J226 Digital News Gathering  
San Francisco State University  
Syllabus - Spring 2011

Instructors  
Staci Baird  
s Baird@sfsu.edu  
@profbaird  
415-338-3080  

Justin Beck  
justin3000@gmail.com  
@justinryanbeck  
415-338-3080

Office hours:  
Mondays 4:00-6:00 p.m. in HUM 362, or by appointment via:  
• In-person  
• Google chat

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Class meets  
Section 1- Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. in HUM 312 (Baird)  
Section 2 - Fridays 12:30 - 3:15 p.m. in HUM 312 (Beck)

Class website:  http://www.digitalnewsgathering.wordpress.com

Time and Effort Commitment  
You should expect to spend between 3-9 hours outside of class each week working on assignments.

Learning Outcomes/Objectives  
By the end of this course you will be able to gather, produce, publish and promote digital news stories using images, charts, maps, audio and video.

You will learn how to use a variety of applications including tools for managing social media, organizing and presenting data, editing images, audio and video. This includes (but is not limited to): Twitter, Facebook, CoTweet, Flickr, YouTube, Google Reader, Google Docs, Garage Band, and iMovie.

Required Readings/Textbook/Gear  
• Journalism Next A Practical Guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing by Mark Briggs  
• AP Stylebook (hard copy or online subscription)  
• Various reading assignments and handouts will also be posted to iLearn.  
• The course syllabus and assignments are posted on the class website: digitalnewsgathering.wordpress.com. Schedule and
assignments are subject to change. You are responsible for checking the website for the most up-to-date information.

Students are required to have access to devices that can capture audio, video and still images and allow for the easy transfer of such media to a computer. We can assess your gear at the beginning of the semester.

Suggested devices: Zoom H1 ($100) or H2 ($130-150) audio recorder; Kodak Zi8 ($100) digital video/still camera.

**Grades**
Attendance: 15 (1 pt per class, 15 weeks)

Discussion/class participation: 75 (5 pts per class, 15 weeks)

Social media: 60 (5 pts per week, 12 weeks)

Multimedia: 80
- Google map: 10
- EPA worksheet and charts: 10
- "How to" photo gallery: 10
- Event photo gallery: 10
- Audio Q&A: 10
- Audio interview: 10
- Video MOS: 10
- Video interview/b-roll: 10

Essays: 10 (5 pts each)

Skills test: 100

Total points: **340 points**

A passing grade for this class is C+ or higher.

**Journalism Department Policy on Plagiarism**
Plagiarism, the passing off of someone else's work as your own, is a serious offense against scholarship, journalism and honesty. It is regarded as a serious offense by this university and this department. In journalism, the object is to develop one's own original body of work, based on one's own reporting and research, and delivered in one's own "voice"--in one's own writing--in an effort to give the reader as faithful a rendition of the truth of things as we are capable. By contrast, plagiarism delivers what someone else has researched and written under the pretense that it is one's own work. The plagiarist lies to the reader by pretending the stolen writing is original, depriving the real author of
credit, and denying readers the right to form opinions based on the real sources of information. To call this a disservice to journalism is putting it in the mildest terms. When a journalist steals someone else's work, it damages the credibility of all his or her associates, calling into question the integrity of the newspaper or magazine in which the plagiarized work is published. Plagiarists fail their readers, their profession and themselves. San Francisco State University calls plagiarism "literary theft" and treats it as a disciplinary issue. Journalism Department professors regard plagiarists as liars and thieves and read their assignments with disbelief beyond skepticism. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will receive an F.

**Accommodations for Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email dprc@sfsu.edu. (More info: [http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/facultyfaq.html#1](http://www.sfsu.edu/~dprc/facultyfaq.html#1))

**Journalism Department Policy on Misspelled Names, Errors of Fact and Deadlines.**

Misspelled names received an F on the assignment. Missed deadlines receive an F on the assignment. Errors of fact receive an F on the assignment.

**Course Schedule (subject to change)**

**Pre-class assignment due the first day of class:**
Read Briggs page 1-8.

Discussion questions (bring your answers to class):
1. What website do you visit every day? Why? What do you get out of the site?
2. How do you define news?

**Write a 350 word essay that answers the following (This is not a Q&A. It is not necessary to include the questions in your paper.):**
1. Why are you majoring in journalism?
2. Where do you see yourself five years after graduation?
3. Find a job description for a job you hope to have (copy and paste the link in your doc). Or, describe your ideal job.
4. How will you learn the skills you need to succeed in your career?

**Week 1 - Jan 24 The future of journalism.**
The future of journalism, online journalism literacy, terminology, trends.

**Lab:** Sign up for Gmail, Google Reader, Facebook (Facebook page San Fran Beat: [http://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Francisco-Beat/131791390198677](http://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Francisco-Beat/131791390198677)), Twitter, and Dropbox. Write down your login info. You will need it throughout the semester.

Short intro lesson on Google Reader.

**Assignment:**
Complete the online skills assessment: [https://survey.insightify.com/632-7cd-e50-aa6](https://survey.insightify.com/632-7cd-e50-aa6)

Sign up for Gmail, Facebook (Facebook page San Fran Beat: [http://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Francisco-Beat/131791390198677](http://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Francisco-Beat/131791390198677)), Twitter, and Dropbox. Write down your login info. You will need it throughout the semester.

Sign up for Google Reader and subscribe to the following RSS feeds:
San Fran Beat
SFGate:
--Page One News
--Bay Area News
SFAppeal News
SFWweekly News
SFist News
San Francisco Bay Guardian Front Page
California Watch:
--Articles
--Facts and Figures
OaklandLocal
Oakland Tribune Top Oakland Tribune Headlines
San Jose Mercury News Local News
Golden Gate Xpress
KQED This Week in Northern California
KALW Crosscurrents Show Podcast

Three additional sites of your choosing.
E-mail Justin & Staci a screenshot of your "Trends" page so we can verify you've subscribed to at least 40 sites.

Read Briggs Chapter 4 & Chapter 10 pg. 277-288
Discussion questions:
Find and join one of the local San Francisco media organization's Facebook page.
1. How many "fans" do they have?

2. How often do they post?

3. Are they just broadcasting or do they seek input from their followers?

4. Are they encouraging conversation?

5. Are they using anything besides the Facebook Wall to engage their fans?

**Week 2 - Jan 31 Social media.**
Introduction to social media.

**Lab:** Twitter, Facebook.

**Assignment:**
Write a short bio for your Twitter account and upload a photo.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

Discussion questions:
Follow a journalist or media organization that's using Twitter and evaluate their use of social media.
1. How often do they post?

2. Are they just broadcasting or do they seek input from their followers?

3. Are they encouraging conversation?

4. Do you get a sense of their personality?

5. What are they doing well? How could they improve?

**Week 3 - Feb 7 Social media.**
Discuss social media evaluations.
Lab: Twitter, Facebook tools, metrics. Sign up for TweetDeck.

Assignment:
Read Yahoo Style Guide (Handout posted on iLearn)


Taylor Momsen Did Not Write This Headline: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/17/business/media/17carr.html

Discussion questions:

2. Do you think there's a way to still write "creative" headlines and still meet the requirements of search engine optimization. Why or why not? Describe one solution that would allow you to publish clever, creative headlines for the print newspaper but also have seo-friendly headlines for your news website?

3. When it comes to digital headlines they can appear in a number of places. What are two of these places?

4. Use Google News to search for a current news story. Copy the top five headlines that appear in the search results. What "keywords" do all the headlines use? How do the headlines differ?

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

*Extra credit: Attend the Social Media Week SF Academic Tweetup and live Tweet from the mixer include the tag #SMWSF.

Week 4 - Feb 14 Writing for the web.
Introduction to SEO, linking, tagging. Requirements for posting stories to San Fran Beat.

Lab: Sign up for WordPress. Post the essay you turned in on the first day of class. Be sure to include at least three links, and at least three tags.
Assignment:
Read Briggs Chapter 9

Discussion questions:
1. Find an example of one story that would have benefited from a map.
2. Find an example of one chart or infographic.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

Week 5 - Feb 21 Charts and maps.
Introduction to charts and maps. Evaluate your examples of a chart/infographic and map.

Lab: Google charts, Google maps. Many Eyes.
Create a spreadsheet
Create a chart
Create a map

Guest: Max Garrone (map mashups)

Assignment:
Create a Google Map mashup and post to San Fran Beat along with a short paragraph introducing the map and citing (and linking to) all data sources.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

Week 6 - Feb 28 Research and investigation - Library workshop.
Meet in Library Annex I.

Introduction to research.

Assignment:
Complete purple handout on EPA research. Create and post three EPA charts to San Fran Beat along with a short paragraph for each chart explaining what the data shows. Cite the chart data source (and link to it).
Discussion questions:
1. Practice shooting with your camera in natural light and with a Flash in the dark or at night. Take at least 10 photos of classrooms on campus. What differences do you notice? Save your photos and bring them to class.

2. Practice filling your frame in your photos by shooting close-ups. Take at least 10 photos of people you see every day on campus. Don’t let the subject pose or look directly at the camera. Try to capture them in their natural state. If you don’t have a lens that zooms, you’ll have to move uncomfortably close to your subject. Figure out how close you need to get. Save your photos and bring them to class.

Make sure you can get the photos off of your camera and onto the computers in the HUM 312 lab. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIGURE THIS OUT BEFORE CLASS. Bring any and all necessary cables with you to class (ie: USB cable).

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 7 - March 7 Photo stories.**
Introduction to photo basics - composition, framing, angles, editing.

**Lab:** Practice and publish portraits, candids, action, detail, landscapes.

**Assignment:**
Sign up for Flickr and post your photos from lab. Be sure to give each photo a title, description and at least five tags. Create a set and put all the photos in the set. Be sure to give the set a title and a description. Post a link to the set on Twitter and the San Fran Beat Facebook page.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 8 - March 14 Photo galleries.**
Introduction to multimedia storytelling.
Lab: Create and evaluate storyboards for a photo story about how to do something. You should plan to have a minimum of 10 "key" shots.

Assignment:
Follow the steps in Briggs Chapter 6, pg. 158-171 and post your "How to" gallery to San Fran Beat.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

Week 9 - March 21 Photo galleries.
Evaluate "How to" galleries.

Lab: In-class photo assignment. Posting galleries using WordPress, Flickr.
Upload the photos to Flickr, create a set called "How to ..." be sure to give each photo a title, description and at least five tags. Pick the 10 key photos and create a gallery via WordPress. Publish the gallery along with a short paragraph describing what you documented in photos. Post it to San Fran Beat. Promote the story via Twitter and Facebook.

Assignment:
Take photos to document an event. Be sure to study the event beforehand and have a list of the 10 key photos you want to capture to tell a story about the event, but plan to take 20-25 photos total. Upload the photos to Flickr, create a set with the title of the event. Be sure to give each photo a title, description and at least five tags. Pick the 10 key photos and create a gallery via WordPress. Publish the gallery along with a short paragraph with the who-what-why-how-where-when of the event. Post it to San Fran Beat. Promote the story via Twitter and Facebook.

Read Briggs Chapter 7

Discussion questions:
Listen to five podcasts on iTunes. Subscribe to the ones you find the most interesting or useful.
1. Which one do you like the most? Why?
2. How does the podcast utilize the strengths of audio storytelling? Give at least one specific example.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.).
You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 10 - March 28 SPRING BREAK NO CLASSES**

**Week 11 - April 4 Audio.**
Introduction to audio.

**Lab:** Use your mobile phone to record a short interview. Ask a student to give you their name, year in school and major. Then ask them "What are your spring break plans?" or "What did you do over spring break?" Save the interview and bring the audio to class. Make sure you can get the audio off of your phone and onto the computers in the HUM 312 lab. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIGURE THIS OUT BEFORE CLASS. Bring any and all necessary cables with you to class (ie: USB cable).

**Assignment:**
Find two audio stories and evaluate:
1. The use of nat sound.
2. The choice of sound bites.
3. Do you think audio was the best way to tell the story? Why or why not?
4. What do you feel was missing from the story?

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 12 - April 11 Audio.**
(Staci out April 13-18)

Review your audio story evaluations.

**Lab:** GarageBand.

**Assignment:** Record a Q&A interview with a professor at SFSU.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.).
You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 13 - April 18 Audio.**

**Lab:** Edit your Q&A interview into a 2-3 minute piece and post it to San Fran Beat. Promote the story via Twitter and Facebook.

**Assignment:**
Interview a musician, edit the interview into a 2-3 minute piece and post it on San Fran Beat. Promote the story via Twitter and Facebook.

Read Briggs Chapter 8

**Discussion questions:**
1. Visit three different sections of a news website and identify one story from each section that would have made a great video story.
2. Make sure you know you can get video off of your camera and onto the computers in the HUM 312 lab. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO FIGURE THIS OUT BEFORE CLASS. Bring any and all necessary cables with you to class (ie: USB cable).

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 14 - April 25 Video.**
Introduction to video.

**Lab:** In-class video assignment.

**Assignment:** Find two examples of videos and evaluate:
1. The use of sound.
2. The use of b-roll.
3. The use of interviews.
4. Do you think audio was the best way to tell the story? Why or why not?
5. What do you feel was missing from the story?

Sign up for YouTube.
Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 15 - May 2 Video.**
Review your video evaluations.

**Lab:** iMovie.

**Assignment:**
Record a MOS with at least five people. Remember, it's best to get more than the minimum in case some of the video doesn't turn out. Ask each person to give you their full name and hometown. If you interview students, ask them to give you their full name, year in school and major.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Week 16 - May 9 Video.**
Continue working with iMovie.

**Lab:** Edit your MOS interviews into one video with five people. Upload the video to YouTube, give the video a title, description and at least five tags. Embed the video along with a short paragraph that includes some background info on the question you asked. Post it to San Fran Beat. Promote the story via Twitter and Facebook.

**Assignment:**
Record an interview with someone about their hobby. Record at least 5 minutes worth of b-roll. Edit your interview and the b-roll into one video. Upload the video to YouTube, give the video a title, description and at least five tags. Embed the video along with a short paragraph that provides the who-what-why-how-where-when. Post it to San Fran Beat. Promote the story via Twitter and Facebook.

Use social media (Twitter & Facebook) to promote local news stories (this is an on-going assignment from now through the week of May 9.). You must Tweet at least four times a week and post to Facebook twice Thursday to Thursday.

**Final: May 18 10:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.**
Skills test.