay due**
- In-class lab/critique
- Overview of Final Project

Week 13 - April 17 - Future of Photojournalism
- **Photo Series #4 Due** - in-class critiques
- Emerging tools
- Experimental photo projects
- Mobile photography
- Changing pattern of distribution
- Other topics as needed
- Ideas and contact(s) for Final Project due

Week 14 - April 24 - Work Day
- In-class critique / work day for the final project and portfolios
- Other topics as needed

Week 15 - May 1
- **Final Project Due** - in-class critiques
- Final portfolios due during finals week