

**ST: ONLINE JOURNALISM**  
**ENGL 391**  
**Fall 2011**

**Instructor: Mary Ellen Alu**

**Office Hours:** Tues-Thurs 8:25 a.m.-8:45 a.m. and by appointment. If you have questions about assignments, please e-mail me and I will respond as quickly as I can.

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**Course Information:**

Credit Hours: 3 credits

Class Meeting: Tuesday and Thursdays, Memorial Hall Room 201, 8:55 a.m. to 10:05 a.m.

**Course Description:** Hyperlocal is the new buzz word in the news industry, as more media companies shift more resources online. This course will examine hyperlocal news, with a focus on gathering information for the Web, writing lively content, making visual presentations and harnessing an online audience. Students will learn how digital technology has changed the news business while examining the role of journalism in society.

**Required Texts and Materials:**

- Briggs, Mark. **JournalismNEXT**, CQ Press 2010
- Journalism 2.0: How to Survive and Thrive (Download as PDF for Free)
- Additional Course readings posted on Blackboard and distributed in class
- The Associated Press Stylebook (Available online).
- Flash drive (to save your work).

**In preparation for creating an English Major Portfolio in your senior capstone seminar, please save both digital and hard copies of your work for this class, including drafts with peer and instructor comments.**

**Course Goals:**

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- \* Think and write as a mobile journalist as you explore the role of the news media in a democracy and the emergence (and re-emergence) of hyperlocal news.

- \* Understand the differences and similarities between online journalism and print/broadcast journalism, with an emphasis on accuracy, fairness and balance.
- \* Identify and gather news to be posted online.
- \* Write lively blog posts.
- \* Write effective headlines for online stories/blog posts, utilizing SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to optimize page views.
- \* Recognize the dimensions of multi-media storytelling, including how to effectively use photos and video to convey news.
- \* Utilize social media (Facebook, Twitter) to deliver news and harness an online audience.
- \* Utilize AP style in your writing.

### Course Expectations

- You are expected to create a beat and a blog, then report, write and offer commentary.
- You are expected to write engaging headlines, and develop a final project with multi-media components.
- You are expected to adhere to the Blogger's Code of Ethics. <http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>
- You are expected to **attend each class** and **actively participate** in discussions about readings, in assignments, and in workshops. To actively participate, you must not only attend class and take notes but ask questions and volunteer thoughtful answers on a regular basis.
- You are expected to attend every class (there are only 27 of them). Points are assigned for attendance and participation, which will figure into your final grade. Students who miss class are responsible for all material covered in that class, including deadlines related to that material. The only acceptable excuses for missing class are religious observances, documented illnesses, death of a family member, pre-approved school-related activities. Students must provide official written documentation to receive an excused absence.
- You are expected to arrive to class **on time. Note that class starts at 8:55 a.m. NOT 9 a.m.** More than 15 minutes late (or leaving 15 minutes early) will count as an absence.
- You are expected to complete all readings and assignments **on time. No late work permitted.** If your work is not handed-in or posted online by due date, points will be deducted. This is especially critical in an on-line journalism class since journalists live by their deadlines and could find themselves without a job if they miss them.
- You are expected to be considerate of other students in class, including their opinions. No text-messaging, no cellphone use, no Facebook or Twitter use in class, UNLESS part of the day's assignment.

## Grading/Assignments

Assignment	Points
Attendance/ Class Participation/	108 points
Beat Pitch/Blog Setup	30 points
Twice-weekly blog posts	18 @ 10 points each 180 points
Headline Writing On Blog Posts	13 @ 4 points each 52 points
Live Tweet Event (Need Internet Access)	60 points
Draft on Final Project	50 points
Final Project	75 points (based on response to draft critique)
Reflection Presentation/Paper	45 points
<b>Total</b>	600

## Final Course Grade:

93.0-100% A	90.0-92.9% A-	87.0-89.9% B+	83.0-86.9% B	80.0-82.9% B-	
77.0-79.9% C+	73.0-76.9% C	70.0-72.9% C-	67.0-69.9% D+	60.0-66.9% D	<60.0% F

## Guidelines (Rubric) for Written Assignments

Blog posts, as well as the final project, will be graded on overall effectiveness, accuracy, grammar and substance; the quality of the writing and headlines in accordance with online journalism standards; use of links; use of social networking; quality of photo captions (where appropriate). Associated Press style rules must be followed.

### COURSE OUTLINE

(Subject to Change)

**NOTE: Reading assignments are on Blackboard, or distributed in class**

#### ASSIGNMENTS

#### DUE DATES

##### Week 1 Aug. 30 and Sept. 1

Introduction: What is Online News?

Aug. 30

Syllabus/Course Overview

A look at media jobs

Hyperlocal News: Back to the Future

Sept. 1

Read: Online Journalism FAQ

<http://home.comcast.net/~dougmillison/faq.html>

<http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000117.php>

Read: "Out of Print" by Eric Alterman, New Yorker Magazine

##### Week 2 Sept. 6 and Sept. 8

Blog Basics/Finding a Blog Beat

Sept. 6

Read: *JournalismNext*, Forward, pp. xiv to xix;

Intro, pp. 1-8, Ch. 2

Creating a Blog/Writing for Online

Sept. 8

Read: *JournalismNext*, Ch. 1

Writing News Online

<http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000118.php>

<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9703b.html>

Make Blog Pitch/Set Up Blog

**Week 3 Sept. 13 and Sept. 15**

Where/How To Find Story Ideas Sept. 13

Read: Handouts/News Criteria

Read: How to report a news story online

<http://www.ojr.org/ojr/wiki/Reporting/>

Workshop Sept. 15

**First Blog Post Due**

Read: Why I blog? Andrew Sullivan

JournalismNext, Ch. 4

**Week 4 Sept. 20 and Sept. 22**

Gathering News For the Web/5 Ws Sept. 20

Read: Handouts on Covering the News

Workshop/Writing For Online Sept. 22

Read: "Web blogs: A New Source of News"

**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 5 Sept. 27 and Sept. 29**

Guest Blogger Sept. 27

Writing for Online

Read: "Blogging as a form of journalism"

<http://www.ojr.org/ojr/workplace/1017958873.php>

Workshop/Writing for Online Sept. 29

Read: Ch. 10

**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 6 Oct. 4 and Oct. 6**

Writing Effective Headlines (SEO)/ Oct. 4

Building a Digital Audience

Read: JournalismNext, Ch. 11

Writing for Online Oct. 6

Read: JournalismNext, Ch. 3

**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 7 Oct. 11 (No Classes) and Oct. 13**

Guest Speaker: Morning Call Online Editor Liz Bartolai

Oct. 13

Read: Handouts on Interview Techniques

**One Blog Post Due this week**

**Week 8 Oct. 18 and Oct. 20**

The Power of Twitter/Tweetdek/Facebook

Oct. 18

Read: JournalismNext, Ch. 4

Read: <http://beatblogging.org/2009/02/11/screencast-how-to-use-twitter-for-reporting/>

Workshop/Building an Audience

Oct. 20

Read: Handouts

Create Facebook/Twitter accounts

**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 9 Oct. 25 and Oct. 27**

How to take a Good Photo/Video

Oct. 25

Read: JournalismNext, Ch.6

Comparative Paper Due

Workshop/Photo/Videos

Oct. 27

Guest speaker: Videographer/photographer Betty Cauler

Read: JournalismNext, Ch. 8

**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 10 Nov. 1 and Nov. 3**

What is Journalism For?

Nov. 1

Read: "Does the Internet Spread Democracy?"

Read: "What Is Journalism For?" Kovach/Rosenstiel

Shooting Photos/Videos

Nov. 3

Guest Speaker: Betty Cauler

**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 11 Nov. 8 and Nov. 10**

The Art of the Interview

Nov. 8

Preparing for the Final Project

Read: Handouts on Interview

Techniques

Workshop/online writing Nov. 10  
Preparing/Planning for the Final Project  
Polishing copy  
**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 12 Nov. 15 and Nov. 17**  
Packaging News for the Web Nov. 15  
Read: Legal Guide to Newsgathering  
<http://www.rcfp.org/djlg/index.php?cat=NEW>  
Read: Online Storytelling forms

Workshop/Online Writing Nov. 17  
**Two Blog Posts Due this week**

**Week 13 Nov. 22 and Nov. 24 (No Classes)**

**Draft, Final Project Due** Nov. 22  
Peer Review

**Week 14 Nov. 29 and Dec. 1**

Workshop/Polishing the Final Project Nov. 29

**Presentations/Reflection** Dec. 1

**Week 15 Dec. 6** Dec. 6  
What's next?/Workshop  
Polishing the Final Project

**FINAL PROJECT DUE: EXAM WEEK**