COMM 180
Introduction to Digital Media

Credit Hours: 3

Course Time/Place: T/TH 8-9:15 AM

Instructor: Dr. Megan Adams
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Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Understand and apply traditional rhetorical principles when planning and creating digital media compositions (DMCs)

- Critically examine the cultures and contexts (e.g. social, technological, etc.) in which DMCs are created and deployed.

- Situate DMCs in comparison to other media, exploring how DMCs reciprocally draw upon and affect older/other forms of media (e.g., print, cinema, photography, broadcast radio and TV)

- Use and critically examine a range of digital capture and editing technologies (e.g. digital cameras, digital audio recorders, digital video cameras; Dreamweaver; Garage Band or Audacity; Photoshop or GIMP; Adobe Premiere)
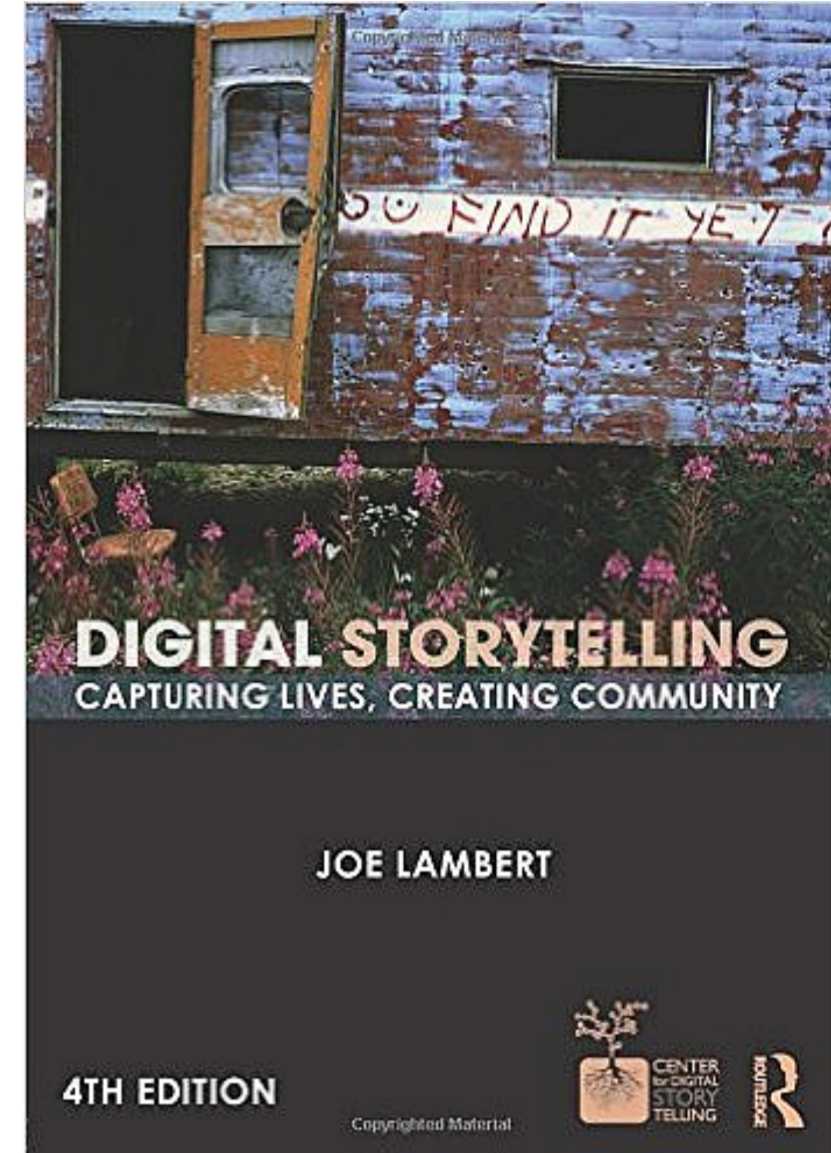
Required Materials:

Lambert, Joe (2012). Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Communities (4th ed.). New York: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-415-62703-0

Flash drive (16 GB or more)

Additional readings/materials assigned.

Grading:

Reflections 20%

Artifact Analysis 10%

Audio Composition 20%

Digital Image Composition 20%

Farm Narrative Documentary 30%

Goals of the Course:

In today's evolving digital media landscape, it is critical that we learn how to engage thoughtfully and ethically in order to be successful communicators in our personal and professional lives. The purpose of this course is to think about what makes digital media meaningful both for ourselves and for others as well as to understand and explore how the uses of digital media are shaped by social, cultural, political, economic, historical, material, and ideological forces. The primary goals of this course are to provide you with the knowledge and technical know-how to create meaningful digital media projects and to engage in a digital environment constantly in-flux.

Introduction to Digital Media provides a rhetorical framework to allow you to analyze, create, and engage in current communication landscapes in meaningful ways. You will be knowledgeable of the theory and gain the technological expertise to be ethically-aware and responsible creators of media. The following course objectives further explain how we will fulfill these goals.

Module One:
Telling A (Digital) Story:
Analyzing the
Rhetoric of DMCs

Assignment: Artifact Analysis
Paper

Module Two:
Creating Digital Media

Assignments: Audio Compositions
& Digital Image Assignment

Module Three:
Interactive Storytelling
& the Impact of
Digital Media

Assignment:
Video
Documentary

Module One:

In this module, we'll learn the fundamentals of digital storytelling by reading about and looking at examples of successful storytelling across digital platforms. Additionally, we'll be discussing the communicative landscape surrounding current digital composing practices. Such information is important to become knowledgeable about before creating DMCs, because it assists us in thinking more deeply about the stories we choose to tell and the methods we choose to tell them. In other words, because digital environments (and by nature the methods and technologies used to create DMCs) are fluctuating and evolving, it is necessary to become aware of the ethical implications of entering into these environments and the how and why we create stories using certain technologies. We'll be looking at current DMCs that allow us to examine these issues in context of reading assignments and class discussions. You will then choose a DMC to rhetorically analyze.

Module Two:

This unit requires we get acquainted with the "techy" side of digital media creation. We'll be honing our skills in audio-visual composing particularly. We'll hear from the "experts" and play with cameras, microphones, and video cameras with the goal of becoming comfortable with each of these digital technologies. As we work with these technologies, we'll discuss successes and failures as well as evaluate the affordances and constraints of each medium. We'll also build on knowledge gained from Module One about the landscapes in which we are composing, and the often difficult and invisible labor that goes into creating and publishing DMCs.

Module Three:

In this final module, we'll use the knowledge and skills gained during Modules One and Two to create a short video documentary aimed at helping preserve and promote rural culture in Hancock County. We'll be working with representatives from the university and The Hancock County Historical Society to work on these projects that will have a real-life audience upon completion. Here, you will be tasked with becoming creators of media. That means you will have to take into consideration the nature of the story you want to tell, and the ways different forms of media will help you tell that story. You'll also have to consider issues of labor and time management, collaboration, and any ethical dilemmas you might face as you create and publicize your work. As you focus on this project, we'll also spend time reading about and hearing from media professionals about how they create and tell stories across social media platforms, a key element in successful digital storytelling.

Reflections (20%): Throughout the semester you will be prompted to complete short responses to our class readings and discussions. These responses do not always have to be formal, but should function as critical analyses of the readings assigned. In this way, it is my hope that these responses help you begin to make connections between the sources we read and discuss in-class as well as to your own lives. Each response should be between 250-300 words, and include at least one question related to the readings.

Artifact Analysis (10%): Before we can begin to engage in digital media environments, it's important that we understand the nature of those environments and how they affect the ways digital media is created and circulated. We also must gain a good understanding of the rhetorical elements of DMCs to gauge how successful they are in reaching and moving audiences. Throughout Module One we will study the fundamentals of good storytelling as well as the forces that influence the creation of DMCs including: social, cultural, political, economic, historical, material, and ideological forces. In this assignment, you'll choose one DMC to rhetorically analyze and write a 2-3 page paper.

Farm Narrative Doc (30%)This project requires you take the skills you gained in Module One (analyzing/reflecting on digital trends) and Module Two (creating digital compositions using images and/or sound) to create a 4-5 minute short documentary intended to educate potential donors about the significance of the Farm Narrative Project (an effort to capture the oral histories of local farmers). As with the audio and digital images assignment, you will be creating and editing these projects. You will use interviews, b-roll, and sound clips to create an entertaining, educating video composition. Additionally, since much of digital media production requires that stories be circulated and publicized across platforms, you will develop a social media plan in which you will explain/embed examples and explanations of how and why you would promote or publish content used to promote the Farm Narratives project across several media platforms. Lastly, you will each individually have to complete a written reflection detailing your experience working with digital media and in a group for this project. Again, each element of this final project is designed to get you engaged with all aspects of digital media creation and circulation. As a perk, we will be visited by media professionals throughout the semester to provide feedback for your projects.:

Audio Composition (20%):): In this assignment we'll focus on honing our interview skills to create a story based on the models we study in-class from StoryCorps. To successfully complete this assignment, you'll have to develop interview questions and collect quality audio samples from an interview you conduct with someone you feel has a story to tell. We'll then edit our stories, and if you wish, you may upload your interview to StoryCorps where it will be preserved in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The goal of this assignment is to become comfortable using and editing audio technologies to capture great stories.):

Digital ImageComposition (20%):We'll continue to build our digital media skills and focus on composing digital images in this assignment. You'll work to capture five digital images, and chose one to edit on the storytelling platform, Cowbird. This platform allows you to compose stories that combine audio, images and words. As you use these various digital technologies to create stories you'll reflect on the rhetorical affordances of each mode, and defend your choices in your cover letter (which will be covered in more depth in-class).