

Digital Tools for Journalism

Course code: JRN 276

Term and year: Fall 2025

Day and time: Tuesdays (18:30-21:15)

Instructor: Douglas Arellanes

Instructor contact: douglas.arellanes@aauni.edu

Consultation hours: 60 minutes before each class and by appointment

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Intermediate
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	TOEFL iBT 71
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	HSC el, PS el, JC req, CEA

1. Course Description

Digital technology is radically transforming the practice of journalism, recasting everything from newsgathering to end-user preferences. This class will give students an opportunity to try out currently used digital journalism tools and explore practical and ethical issues related to their use. Students will get hands-on experience documenting events and daily life using a variety of digital media – photography, video, audio and text. The focus of the class is on reporting for the World Wide Web, social networks as sources of news and opinion, and how to use online storytelling tools effectively. The class assumes some familiarity with social media, digital photography, and audiovisual recording.

Students are strongly advised to have their own computers and cameras (cameras built into mobile phones are OK), and other equipment such as tripods, microphones, are recommended.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Use modern digital tools to fulfill journalistic tasks effectively;
- Identify newsworthy subjects and research, edit and deliver reports about them;
- Critically evaluate online presentations by themselves and others;
- Understand how online culture and social media affect the values, practices and techniques of journalism.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

- Craig Silverman, editor, "The Verification Handbook," <http://verificationhandbook.com/>
- Clare Wardle and Hossein Derakshan, "Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making," <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research/168076277c>
- "95 tools for investigative journalists," *Medium*, <https://medium.com/@Journalism2ls/75-tools-for-investigative-journalists-7df8b151db35>

- Joanna Duchesne, et al. "Video Production: Filming a Story," chapter 4 of *Video for Change*, http://www.mediafire.com/download/rbhcy460twzvh8a/EN_V4C_Chapter_4.pdf
- Adam Dachis, "The Basics of Video Editing: The Complete Guide," *LifeHacker*, <http://lifehacker.com/5785558/the-basics-of-video-editing-the-complete-guide>

- [Essential Guide to Newsgathering and Monitoring on the Social Web](#), First Draft Coalition
- Alfred Hitchcock, "Alfred Hitchcock on film production," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Alfred-Hitchcock-on-film-production-1989444/Economic-considerations>
- Marco Solorio, "Audio Techniques for Visual Editors," https://library.creativecow.net/articles/solorio_marco/magazine_audio_techniques.php
- Mike Russell, "How to set up your own internet radio station," *Media.info*, <https://media.info/radio/how-to/how-do-you-set-up-your-own-internet-radio-station>
- Richard Koci Hernandez, "Mobile Reporting Field Guide," UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, <http://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/mobilereportingfieldguide/MobileGuide.pdf>

Recommended Materials

- See "Resources" list on the course website

4. Teaching methodology

Students will learn by doing, discussing and reading. Discussions, demonstrations, information gathering, hands-on editing and production work will fill much of the class time, supplemented with lectures, in-class browsing and guest speakers. In addition, students will be expected to contribute to an online forum accessed through the class website as an extension of the in-class discussions. Pointers to additional online resources related to class topics can be found on the course website.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Session 1 4 Feb 2025	Topic: "Hello World" - Introduction & course overview Description: What this course is about. Journalism and the Internet. Digital tools for media production, research and reporting. Social networks in news distribution. Reading: Photoshop User Guide https://helpx.adobe.com/photoshop/user-guide.html Assignments/deadlines: Create your first altered image – cut someone out of a photo
Session 2 11 Feb 2025	Topic: Marshall McLuhan and Critical Thinking Description: An introduction to the concepts Marshall McLuhan covers in "Understanding Media" and "The Medium is the Message;" An introduction to critical thinking as a prerequisite for creating and evaluating content on the internet. Reading: Photoshop user guide Assignments/deadlines: Edit a photo and remove a person from a group photo
Session 3 18 Feb 2025	Topic: Image manipulation in history Description: A look at manipulated images from the birth of photography to now Reading: The Verification Handbook, edited by Craig Silverman Assignments/deadlines: Complete the First Draft "Basics: Quick start to verifying online media" course.
Session 4 25 Feb	Topic: Verification Description: An introduction to methodologies and tools used to verify

2025	<p>content on the internet</p> <p>Reading: The Verification Handbook, edited by Craig Silverman</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Using Photoshop, create a fake image that could be believable online</p>
Session 5 4 Mar 2025	<p>Topic: Elements of a great visual story</p> <p>Description: What are the elements that come together to make a great story? We'll look at the role of emotion, surprise and acting as a proxy for the reader</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Identify topic for midterm multimedia project</p>
Session 6 11 Mar 2025	<p>Topic: "You Are The Product"</p> <p>Description: A critical view of social media data collecting and handling</p> <p>Reading: "You Are The Product," by John Lanchester, London Review of Books, 17 August 2017</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Work on your midterm multimedia project</p>
Session 7 18 Mar 2025	<p>Topic: Midterm presentations</p> <p>Description: Present and discuss your midterm multimedia projects</p> <p>Reading: None</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: None</p>
24-28 Mar 2025	Mid-term break
Session 8 1 Apr 2025	<p>Topic: Digital audio</p> <p>Description: Microphones and recording media; podcasting and internet radio stations; introduction to audio editing; Singin' In The Rain film</p> <p>Reading: "State of the News Media," Pew Research Center, http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Work on final multimedia projects</p>
Session 9 8 Apr 2025	<p>Topic: Digital audio Part II</p> <p>Description: Working with Audacity, multi-track editing</p> <p>Reading: "State of the News Media," Pew Research Center, http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Create sound collage; Work on final multimedia projects</p>
Session 10 15 Apr 2025	<p>Topic: Editing video – basic concepts</p> <p>Description: An introduction to video editing; Alfred Hitchcock on editing</p> <p>Reading: Alfred Hitchcock, "Alfred Hitchcock on film production," https://www.britannica.com/topic/Alfred-Hitchcock-on-film-production-1989444</p>
Session 11 22 Apr 2025	<p>Topic: Editing video – advanced topics</p> <p>Description: Video editing using Adobe Premiere; subtitles; color correction; getting your project to look its best</p> <p>Reading: Adam Dachis, "The Basics of Video Editing: The Complete Guide," LifeHacker, http://lifelacker.com/5785558/the-basics-of-video-editing-the-complete-guide</p>
Session 12 29 Apr 2025	<p>Topic: Advanced topics in journalism</p> <p>Description: An overview of the development of Photoshop AI functions; an introduction to AI-powered image generators like Stable Diffusion and how they work</p>

	Reading: Star Gazers, "Artificial Intelligence in Journalism," https://medium.com/star-gazers/artificial-intelligence-in-journalism-2fcd102207f3 Assignments/deadlines: Video editing project
Session 13 6 May 2025	Topic: Where do we go from here? Description: A look at emerging technologies, Amy Webb's Tech Trends Report, Gartner's Hype Cycle; 'digital frailty' Reading for next class: Future Today Institute, "Tech Trends Report," https://futuretodayinstitute.com/trends/ Assignments/deadlines: Work on final projects
Session 14 13 May 2025	Topic: Final projects presentation and group feedback, Part I Description: Students present their final multimedia projects and discuss them with each other Reading: Assignments/deadlines: All final projects due
Session 15 20 May 2025	Topic: Final projects presentation and group feedback, Part II Description: Students present their final multimedia projects and discuss them with each other Reading: Assignments/deadlines: None

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	25%	Understand how online culture and social media affect the values, practices and techniques of journalism	1,2
Readings	31		Get context for technology and how it is used in a journalistic environment	1
Assignments	19	20%	Use modern digital tools to fulfill journalistic tasks effectively; Identify newsworthy subjects and research, edit and deliver reports about them; critically evaluate online presentations by themselves and others.	1,2,3
Midterm longform multimedia project	30	25%	Use modern digital tools to fulfill journalistic tasks effectively; Identify newsworthy subjects and research, edit and deliver reports about them; critically evaluate online presentations by themselves and others.	1,2,3

Final longform multimedia project	30	30%	Use modern digital tools to fulfill journalistic tasks effectively; Identify newsworthy subjects and research, edit and deliver reports about them; critically evaluate online presentations by themselves and others.	1,2,3
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Assignment 1: Editing a person out of a photo

Students will edit a person out of a group photo using Adobe Photoshop. The resulting work will be presented before the class for discussion.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Technical quality of photo editing	50%
Interest of concept	25%
On-time delivery of finished product	25%

Assignment 2: Creating a believable fake photo

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Technical quality of photo editing	50%
Interest of concept	25%
On-time delivery of finished product	25%

Assignment 3: Editing a video

Students will demonstrate basic proficiency with a video editing software tool such as Adobe Photoshop or Apple iMovie.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Technical quality of video editing	50%
Interest of concept	25%
On-time delivery of finished product	25%

Midterm and final projects:

Students will produce a digital multimedia report that combines video, audio, text and images to tell a journalistic story. The projects will have at least 10 'items,' individual screens of content.

8. Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Points
Narrative text	10

Audio editing	5
Video editing	10
Continuity and sequence	10
Mobile experience	10
Photography	10
Videography	10
Audio recording	10
Charts, maps and graphics	5
Overall impression	20
TOTAL	100

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](#) regarding coursework.

Course specific requirements

There are no special requirements or deviations from AAU policies for this course.

Prepared by: Douglas Arellanes

Date: April 10, 2025

Approved by:

Date: