

**JO304 Online Journalism**  
COM, B27

**Instructor: Nick Barber**  
[nick.j.barber@gmail.com](mailto:nick.j.barber@gmail.com)

Cell 908-507-6745

**Office hours:**

Friday, 3-5pm

Or by appointment

**Textbook**

[Producing Online News: Digital Skills, Stronger Stories](#)

Ryan M. Thornburg

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**Course Goals and Objectives**

With multimedia convergence commonplace, skills required of newly minted journalists are more demanding than ever. JO304 intends to prepare Boston University students with the multimedia skills and news judgment needed by today's news organizations. Students will learn to tell stories using a multiplatform approach and identify the best platforms that work with different stories. Through weekly assignments and projects, students will hone their skills as storytellers using photo slideshows, blog posts and video and audio reports.

**Course Requirements**

**Blogging Project: NewsTrack**

Students will be required to blog a minimum of once a week about an online news site that you will track throughout the semester. This "NewsTrack" project will be assigned on the first day of class. Students will select a news web site that they will monitor throughout the semester, posting analysis and commentary about work that appears on the site. Consider these questions in your analysis:

- How well do they integrate multimedia and other features designed to attract and engage their audience?
- How often do they launch new features?
- How does their coverage compare to other media (newspaper, TV, etc)?

The audience for your NewsTrack blog is your fellow journalism students, so point them to the most interesting, controversial, engaging content on your assigned site.

**NOTE: Blog posts are due by 6 p.m. on the day BEFORE class.**

**News Quiz**

At the start of every class there will be a three to five question news quiz. If you keep up with the news and read the front page of newspapers and homepages of major media websites then it should be easy. The quizzes will focus on the most important news of the week covering topics including politics, health, international relations, science & technology and others.

**Equipment Checkout**

We have an equipment depot located in the basement of the building (B-17) where you can check out cameras, audio recorders and other equipment. You can reserve equipment online at [wco.bu.edu](http://wco.bu.edu). Make sure that you have your student ID with you when you pick up gear.

**Required Hardware**

Students must provide their own SD card and a portable hard drive to store projects. Consider a class 10 SDHC card that's at least 4 GB. A local Best Buy, or even better B&H Photo Video in New York will have your best options. Shipping is fast and sometimes free at [bhphotovideo.com](http://bhphotovideo.com).

### **Recommended Software**

While you are not required to purchase software for this course, you will need access to a number of programs to complete homework, assignments and your final project.

If you do not already own this software, you will need to structure your time so that you can work in a lab to complete these assignments.

You will need access to the following applications:

- Microsoft Office (Word, notepad)
- Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere
- Adobe Photoshop
- Audacity (Available as a free download, [audacity.sourceforge.net](http://audacity.sourceforge.net))
- Soundslides Plus (Trial version available at [www.soundslides.com](http://www.soundslides.com))

### **Grading**

Assignments – 25%

News Track Blog Project – 15%

News Quizzes – 15%

Midterm project – 20%

Final Project – 25%

News Track blog and homework assignments will be graded pass/fail. Blog posts should be thoughtful and consist of at least 150 words as well as hyperlinks, embedded videos, etc.

Each assignment (including the midterm and final project) will be scored on a 100 point scale with the following breakdown:

20 points – Spelling and grammar as stated by AP style

25 points – Creativity: thinking outside the box, covering an old story in a new way, etc.

20 points – Functionality: hyperlinks work, photos are in focus, video is free of glitches, etc.

20 points – Newsworthiness as stated by our news values lesson

15 points – Following instructions

The point scale will correspond to the following letter grades:

A	95-100	B-	80-83	D	65-69
A-	90-94	C+	77-79	F	64 and below
B+	87-89	C	74-76		
B	84-86	C-	70-73		

### **Late assignments**

If you're an aspiring journalist, making deadlines is essential. Assignments are expected to be turned in when they are due. If an assignment is 0-24 hours late 10 points will be deducted. After 24 hours the assignment will receive a zero.

### **A word about computer failure...**

In a day where flash drives, portable hard drives and online backup are so commonplace, computer crashes and drive failures are not an acceptable excuse for late work so don't try it.

### **Class Attendance & Participation**

Plan to attend class every week on time. If you must miss a class, please email or call me before class. If you miss a class you are still expected to complete assignments on time. Students are expected to participate in every class.

### **Class Recording**

Please note that classroom proceedings for this course might be recorded for purposes including, but not limited to, student illness, religious holidays, disability accommodations, or student course review. Note also that recording devices are prohibited in the classroom except with the instructor's permission.

### **Academic Code of Conduct**

Be sure to read and comply with Boston University's Universal Academic Conduct Code for Undergraduate Students. It is available at [bu.edu/academics](http://bu.edu/academics).

### **Plagiarism and Fabrication**

The College of Communication rules on plagiarism are applicable to this course.

Statement: "Plagiarism is the act of representing another person's creative and/or academic work as your own, in full, or in part. It can be an act of commission, in which one intentionally appropriates the words, pictures, or ideas of another, or it can be an act of omission, in which one fails to acknowledge/document/give credit to the source, creator and/or the copyright owner of those words, pictures, or ideas. Any fabrication of materials, quotes or sources other than those created in a work of fiction is also plagiarism. Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense that you can commit and can result in probation, suspension, or expulsion."

### **January 20, 2012 – Week 1**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- Introductions, review course syllabus and requirements
- Choose News Track website
  - Discuss convergence, parallel reporting, interactivity, evergreen and user generated content
- Define what is and what is not multimedia journalism
- Set up blogs
- Set up Google Reader account
- Design business cards
- Skill assessment
- News quiz prep

#### **Assignments, homework**

- Textbook – read preface and chapter 1
- Update blog with News Track observations
- Prepare for news quiz

### **January 27, 2012 – Week 2**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- News quiz
- Business card check
- Discuss blogging and how its different from other writing
- Importance of blogging and how to differentiate
- Connecting with audiences via Twitter, Facebook, YouTube
- Add extras to your blog
- Discuss news values; why they're important and how to consider them
- Ethics workshop

### **Assignments, homework**

- Read chapter 2
- Update blog with News Track observations
- Comment on partners' blogs
- Complete the following NewsU online courses
  - News Sense: The Building Blocks of News <http://bit.ly/pcuJxv>
  - Handling Race and Ethnicity <http://bit.ly/oOsYHC>
  - Online Media Law: The Basics for Bloggers and Other Publishers <http://bit.ly/qbUWcq>
- Prepare for news quiz

### **February 3, 2012 – Week 3**

- News quiz
- The art of interviewing
- Audio recording, editing
- Listen to examples of audio pieces in preparation for homework assignment
- Understanding a CMS (content management system); its benefits and drawbacks

### **Assignments, homework**

- Textbook: Read chapter 4
- Complete NewsU courses
  - Telling Stories with Sound <http://bit.ly/p1CfQ4>
  - Writing for the Ear <http://bit.ly/ndDrCW>
  - The Interview <http://bit.ly/pDqMhG>
- Prepare a two minute audio piece that would be appropriate to be used as a standalone piece or as part of a radio broadcast (think NPR)
  - Guidelines
    - Choose a relevant and current issue that has two sides. Present the facts of the issue and then differing opinions.
    - Differing opinions can be from experts or MOSs.
    - Use Audacity, Soundbooth or Audition to edit your audio package.
    - Export it as an MP3.
    - Title and subhead the piece keeping SEO in mind.
- Prepare for news quiz
- Update News Track blog

### **February 10, 2012 – Week 4**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- News quiz
- Social media, liveblogging, convergence
  - SEO and SMO
  - In class SEO/SMO workshop
- Using Google Insights

### **Assignments, homework**

- Read chapter 10 & 11
- Multimedia Reporting: Covering Breaking News <http://bit.ly/pljdag>
- Liveblog an event (due before March 30)
  - Choose an event like a lecture or presentation that will be conducive to liveblogging.
  - Make sure you obtain press access and ensure there is WiFi before liveblogging the event.
  - Use the principles and techniques learned in class.

- Update News Track blog
- Prepare for news quiz

### **February 17, 2012 – Week 5**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- News quiz
- Photography introduction
- Photo composition guidelines
- Understanding the science of photography and using it to take better pictures
- Basic photo editing with Adobe Photoshop
- Telling a story with photos and the importance of captions
- Using Soundslides

#### **Homework, assignments**

- Read photo section of chapter 8
- Create two separate photo slide shows complete with edited photos and captions.
  - Guidelines
    - Each slideshow should be comprised of five or more high resolution photos.
    - Create captions for your photos
    - One slideshow should cover an event; lectures, festivals, parades, fundraisers, etc. are all good examples.
    - Another slideshow should focus on a person; an athlete, student, professor, or professional are all good examples. Tell their story; what they do, their challenges, what their work or daily life entails.
    - The assignment will be graded on the 100 point scale presented in this syllabus.
- Prepare for news quiz
- Update blog

### **February 24, 2012 – Week 6**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- News quiz
- Flash basics
- Using interactive maps and graphics to enhance your work
- More TBA

#### **Assignments, homework**

- Reporting Global Issues Locally <http://bit.ly/q02ctu>
- Cleaning your Copy: Grammar, Style and More <http://bit.ly/ostQcQ>
- Prepare for news quiz
- Update blog

### **March 2, 2012 – Week 7**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- Video for the web and shooting it with a digital still camera
- Writing for video
- Basic edits with Final Cut Pro

#### **Assignments, homework**

- Read video section of chapter 8
- Complete NewsU course: Video Storytelling for the Web <http://bit.ly/p1fgbg>
- Five Steps to Multimedia Storytelling <http://bit.ly/qAlw0G>
- Reporting Across Platforms <http://bit.ly/nmA9a>

- Cover an event using video and the lesson learned in class.
  - Guidelines
    - Video should be 1:30 to 2:00 in length
    - It should include a voiceover, b-roll, nat sound and at least one interview.
    - Event should be inherently visual: on campus or local events, performances, etc. Avoid lectures.
    - Export the final video as an MP4 or MOV.
    - Add a title and subhead for the video.

### **Midterm assignment (due at March 23 class)**

- Use media convergence principles to prepare a multimedia package incorporating at least three different types of media
- Choose from the following:
  - Photo slideshow (at least 10 photos with captions)\*
  - Photo slide show with audio (at least 5 photos with captions and accompanying audio)\*
  - Audio package (at least 3 minutes including two or more interviews)
  - Blog text post (at least 600 words and 5 or more hyperlinks)
  - Video package (at least 90 seconds including one interview)
  - \*If you choose a photo slideshow as one of your projects, you must choose something else as the other two types. For example, you cannot choose to use a photo slideshow AND a photo slideshow with audio.

### **March 9, 2012 – Week 8**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- Midterm workshop

### **March 16, 2012 – Week 9 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

### **March 23, 2012 – Week 10**

- News quiz
- How to make video diaries to further your personal brand
- Career and resume workshop
- Writing an effective cover letter
- Review midterm projects

#### **Assignments, homework**

- Read chapter 9
- Shoot at least one video diary before the next class
  - The video diary should give your audience a candid look at an event on campus or something happening around the city.
  - The video diary should be at least 60 seconds and use the principles and techniques learned in class.
- Math for Journalists: Help with Numbers <http://bit.ly/nggCur>
- Update News Track blog
- Prepare for news quiz

### **March 30 – Week 11**

#### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- Discuss final projects and brainstorm ideas
- Review pros and cons of different types of media

#### **Final project assignment (due at April 27 class)**

- Use media convergence principles to prepare a multimedia package incorporating at least four different mediums.
- Choose from the following:
  - Liveblog
  - Video diary
  - Photo slideshow (at least 10 photos with captions)
  - Photo slide show with audio (at least five photos with captions and accompanying audio)
  - Audio package (at least three minutes including two or more interviews)
  - Blog text post (at least 600 words and five or more hyperlinks)
  - Video package (at least 90 seconds including one interview)

#### **April 6, 2012 – Week 12**

##### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- News quiz
- Final project workshop

##### **Assignments, homework**

- Finish your final project
- Update your News Track blog
- Prepare for news quiz

#### **April 20, 2012 – Week 13**

##### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- Intro to creating custom graphics with Adobe After Effects

#### **April 27, 2012 – Week 14**

##### **Lecture Topics & In Class Exercise**

- Final project review and course summary