



# DIGITAL MEDIA & COMMUNICATION

# SENIOR SEMINAR

## E~Book, DOC Film & Web Documentary



**DMC SENIOR SEMINAR: E~Book – Film – WEB Documentary**

Spring 2025

MJD 460

WEDNESDAYS 1:30-4:30PM, JEM 142—The Media Lab

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## THE COURSE

This is your senior seminar, the capstone course of your experience in the Department of Digital Media, Communications, and Marketing (DMC). It's an opportunity to develop a final professional-quality documentary media project which explores a socially significant topic through a variety of interdisciplinary angles. It's also a chance to produce a meaningful—and hopefully lasting—story/narrative which highlights the variety of interests and skills you've developed over the past several years. Moreover, it's a final occasion to work collaboratively and intensively with your classmates to produce media works that will help each of you take your next steps after graduation—professionally and intellectually.

## COURSE FORMAT

The course is structured as an independent project seminar divided along two major lines:

**(1) In-class Collaborative Development and Criticism — The Creative-Critical Round Table.** Throughout this course our focus will be on collaborative development and critical evaluation of each others works. This means that you will not only be engaged in developing the underlying elements of your own project, but you will also be helping your classmates develop theirs. A primary objective during class time will be to help each other work out the major elements of our stories. You will be submitting parts of your working project each week. You will also present your works in progress to the class during this time in order to solicit critical feedback. Your job as an audience member will be to assess and offer as detailed and helpful feedback as possible. **Note:** You will not be excused from class time to conduct interviews. **All work** will be evaluated with the assumption that it has been meticulously proof-read and reviewed. Grammar and spelling errors will affect your grade. Academic standards for citations, logic, and coherence! will apply to all work and presentations.

**(2) Project Execution EXCELLENCE.** This one is fairly straightforward, but also quite demanding. Outside of class, you need to be writing, photographing, filming, designing major chunks of your project starting **NOW**. Above all else that might be going on in your life this semester, this senior seminar project needs to take priority (at least until it's done in early April). The more that you produce now (while it's minus 30 outside), the less stress you'll have this spring (when it's +30). Break down your project into smaller (doable) units and dive into PRODUCTION.

## REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Attendance, Ethical-Professional Conduct, Active Verbal Participation & Collaborative Feedback (30%)**— This is a once-a-week seminar. Attendance is mandatory. **Be here**, in mind, body, and spirit. **Excessive absences will result in a failing grade.** This seminar is a highly participatory class. One of the **essential requirements** for this course will be *actively helping your classmates conceptualize and hone their projects*. You need to be verbally engaged every single week.
- 2. Presentations, Project Development Phases, Web, Interviews (30%)**—During the first half of the semester, there will be three short process papers due at the beginning of class and five sets of interview edits/summaries/transcripts. Each of the papers is designed to help you think through and hammer out the essential structure, significance, and conception of your project. **In Class Presentations**— You will present one of these papers (**and parts of your working project**) to the class during the first half of the semester. These presentations are important not only for you to practice the art of public presentation but to get **FEEDBACK** from your classmates about drafts of your project.
- 3. Final Research Project and Formal Presentations (50%)**— Obviously, the primary focus of this class will be the creation and presentation of a professional quality and nationally-/internationally-oriented media project. This project should be extremely well-conceived, substantive in its treatment of an important topic, very creative, and flawless in its technical production—writing, editing, images, citations, audio, lighting, etc.

**PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS** — Several important/formal public presentations of your project will take place throughout the semester. All presentations should be organized, practiced, and polished. The early presentations will involve formal (in-class) round-table focus group presentations. Once your project is completed, you will present of your FINAL project to the DMC faculty and students and members of the public. Additionally, your project will be a public presentation/display of your project to the SMC College community on approximately April 28<sup>th</sup>. **Finally**, once finished, a digital version of your project will need to be published, posted live, and/or screened using the appropriate facilities available.

## TEXTS/SCREENINGS

In order to investigate, create, and tell great stories, you need to have read, seen, and heard a number of them. Throughout the semester, I will be having you read, screen, and listen to a variety of stories. Your aim as you analyze these examples should be to see what styles, techniques, or story structures there are in these productions which might be helpful for your own project. This might be something as small as a typeface for the layout, or it might be something as large as an interesting strategy for crafting an introduction or an organizational scheme for a set of storylines.

### SOME WORDS TO THE WISE:

- 🎧 **Quality!** Ultimately, this project should exemplify the **BEST** that you are capable of producing in all of the different media you are using for your project. It should be professionally done and with the goal of widespread distribution.
- 🎧 **Interviews!** Great documentary stories are grounded in interviews and behind-the-scenes visuals/perpectives. You will need a **minimum of 12 recorded interviews for this project**. These interviews should **NOT** be simple quote-grabbers or man-on-the street one-liners. Instead, they need to be extended conversations with people who can provide important threads to your story. Diversity and knowledge are paramount for your interviewees.
- 🎧 **MULTI-MEDIA ENRICHED! ALL PROJECTS** must include **professionally produced writing, audio, photo-video and design content**. Baseline Standards: **E-Books:** 70-100 pages writing + 25-30 Photographs + 10 info-graphics ; **Web Docs:** 30-50 pages writing + 15min video + 25-30 Photographs +10 info-graphics +; **Film Docs:** 45min length, 12-15 pg script +10 info-graphics + Titling + Music + Visual FX.
- 🎧 **HONESTY AND ETHICAL INTEGRITY - Collaboration, Interviewing, Production and Plagiarism.** This is one of the most important facets of this project. You must be professional, ethical, and honorable in ALL of your interactions producing this project. This includes interactions and communications with your group members, interviewees, faculty, staff and others. Failure to do so may result in the failure of the course. **Plagiarism & Dishonesty.** The Department of Digital Media and Communication has a firm policy on plagiarism and dishonesty. All are grounds for failure in this course.
- 🎧 **The Details Count.** This goes for wording, spelling, composition, lighting, etc. Multiple drafts and/or takes are essential in getting the details correct. If it isn't done right the first time then you may need to do it again...and again...and again (even from the very beginning).
- 🎧 **Get Off Campus→Out of State!** For this project, most, if not all of your sources should come from outside of Winooski Park. For many of you, they will come from outside of VT. This takes planning and preparation (see group organization and management).
- 🎧 **Be EXPLORATORY!** This is one of the most important skills you'll want to develop here. Your project should be crafted as An exploratory project which engages audiences by the stories you reveal throughout it.
- 🎧 **Be CrEaTive! Refine and STYlize**— One of the major differences between an amateur production and a professional one is in creative stylization. In our current media age, how something looks, appears, feels, or sounds is not a mere superficial feature of a project, but rather, a fundamental component. The bottom line here is that content and style are inextricably intertwined. How you tell your story is enmeshed with what your story is about and the ideas you are trying to get across. You need to have both style and substance.
- 🎧 **Group Organization/Management.** Collaborative projects can be a tough but particularly satisfying (not to mention efficient) means of creating a project. The best and most productive groups are ones **where ALL members of the group participate equally in the conception and execution of a project**. However, complete equality is not always achievable. Therefore, it's often best to lay out a clear sense of the responsibilities for each group member from the very start and then "manage" them as you progress. It's important for groups to adapt to changes or transitions in the project. Each group member has to have a sense of "ownership" in the quality of the project.
- 🎧 **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.** Our classroom should be an inclusive learning environment for all students, and it is important that we work together to create and maintain an inclusive community for all forms of diversity: race, gender, class, culture, nationality, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, ethnicity, etc. Acts of hate or bigotry will not be tolerated. My intention is to present activities and materials that are respectful of diversity.
- 🎧 **Become Your Own Tech-Meister.** You will need to create solutions to the technical problems that you face on a day-to-day basis. For some of you this means that you may want to befriend a techie. In the long, run however, you'll want to develop the skills to solve your own technical problems.
- 🎧 **Phones, Texting, and other Diversions.** In this day and age, our digital devices can be indispensable tools. Most media producers are wired to the gills with phones, laptops, iPods, iPads, headsets, etc. However, these tools are often a diversion from focus and meaningful face-to-face interaction. If you carry a phone with you, make certain that it is **OFF during class**. Period. Nothing should be even vibrating in your clothing or accessories.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

DATE	TOPIC/ASSIGNMENTS
Jan. 15	Introduction and Overview: PROJECT UPDATES AND Digital Resource Production
Jan. 22	<p><b>GAME-ON! PRODUCTION</b> Protocols: Interviews, Images, Audio &amp; Marketing Web sites –</p> <p>☑ <b>DUE:</b> <u>MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS Web Site for your Project</u></p> <p>☑ <b>DUE:</b> 1 <u>New OFF-CAMPUS</u> In-depth <u>Recorded</u> Interview (<u>Clip Quote Highlight Edits DUE in Digital Form in the SENIOR SEM FOLDER</u>)</p> <p><b>WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22 / MCCARTHY ARTS CENTER // 4 P.M.</b> Radical Empathy: Taking Action/Bridging Divides with Terri E. Givens, PhD, Professor of Political Science, University of British Columbia, Vancouver</p>
Jan. 29	<p><b>STORYLINES:</b> Crafting the Dramatic and Engaging Story ARCS, Segments, and “Chapters”</p> <p>☑ <b>DUE:</b> 2 <u>New OFF-CAMPUS</u> In-depth <u>Rec</u> Interviews (<u>Clip Quote Highlight Edits in SENIOR SEM FOLDER</u>)</p>
Feb. 5	<p><b>DIVERSITY VOICES!</b></p> <p>☑ <b>DUE:</b> 2 Off-Campus Interviews (<u>Recorded</u> and Rough Cut Edits <u>in SENIOR SEM FOLDER</u>)</p> <p>➡ <b>FOCUS GROUP#1: Presentations &amp; Critique/Feedback Session</b></p>
Feb. 12	<b>PRODUCTION DAY: NO CLASS – TRAVEL/INTERVIEWS/PHOTO SHOTS</b>
Feb. 19	<p><b>Behind-the-Scenes + Shadow “OPERATIONAL” B-roll/Supporting Imagery</b></p> <p>☑ 1 Off-Campus Interview + 20 PROFESSIONALLY PHOTOGRAPHED ILLUSTRATIVE IMAGES (<u>SELECTS in SENIOR SEM FOLDER</u>)</p> <p>➡ <b>FOCUS GROUP#2: Presentations &amp; Critique/Feedback Session</b></p>
Feb. 26	<p><b>Story Frames + Data Visualizations/Infographics—</b> Introductions and Introductory Hooks</p> <p>➡ <b>FOCUS GROUP#3: Presentations &amp; Critique/Feedback Session</b></p> <p>3 <b>Infographics</b> <u>in SENIOR SEM FOLDER</u></p> <p>☑ 2 Off-Campus Interviews (<u>Recorded</u> and Rough Cut Edits <u>in SENIOR SEM FOLDER</u>)</p>
Mar. 5	<p>➡ <b>FOCUS GROUP#4: Presentations &amp; Critique/Feedback Session</b></p> <p>☑ 2 Off-Campus Interviews (<u>Recorded</u> and Rough Cut Edits <u>in SENIOR SEM FOLDER</u>)</p>
Mar. 12	<b>☑ DUE: PROJECT INTRO/HOOK + 1 SECTION + LAYOUTS/CHAPS (EVERYBODY PRESENTS)</b>
Mar. 19	<b>SPRING Break– No Class</b>

DATE	TOPIC/ASSIGNMENTS
Mar. 26	<b>FINAL EDITING:</b> Narration and Structure – from rough draft to polished perfection + Filling in the Holes
April 2	<b>FINAL PROJECTS ARE DUE!!!</b>
Apr. 9	<b>Formal Presentations</b>
Wed. Apr. 16	<b>Formal Class Presentations</b>
Sat. April 26	<b>PUBLIC + Academic Symposium presentations April 26<sup>th</sup></b>
APRIL 30	Comprehensive Final Exam covering ALL DMC-DMK course content! 😊
May 11 <sup>h</sup> (Sun)	<b>Graduation?!!!</b>

