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JRNL 432.01: Social Media and Audience II

Lee M. Banville

University of Montana - Missoula, lee.banville@umontana.edu

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JRNL 491/432: Social Media and Audience II

Syllabus – Spring 2019

Subject to change

Scope

News organizations are facing challenges, but also opportunities, when it comes to reaching and connecting with their communities. This course takes the principles of audience research and connection from the JRNL 332 ("both active and passive as well as quantitative and qualitative—in all forms of media, including new media such as the Internet, mobile phones and social media") and expands that to include interactions with the larger community. It allows students to learn how to adapt skills learned for news delivery to the diverse and separate types of audiences and platforms used in today's society, allowing them to identify and reach those other community members for whom this is also a critical need.

Grading options

This course may be taken for a traditional letter-grade and may not be taken credit/no-credit. The Montana University System's plus/minus grading system will be used in this class.

Class Meetings

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:20 p.m., in DAH 306.

Instructor Info

Lee Banville, Professor, School of Journalism.

Office: Don Anderson Hall 406

Office hours: Mondays 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and Thursdays 9:30-11:00 a.m. I'm also available at other times by appointment.

Office phone: 243-2577.

My regular e-mail: lee.banville@umontana.edu.

Required Textbook

There will be reading and quizzes based on those readings, but the readings will be posted on Moodle and distributed in class. There is no required textbook for this class.

Students read several parts of Media Audience Research: A Guide for Professionals as well as several works on audience engagement published by the American Press Institute and the Poynter Institute. These texts will be made available via Moodle.

Successful JRNL 432 students will:

- Develop a more advanced understanding of audience engagement and its different uses within a newsroom or any organization.
- Develop strong storytelling and reporting techniques that utilize social media platforms.
- Create and present a real social media strategy to an organization.
- Create compelling content to put in effect the agreed upon strategy.
- Develop benchmarking goals to assess the effectiveness of the new content.
- Produce a final report and set of recommendations as to how the organization continues to build upon the social media strategy.
- Have a basic understanding of active and passive audience research, how to conduct small-scale surveys and focus groups and working knowledge of online analytics.

Course Grading

- 10% Attendance
- 10% Identification of goals and interview with organization
- 15% Research Plan
- 15% Presentation and revision of plan to organization
- 20% Execution of strategy with new content
- 30% Analysis of content and final report and guide for organization

Graduate Increment

Graduate students will complete two additional assignments: a final presentation to the class outlining how storytelling and reporting techniques developed for the organization could be modified to work for other news media or community organizations. Presentations will be 20 minutes and will be delivered in the final weeks of class. The second assignment would be a research paper (8 - 10 pages) that addresses some topic related to audience involvement in media creation or consumption.

Attendance and participation

Come to class and stay for the entire class period. Three unexcused will result in the lowering of your final grade a full letter grade. Excused absences must be cleared with me ahead of time. A couple of times this semester we may have meetings that fall outside of class time and there may be classes where you will not be expected to attend. If you are unsure of whether your attendance is mandatory, please email me.

Cell phones must be off or on vibrate while you are in class. Desktop computers should only be used for coursework. Anyone whose phone rings during class will be made fun of by me.

Academic Honesty

I expect your honesty in presenting your own work for this course. Academic misconduct at The University of Montana is subject to an academic penalty ranging from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university. Students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code.

<http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>

Plagiarism

As defined by “The University of Montana Student Conduct Code” plagiarism is: “Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own.” This is strictly prohibited in this class and any case of plagiarism in this course will be subject to the penalties outlines in the student code of conduct.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course. Your responsibilities are to request them from me with sufficient advance notice, and to be prepared to provide verification of disability from Disability Services. Please speak with me after class or during my office hours to discuss the details. For more information, visit the Disability Services for Students website at <http://life.umt.edu/dss>.

Basic course structure:

Students will be organized into two- to three-member teams. Each team will either find a organization or select one from the organizations the professor has negotiated with to do this work. These groups include local media outlets, online news operations and select non-profit groups that utilize storytelling in their communications strategies.

Students will be responsible for meeting with the organization, to develop a detailed understanding of the brand, the goals of their audience engagement and some research of the potential audiences the organization seeks to reach. This work could include, but is not limited to, developing focus groups, user surveys and passive analytics research.

Within two weeks of the class, students will develop a research plan and meet with the professor to finalize their work.

Within four weeks, a draft presentation of their findings and some recommendations will be delivered to the professor and following his approval, the organization.

Over the middle five weeks of the course, the students will develop and deploy content for the organization, with their approval, to the social platforms outlined in the strategy. Content will be assessed for its accuracy, effectiveness and performance. Students will then develop a briefing for the organization and professor on the effectiveness of the work.

Modifications to the strategy may be deployed for the next couple weeks to tweak the strategy.

Finally, in the remaining weeks of the course, the students will develop a final report on the effort, a guide for what has works and what has not and a set of best practices for the organization to continue. Reports will run 10 pages and will include specific examples of social media storytelling that can be used to engage the organization’s members or readers.

Partner Organizations:

The following media organizations have agreed to participate in this class, working with you as professionals to assess their social media efforts and better understand their audiences. We will divvy these organizations up and you will work with one for the whole semester.

Spring 2019 Organizations

Bozeman Daily Chronicle, established daily newspaper in Bozeman

New Missoula Independent, a soon-to-launch alternative weekly newspaper

Institute for Nonprofit News, the institute will connect us to one or more of its members looking for audience engagement help

Montana Public Radio, if INN does not occur, we will work with the public radio station serving western Montana