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***Embedding for Empathy:
Helping Journalism
Students Become Better
Reporters***

**A Peer Review of
Teaching Inquiry
Portfolio
Journalism 446/886:
Nebraska Mosaic**

2017

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Abstract

As part of Nebraska Mosaic, a senior-level journalism capstone course, students are tasked with interviewing, writing and producing stories for and about refugees and immigrants in Nebraska. But students face a steep learning curve in this experiential learning class. Their knowledge about refugees and immigrants is limited, and they have little understanding of the issues refugees and immigrants face in their new country. Students also have little experience interacting with them, much less interviewing them and writing about them. Using an experiential learning assignment that mimics the journalism practice of embedding, students have an opportunity to develop empathy, gain confidence and improve their reporting, interviewing and writing skills. This inquiry portfolio explores the effectiveness of embedding students in refugee agencies in order to prepare them to report on diverse audiences.

Keywords: Experiential learning, embedded journalism, empathy, diverse audiences, journalism capstone, reporting, interviewing.

Table of Contents

Objectives of the Inquiry Portfolio.....	4
Course Description	6
Course Goals	6
Course History.....	7
Teaching Methods and Materials	7
Embed Assignment	8
Context for the Assignment	9
Analysis of Student Learning.....	10
Pre- and Post-Course Surveys.....	11
Reflections	14
Course Conclusions.....	17
Planned Changes	20
Final Remarks.....	20
Appendices	21
Appendix A: Syllabus.....	21
Appendix B: Embed Assignment Reflections.....	36
Appendix C: Excerpts from Final Reflections	57
References	61

Objectives of the Inquiry Portfolio

Like many upper-level skills courses in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, Nebraska Mosaic (Journalism 446/846) focuses on experiential learning. In this course, students publish multimedia stories for and about refugees and immigrants in Lincoln and the state of Nebraska. Students do their reporting in the field and essentially assume the roles of professional journalists writing for a diverse audience.

So the course has a unique mission within both the college and the community. While Nebraska Mosaic is one of two required capstone journalism courses in which students receive hands-on publishing experience, it also helps fill a communication need in a city that has attracted refugees and immigrants from all over the world.

With an established website, social media platforms and audience, the course becomes the perfect lab for students to explore ways to create information that will meaningfully engage this multicultural audience.

But in order to produce meaningful stories for and about refugees and immigrants, students must overcome some significant deficiencies. In pre-course surveys, a majority rank their knowledge about refugees as being limited and report that their comfort levels in interacting with refugees and immigrants are low (Figures 1 and 2). For example, more than 69 percent said in the pre-course survey that their level of comfort fell in the lowest two categories – little or no experience or beginner.

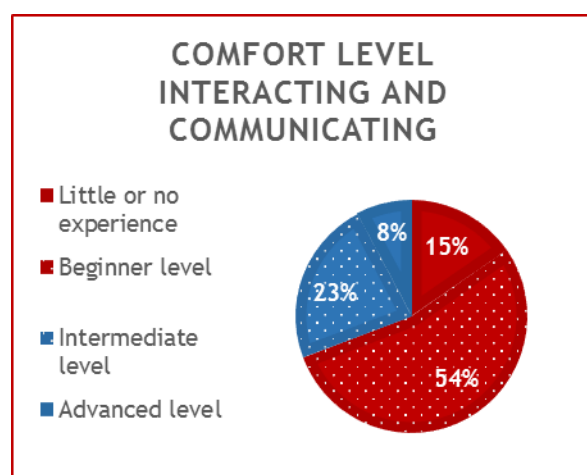


Figure 1. In pre-course surveys, a majority of students said they were in the little-or-no-experience or beginner levels (red) when asked about comfort level when communicating with refugees and immigrants.

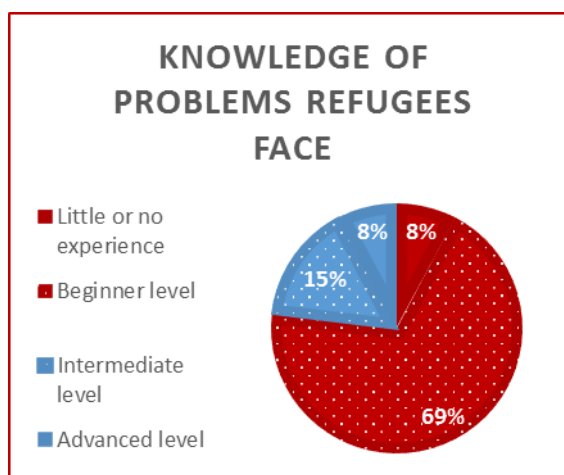


Figure 2. In pre-course surveys, a majority of students said they were in the little-or-no-experience or beginner levels (red) when asked about their knowledge of refugee problems.

They also worry about language barriers, accidentally offending refugees and their ability to develop story ideas about an audience they know little about.

Yet these student journalists need a solid knowledge base and the ability to develop understanding and empathy of refugees in order to formulate pertinent questions, conduct fruitful interviews and write clear stories. They also need to develop communication strategies to interact with non-native English speakers and to recognize cultural differences and their own biases and attitudes when interviewing diverse peoples. All of that is a tall order – and the main reason why students express anxiety about the challenges of the course (Figure 3).

Q32 What are you most apprehensive about in this class?

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0

#	Responses
1	Interviews
2	Working on a topic I'm unfamiliar with
3	The reporting side of it– communicating with refugees could be challenging
4	Putting all my skills and knowledge together to demonstrate what I have learned in the college.
5	newsletters and videos
6	HootSuite and Tweet Deck
7	I am nervous about reporting specifically on the refugee population, because I've had no experience in this area.
8	Finding stories as I have little to no experience with immigrant or refugees in Lincoln.
9	Hunting for stories about refugees in a sensitive way (avoiding the feeling of exploitation).
10	language barriers
11	I am apprehensive in pursuing conversations with refugees/immigrants because of possible language-barriers – this is because I'm fearful of feeling bad or rude not being able to understand them or them not being able to understand me. But I know this is just something I have to overcome and push through.
12	Reporting and talking to refugees and being sensitive about their topics
13	Editing still photos and figuring out which multimedia platform works best for each story

Figure 3. *Nine out of 13 students (marked in red) expressed apprehension about interviewing and interacting with refugees*

In order to help students overcome some of these hurdles and be better prepared for their reporting and writing assignments, I took a cue from the professional journalism world and created an experiential activity that mimics the journalistic practice of “embedding” reporters among the people they are covering. I arranged for students to spend time observing and interacting with refugees and staff members at two refugee assistance agencies in Lincoln.

The overarching goal of this activity is to improve the students’ journalistic skills so they could write meaningful and well-reported stories that resonate with their diverse audience.

The assignment's specific objectives for students included the following:

- Develop empathy for their diverse audience members – refugees and immigrants.
- Gain an understanding of the challenges refugees and immigrants face.
- Improve comfort levels when interacting with diverse peoples.
- Develop enhanced interviewing and communications strategies.
- Improve ability to develop story ideas and identify potential sources.

Research question: *Can students who “embed” at refugee agencies gain knowledge, understanding and empathy of refugees and immigrants and improve their journalistic skills?*

Course Description

As a capstone course for journalism majors that is ACE 10 certified, Nebraska Mosaic is designed to help undergraduate students apply what they have learned during their four years in the major. [ACE 10](#) requires students to “generate a creative or scholarly product that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation, and reflection.” The stories published on a website (nemosaic.org) and a periodic email newsletter constitute the scholarly product and offer students the opportunity to showcase their ability to apply their broad knowledge, technical proficiency, information collection, interpretation and presentation. Students engage in reflective practice throughout the semester.

The screenshot shows the course description for JOUR 446/846 Nebraska Mosaic. It includes the course title, prerequisites, a description of the course content, and a table of course details.

JOUR 446/846 Nebraska Mosaic

Prereqs: JOUR 202, JOUR 302 and JOUR 304 or BRDC 371 or BRDC 369 and BRDC 370 and JOUR 304.

Create and present news and information of particular interest to Lincoln's growing refugee communities. The stories students report will be presented on the Nebraska Mosaic website (www.nemosaic.org), and they may also be repurposed as part of printed newsletters or video projects distributed on DVD.

Credit Hours:	3
Course Format:	Lecture 3
Course Delivery:	Classroom
ACE Outcomes:	10

Figure 4. UNL's Undergraduate Bulletin course description

Course Goals

The overriding goal of this course is to provide a holistic way for students to practice and use the concepts and skills they have learned in the journalism major to engage and inform a niche audience ([Appendix A](#)). Students study the following:

- International migration, including the global, national and local history of refugees; the role of religion; and how refugees navigate in a foreign language and culture.

- Strategies for embracing a more inclusive and open-minded approach to covering a multicultural society.
- Methods and concepts of news engagement in a digital world.
- The essentials of high-quality journalism and storytelling across all platforms.

Course History

Nebraska Mosaic is a textbook example of an experiential learning course and one that follows the “teaching hospital” model. The course was the result of a \$25,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation sought by the College of Journalism and Mass Communications to launch a community news project for Lincoln’s refugee communities.

A faculty committee proposed the idea to create a website in which journalism students would have the opportunity to cover the growing and diverse refugee population in the city of Lincoln. The grant application noted that in the Lincoln Public Schools, refugees or immigrants speak more than 40 languages and come from more than 50 nations.

After the awarding of the grant, two classes laid the groundwork for the project. An advertising class explored the information needs of the communities and a journalism class focused on content. The website was launched in 2011, and since then, more than 400 student-produced stories have been published by students enrolled in the Nebraska Mosaic course, which is offered every semester.

The Nebraska Mosaic course follows the “teaching hospital” model of journalism education espoused by many U.S. journalism educators, including Nicholas Lemann, former dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University. In that model, journalism schools become actual news production operations. According to Lemann (2009), “Like teaching hospitals, journalism schools can provide essential services to their communities while they are educating their students.”

The nature of the course makes it a perfect capstone for journalism students ending their collegiate careers. And with its mission to cover diverse audiences, the course offers a challenging yet rewarding learning experience.

Professor Tim Anderson founded the course and taught it until his retirement in December 2015. I taught the class for the first time in the spring of 2016 and have continued in teaching it in each subsequent semesters. As with other experiential education experiences, the instructor acts as a learning facilitator, providing guidance and support as students encounter real-world challenges (Kolb & Kolb, 2011).

Teaching Methods and Materials

The Nebraska Mosaic class meets twice a week; each class period is 110 minutes. For the first six weeks, the course format is lecture and discussion, with a number of guest speakers. For the rest of the semester, it becomes a mix of lecture and workshop, in which students peer edit and/or meet individually with the instructor for guidance in the reporting process and critical feedback on their stories.

Students are graded on their stories, their contributions to an email newsletter and several reading reflections in which they respond to specific prompts about the two texts, *The Middle of*

Everywhere, by Mary Pipher, and *Overcoming Bias: A Journalist's Guide to Culture and Context*, by Sue Ellen Christian.

During the past two semesters, students have written three or more stories that are published on the website. In addition to a first-person narrative about their family history and a refugee-related story that they have developed on their own, students produce a theme-based multimedia project. For example, during Fall Semester 2016, students worked on a collaborative project about the importance of food to refugees and immigrants ([Spice of Life: New Americans and Food](#)). In Spring Semester 2017, students examined Lincoln's role in refugee resettlement and produced a seven-part series ([Refuge on the Prairie](#)). Students brainstormed story ideas for both projects, and I assigned specific stories based on those ideas. Students worked on stories for these projects individually or in small groups, depending on the nature of the story.

Because of the experiential nature of the class, it seemed logical to incorporate another experiential learning activity to help students overcome some of their admitted shortcomings. As in other examples of experiential learning noted by Lewis and Williams (1994), students would be immersed in an experience and then encouraged to reflect about the experience "to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking" (p. 5).

Embed Assignment

I introduced the embed assignment during the second class meeting in order to give students time to complete it before their first story pitch was due. I lectured about the journalistic concept, including when, why and how news organizations use embedding for newsgathering. I wanted students to understand that this assignment was rooted in journalism practice. I discussed notable examples – in military operations and political campaigns – and routine cases, such as crime reporters accompanying police officers on ride alongs.

While the term "embedding" is relatively new, the journalism practice of reporters immersing themselves in their subject matter is not. After all, famed journalist Nellie Bly essentially embedded herself in a New York insane asylum – albeit undercover – to produce her landmark exposé in 1887.

The practice of embedding became more widely known after the winter of 2002, when the U.S. Department of Defense announced a media management program to "embed" journalists during the upcoming invasion of Iraq (Ziede, 2005). "Through the initiative, reporters from a pool of various media organizations accompanied troops on the campaign—living, sleeping, and eating with soldiers and commanders as they observed and reported on maneuvers and morale" (p. 1309).

Embedding during the war in the Mideast became controversial. The biggest concern centered on fears that reporters would lose their independence in coverage. Embedded reporters also were criticized for being one-sided by overemphasizing the personal lives of troops while not adequately covering the war's effects on Iraqi citizens (Lindner, 2009).

After highlighting the history and citing these examples, I encouraged students to discuss the pros and cons of the practice. I then went over the logistics of how our version of embedding would work (Figure 5).

Embed assignment: Between Jan. 11 and Feb. 1, you will be required to spend at least two, one-hour shifts at locations where refugees gather, primarily social service agencies in Lincoln. You will sign up for one-hour shifts; you may do this in pairs, if you like.

During your shift, you should try to interact with as many refugees as possible. You will take with you a list of questions to ask refugees - or have them fill out. You also will take Mosaic brochures to distribute to refugees or others you speak with. When you are not interacting with refugees, you should be observing the agency in action.

Asking refugees to relate their questions about Lincoln or the U.S. will help the class determine their information needs. We will use these questions to develop an audience-driven engagement strategy. The “embedding” assignment also has other benefits, including opportunities to:

1. Interact with refugees and better understand their experiences.
2. Better understand the news and information needs of refugees and immigrants.
3. Better understand the services the agencies offer and how they operate.
4. Develop possible story ideas.
5. Determine some specific ways to increase the audience for Mosaic.

Figure 5. Embed assignment instructions

I had arranged in advance for students to spend time at two refugee agencies – Lincoln Literacy, which provides language tutoring at locations across the city, and the Good Neighborhood Community Center, which provides classes and other services, including food and clothing distribution. Both agencies were eager to have the students visit.

The assignment required students to spend two, one-hour shifts at the agencies. At Lincoln Literacy, students observed English Language Learning classes; at the Good Neighbor Center, they sat in on language and citizenship classes and other activities. During their shifts, students were encouraged to talk with as many people as possible, including agency staff, and to keep a log of their interactions.

Context for the Assignment

Before Spring Semester 2017, on which this inquiry focuses, I had tried two approaches to help better prepare the students for their writing and reporting assignments. The first time I taught the class – Spring Semester 2016 – I followed the syllabus and assignments developed by my predecessor. To help prepare students for reporting on refugees and immigrants, the students were divided into groups to examine immigration and migration issues in three areas: international, national and local. They conducted primary and secondary research, wrote a report and presented it to the class. Before the assignment, students brainstormed local primary sources they might interview.

While that assignment seemed helpful, I wanted students to focus more on local sources to help them get to know the people and the work they do and to help students tease out story ideas.

This time I assigned them to interview staff at a variety of refugee assistance agencies in Lincoln. Their task was to learn as much as they could about local issues and the mission of the agencies. At the end of the assignment, each group was to report to the class about what they learned.

While I had a sense the students seemed better prepared to develop story ideas and pursue them after completing this assignment, I wanted to try a third option. I had been contemplating ways to incorporate experiential lessons about audience engagement. With a website, newsletter and social media platforms in place, Nebraska Mosaic becomes a testing lab for students to experiment with audience engagement tactics. My thought was that sending students out into the community to help determine the information needs of refugees and immigrants would be a starting place for them to develop an audience engagement strategy for the semester.

Although my main goal for the assignment originally was to gather audience information, I also recognized that the student interaction with refugees and agency personnel might help students increase their understanding and comfort level and develop story ideas.

As it turns out, the audience engagement aspect of the assignment took a back seat once I began getting initial feedback from students as they returned from their shifts. They were finding it difficult to actually question refugees, primarily because of the language barrier, but they were pleased with the insight they were gaining from the observation. About a week and a half into the assignment, I instructed students to focus less on getting questions answered and more on observation and informal conversations.

Students documented their interactions on a shared Google document, including the number of refugees, immigrants and staff members that they spoke with during their shift. If they were able to ask refugees and immigrants questions, they were asked to record those answers on the same document. Thirteen of the 14 enrolled students completed the documentation. They recorded 53 interactions; 11 of those involved refugees and/or immigrants answering student questions.

Analysis of Student Learning

I relied on a series of indirect measures to analyze student learning. Those included the following:

- **Pre- and post-course surveys.** Students answered a series of questions in which they evaluated their skills and the effectiveness of course assignments and activities in relation to their learning. A number of open-ended questions offered them an opportunity to comment further on assignments. Thirteen students answered the questions in the pre-course survey; 14 completed the post-course survey.
- **Guided reflections.** Students were asked to specifically reflect on their embedding experience by answering a series of directed prompts. Twelve reflections were analyzed for this inquiry ([Appendix B](#)).
- **Final course reflections.** Although this reflection was an open-ended reflection on the course and did not include any specific questions regarding the embed assignment, six

of the 12 reflections analyzed for this inquiry included comments about the embed assignment ([Appendix C](#)).

Pre- and Post-Course Surveys

The pre- and post-course surveys attempt to assess a variety of student learning. I designed the 50-question surveys to help me gauge performance in these areas:

- **Course objectives.** Students are asked to assess their learning by answering questions that are matched to course objectives.
- **Effectiveness of assignments.** Students are asked to rank each assignment in terms of how it affected their learning.
- **General goals.** These open-ended questions include topics such as what students would change about the class and what they wouldn't change; what skill they most improved; how confident they feel embarking on a professional career; and what advice they would give to future students to be successful in the class.

For this inquiry portfolio, I added some specific questions in an attempt to gauge the effectiveness of the embed assignment. As the following charts indicate, a majority of students reported significant improvement in these areas:

- Knowledge of problems refugees face in their new country.
- Comfort level interaction and communicating with refugees and immigrants.
- Ability to develop interesting story ideas for diverse audiences
- Ability to interview and engage with members of diverse audiences.

The area in which students showed the greatest improvement (335 percent increase) was knowledge of problems refugees face in their new country (Figure 6). In the pre-course survey, only 23 percent said they were in the intermediate or advanced level, while 100 percent said they were in those levels at the end of the course.

With regard to comfort level, only 31 percent of the students identified as intermediate or advanced before the course

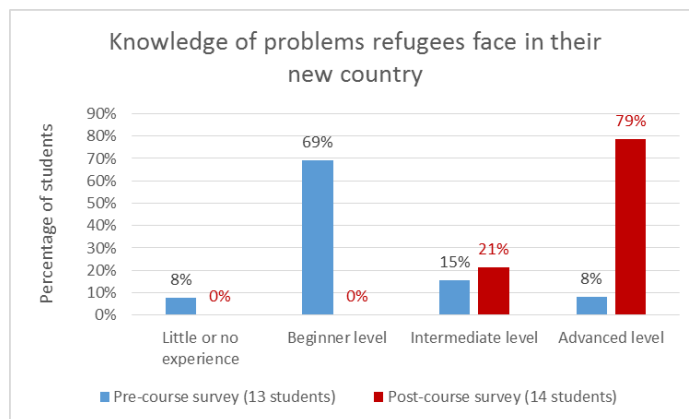


Figure 6. Knowledge of problems

began, while 100 percent felt they were either intermediate (75 percent) or advanced (25 percent) when the course ended, as shown in Figure 7. This reflected an improvement of 223 percent.

Their ability to develop interesting story ideas for diverse audiences improved from 54 percent in the intermediate or advanced level in the pre-course survey to 93 percent in those categories in the final survey – a 72 percent improvement (Figure 8).

Their ability to interview and engage with members of diverse audiences also improved from the beginning of the semester, although by a lesser margin (61 percent). As shown in Figure 9, 62 percent reported being in the intermediate or advanced level before the course started. That number increased to 100 percent by the end of the semester.

Of course, other factors and course activities could contribute to students' perceived increased performance in these areas. For example, students could have increased their comfort levels after having interviewed a number of refugees and immigrants during the course of the semester. Likewise, the students' knowledge of the problems refugees face could be influenced by their reading of the text, *Middle of Everywhere*.

In fact, one student, in a final reflection on the course, attributed writing improvement to the embed assignment and one of the texts.

“I specifically improved in how to talk to and talk about refugees and immigrants. Doing the embed assignment and reading ‘The Middle of Everywhere’ broadened my horizon in terms of how I should go about writing my stories.”

Another area of the survey in which students rated the effectiveness of the embed assignment was in a ranking of assignments and course activities. Students were asked to rate the assignments on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest in helping them learn. The embed

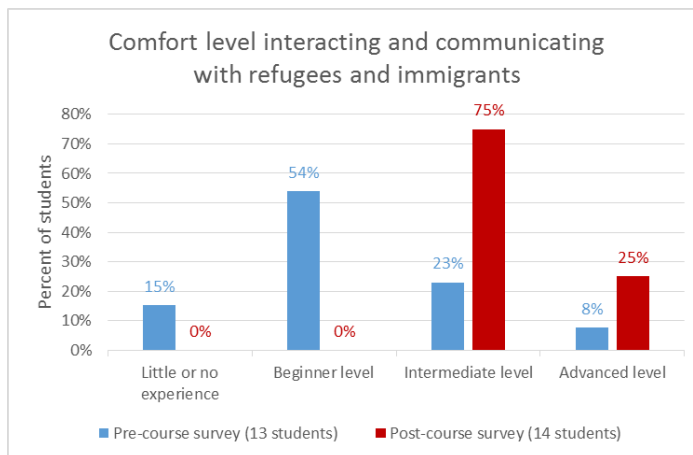


Figure 7. Comfort level

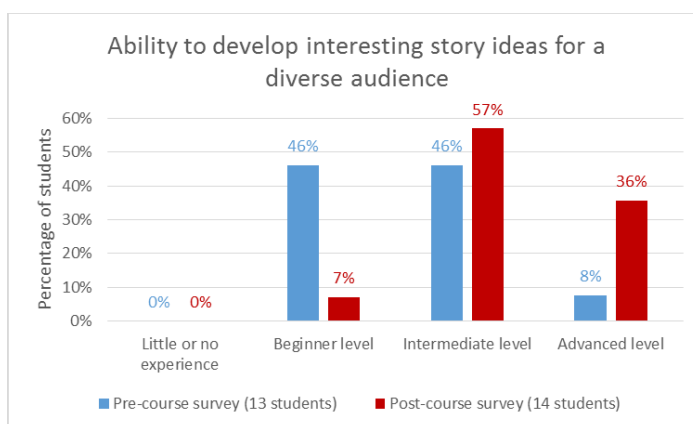


Figure 8. Story ideas

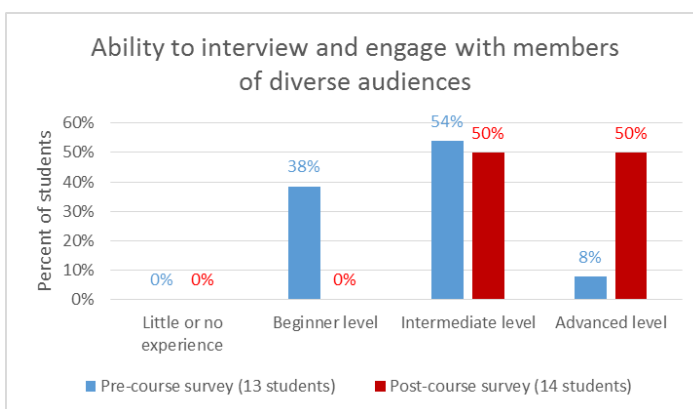


Figure 9. Interview and engage

assignment was highly rated, tying as the second-highest ranked of the 14 assignments and/or course activities in helping them learn (Figure 10).

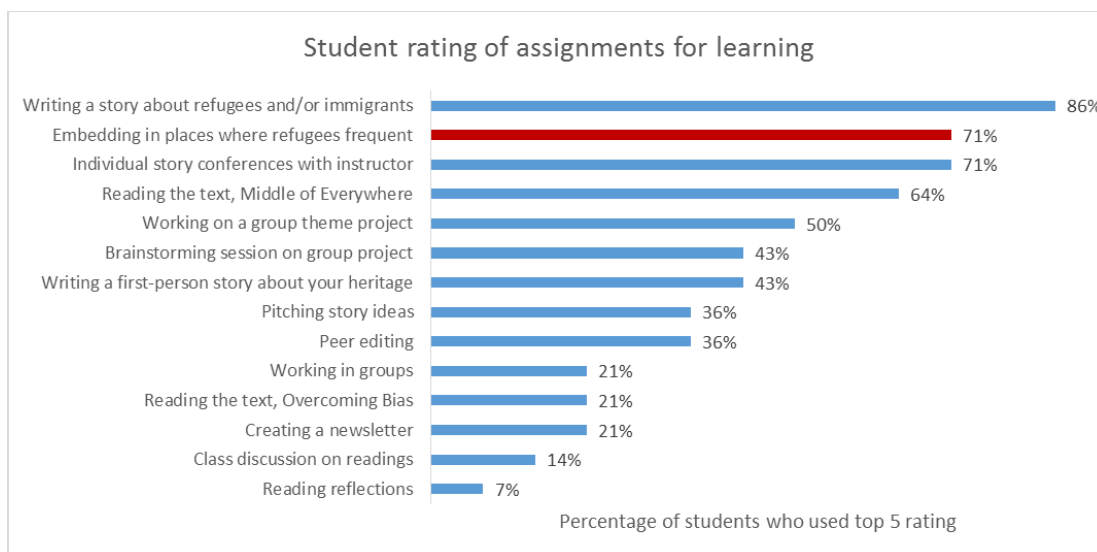


Figure 10. Rating of assignments

As expected, the stories students published about refugees and immigrants garnered the biggest percentage of the highest rating (86 percent). This makes sense in a reporting class in which the primary goal for students is to learn how to create publishable work. The fact that the embed assignment was rated so highly (71 percent) and tied with instructor story conferences is indicative of how valuable students thought it was to their learning.

I routinely ask students in all of my classes to rate the effectiveness of assignments. And many times, I conclude that the exercise seems more like a popularity contest than a sound assessment. For example, students in general despise quizzes and reading reflections – no matter how they are configured or presented. A common complaint on course evaluations is that they are busy work. I think students are quick to dismiss them because they don't see any immediate benefit to them, although I use quizzes and reading reflections as a way to insure students are reading the texts.

With those thoughts in mind, the high ranking of the embed assignment seems more remarkable to me. Like quizzes and reflections, the embed assignment was one that students were not particularly eager to complete, based on the trepidation many mentioned in their reflections. But in the end, they did not see it as busy work and were quite emphatic about its value and benefit in the learning process.

Students also demonstrated their high opinion of the assignment in another section of the survey, in which they were asked the following two questions:

- What three things would you not change about this course?
- What three things would you change about this course?

Ten of the 14 students (71 percent) cited the embed assignment as something they would not change. None of them included in the embed assignment their answers to the question about what they would change.

And finally, in a question that asked students to share their advice for future Nebraska Mosaic students, five specifically addressed the embed assignment.

Advised one student:

“Take the embed seriously. Meet refugees early and often.”

Another student had specific suggestions about the assignment:

“Try to embed more than once with the same people. If you can make it to a weekly gathering of refugees, you’ll learn a lot and build connections.”

These comments were among the most gratifying for me because a) they were made voluntarily; and b) they were addressed specifically to future students – not the instructor. That’s a big distinction in my mind, and as a result, I concluded that these current students found the assignment so valuable that they wanted to share advice about it with their peers in order for them to receive the same benefit.

Reflections

Students completed two sets of reflections about their learning. One was a guided reflection, in which students were asked to answer a series of specific questions shortly after they completed the embed assignment (Figure 11); the other was an end-of-the-semester reflection about overall learning in the course (Figure 12).

Please reflect on your experience “embedding” at places where refugees frequent.

1. What specifically did you learn from the interactions you had at those places?
2. Have those interactions affected your knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country, and if so, how?
3. Have those interactions affected your ability to do the following - and if so, how:
 - a. Develop story ideas about refugees;
 - b. Develop potential sources for stories;
 - c. Develop interviewing strategies;
 - d. Be more comfortable communicating with

Figure 11. Embed reflection

This is a two-part reflection.

Part I: Review your work with this semester -- the readings, reflections, embed assignment, newsletter, stories, photos, multimedia -- and reflect. Then answer these four questions:

1. What aspect of that work are you most proud of and why?
2. Identify the strengths and weakness of that work.
3. What would you work on more if you had additional time?
4. Describe and cite examples of how specific skills or knowledge improved (or did not).

Part II: Since this is perhaps among the last reflections you'll write during your college career, I'd like you to take a deep breath and write a bit longer for this one -- preferably at least 650 words. Think back over the entire semester then discuss what you've learned, if anything, about any or all of the following: the state of refugees and immigrants, about dealing with diverse audiences, about writing, about reporting, about engagement (social and otherwise), about solutions journalism, about anything regarding journalism in general.

Figure 12. Final reflection

In the reflections, students were overwhelming positive about the embed assignment – with many of them being enthusiastically so. As one student wrote:

“I loved this experience. Prior to the embed assignment I had little to no personal contact with refugees. I was going into this class blind. I thought that the refugees I interacted with would be afraid or unwilling to talk with me. I thought I would be seen as an intruder of sorts. This wasn't my experience at all. The people I spoke with were very willing to have conversations with me.”

A common theme among the students was their noticeable increase in the level of comfort and development of empathy.

“As this is a population I had little experience with before, I felt nervous talking and interviewing these people. This assignment really helped me to not only feel comfortable around immigrants and refugees, but to also see a little more about what their lives are like and what is important to them.”

Another mentioned a confidence boost.

“To see refugees and experience what they are, made me have a better understanding of them and more of a confidence to talk to them in an interview and ask about their life.”

Many students said the assignment helped them develop interviewing strategies when dealing with diverse sources.

“Watching these new Americans has been a great reminder of how difficult the English language is. This has helped remind me to be patient during interviews and to not be afraid to ask for them to spell something or repeat it a few times. Observing them learn English has also been insightful in knowing that they can get frustrated when language is failing them. I now feel better equipped to respond when this happens.”

Another student said the assignment was motivating:

“Previous to this class, I was still not great at interviewing. Speaking to new people isn’t my strongest trait. However, this class forced me to interview a ton of people from a wide variety of backgrounds. The embed assignment pushed me to speak with refugees and immigrants who didn’t have the best English skills.”

Several students also said they developed story ideas and potential sources because of the assignment.

“After embedding, I had a stronger sense about what it would be like to write a story for refugees. The classes I attended helped me develop potential story ideas and sources by putting me directly in contact with members of the refugee community. I did not have many story ideas before I went out and met refugees and immigrants. Even the teachers had interesting stories to tell about their volunteer experience.”

Another theme that cropped up in the reflections was a bit unexpected but very intriguing and worth further exploration.

In their reflections, several students made distinctions between the casual conversations they experienced as part of the embed assignments and the more formal process of interviews. They said they enjoyed the opportunity to simply talk with the refugees and immigrants rather than interview them. They said the process was less stressful for both parties yet yielded helpful insights and perspectives they could use in future reporting and interviewing sessions.

I experienced some “aha” moments after reading these comments. First, I have long stressed to students the need to be active listeners in their communities and to talk with as many people as possible to develop relevant story ideas or gather background on subjects. I tell students that good reporters have informal conversations all the time as they go about their job; they often go out of their way to schedule informal interviews to gain insight or confirm hunches. While I have strongly urged students to try some of these practices as part of the reporting process, few actually do. I think their reluctance can be attributed to several reasons: 1) Students are uncomfortable talking with strangers; 2) Students have never done something like that before and don’t see the immediate benefit; and 3) It is a suggestion not a required assignment.

The embed assignment, therefore, seems to be a great way to emphasize these reporting practices by allowing the students to experience the benefits first hand.

In the same way, I realized this assignment also helps stress another tenet of interviewing: That it should be more of a conversation than a formal question-answer session. I think it is easier for students to understand this practice once they experience what it is like to have a conversation with potential sources. They generally don’t have that opportunity as students – or even interns; they are too busy chasing specific reporting assignments. So going forward in future courses, I

think I will be better able to make this point and help them see the distinction by drawing on their personal experiences with the embed assignment.

Another interesting observation dealt with unconscious bias. One student acknowledged having pre-conceived notions about the refugees and immigrants that were dispelled after the embed assignment.

“I shouldn’t let my mind assume things about what refugees will feel about a certain topic (like Donald Trump.) I had assumed that all immigrants wouldn’t respect Trump, or fear him, but one refugee had told me he’s putting America first with his immigration ban, and he didn’t mind if he wasn’t allowed in, that he’d understand.”

I was pleased to see this mentioned because it tied in so well with the reoccurring class theme of self-examination with regard to bias. In the texts and in class discussions, students learn that recognizing their own biases is the first step toward making fair judgments. I used this student’s experience as a jumping-off point for a class discussion. In that discussion, several other students said they had similar experiences while completing the embed assignment. Again, it was gratifying to see important concepts come to life for students through their personal experiences.

Course Conclusions

I honestly didn’t know what to expect from this assignment. I thought it could go either way – be highly successful or dramatically flop. So I was unprepared for the enthusiastic reception students gave the assignment. Many of them couldn’t stop talking about their experiences during class discussions and in personal conversations outside of class.

It was during these excitable exchanges that I had the strongest sense that this experiential assignment was special – and successful. It was clear from their reflections that they found value in the exercise. When students are engaged in learning experiences that they see the relevance of, they have increased motivation to learn (Ambrose, et. al., 2010). I believe this assignment set the stage for more readiness – and even eagerness – for learning.

I also was pleased to see that at the end of the semester, students said they improved their learning in key areas, based on the results of the pre- and post-course surveys. What part the embed assignment played in that improvement remains uncertain at this point.

But based on the pre- and post-course survey results that were buttressed by the overwhelmingly positive student reflections, I think it is clear the assignment was a pivotal, transformative and important learning activity. Did the embed assignment help students gain knowledge, understanding and empathy of refugees and immigrants? They said it certainly did. Did the embed experience help them improve their journalistic skills? That’s a bit more difficult to answer definitively but something I’m certainly interested in studying further.

I think it is worth looking more closely at two key questions in the surveys: student knowledge of issues refugees and immigrants face and the comfort level of students interacting and interviewing refugees and immigrants. At the end of the semester, all of the students said they were in the top two highest categories.

In the reflections, many students credited the embed assignment with helping them feel more empathetic, knowledgeable and comfortable. I think one could argue that students who feel more comfortable with and knowledgeable of a particular group of people would logically improve their journalistic skills. They would be expected to conduct more relaxed and knowledgeable interviews and be more inclined to write more empathetic, clear and meaningful stories.

Along the same lines, the assignment also attempted to alleviate anxiety so students could concentrate on improving their skills. Coming into the class, students reported being anxious about a variety of issues – finding stories, appearing insensitive, having trouble communicating. But after the embed experience, they expressed feelings of renewed confidence and being more at ease. In a challenging capstone course such as Mosaic, I think it's extremely important for the instructor to seek out ways to reduce student anxiety.

After reviewing the embed reflections, I was pleased with the ability of the students to think critically. As defined by Atton (1994), critical thinking is characterized by a readiness to question all assumptions, an ability to recognize when it is necessary to question, and an ability to evaluate and analyze. Those characteristics were very much on display in the student reflections and in class discussions. I was particularly impressed with their discussions of higher-level concepts such as empathy and how they related to journalism practice.

I also was struck by the fact that they actually sounded like professional reporters ruminating about their craft. Here are some examples:

On developing reporting strategies:

- *“Connecting with the coordinators is important and getting them to really enjoy my presence around the classrooms has been the most important part, I think. If they trust me, then the students will too.”*
- *Developing story ideas for refugees starts out with understanding what they know and don't know. I think I have a start on this.*
- *Watching these new Americans has been a great reminder of how difficult the English language is. This has helped remind me to be patient during interviews and to not be afraid to ask for them to spell something or repeat it a few times.*

On the importance of interviewing:

- *I have to confess that the language barrier is still intimidating to me—I know it's foolish. These people are just as hesitant to talk to me as I am to them. Though, to my credit, I still get nervous about talking to perfectly capable English speakers. This is something I'm still actively trying to work on*

In the end, I think this assignment addressed many problems particular to this class, but also facilitated a larger discussion about journalism practice. It prompted students to discuss the skills they used in the field, analyze them and be able to experiment with them in new situations.

The following excerpt from a student reflection echoes my conclusions and is an eloquent example of how students were able to come away with a heightened understanding of higher-level concepts – in this case, empathy and self-awareness.

“While the Mosaic project seemed the most interesting to me out of the journalism capstone options, I was a worried that pursuing stories about refugees would be extremely difficult, especially to coordinate my schedule for interviews, do embedding assignments and build the connections I would need for good stories. I worried about language barriers—I already struggled with asking clear and concise questions during interviews, how would I manage trying to communicate clearly with refugees who are still in the process of learning English, and who English is their second, third or fourth language? I also worried about my own privilege. How would a refugee want to honestly talk to me about their struggles, when my only struggle growing up in Nebraska has been choosing a major? How could I relate with a mother who is so happy to come to the safety and peacefulness of Lincoln, Nebraska, while I complain that the town is boring or small?

I would be putting myself in spaces where refugees go to find safety and a community of familiar faces. When went to my first ELL class at Culler Middle School, I figured regular attendees there would be a bit confused and maybe even reserved if I invaded that space—especially if I just sat there, taking notes. I wanted to talk to refugees and have them be comfortable with me—I wasn’t sure if this was the best way.

I realized these worries weren’t rooted in any real experiences I had—I only wondered how I would feel in the situation if I were a recent immigrant to the U.S. But the truth was, I had no idea—how could I have any idea? I would have to ask to find out. I quickly realized embedding was one of the best ways to do this.

After initial introductions at Culler Middle School, I was welcomed in the classroom without a question. Although this first experience in an ELL classroom didn’t involve much participation on my part, it was very essential to understand the struggle of learning English—and everything about American culture—after spending a lifetime in another country. I knew it was extremely difficult, but I don’t think you can really grasp the enormity of it until you sit in a classroom with a teacher who is attempting to explain verb conjugation to a group of people who have all come from absolutely diverse backgrounds. I feel that understanding how tedious and difficult learning English is for a refugee that was forced to leave their home country and culture is essential to understanding the stress a refugee is under when they are relocated to America. There is almost no way around trying to acclimate to American culture and the English language—barely anyone is bilingual here, and knowing English is the one thing that will get you a good job and a way to live. For all of these reasons, I consider this assignment successful.”

Planned Changes

In light of the students' overwhelming enthusiasm and thoughtful reflections, I most certainly will offer this assignment in coming semesters and will heed the advice of several who suggested the required hours be increased. I also plan to reach out to additional refugee service agencies to see if we can expand the opportunities to meet more refugees and staff at different locations.

Overall, I think my assessment tools and measures could use some fine-tuning. I want to restructure some of the assessment measures so I can better pinpoint how this assignment might help with the improvement of journalistic skills. One way to do that would be to add questions more specifically related to the embed experience. Another would be to offer a skills rating survey immediately following the assignment in order to better isolate the impact of the embed assignment.

And in order to have more quantitative data, I also am considering developing a grading rubric that might better incorporate measurements key to this assignment, such as interviewing skills, knowledge gained and empathy developed. These aren't easy concepts to measure, but I think there might be a way to incorporate them somehow; if not in a rubric, then in some sort of self-assessment survey completed by the student.

Final Remarks

For me, the most rewarding aspect of undertaking a course or inquiry portfolio is the pedagogical exploration itself – and the additional insights and questions it yields.

As a result of this inquiry, I now find myself contemplating new and intriguing questions like these:

- What other assignments or activities can I create to help students develop empathy?
- How else can I continue to help students improve their interviewing skills? And how can I tweak my grading rubrics so it better assesses interviewing competency?
- How can I incorporate the embed assignment in other reporting classes I teach.

For journalism students in particular, discussions about empathy and reaching out to diverse audiences are crucial. At a time when the national media is being criticized for being out of touch, news organizations have stepped up efforts to better engage audiences – especially diverse ones – and earn the trust of readers. This experiential learning assignment seems to be an easy and effective way to teach students about the importance of audience engagement while helping them develop a better understanding of the people they will interview and write about.

Appendices

Appendix A: Syllabus



Journalism 446/846 | Mosaic | Section 001 | Fall 2016

10:30-12:20 p.m.
Mondays and Wednesdays
Andersen 120 and 324
(We will start out in 120 and use
324 in the newsroom phase)

*“ ... identity is no longer based on territory.
The world community is small and
interconnected. We are all living in one big
town.”*

*Mary Pipher,
The Middle of Everywhere*

Instructor:
Michelle Hassler
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402.472.7050
402.580.5816 c
mhassler3@unl.edu
@MichelleHassler

Office hours:
Tuesdays, 1-4 p.m.
Or by appointment

*“In almost every generation, nativists portrayed new
immigrants as not fit to become real Americans: they were
too infected by Catholicism, monarchism, anarchism,
Islam, criminal tendencies, defective genes, mongrel
bloodlines, or some other alien virus to become free men
and women in our democratic society. Again and again,
the new immigrants or their children and grandchildren
proved them wrong.”*

*Peter Schrag,
Not Fit for Our Society: Immigration and Nativism in
America*

Grad assistant:
 Emily Case
 She's on our Slack Channel
 308-293-6261
emilycase@hotmail.com

Welcome to Mosaic. In this class you will create and produce news and information for and about Nebraska's New Americans – refugees and immigrants. In the process, you will learn how to engage with and better understand diverse audiences. The stories you tell will be presented on our website, Nebraska Mosaic at www.nemosaic.org.

This class satisfies your ACE 10 requirement. This means that this class requires you to exhibit the knowledge and skills you have acquired in your time at the College of Journalism and Mass Communications by generating “a creative or scholarly product that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation and reflection.” Your published work and portfolio will constitute that product.

REQUIREMENTS

The Middle of Everywhere, by Mary Pipher

Overcoming Bias: A Journalist's Guide to Culture and Context, by Sue Ellen Christian

The New York Times, which you will read regularly to stay current on national and international news of refugees. (Free copies are available at the J-school.)

You also will be required to stay current with the Nebraska Mosaic website, meaning you must read and view not only your work but also that of your classmates.

All of your writing assignments must conform to AP style, and your grade will suffer if they do not. This means you would be wise to acquire, if you don't already have one, a recent edition of *The Associated Press Stylebook* or an online subscription will be helpful.

Please have personal accounts opened in all of these as soon as possible:

- Google Drive
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Diigo – a social bookmarking site. You'll get an email invitation to join the Mosaic Diigo group.
- Slack – you'll get an email invitation to join.

You should bring a laptop to each class until further notice.

PREREQUISITES

This is your capstone course so it should be among your final journalism skills courses.
Required pre-reqs: JOUR 202 and 302 or, if you are a broadcast major, BRDC 369 and 370.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Follow these and you'll have a much richer and rewarding educational experience:

Give your full attention. I work hard to create engaging and interesting lectures and in-class activities, including arranging for guest speakers. In return, I ask that you give your full attention to me, guest speakers and your fellow students at all times. At the beginning of each class, I will give a signal that means all laptops must be closed, all desk computers off and all phones turned off. Please abide by this so you and your neighbors will not be distracted and can focus on any presentations, exercises and discussions.

We will be using the computers in the class, but only during designated times. If you want to take notes during class, which I strongly suggest, I encourage you to use paper notebooks.

Come to class. This class will run more like a newsroom than a class. This means that attendance is critical for you to succeed (I cannot fire you, but you can certainly earn a poor grade). Plus, skills are best learned through regular participation. I allow no makeup of missed class work, so absences and tardiness can greatly affect your grade, not to mention your level of learning. Obviously, life happens, so you may have good reason to be absent. In that case, please at least send me an email.

And please be on time to class. Being late is unprofessional. It also is rude to me and others when you arrive late and interrupt the class.

Come to class fully prepared. When readings or videos are assigned, you should have carefully read them (or watched them) and be prepared to elaborate on main points during class discussions. I'm not planning to require reading quizzes, but if it becomes apparent that you aren't reading the material before class, I may institute quizzes.

COURSE GOALS

The goal of this course is to provide a holistic way for you to practice and use the concepts and skills you've learned in this college to engage and inform a niche audience. With an established website, social media platforms and audience, this course becomes the perfect lab

for you to explore ways to create news that will meaningfully engage a diverse audience, namely refugees and immigrants in the city of Lincoln and greater Nebraska.

You will study the following:

- International migration — the global, national and local history of refugees, the role of religion or navigating in a foreign language and culture, to cite just a few examples.
- Strategies for embracing a more inclusive and open-minded approach to covering a multicultural society.
- Methods and concepts of news engagement in a digital world.
- The essentials of high-quality journalism and story-telling across all platforms.

CLASS STRUCTURE

What we do in class will vary each week; it will be a mix of lecture, guest speakers, class discussion and newsroom practicum, in which you – as a class – will plan coverage, develop engagement strategies and get stories and social media content ready for publication.

During the production part of the course, you will be responsible for the following:

- Developing and pitching story ideas.
- Determining how best to tell those stories. Not every story has to be a text story. Some stories might be better told through video or graphics, etc.
- Reporting for stories.
- Shooting a variety of photos for the stories and editing them for publication.
- Creating and posting social media content to promote stories.
- Editing stories, including approving headlines and subheads.
- Editing social posts and scheduling them for publication.
- Creating and editing a weekly e-newsletter, which will be posted on social channels and on the website, in addition to being emailed.

STORIES FOR MOSAIC

All stories done for Mosaic should be fully reported and multi-sourced. Before pitching story ideas, it is your responsibility to check the website to make sure your story ideas have not already been covered by previous students. My suggestion: Search the site several times using a variety of key words.

You have the choice, on each of individual assignments, of telling the story via text, photography or video – or some other way that makes sense for the story you want to tell. I'm open to new ways of storytelling and am willing to consider other possibilities. No matter what platform you choose, however, you are required to provide a selection of photographs for every assignment (you should carry a camera with you for every interview). Each time one of your stories is published, you are responsible for creating social media posts to be used on Facebook and Twitter.

- Your first story for Mosaic will be a contributor self-portrait. This is your family's immigration story. Where did your family originate? When did your ancestors arrive in the U.S.? Why did they come? What hardships, if any, did they endure? And so on. If you are from a foreign country, you should include what brought you to the U.S. Our website contains the self-portraits of the students who have preceded you at <http://cojmc.unl.edu/mosaic/contributors/>. Check them out.
- Your second story will be one of your choosing that covers something of interest to our audience. We will talk about strategies for developing solid story ideas and make class time for brainstorming ideas.
- In teams of two or three, you will create weekly newsletters.
- Everyone will work together to produce a multimedia project. ([Last semester's project.](#)) This project will consist of multiple stories centered on a single theme. You will be assigned different story components, which may include text, video, infographics, audio, slideshows and other multimedia. This project will be discussed in greater detail as the semester progresses.

PORTFOLIO

An important aspect of a capstone course is reflection. You will compile a two-part portfolio that both highlights your work throughout the semester and your reflections on your learning.

To properly complete this assignment, it's important to keep track of your work during the semester so that you can clearly demonstrate through examples what you have learned and reflect upon it. For example, you might consider screenshotting a social post to discuss its success or lack thereof and your conjectures. Or a before-and-after look at a story you edited. Or you might include examples of a lede of a story that you improved from the first attempt. Or how you used mark up a story to show how you used transitions and story focus to create a tight narrative. These are just examples for you to think about; we will discuss this portfolio in more depth as the semester progresses.

My hope is that you could also incorporate this portfolio – or parts of it – in the materials you use in your job searches. I think prospective employers would be interested to read your discussions of journalism, particularly those relating to diverse audiences, news engagement, social media and analytics.

REFLECTION PAPERS

You also will write periodic reflections on the assigned readings. See the schedule for deadlines. These must be uploaded to Blackboard as a Word document (one page, single-spaced). Most often you will be answering specific questions or prompts, but not always. My hope is that you can start making connections between the readings, the class discussions and the reporting and publication process

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Embed assignment: Between Jan. 11 and Feb. 1, you will be required to spend at least two, one-hour shifts at locations where refugees gather, primarily social service agencies in Lincoln. You will sign up for one-hour shifts; you may do this in pairs, if you like.

During your shift, you should try to interact with as many refugees as possible. You will take with you a list of questions to ask refugees – or have them fill out. You also will take Mosaic brochures to distribute to refugees or others you speak with. When you are not interacting with refugees, you should be observing the agency in action.

Asking refugees to relate their questions about Lincoln or the U.S. will help the class determine their information needs. We will use these questions to develop an audience-driven engagement strategy. The “embedding” assignment also has other benefits, including opportunities to:

1. Interact with refugees and better understand their experiences.
2. Better understand the news and information needs of refugees and immigrants.
3. Better understand the services the agencies offer and how they operate.
4. Develop possible story ideas.
5. Determine some specific ways to increase the audience for Mosaic.

You will be asked to keep track of all interactions on a shared Google document as well as write a reflection on your experience and discuss in class.

Engagement strategy assignment: As a class, you also will discuss other engagement strategies we could undertake and how to implement them – and you will have a \$200 budget that has been graciously provided by a local donor. After the “embedding” assignment and studying engagement concepts, the class will decide how best to use the money to finance engagement methods, subject to the instructor’s approval.

You will have to determine how to measure and analyze the effectiveness of your ideas to prompt better engagement and increased audience. The class will give an informal presentation to the donor at the end of the semester.

Artist collaboration: We will be collaborating this semester with [Jim Lommasson](#), a freelance photographer who will be showing his work at the Sheldon Art Museum. Before his March visit, we will tour the Sheldon to see his exhibit, which features cherished items Iraqi

refugees have brought with them to their new homeland. We also will attend an evening lecture by him.

Then, on Wednesday, March 8, Lommasson will speak to the class. This will be an excellent opportunity to candidly discuss with him his interviewing strategies, any challenges he faces in documenting his project and any story ideas he might have for our project. Please come prepared with questions.

We also will be allowed to participate in two meetings with him and members of the Yazidi community.

Please put these dates in your planner:

- **Tuesday, March 7:** 6 p.m. lecture, Sheldon Art Museum.
- **Wednesday, March 8:** Evening meeting with Yazidi community members (time and place to be announced).
- **Thursday, March 9:** Morning meeting with Yazidi community (time and place to be announced).

Hootsuite: The college has worked out a special contract with HootSuite to allow us to upgrade to a Pro Account. Through this special designation, our class will have access to a full range of analytics as well as the ability to use the platform as a team. This designation also allows you to receive social media certification at a reduced rate (\$99). More details on this to come.

Slack: We will be test-driving Slack, a messaging and project management app, to keep in communication, particularly during the newsroom/production phases of the course. You'll be receiving an email invitation – so watch for it. Slack also should prove useful for your group work. Many newsrooms use it.

GRADING

Reflections, pitches, stories and the portfolio will have a posted rubric (on Blackboard) with grading criteria so you will know what is expected. You will earn letter grades for all your work based on the following:

- 15 percent for reflection papers, embed project
- 20 percent for pitches
- 65 percent for portfolios, stories and newsletters

COURSE GRADING SCALE:

A+ = 97-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69	
A = 94-96	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	D = 64-66	
A- = 90-93	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	D- = 60-63	F = 59/below

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In this college, we take ethics very seriously. As an aspiring journalist, you are expected to demonstrate integrity and follow the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. In the classroom, that means also following the UNL Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the UNL Bulletin. Plagiarism generally results in firing in the journalism profession. Students who plagiarize or fabricate material may receive a failing grade on an assignment or for an entire course and may be reported to the Student Judicial Review Board. The work a student submits in a class must be the student's own work and must be work completed for that particular class and assignment. Students wishing to build on an old project or work on a similar project in two classes must discuss this with both professors.

Academic dishonesty includes:

- Handing in another's work or part of another's work as your own.
- Fabricating quotes, interviews or other material for any content you submit in this class.
- Turning in one of your old papers (including something you wrote in high school) for a current class.
- Turning in the same or similar paper for two different classes.
- Using notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining another's answers for a quiz or an examination.

Anything and everything you include in your papers that comes from another source must be attributed with proper citation. That includes ideas and opinions. Plagiarism consists of using phrases, sentences or paragraphs from any source and republishing them without alteration or attribution. The sources include, but are not limited to, books, magazines, newspapers, television or radio reports, websites and other students' papers.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

DIVERSITY

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications values diversity, in the broadest sense of the word – gender, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, religion, education, geographic, physical and mental ability or disability, sexual orientation. We recognize that understanding and incorporating diversity in the curriculum enables us to prepare our students for careers as professional communicators in a global society. As communicators, we understand that journalism, advertising and other forms of strategic communication must reflect society in order to be effective and reliable. We fail as journalists if we are not accurate in our written, spoken and visual reports; including diverse voices and perspectives improves our accuracy and truthfulness. In advertising, we cannot succeed if we do not understand the value of or know how to create advertising that reflects a diverse society and, thus, appeals to broader audiences.

ACEJMC COMPETENCIES

The CoJMC is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC), whose mission is “to foster and encourage excellence and high standards in professional education in journalism and mass communications.” ACEJMC recommends that all of you be aware of certain core values and competencies, a number of which will be addressed in this class:

- Writing. You will write text articles, captions, video scripts, story pitches.
- Diversity. Your journalistic work in this course will focus primarily on communities of people new to Nebraska and to the United States. These people will be the subjects of your articles as well as your expected audience.
- Critical thinking. You will be expected to think critically about the creation of journalistic content that is helpful and informative, and you will be expected to learn how to navigate communities different from your own.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Warning: This is subject to change; additional exercises and readings may be added and due dates may be changed. If things change, I will alert you and post a revised schedule.)

<p>Mon., Jan. 9</p> <p>Read for Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarize yourself with this website: Refugee Resettlement Program • Familiarize yourself with this: Center for People in Need resource handbook • Refugee resettlement figures • Where refugees go in America • Refugees' journey: a long, difficult process • The refugee process in a graphic • 35 maps that explain how America is a nation of immigrants • The Refugee Project. □ Refugee 101 □ What's happened to history's refugees? • Nebraska Mosaic magazine 	<p>Wed., Jan. 11</p> <p>Discuss: Come with questions for guest speaker: Karen Parde, state refugee coordinator.</p> <p>Sign up for embed shifts.</p> <p>Read for Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Bornstein on Solutions Journalism (20 minutes) • Solutions Journalism (2 minutes) • Solutions Journalism in the time of Trump • The news we need to hear • Immigrants welcome here • Tips for better reporting • Inherited from ancestors: Work ethic • A family tradition comes to an end
<p>Mon., Jan 16 NO CLASS</p>	<p>Wed., Jan. 18</p> <p>Contributor story due by class time. Bring two hard copies of contributor story with you to class.</p> <p>Discuss: Readings and story ideas</p> <p>Read for Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening for newsrooms and communities • <i>Reach new and non-traditional publics</i> (Blackboard > Course documents > Reading) • What is community engagement? • <i>Engagement Resource for Newsrooms</i> (Blackboard > Course documents > Reading) • Cooling down from Mary Pipher's <i>Writing to Change the World</i>. • Nine photocomposition tips

<p>Mon., Jan. 23</p> <p>Revised contributor story due by class time.</p> <p>Contributor photos taken during class.</p> <p>Discuss: Uploading to Mosaic; story ideas.</p>	<p>Wed., Jan. 25</p> <p>Discuss: Uploading to Mosaic; story ideas.</p> <p>Read for Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 1-4, <i>Everywhere</i> • Chapters 1 and 2, <i>Bias</i>
<p>Mon., Jan. 30</p> <p>Reflection #1 due by class time.</p> <p>Story ideas due. Be prepared to discuss them in class.</p> <p>Discuss: Readings; story ideas</p> <p>Read for Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top 10 reasons to become a U.S. citizen. • 13 simple journalist techniques for effective interviews. • 10 interview tips from a reporter scared of reporting. • Hints for good interviewing. • Appendix 1 in <i>Everywhere</i> 	<p>Wed., Feb. 1 (Class meets at Sheldon Art Museum)</p> <p>Pitches due; upload to Blackboard by class time.</p> <p>Discuss: Sheldon Art Museum exhibits</p> <p>Read for Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Chap. 5 and 6, <i>Everywhere</i> □ Watch these short videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bhutanese refugee Chabi Neopaney. ○ Bhutanese refugee Kumar Gurung. ○ Burmese refugee Yamin Nyi Chay. ○ Burmese refugee Myo Myint. And read this additional information about him.
<p>Mon., Feb. 6 Newsroom</p> <p>Reflection #2 due by class time</p>	<p>Wed., Feb. 8 Newsroom</p> <p>Read for Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metrics, metrics everywhere • Think audiences • Going beyond page views

<p>Mon., Feb. 13 Newsroom</p> <p>Discuss: Newsletters, social sharing, analytics, newsletters</p>	<p>Wed., Feb. 15 Newsroom</p> <p>Stories and social posts due to shared folder by class time.</p> <p>Read for Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees from Iraq (PDF) • Escaping Isis (54 minutes) • Iraq crisis explained • Yazidis settle in Nebraska • Watch these short videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Iraqi refugee Nagham Saady ◦ Iraqi refugee Sahar Aldurobi <p>Discuss: Newsletters, social sharing, analytics, newsletters</p>
<p>Mon., Feb. 20</p> <p>Embed assignment reflection due at class time</p> <p>Newsletter #1 due at class time; upload to shared folder and Blackboard</p> <p>Discuss: Come prepared with questions for Gulie Khalaf and Basim Alili, Yazidi activists.</p> <p>Read for this week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chap. 7 + 8, <i>Everywhere</i> • Chap. 3-5, <i>Bias</i> • Good Neighbor Center Answers Mission 	<p>Wed., Feb. 22</p> <p>Newsroom/Story conferences</p>

<p>Mon., Feb. 27 Newsroom/story conferences</p> <p>Reflection #3 due at class time</p> <p>Newsletter #2 due at class time; upload to shared folder and Blackboard</p> <p>Read for Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chap. 9 + 10, <i>Everywhere</i> • Chap 6, <i>Bias</i> ○ Ethiopian refugee Tegegne Feyissa. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eritrean refugee Samson Ghilu. 	<p>Wed., March 1 Newsroom</p> <p>Portfolio Part I due at class time; upload to Blackboard</p> <p>Discuss: Iraqi project + assignments</p>
<p>Mon., March 6 Newsroom</p> <p>Reflection #4 due at class time</p> <p>Newsletter #3 due at class time; upload to shared folder and Blackboard</p> <p>Discuss: Iraqi project and assignments</p> <p>Read for Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim Lommassen's "What We Carried" • Watch "What We Carry" (15 minutes) 	<p>Wed., March 8</p> <p>Discuss: Come prepared with questions for Jim Lommassen</p> <p>Read for Monday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chap. 11 + 12 + Coda, <i>Everywhere</i> • Chap. 8 + 9, <i>Bias</i> • American Baghdad (17 minutes)

<p>Mon., March 13 Newsroom</p> <p>Reflection #5 due at class time</p> <p>Newsletter #4 due at class time; upload to shared folder and Blackboard</p> <p>Read by March 29: Chap. 10, <i>Bias</i></p>	<p>Wed., March 15 Newsroom</p>
<p>Mon., March 20 SPRING BREAK</p>	<p>Wed., March 22 SPRING BREAK</p>
<p>Mon., March 27 Newsroom</p> <p>Discuss: Updates on Iraqi project</p>	<p>Wed., March 29 Newsroom</p> <p>Reflection #6 due at class time</p> <p>Newsletter #5 due at class time; upload to shared folder and Blackboard</p>
<p>Mon., April 3 Newsroom</p> <p>Newsletter #6 due at class time</p>	<p>Wed., April 5 Newsroom</p>
<p>Mon., April 10 Newsroom</p> <p>Newsletter #7 due at class time</p>	<p>Wed., April 12 Newsroom</p>
<p>Mon., April 17 Newsroom</p> <p>All project stories due to shared folder and Blackboard.</p>	<p>Wed., April 19 Newsroom</p>

Mon., April 24 Newsroom

Wed., April 26

Course wrap up/online evaluations.

Presentation for donor on engagement strategies.

Portfolio Part II uploaded to Blackboard by 5 p.m., Friday, April 28.

Appendix B: Embed Assignment Reflections

#1

1. What specifically did you learn from the interactions you had at those places?

I ended up going to two English learning classes (advanced level) at the St. Paul United Methodist Church downtown and learned that sticking around the same location is a good thing. At first I did want to go to the Good Neighbor Center and places like that as well for the assignment, but I quickly learned if my presence is normalized, people would become comfortable with me being there. The coordinator, Joe, recommended that I stick with Emilie's advanced English class because of that fact- so I did.

2. Have those interactions affected your knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country, and if so, how?

The first day I attended the English learning class, the refugees were learning idioms. And what I learned from watching them learn was that Americans say a lot of things in different ways. Sometimes we are not upfront about things- and that's what confuses them.

Another thing I learned that I also mentioned in class, was that I shouldn't let my mind assume things about what refugees will feel about a certain topic (like Donald Trump.) I had assumed that all immigrants wouldn't respect Trump, or fear him, but one refugee had told me he's putting America first with his immigration ban, and he didn't mind if he wasn't allowed in- that he'd understand.

3. Have those interactions affected your ability to do each of the following – and if so, how:

- Develop story ideas about refugees; Immensely. Especially with our “dispelling myths” side project- my interactions with refugees make me think “what else am I assuming about these people?”
- Develop potential sources for stories; Connecting with the coordinators is important and getting them to really enjoy my presence around the classrooms has been the most important part I think. If they trust me, then the students will too.
- Develop interviewing strategies; Having a conversation, or listening to refugees having a conversation was helpful. It wasn’t as nerve-wracking because they didn’t feel probed because I wasn’t just using them for information. I was more learning from watching.
- Be more comfortable communicating with refugees; Absolutely, after embedding myself I would feel comfortable approaching most refugees that would be open to talk with me!

#2

Embed Reflection

1. As I mentioned in the notes on the spreadsheet, I didn't have a ton of individual interactions with refugees. This was, in part, due to sitting in on groups that were as new to English as they came. Still, I played some of their games and felt like I had some kind of connection with them, even if talking to them would have been hard. The biggest takeaway I had was, in a sense, a real-life picture of some of the struggles Pipher discussed in her book. In one class I sat in on (out of three total) they discussed medical terminology. That had me thinking—how terrifying would it be if I knew something was wrong with me, but I lacked the words to communicate to people who could help me. Additionally, I learned about the variety of new Americans that are living here in Lincoln. Between both of the classes I went to at Grace Lutheran, I met people from China, Brazil, Iraq, Mexico and Russia. It was a really interesting group. I usually only think of the main populations of Iraqis and Vietnamese (as well as the Hispanic population common in every American city). Getting to meet a Russian was very cool. Most of these people were not refugees, though. I suspect (but don't know for sure) that the people I encountered at the Good Neighbor Center were refugees—the class I sat in on there was entirely Iraqi women.
2. These interactions absolutely helped clarify my perception of refugees here in Lincoln. As I mentioned above, one thing I hadn't had much firsthand experience with was how steep the language barrier is for someone coming to a country not speaking any of a language. The sort of material they were working on at Grace Lutheran was a prime example of this. At GNCC, they were working on naming their own addresses. It was these things that really got me thinking about the difficulty of adjusting to living here. Another big takeaway I had from these experiences, though it encompassed other new Americans (not just refugees), was that we really shouldn't assume anything about why these people are in the US. It's good to be informed about various migration-causing events around the world, but they don't apply to everyone. A couple people I encountered were simply visiting relatives here in the states, and wanted to learn English while they were here. I never made the mistake, but it could be offensive to assume someone is here just because they were fleeing a war, or something to that end.
3. I'm certainly better off for having done this assignment, but I think I benefitted more in some of these areas than others. I'll break them apart:
 - a. Developing story ideas for refugees starts out with understanding what they know and don't know. I think I have a start on this. One thing refugees are very interested in how easy entering and exiting the US will be from this point—I caught some of this when the Iraqi women at GNCC were talking. This semester, though, the regular news media has been giving me plenty of ideas for new stories too.
 - b. I gathered no refugee sources doing this. However, I have a better understanding of some of these organizations and who to contact therein. So, I think it's fair to

say I know better how to gain access to sources after doing this assignment. So far for my first story, gathering sources has been slow, but ultimately fruitful.

- c. I can't say I accomplished much so far as interviewing goes. I did learn more about embedding, though. I haven't ever really gone somewhere for a class here in the college without a particular agenda—it was a rewarding experience to just observe.
- d. I have to confess that the language barrier is still intimidating to me—I know it's foolish. These people are just as hesitant to talk to me as I am to them. Though, to my credit, I still get nervous about talking to perfectly capable English speakers. This is something I'm still actively trying to work on—it's something I feel like I made a lot of progress on last semester in 302.

#3

Embed Reflection

1. What I learned is that refugees are very willing to tell their stories. The language barrier won't stop them from trying to talk and get out what they can.
2. Yes they have, it has made me more appreciative and understanding of what they go through even though I will never understand that.
3. These interactions have definitely affected my ability to think of different ways of telling the story I want to write to make it more engaging to the audience.

#4

1. What specifically did you learn from the interactions you had at those places?

Observing refugees and immigrants in spaces that are natural to them is clearly the correct first step when seeking to write about new Americans. Although I was not able to interact one-on-one with many refugees through the two visits, I was very emotionally effected by watching these people work so hard to learn a language that can often seem nonsensical. While students practiced asking questions at the MENA Hope Project, I learned one man has only \$300 to his name and one woman takes the bus everywhere so that her son can drive the one car they can afford. I was reminded through these experiences of the struggle and the dissimilar life I lead from these new Americans, yet I was still able to connect with them on an emotional level.

2. Have those interactions affected your knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country, and if so, how?

I have always believed that the borders we create are nonsensical, and this experience further solidified this belief. Humans are humans and the more new Americans I meet, the more I am amazed by their stories of overcoming and also their gratitude for what they do have. One thing that I was lacking knowledge on before, and I still have much to learn, is on the process of first getting to America and how that translates to citizenship. I also noticed the differences in ability of those who came here with an educated background and those who had not had as much formal education before arriving in America and how this effects their likelihood of success here.

3. Have those interactions affected your ability to do each of the following – and if so, how:

- Develop story ideas about refugees;

Simply being around refugees and immigrants and seeing what the beginning of their time in America is actually like has generated quite a few story ideas. It has also illustrated how much people do not really understand what these people go through to get here and what their life is like once they do arrive. This has caused me to come up with ideas such as what would following a family on their day of arrival from the airport to their new, foreign apartment be like. I also had the idea to contrast arrival stories of adults with their children to show how age of arrival effects success in America.
- Develop potential sources for stories;

Going to these agencies has helped me to meet a variety of sources. While I have not used any of these individuals for the current story I'm working on, having a home base and a staff who now recognizes us as reporters will likely be immensely helpful in the future.
- Develop interviewing strategies;

Watching these new Americans has been a great reminder of how difficult the English language is. This has helped remind me to be patient during interviews and to not be afraid to ask for them to spell something or repeat it a few times. Observing them learn English has also been insightful in knowing that

they can get frustrated when language is failing them. I now feel better equipped to respond when this happens.

- Be more comfortable communicating with refugees.

I'd say the biggest success of the embed assignment is simply acclimating to spending time with new Americans. As this is a population I had little experience with before, I felt nervous talking and interviewing these people. This assignment really helped me to not only feel comfortable around immigrants and refugees, but to also see a little more about what their lives are like and what is important to them, which has given me a very necessary perspective that I did not possess before.

#5

1. What specifically did you learn from the interactions you had at those places?

By attending classes at Lincoln Literacy and the Good Neighbor Center, I formed a new opinion about refugees. I didn't know much about them before this class and I've learned a lot, but by attending these classes, I was able to experience and see them at first hand so it seemed as if they really were real people. It was a reality check to see the refugees interact with people from this country and try to learn our culture, our news, and our language just to start a new life for themselves. They really cared about becoming a part of the culture and learning. At Lincoln Literacy, a few women brought their children to a nursery because both them and their husbands were attending the classes.

But what was also interesting was that the teachers were trying to understand the refugees' language and culture to better understand them too. They also understand their struggle and let some of them be a little late because they had to walk in the cold, take the bus, or drop their children off at the nursery.

To see refugees and experience what they are, made me have a better understanding of them and more of a confidence to talk to them in an interview and ask about their life.

2. Have those interactions affected your knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country, and if so, how?

When I attended the class at Lincoln Literacy, I didn't learn much about the refugees in specific, but when I was at the Good Neighbor Center, I spoke to the refugees and they answered questions in English to practice the language. They talked about things they missed from their country, like holidays, and important people in their life.

They also talked about recent news that has happened in our country. At that time, The Women's March had happened after President Trump's inauguration and I was surprised to hear that even if they didn't really have cable, they had a way to become informed about the new country they are in. It made me understand that they were really trying to assimilate into the country.

3. Have those interactions affected your ability to do each of the following – and if so, how:

Develop story ideas about refugees;

Develop potential sources for stories; YES

Develop interviewing strategies; YES

Be more comfortable communicating with refugees. YES

These interactions made me more comfortable to talk to them in specific. I could experience what it would be like to talk to them because they might have a language barrier.

When I attended the classes, I wasn't focused too much on story ideas because I just wanted to experience being there and talking to them and hear their stories of what they might have experienced. This helped overall develop a better interviewing strategy for the future.

After I left the classes, and after hearing other students' experiences from the classes, I started to think about what kind of sources we could use for the stories and if any of the people I met would be perfect for ideas. There were a lot of people who worked at the Good Neighbor Center who were refugees themselves. They spoke fair English so they have probably been here for a while and they were passionate about teaching new refugees about the language and culture here.

#6

1. The biggest thing I learned from this experience is how truly difficult it is to adapt not only to a new country, but to a completely new culture as well. Zainab told me about one time she went to the grocery store just looking for salt and how she spent 45 minutes walking around the store because she couldn't read or speak English. That story really struck a chord with me. Sure she told me stories of being harassed and how her friends and family were harassed. That stuff's terrible, but it's those little things like spending 45 minutes looking for salt, that really made me take a step back.
2. Pretty much what I said above. As Americans born in the US, we hear and sometimes see immigrants and refugees being harassed. We understand how that can be difficult, but we never even think of all the little day-to-day struggles that we would have to go through if we one day had to uproot our lives and move across the world.
3. How have interactions affected my ability to:
 - a. Develop Story Ideas: These interactions showed me how important it is for refugees to look out for each other. Adapting to America is a struggle we can hardly fathom. Tareq at the Goodneighbor Center told me about how so many refugees go to English classes taught by people who only know English. He told me about how much they struggle in a class where only English is spoken so I was able to understand what a vital role someone like him was playing. That really makes me believe in the current story I'm on about refugees giving back. It also makes me believe that most Americans don't understand how difficult it is to adapt to another culture. I think there's a lot of potential with that.
 - b. Develop potential sources for stories: I think visiting the Goodneighbor Center has set me up with a lot of great sources such as Zainab and Tareq. I was hoping to find more, but when I sat in on the English class, Tareq was the only one I could speak with. The others didn't know English well enough to understand my questions.
 - c. Develop interviewing strategies: I think the important thing is to sit down and have a conversation. The situation is already naturally awkward as it is. A rigid interview will just be more uncomfortable and you're going to get short answers.
 - d. Be more comfortable communicating with refugees: Kind of like what I mentioned above. It's important to be able to strike a conversational tone and I'm not sure I'm completely there yet, but this was great practice.

#7

Embed Reaction

To be honest, at the beginning of the semester I was a bit nervous to embed myself within groups of refugees. This nervousness wasn't because I thought the people I would meet would be unfriendly, or because I was uncomfortable introducing myself and having a conversation—in fact, I'd had wonderful interviews and interactions with refugees in the past.

I think my uneasiness stemmed from the fact that I would be putting myself in spaces where refugees go to find safety, familiar faces and perhaps a little peace from their stressful lives. I figured they would be a bit confused and maybe even reserved if I invaded that space, even if I just sat and observed—maybe even *especially* if I just sat and observed, as if they are some science subject for me to watch and take notes about their every move. I wondered how they would perceive me, and I was very much relating to Mary Pipher's thoughts on sitting in a room full of Sudanese men, and being asked if she was an anthropologist. Of course I wanted to make meaningful connections with Lincoln refugees in order to help tell their stories, but I wondered if this was the best way.

My experiences embedding at an ELL program at Culler Middle School and the MENA Hope Project at the Good Neighbor Center rid me of any anxiety almost immediately.

After initial introductions at Culler Middle School, I was welcomed in the classroom without a question. Although this first experience in an ELL classroom didn't involve much participation on my part, it was very essential to understand the struggle of learning English—and everything about American culture—after spending a lifetime in another country. I knew it was extremely difficult, but I don't think you can really grasp the enormity of it until you sit in a classroom with a teacher who is attempting to explain verb conjugation to a group of people who have all come from absolutely diverse backgrounds.

The teacher had begun the class by asking what they'd like to learn today, and a Spanish-speaking woman raised her hand and said, "verbs—like, past and present." It sounded simple, but I quickly realized how awful the English language is—you can try to teach one thing, but there will be dozens of exceptions to one rule, compound verbs to explain and general slang. Not to mention the Midwestern drawl that exists among Nebraskans where we roll every word together in a string of syllables that's difficult to hear. I couldn't believe the teacher (a substitute for the class that week) even knew where to start.

Understanding how tedious and difficult learning English is for a refugee that was forced to leave their home country and culture is essential to understanding the stress a refugee is under when they are relocated to America. There is almost no way around trying to acclimate to American culture and the English language—barely anyone is bilingual here, and knowing English is the one thing that will get you a good job and a way to live.

Last week at the Good Neighbor center was also an important experience. By the end of the class I had become a participant, helping an Iraqi woman next to me during a game and feeling very welcomed by everyone at the table. The dynamic was definitely different at MENA—here, everyone spoke Arabic and had been attending the same class for quite some time and were all well acquainted. They laughed easily and poked fun at each other, and the teacher was a refugee himself and able to teach in Arabic.

By the end of the class I think I had somehow gained the trust of the group. Before everyone got up to go, I asked the table if anyone had a story they would like to tell of where they came from. Although she wasn't very confident in her English, a woman named Leila spoke up about her life after fleeing Iraq, when she lived in a camp in Jordan with her daughter for four years. The words began to flow in Arabic and the whole group stayed to help translate, or just listen. Her story was horrific, but she talked easily about her experiences being beaten and stolen from at the camp, having to uproot her daughter constantly from her friends and her

daughter's untreated juvenile diabetes while in Jordan. It was a matter-of-fact account of her past and it kind of stunned me—this was the woman who laughed the entire class, her eyes constantly crinkled from smiling.

#8

Embed Assignment Reflection

1. What specifically did you learn from the interactions you had at those places?

There were a myriad of things I learned from my interactions at the Good Neighbor Community Center and the Lincoln Literacy Class. Some of the things I learned were small-scale revelations while others were a bit bigger. While there were a range of different pieces of information learned, there are two that are most prominent.

One of the first things that stands out in regards to what I learned was the concept of time in America versus what refugees understand. While I was at GNCC two men came in 15 minutes before they were going to close and wanted to fill out an application for food stamps. The man, who wouldn't give me his name, volunteering with MENA Hope told me that time is an entirely different concept for refugees. In America, if we have an appointment at a specific time we will be there early or if we are going shopping we will get there well in-advance before closing time. For refugees the idea of time and timeliness is a bit different, they are much more relaxed and will show up when they do, not necessarily any time near the designated slot.

Another thing I learned from my interactions while sitting in on the Lincoln Literacy class was the true value placed on community among refugees. I've been told that refugees, especially Middle Easterners, place a wealth of importance on community and support of the people within it. This was very apparent during my hour and a half long experience at the Lincoln Literacy course. The beginner course was made up of women from Brazil, Iraq, Congo, Honduras and Mexico. Despite their deficiencies with the English language and the fact that they all had entirely different native languages, they still managed to support each other, laugh together and help one another learn English. I found the sense of community among the women, each very different, to be an eye-opening lesson. I was unaware that even between different countries, support and community reigns valued – not solely among Middle Eastern refugees.

2. Have those interactions affected your knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country, and if so, how?

These interactions, the two stated above and the others, have most definitely affected my knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country. As a whole, I was able to better understand the plight (from the extreme vetting process to adjusting to the United States) of a refugee much better and in greater detail.

In regards to the two things I learned that are detailed above, these each taught me quite a bit in ways that greatly affected my knowledge. The first being a refugee's concept on time and its seemingly insignificant importance in their lives. Learning this made me realize how hard it would be with, not only language barriers, a skewed concept of time when trying to set-up a variety of appointments, run errands or even when to call someone who could help. America runs on time – whether we have too much or too little – and to be thrown into that as a refugee who is struggling to adjust to so many other things would become very cumbersome.

The support among refugees that I got to experience and learn about also gives me stronger knowledge and insight on the refugees and their experiences. While the journey and process is very tasking, intimidating and difficult it seems that the refugees find solace in their support groups within their specific ethnic community and the refugee community. This really expanded my knowledge on the differences that exist between the United States of America and other countries as well. In America we are fairly proud of our independence and privacy, but I feel that we are lacking in community in many ways, something that we could really learn from refugees. Despite the perils of the process, refugees are supported and encouraged by members of their community, something very vital to their own experiences in the U.S.

Another interesting thing I'd like to note is my experience with my first embed assignment at GNCC. I walked in by myself, waiting for someone to talk to, and found myself overwhelmed by the fast-paced conversations in Arabic flying around me. This uncomfortable feeling I had these first few moments really left a lasting impression on how I understand the refugee experience here in the U.S. I, for a brief moment, was uncomfortable because I did not know what was being said around me or how to relate; this situation put me, for an extremely quick moment, in the shoes of what it is like to be a refugee surrounded by a culture and language completely foreign. This experience gave me a deeper appreciation for refugee's and their determination to tread forward on their journey as a refugee.

3. Have those interactions affected your ability to do each of the following – and if so, how:

- *Develop story ideas about refugees;*
- *Develop potential sources for stories;*
- *Develop interviewing strategies;*
- *Be more comfortable communicating with refugees.*

These interactions have greatly affected my ability as a journalist in a very positive way. I found, even through the most casual and brief interactions, that there are story ideas waiting to be developed or unearthed in the simplest conversations. My interactions also honed in on and expanded my ability to develop potential sources for stories. Through simple conversation I learned things about different refugees that would make for great stories or provide very rich sources. It also solidified that I shouldn't have a set-up framework in my head of who and what makes a "good story," but rather be open-minded and engage to find these stories and sources.

An example of this would be my conversation with the MENA Hope assistant. He was a middle-aged gentleman who had arrived as refugee before the 90s by himself. My conversation with him sparked so many stories to be developed and sources to be sought out. The gentleman himself would make a compelling story, but he also told me about a refugee girl who came here to complete college (and she's graduating this semester to work with aging adults). Just a simple conversation with this man lead to story ideas that I wouldn't have been able to concoct or consider prior.

Through gaining more comfortability in communicating with refugees I will be able to gain a better sense of how to interview their community. I think one important detail I gained through my interactions was to interact with them fearlessly; by this I mean approaching them as I would any other source, and not being intimidated or uncomfortable because of the language barrier. Through this my ability to interact with refugees has adapted and improved. I now know that if they do not understand me, it is okay to use simpler terminology or to go with the flow of the conversation. By zeroing in on these skills, my interactions with refugees become much easier.

I continue to remind myself, any time I am uncomfortable talking with a refugee, that if they can make the plight to America to live and learn – I can get to know them by holding a conversation and doing a bit of learning on my own end.

#9

Embed assignment

What specifically did you learn from the interactions you had at those places?

I loved this experience. Prior to the embed assignment I had little to no personal contact with refugees. I was going into this class blind. I thought that the refugees I interacted with would be afraid or unwilling to talk with me. I thought I would be seen as an intruder of sorts. This wasn't my experience at all. The people I spoke with were very willing to have conversations with me. One woman, a refugee from Iraq who was in her 70s, was very welcoming. The first thing she asked me after I introduced myself was, "Are you married?" after I answered "no" she inquired into why I was single. She then told me I would be married within the year and that I was to bring the man to her so that she could tell me if he was good or bad. This interaction was simple and humorous, but it made me relax and begin to enjoy the entire experience. I learned that interviewing refugees doesn't need to be difficult. It's just about having a conversation and learning about the very interesting lives of these people.

Have those interactions affected your knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country, and if so, how?

This experience has affected my understanding of refugees. I didn't have a lot of pre-conceived notions, but I now feel like I have a greater knowledge of this group. At the Good Neighbor Center I talked to a group of four women. They each had such diverse and interesting stories. They all seemed smart, kind and eager to learn new things. Just from the brief couple of hours I spent at their class, I learned of the daily struggles they experience. Many of the women had master's degrees from their countries of origin. However, they had to start at the beginning after coming to the United States. These women allowed me to put a face to the ambiguous term "refugee." They humanized this whole experience for me and made me even more excited to pursue stories in this area.

Have those interactions affected your ability to do each of the following – and if so, how:

I was very intimidated by this assignment. I wasn't very comfortable with interviewing refugees, because I was afraid that I would be intruding into the lives of people who were already going through so many struggles. However, the refugees I interacted with went out of their way to make me feel at ease and welcome. I'm now more comfortable communicating with refugees, because of these one-on-one interactions.

I think I do have potential sources after the embed assignment. I didn't get a lot of full names, but I can go back to these classes when the people are more comfortable with me. I think this could lead to more sources. The people I spoke with were hesitant to share their names and contact information, but I learned so much just from having regular conversations with them. By doing this, the process seemed less formal, and the people I talked with seemed more willing to share about their lives. In the future I think this is how I will approach interviewing refugees.

I think embedding is a great way to develop story ideas. At the Good Neighbor Center I sat in on an advanced English language course. The course consisted of four women who regularly attended. They were all obviously very familiar with each other, and in between lessons they had casual conversations about their lives. From this I learned that most of the women were kosher. They had a desire to try typical Nebraskan dishes like Runzas, but they were prevented from obtaining them at the restaurant because of the non-kosher beef. One woman made them at home. The other women insisted that she bring some to the next class. This one exchange alone gave me story ideas about the difficulty of finding kosher food and refugees attempts to develop their own way of experiencing Nebraska traditions.

I found this experience to be very eye opening and helpful. I think this is something I can do not only for future stories in this class, but also for stories I work on in other realms.

#10

I attended two English classes hosted by Lincoln Literacy at First Presbyterian Church. I learned more than I expected. On Jan. 25, I sat in on a class taught by Renea Meyer. Six women attended. They were all from different countries: Samia from Iraq, Fatemah from Iran, Terhas from Eritrea, Huoy from Cambodia, Ling He from China and Hyo Mi from South Korea.

There reasons for coming to the United States varied greatly. Hyo Mi is middle-aged, and her husband is researcher at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Conversely, Samia fled her hometown of Sinjar because of ISIS.

Renea began class by allowing me to ask questions to the group. She thought it would be a nice conversation exercise for her students. The women took turns explaining why they came to Lincoln, what they like about it and what surprised them. Most of their concerns and surprises stemmed from confusion about American culture. Samia said she was nervous when she first came to Lincoln three months ago because a friend told her Americans only like people who smile all the time.

Considering President Trump's attempted travel ban, I think embedding was an invaluable experience. I helped me understand why people try to come to America. Whether a refugee or an immigrant, it is important to put a face to the new members of our community. Refugees, like Samia, need to be saved. She left everything behind in Iraq, including most of her family. Anyone who has an opinion on the travel ban would benefit from sitting across from her and hearing her story.

The first few weeks of this class helped me broaden my understanding of refugees in Lincoln. Mary Pipher's *Middle of Everywhere* shed light on the struggles of adapting to a new culture. Karen Parde's talk was a nice table setter for what to expect when we started to speak to refugees. Nothing, however, compares to going out and meeting refugees first hand. It was nice to have a chance to meet refugees and immigrants without the immediate pressure of needing an interview for a story. The embed assignment allowed me to hear about a new American experience from a primary source.

After embedding, I had a stronger sense about what it would be like to write a story for refugees. The classes I attended helped me develop potential story ideas and sources by putting me directly in contact with members of the refugee community. I did not have many story ideas before I went out and met refugees and immigrants. Even the teachers had interesting stories to tell about their volunteer experience.

The embed assignment also helped me prepare for interviews with refugees who are not totally comfortable speaking English. The classes I attended seemed to be fairly advanced, so the language barrier was not as significant. Still, when I was introducing myself at one the classes I used the idiom "getting my feet wet." I immediately got a question about what that meant. It was a lesson in choosing words carefully to achieve maximum understanding.

I know this is one of the first times Mosaic has begun with an embed assignment. I strongly recommend continuing it. The interactions I had helped me focus on what Lincoln is like for refugees.

#11

Embed Reflection

1. The first experience I had was not very helpful. I think I was too shy to really talk to people. I also wasn't feeling well and I didn't want to get anyone sick so I just kind of stuck to my own spot and observed. The second experience I had was great. I went to a one-on-one tutor session for Lincoln Literacy. At that session I learned how little about English I know. The student was from Congo and is 30 and her English is already pretty great, but she would ask questions about grammar that made me think. I don't remember any questions specifically, but I remember she asked about past progressive instead of simple past.
2. Going to the tutor session definitely made me think about how hard it is to learn a new language and gave me more insight into a refugee's life. I remember taking two semesters of French last year and I asked similar questions to what this student was asking. I can't imagine having to move to France and try and learn their language even after I struggled and learned a little here at UNL. I know learning English is only one aspect of the refugee resettlement process, but it gave me more respect for the refugees and immigrants.
3. I think my embed experiences have helped me be more comfortable around refugees. I hate to admit it, but I was a bit nervous at first. I didn't want to unknowingly offend someone's religion or culture by saying anything incorrectly. I also wasn't sure if language would be a barrier or if any refugees would want to talk to me. Basically, I just worried a lot. While there are still some language barriers, I am definitely more comfortable and excited to interview different refugees for my next two stories in Mosaic.

#12

Embed Reflection Assignment

1. What specifically did you learn from the interactions you had at those places?

A: I learned how to embed myself into a refugee community center and how to make contacts with people who I felt could help me with our current assignment as well as future projects that we may be working on this semester. It was a little bit uncomfortable at first but it was a great experience to learn how to be willing to go straight to the root of information for potential sources and contacts to use for a story.

2. Have those interactions affected your knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experience in this country, and if so, how?

A: I think that this embedding assignment has affected my knowledge and understanding of refugees and their experiences. I say this because you can do all the research into the refugee situation and still not fully grasp the entirety of it until you go and sit in one of these language classes yourself. It was very valuable to figure out the problems and struggles that the refugees were experiencing and forming story ideas that would help them or other people understand what they are going through.

3. Have those interactions affected your ability to do each of the following – and if so, how:

- Develop story ideas about refugees;
- Develop potential sources for stories;
- Develop interviewing strategies;
- Be more comfortable communicating with refugees.

A: I believe that my embedding interactions have impacted my ability to do develop stories about refugees because my embedding experience was a golden opportunity to develop contacts and listen in to a class that was geared toward helping the clarify any confusion that the refugees may have had. By doing this I learned quite a bit about what the refugees are struggling with and what stories would benefit them.

A: I have been able to develop potential sources by being in touch with the people who help run these classes at the good neighbor community center. I feel very good about my ability to reach out to these people and find good sources in the future.

A: I have been able to develop good interviewing strategies by crafting a questionnaire with my group members and distributing it to the people who we would like to hear opinions from. This has helped us reach out to many people in a short amount of time and the possibility of a follow up interview is always an option if needed.

A: I am more comfortable interacting with refugees after spending some time in their environment and better understanding the struggles that they are going through. They are regular people who are experiencing a different culture (and language) for the first time. I am very comfortable interacting with them for both embedding purposes as well as interviews in the future.

Appendix C: Excerpts from Final Reflections

Excerpts from the final reflections in which students mentioned the embed assignment

#1

Before starting this class, the main thing I knew about refugees was the admission process into the U.S.—the quotas, screenings and so on. One thing I had never considered are the fundamental cultural differences that exist between the U.S. and other parts of the world. I've never conceptualized time any differently than we do here. To have to adjust to the quickness and promptness with which we live our lives would be incredibly hard, as Pipher pointed out.

One thing that surprised me about dealing with diverse audiences, especially interacting with them, was how easy it was once I got into it. I've got a tendency to overthink and worry about meeting new people, but in my experience in this class, dealing with the diverse people that we did wasn't that much harder for me than anyone else. Most people, when it comes down to it, are decent, kind people.

#2

Doing the embed assignment helped me ease into talking to people who were very different from myself. These classes also reminded me of how difficult it is and how terrifying it must be to come to this fast-paced country, especially if one does not have a background in English. There were so many times over this semester where I was deeply moved by the humanity of it all. Where a hug from a refugee or a smile across the room in an English class would humble me so deeply. There is so much to connect with these people on. Because of this though, it was also important to check my own biases and not assume I knew or understand other's struggles just because I had written about one person.

#3

I specifically improved in how to talk to and talk about refugees and immigrants. Doing the embed assignment and reading *The Middle Of Everywhere* broadened my horizon in terms of how I should go about writing my stories.

#4

Signing up for Nebraska Mosaic, I have to admit I was a bit worried about how it would go. My final semester was a heavy one—I took 19 hours in order to graduate this May, including my graphic design capstone, which is a huge workload. While the Mosaic project seemed the most interesting to me out of the journalism capstone options, I was a worried that pursuing stories about refugees would be extremely difficult, especially to coordinate my schedule for interviews, do embedding assignments and build the connections I would need for good stories. I worried about language barriers—I already struggled with asking clear and concise questions during interviews, how would I manage trying to communicate clearly with refugees who are still in the process of learning English, and who English is their second, third or fourth language? I also worried about my own privilege. How would a refugee want to honestly talk to me about their struggles, when my only struggle growing up in Nebraska has been choosing a major? How could I relate with a mother who is so happy to come to the safety and peacefulness of Lincoln, Nebraska, while I complain that the town is boring or small?

I would be putting myself in spaces where refugees go to find safety and a community of familiar faces. When went to my first ELL class at Culler Middle School, I figured regular attendees there would be a bit confused and maybe even reserved if I invaded that space—especially if I just sat there, taking notes. I wanted to talk to refugees and have them be comfortable with me—I wasn't sure if this was the best way.

I realized these worries weren't rooted in any real experiences I had—I only wondered how I would feel in the situation if I were a recent immigrant to the U.S. But the truth was, I had no idea—how could I have any idea? I would have to ask to find out. I quickly realized embedding was one of the best ways to do this.

After initial introductions at Culler Middle School, I was welcomed in the classroom without a question. Although this first experience in an ELL classroom didn't involve much participation on my part, it was very essential to understand the struggle of learning English—and everything about American culture—after spending a lifetime in another country. I knew it was extremely difficult, but I don't think you can really grasp the enormity of it until you sit in a classroom with a teacher who is attempting to explain verb conjugation to a group of people who have all come from absolutely diverse backgrounds. I feel that understanding how tedious and difficult learning English is for a refugee that was forced to leave their home country and culture is essential to understanding the stress a refugee is under when they are relocated to America. There is almost no way around trying to acclimate to American culture and the English language—barely anyone is bilingual here, and knowing English is the one thing that will get you a good job and a way to live.

#5

The embed assignment, one of the first of the semester, was really intimidating for me. I tend to get overwhelmed in new situations, although enthusiastic, and I had a fear I wouldn't understand the accents, cultural differences or, perhaps, they wouldn't speak any English. After this assignment, I realized those fears are things that refugees deal with daily as they come to America, giving me (although not intentional) a personal, brief glimpse at a fraction of what refugees experience. I also found that the best stories come from simply talking to people without the intention of pulling out a story idea or coming away with something grandiose. Through the embed assignment and interacting with people for Mosaic, I found the most compelling stories and interactions I had were with people I had simple, unexpected conversations with. It is true that the best things in life tend to be unexpected, and the same goes for the best, richest types of stories. Mosaic reaffirmed why I admire journalism: everyone has a story waiting to be told and I want to be the one to lend an ear and a voice.

6

At the Good Neighbor Center I tried to have real conversations with people, instead of just reading questions out of my notebook. I felt like this helped the women be more comfortable with me. I ended up getting some great information.

#7

Previous to this class, I was still not great at interviewing. Speaking to new people isn't my strongest trait. However, this class forced me to interview a ton of people from a wide variety of backgrounds. The embed assignment pushed me to speak with refugees and immigrants who didn't have the best English skills.

#8

I also learned a lot about interviewing a variety of sources. At first, I was nervous to talk with refugees. I worried I was intruding into their lives. I worried about a language barrier. I also worried about a cultural barrier. While these are important things to take into account, when I really sat down and spoke with people, I realized that the barriers weren't as hard to cross as I had previously thought. I ended up hearing beautiful stories and learned a great deal.

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