

MRTS 3500 Fall 2021

Reporting For Digital Media

3500-LECTURE MO 11:00-12:50

3500-301 LAB 9:00-10:20 AM

3500-302 LAB 11:00-12:20 PM

3500-303 LAB 1:00-2:20 PM

Room RTFP 184

Instructor: Steven Ackermann (Steven.Ackermann@UNT.edu)

Office: Sycamore 212

Office Hours:

Mondays 9:30-10:30 AM AND 1:30-3:30 PM

Other days/times by appointment (including Zoom)

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Jaelene Ramirez (JaeleneRamirez@MY.UNT.edu)

TEXTBOOK:

NONE

TECHNOLOGY:

- ✓ Access to a computer (PC or Mac) running current version of Adobe Premiere.
- ✓ External Hard Drive (at least 256Gb; SSD preferred).
- ✓ SD Storage (Class 10 SD card; at least 32Gb).
- ✓ See notes below regarding additional equipment available for this class.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTATIONS:

MRTS 3500 is a beginner-to-intermediate production course intended to follow MRTS 2210 (Introduction to Production.) The course covers single-camera video photography, editing, writing, reporting, information gathering and storytelling for non-fiction digital media. You will receive hands-on experience developing, reporting, shooting and producing (both audio and video) news-style content for broadcast and online delivery. Information programming will include documentary, sports, entertainment formats and news across multiple platforms and distribution modes. Prerequisite(s): MRTS/CBCM major status & MRTS 2210. Stories which demonstrate excellence may be selected to air on NTTV News.

Specifically, you will:

- Understand proper techniques for information gathering including basic journalism practices.
- Understand story-telling techniques appropriate for various media.
- Practice various forms of writing/scripting appropriate for different projects.
- Practice professional videography skills including shot composition/framing, lighting and sound recording.
- Practice professional on-location techniques.
- Practice professional editing skills including shot sequencing, use of graphics and use of sound.
- Demonstrate production of media projects from conception through production and review on appropriate deadlines.

This course fulfills the CLASS requirement for Communication and Digital Skills. At the end of this course, students should be able to demonstrate effective communication using a digital technological platform and do at least two of the following:

- 1. Demonstrate the ability to communicate a central idea effectively using appropriate organization/structure.*
- 2. Demonstrate the ability to develop content at an advanced level using a combination of effective supporting materials.*
- 3. Demonstrate the ability to engage in verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors that are appropriate for the audience and adhere to the conventions of the medium selected (written, oral, or visual).*

Class Structure & Operations:

This is a face-to-face class. Accomplishing class objectives requires participation in lecture/discussions and collaboration during the lab assignments.

UNT encourages everyone to wear a face covering when indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to protect yourself and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines. Face covering guidelines could change based on community health conditions.

Monday lectures (11:00-12:50) are structured as discussions and will NOT be recorded. Each lecture will end with approximately ten minutes for you to complete a short online quiz. You will have until 5:00 PM to complete the quiz, but you must attend the lecture in order to receive credit for the quiz.

Friday labs (the one you are assigned to) are opportunities for you to practice the skills required for your various projects. Certain labs will be designated as “working periods” where you will NOT be required to attend, but our Graduate Teaching Assistant will be available to assist you with your projects.

Equipment: This is the kit assigned for this class:

- Panasonic DVX200 Camera / Tripod
- Batteries / Charger
- Lav Mic
- Handheld Mic
- Wireless Mic
- Undergrad Boom Mic
- XLR Cables
- 3 Light Kit

When using Department equipment or editing in the lab, you must use the resources assigned to this class.

You can use your own equipment for assignments produced outside of class. If you use your own equipment, expectations are EXACTLY THE SAME as if you were using school equipment. That means WORK FLOW, AUDIO and VIDEO should all be approached as if you were on professional-grade equipment. Not using a mic or a tripod won't work. Telling me you couldn't edit because the footage format was different won't work. You get my point?

Equipment Reservation and Check-Out: You must reserve equipment in advance using the online checkout system: checkout.unt.edu ([Links to an external site.](#)). Checking out equipment without a reservation means you have to take whatever equipment they have at the time, there is no guarantee you'll get what you need.

Overnight Equipment must be requested with instructor permission. Email me a list of what you need and I will forward the request to the Equipment Room with my permission. There is a template for equipment requests in Canvas; using it will make the whole process go a lot faster! Email me AND the Equipment Room (MRTSequipment@unt.edu) at the same time for faster service.

Submitting your work will be accomplished on CANVAS. Written assignments should be submitted as .doc files (note that scripts should be submitted using the designated dual-column template). Video assignments must be submitted as YouTube links (make certain your videos are NOT marked private) or Vimeo links. **ALWAYS PUT A SLATE ahead of your videos.** You should export from Adobe Premiere as H264 using the preset HD1080i 29.97.

Deadlines: It is inevitable that you will experience technical difficulties, so plan ahead and leave extra time. What you think will take an hour will take three, so don't leave anything (rendering, compressing, uploading) until the last minute.

Late Work: Late work will be graded at 80% of the available points.

Technical Proficiency: This is considered an "intermediate" level class. Everyone will have had MRTS 2210 but may have different levels of experience beyond that course. THAT IS EXPECTED. If you don't feel strong in an area, this class will give you a chance to practice and expand your knowledge in producing, writing, shooting, cutting and audio.

No Mock Projects: Mock versions of the projects of any kind are prohibited. Show me you can do the real deal first, then we can talk about satire, parody and the like. That doesn't mean comedy is outlawed, just that mock versions of projects won't be accepted.

No Double Dipping: You cannot use a project you produced for another class for an assignment in this class. If you wrote the project in another class and want to produce it, that can be arranged if you let me know in advance. No re-editing prior projects, no re-using already shot footage, no rehashing old work of any kind. Everything you produce in this class should be ORIGINAL. That said, if you have the opportunity to do a real project, such as a video for a client, a friend, your church, etc, by all means use it for a class project as well, but it must be original and not started before this class began.

GRADING:

Weekly Lecture Quiz		100	20%
<i>(12 Quiz Scores @ 10 points; Bonus available)</i>			
Weekly Lab Assignments		50	10%
<i>(5 Lab-only assignments @ 10 points)</i>			
Projects		350	70%
<i>Project 1 Interview</i>	40		
<i>Project 2 News Story Pitch</i>	50		
<i>Project 2 News Story Final</i>	60		
<i>Project 3 Final Pitch</i>	50		
<i>Project 3 Final Script</i>	50		
<i>Project 3 Final Promo</i>	40		
<i>Project 3 Final Completed</i>	60		
TOTAL		500	

Notes:

- ✓ **Weekly Lecture Quiz** will be made available during the last ten minutes of each class. Students will have until 5:00 PM on the day of the lecture to complete the quiz. You must attend the class in order to earn quiz credit. 20 bonus points are available.
- ✓ **Lab Assignments** are indicated on the weekly schedule.
- ✓ **Projects** are described below and are worth 70% of your final grade. Note that Project 2 and Project 3 consist of multiple components that will be graded individually. **There will be an automatic 10% penalty (up to 30% of the Project score) for failing to use a tripod, improper camera settings (e.g. white balance or focus) or improper sound (e.g. use of the wrong microphone, etc.).**
 - **Project 1** is an interview of your assigned partner. You will be graded on the technical aspects (framing, video quality, audio quality) and the editorial quality of an interview not to exceed a total of 5 minutes.
 - **Project 2** is a news story suitable for use on NTTV. You will be graded on the quality of your pitch (news value, general audience interest) and the quality of the edited package (not to exceed 2:30) including technical aspects (framing, video quality, audio quality, editing sequences, writing) and editorial aspects (storytelling technique, attribution, etc.)
 - **Project 3** is a video project that can be one of the following. In each case you will be graded on the quality and specificity of the pitch, the script and the final project which includes a grade for the promo to teaser.
 - **News story** not to exceed 3:00 and suitable for use on NTTV. Must include a :15 or :30 promo spot
 - **Instructional video** not to exceed 5:00. Must include a teaser or trailer video not to exceed 1:00.
 - **Branded or sponsored content** not to exceed 3:00. Must include a :15 or :30 promo spot.
 - **Other** video project subject to instructor's prior approval.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

The class meets only ONCE each week with ONE lab experience. You will only receive QUIZ credit for classes you attend and can only receive LAB credit for lab sessions you attend. Lectures will NOT be recorded. PowerPoint decks and other materials will be posted to CANVAS.

Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

If you are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure.

CLOTHING/APPEARANCE:

It is not possible to address every possible situation. It is important that you understand that your appearance speaks directly to your professionalism and to credibility. It may be periodically necessary for the faculty to ask that someone change their dress based upon the nature of a specific assignment or their determination that a particular outfit is not appropriate.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION:

Communicating with students using the UNT student email account is part of the university's contract with students. Electronic communication with students in this class will be through the students' myunt accounts rather than personal accounts, so be sure you regularly check your myunt email.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE: *(Subject to change depending on the needs of the class.)*

Lecture Titles in BOLD & Underline.

Lab assignment briefly described for each week.

Homework assignments will be brief reading materials and will be added in order to be timely.

Week 1: (Aug 23)

Introductions & discussion of class syllabus

What is a story (Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: Upload a NON-FICTION video and discuss (10 points)

Homework assignment:

✓ [What is an Ally?](#)

Week 2: (Aug 30)

Diversity Equity and Inclusion in story-telling (Lecture/discussion) (Discuss Ally-ship)

Newsroom as a model for video production (Lecture/discussion)

Writing in a newsroom model

Audio & Video in a newsroom model

Lab assignment: Review equipment operation; upload :30 audio/video clip (10 points)

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 3: (Sep 6): Labor Day (NO Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: Complete and upload a 5-shot sequence (10 points)

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 4: Sep 13

Anatomy of a story (Lecture/discussion)

Spot News & Breaking News

Enterprise Reporting

Feature Reporting

Localized Reporting

Event Reporting

All reporting should be investigative

The art of the Story Pitch (Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: Upload a news story and discuss (10 points)

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 5: Sep 20

Audio & Video on location (Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: Cut-down a designated CNN pkg and script into a VO/SOT (10 points)

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 6: Sep 27

The Art of the Interview (Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: PROJECT #1: Interview partner student & upload no more than 3:00

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 7: Oct 4

Assembling the Elements (Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: TBD

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 8: Oct 11

Devil ALWAYS in the DETAILS (Lighting & Sound) (Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: Pitching your PROJECT 2 PKG story (pitches due Friday 10/15; stories due 10/29)

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 9: Oct 18

Ready to edit? Not so fast... (Lecture/discussion)

Steps to review your story

Graphics in your story

Lab assignment: Time to work on your PROJECT 2 PKG story

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 10: Oct 25

Storytelling beyond News (Lecture/discussion)

Promotional video & spots

Branded content

Instructional content

Lab assignment: Feedback on your PROJECT 2 pkg story (due 5:00 PM)

Homework assignment:

✓ [TBD](#)

Week 11: Nov 1

Planning your final project (Lecture/discussion)

Choosing your subject

Understanding the deadlines

Working as a team

Lab assignment: Pitch your PROJECT 3 (pitches due 5:00 PM)

Week 12: Nov 8

Hello, I'm from the Legal Department (Lecture/discussion)

Legal issues of defamation, privacy & copyright

Special protections for "news" productions

Ethical decision-making

Lab assignment: Work on your PROJECT 3

Week 13: Nov 15

The ART of copy-editing (Lecture/discussion)

Lab assignment: Work on your PROJECT 3

Week 14: Nov 22

Monday Lecture class: PROJECT 3 Scripts DUE 5:00 PM

No Lab (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Week 15: Nov 29

Career Chats: Preparing for Interviews

Lab assignment: Feedback on your PROJECT 3

FINAL Projects due Monday December 6