JOU 4930 Video Storytelling
Summer C 2015 / Study abroad for the College of Journalism and Communications in Italy / 3 credits

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ABOUT THE COURSE

Course Description
This course enables you to record and edit a two-minute video story, built around an interview and told in online journalism style (or what television calls a "nat sound package").

Learning Outcomes
By the conclusion of the course, you should be able to:
1. Identify the elements of a good interview-based video story.
2. Employ proper camera techniques to create an interesting story.
3. Edit and polish the story with Adobe Premiere Pro or Final Cut Pro.

Partners
You can either produce a video by yourself or with a partner. If you have a partner in mind now, tell me. Otherwise, you can choose a partner at our April 16 meeting. If you don't attend that meeting, I will assign a partner for you unless you tell me you prefer to produce your own video. Either way, having a buddy to help you run the camera, etc., can be helpful.

Required Equipment (between you and partner)
Laptop (required)
Either a Mac or Windows laptop is OK, so long as it has enough horsepower to run the video editing software. Make sure you have sufficient free space on the hard drive to store video files.

Video Editing Software (required)
If you have Windows, choose Adobe Premiere Pro. If you have a Mac, choose either Adobe Premiere Pro or Apple Final Cut Pro X.
- **Final Cut Pro X**. Available only for the Apple Macintosh. (If you have a Windows laptop, you will have to get Adobe Premiere Pro.) Note that iMovie, which is free, is *not* OK – it's underpowered for what you will need to do. Final Cut Pro X is available through the Mac App Store. This is software you own, not rent.
- **Adobe Premiere Pro**. For both Mac and Windows. Only the Pro version is acceptable. (The scaled-down Adobe Premiere Elements is not OK.) Any version of Premiere Pro is

OK. If you're getting the program for the first time, Adobe now only rents Premiere Pro through a subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud, which you can get at a student rate through Adobe.

Important: If you sign up for Creative Cloud as a new customer, do so before we leave the United States. Adobe requires proof of student status, which can take a few days – and if you wait until we're in Europe to sign up, Adobe may reject you because your IP address will be Italy. Also, download Premiere Pro from the cloud to your hard drive before we leave so you're not dependent on the Internet, which can be spotty and slow in Europe.

Camera (required)

Most any dedicated camera that takes 720p or better video is fine. Students with nothing more than a $100 point-and-shoot camera have produced excellent videos for this class.

- Also OK: A better camera such as a DSLR (such as Nikon or Canon), a mirrorless camera (such as the Nikon 1) or a camcorder (such as Canon Vixia).
- Avoid: A GoPro (the extreme wide-angle lens is too distorting for a profile) or a smartphone (unless you're already truly expert at video capture and file transfer).

Important: Make sure you bring any connecting cables or devices to transfer your files from the camera to the laptop. Test this before you leave for Italy. Also, make sure you have a spare memory card or two. Video files can fill up memory cards in a hurry.

Tripod (required)

Any will do. But pick one that will fit in your suitcase. Go to Best Buy to compare sizes and features. Aluminum is fine unless you have a DSLR with a big, heavy lens.

External Microphone (recommended if your camera allows)

If your camera has a microphone input jack, get a portable microphone like this lavalier mic for $25 from Audio-Technica. The difference in sound quality is enormous. If your camera is a point-and-shoot without a microphone input jack, you'll make do without an external mic by following instructions in the detailed grading rubric below.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignment and Grading

Your sole assignment is to produce a two-minute (plus or minus 30 seconds) video story of sufficient quality to include in your portfolio and impress a person who makes hiring decisions. The entire course grade (100%) will be determined solely by the quality of the video you show to the entire class in Italy.

You will export the video as a .mov file for me so I can show it in class and look at it more carefully for grading. The grade will be based on the rubric at the end of this syllabus.

Tentative Schedule

	Date	Subject	Assignment Due
1	May 7	Finding a subject; good examples	
2	May 11	More good examples	
3	May 13	Story pitch to the class	Headline, details of your story
4	May 18	Video editing software instruction	Your practice a-roll and b-roll
5	May 19	Video editing software instruction	
6	May 20	Video editing software instruction	
7	May 21	Review draft of your story (Blue Group)	Draft of your story (Blue Group)
8	May 22	Review draft of your story (Orange Group)	Draft of your story (Orange Group)
9	May 25	Presentation of finished video story (Blue)	Finished .mov file due before class
10	May 27	Presentation of finished video story (Orange)	Finished .mov file due before class

What to Look For in the Subject

- The subject you interview and build your story around must be an adult (not a student) who lives in Italy (not a visitor) and whose English is understandable.
- This is a <u>video</u>, so the subject must be *doing* something interesting.
- This is a <u>story</u>, so the subject must be interesting.

How to Find a Good Subject

- Before we leave, explore guidebooks such as Lonely Planet to look for leads.
- Look around Florence for someone doing something interesting.
- Safety first. Don't agree to see someone's etchings in his loft.

How to First Approach a Potential Subject

1. Put the camera away.
2. Look for someone with an interesting story to tell. If it bores you, move on.
3. Strike up a conversation: "What made you decide to do that?"
4. Remember the most powerful word for a journalist is *why*. "Why do you …?"
5. If the person seems interesting, ask if you can film him/her for a class project.

Grading

See rubric below. The UF grading policy can be found in the undergraduate catalog online.

	Percent		Percent			Percent			Percent
		B+	89-87%	C+	79-77%	D+	69-67%
A	100-93%	B	86-83%	C	76-73%	D	66-63%
A-	92-90%	B-	82-80%	C-	72-80%	D-	62-60%

The Secret to Getting a Good Grade

Read and follow the next section, Grading Rubric and Details.

GRADING RUBRIC AND DETAILS

	A (excellent)	B (very good)	C (acceptable)	D (unacceptable)
Story topic (25%)	Point of the story is self-evident and so interesting it could appear on a local news website.	Point of the story is self-evident and somewhat interesting	Point of the story is self-evident but of marginal interest	Point of story is either hard to discern or of relatively little interest
Sound (25%)	Crisp and clear; no distracting sounds; Levels consistent across clips and peaks at -6db; audio transitions seamless	Audible; other sounds not distracting; levels consistent across clips and peaks at -6db; audio transitions a bit jumpy	Audible but listening is sometimes strained and requires effort; levels vary but do not impede listener comprehension	At least 25% of video is inaudible without considerable effort; levels are sufficiently inconsistent as to be distracting
Camera stays still (5%)	Camera stays still because a tripod was used	Camera movement is rare and minimal	Camera movement is not rare or is noticeable	Camera movement is not rare and is noticeable
Focus and lighting (5%)	All but one clip is in focus and lighted properly	All but two clips are in focus and lighted properly	All but three clips are in focus and lighted properly	Four or more clips are out of focus or not lighted properly
Filming composition (5%)	90% of shots use space, framing, rule of thirds, lines and foreground effectively	80% of shots are effectively composed	70% of shots are effectively composed	Less than 70% of shots are effectively composed
Interview mechanics (5%)	All 4 met: 1) Apply rule of thirds; 2) subject eyes open; 3) subject looks just off camera; 4) background isn't distracting	3 of 4: 1) Apply rule of thirds; 2) subject eyes open; 3) subject looks just off camera; 4) background isn't distracting	2 of 4: 1) Apply rule of thirds; 2) subject eyes open; 3) subject looks just off camera; 4) background isn't distracting	1 of 4: 1) Apply rule of thirds; 2) subject eyes open; 3) subject looks just off camera; 4) background isn't distracting
Shot length (5%)	Shots are :02 to :07; 90% of video is b-roll	1 or 2 shots > :07	3 or 4 shots > :07	5 or more shots > :07
B-roll portion (10%)	At least 90% of video is b-roll, with no shots reused	At least 80% of video is b-roll, with no shots reused	At least 70% of video is b-roll, with no shots reused	Less than 70% of video is b-roll or b-roll shots are reused
B-roll mixture (10%)	Good mixture of shot types, angles and length; faces dominate	Shots vary but rely a little too much on one type, angle or length; faces dominate	Shoots too reliant on one type, angle or length, or faces don't dominate	Mostly a single type of shot at eye-level used, or faces don't dominate
B-roll matching (5%)	Specific b-roll when possible; when not, generic b-roll used	B-roll matches but is mostly generic	B-roll matches but specific b-roll missing	At times, b-roll clashes visually with a-roll

Extra points can be earned for:
- Interesting use of natural sound
- Using a second interview, such as with a customer

Story Topic (25%)
Find an interesting person doing something

1. Build the story around a single person. Even if filming a group of performers, find a single, primary person through whom you can tell the story.

2. The person must *do* something you can capture on video. A talking head is not a video story. A person sitting at a desk is not a video story. A video story requires *action*.

3. No pre-recorded music allowed.

4. Avoid generic stories such as "Woman Bakes Bread." Lots of people make bread. What makes this person distinctive or worth watching?

5. Be able to summarize your story in a headline of no more than 10 words: "Former Engineer Transforms Trash Dump into Wildlife Sanctuary."

6. Focus on a single idea – the headline.

7. From the opening shot on, let the viewer see right away what the story is about.

8. Reinforce the story with an appropriate ending.

Sound (25%)
Ensure the sound is clear and tells the story without video

1. Sound is more important than video. A good video story can be "read" with eyes closed.

2. Ensure interviewees can be heard clearly. Place the mic or camera close to the speaker.

3. Only interviewees are heard. The person filming is not heard or seen.

4. Record interviews in a quiet room that doesn't echo. If a dog barks or a motorcycle rumbles by, ask the person to repeat the words.

5. During the interview, nod and smile. Don't say "uh-huh" or laugh. Keep silent.

6. In editing, ensure the sound is between -12db and -6db.

7. When assembling clips, let the audio "breathe" by inserting space between them.

Camera Stays Still (5%)
Keep. The. Camera. Still.

1. Use a tripod or a table or stable place to always keep the camera still.

2. No pans. No tilts. Keep the camera still.

3. No zooms. Zoom with your own two feet, not the camera.

4. If shooting a building, let the movement come from people walking by, not the camera.

Focus and Lighting (5%)
Ensure the subject is in focus and well-lit

1. If your camera can adjust the focus, focus on the person's eyes.

2. Have the sun or source of light behind you, not behind the subject.

Filming Composition (5%)
Frame shots to be visually interesting

1. Adhere to the rule of thirds.
2. Have the person look into open space – the other two-thirds. Same for action.
3. Use foreground to provide depth. Avoid flat (2-dimensional) shots.

Interview Mechanics (5%)
Compose the interview shot appropriately

1. Using a medium or close-up shot, place the interviewee's eyes at one of the four "power" intersections, looking just slightly off camera.
2. Avoid distracting backgrounds that compete for the viewer's eyes. Let the subject be the focus. But don't sit the person right in front of a wall, either. That looks like a police lineup.
3. Sit the person in a chair that does not swivel.
4. Sit the person at a 30-degree angle to the camera.
5. Be sure the interviewee's face is well lit.
6. Ensure the sound is clear without distracting sounds, hums or echoes.
7. Use a lavalier microphone if your camera allows. Place the mic two buttons below the collar. Ask the interviewee to tuck the cord inside his/her clothing.
8. If no lavalier microphone, get the video interview shot, then stop filming and hold the camera near the person's mouth like a microphone. Sound clarity is vital.
9. Never record someone in a noisy environment like a café or restaurant.
10. Ask the person to begin with, "My name is _____ and I _____ ..."
11. If the interviewee rambles, ask him/her to describe it again in a sentence or two. ("So I can capture that properly, can you describe that again, only this time in a sentence or two?") Another technique is just to ask it again ("Tell me again: how do you make the leather soft?"), because people usually shorten their statements the second time around.
12. Avoid questions that can be answered by a yes or no. Use open-ended questions such as:
    a. Tell me your life story in five minutes.
    b. What inspired you to get into this line of work?
    c. What do you hope most to accomplish with your work?
13. The interviewee does not have to tell the story sequentially. Use your video editing program to splice and rearrange the interview.

Shot Length (5%)
Vary clip lengths between 2 and 7 seconds each

1. Keep clip lengths to between 2 and 7 seconds.
2. Vary the length of the clips. Avoid having a video filled with a string of 4-second clips.

B-Roll Portion (10%)
Most of the story is b-roll

1. At least 90% of the video is b-roll, or 108 seconds out of a 120-second video.
2. Show the interview shot no more than twice during the video.
3. No b-roll can be repeated.
4. Most video shooters take 100 minutes of real time to get 1 minute of usable video. Thus, to get enough for a 2-minute video, plan to spend about three to four hours shooting.
5. Your finished video will have about 25 different clips, which means 25 different types of shots and angles. Think creatively about different kinds of shots to tell your story.
6. Plan to shoot more than one day to get the b-roll you need.

B-Roll Mixture (10%)
Include a variety of shots from a variety of angles that complement the story

1. Use a variety of shot types: wide, medium, close and extreme close-up.
2. Use a variety of angles: eye-level, high, low and over-the-shoulder.
3. Let faces rule the video. Don't go more than 15 seconds without showing a face.

B-Roll Matching (5%)
Prefer specific b-roll to match the audio

1. Prefer b-roll that matches or complements the audio.
2. When matching video isn't appropriate, use generic b-roll.
3. Avoid b-roll that sends the viewer down a visual cul-de-sac.

Miscellaneous

1. Shoot using the camera's HD setting for 720p or 1080p in widescreen (16:9) format.
2. Record about 3 to 5 seconds before and after the desired scene. Pause a few seconds after someone speaks before asking your next question.
3. When introducing a new speaker such as a customer or family member, show the person's face immediately so the viewer knows this is a different person speaking.
4. Your video won't have a title. The only title will be the names of interviewees. For those names, use a plain lower-thirds element, usually white bold type in a simple sans serif face like Futura or Arial. Don't use colors or tricks in type.
5. Insert a cross-dissolve at both ends of the title clip. Use a two-second cross-dissolve at the end of the video for a soft fadeout. However, don't insert a cross-dissolve between clips.
6. When you're done with the video, export it as a Quick Time file or an .mp4 file.

THE FINE PRINT

Attendance
Attendance is mandatory. Per study-abroad policy, anyone coming late (after a 5-minute grace period) loses a half-letter grade for the course, and anyone who misses a class loses a full letter grade for the course. The only exception is if you are truly ill and you let me know ahead of time. (FYI, the mandatory attendance policy also applies to other educational activities during the month abroad such as guided tours and speakers.)

Academic Integrity
University of Florida students pledge to abide by an honor code that prohibits academic dishonesty such as fabrication, plagiarism and cheating. You have an affirmative obligation to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. You also must report to appropriate personnel any condition that facilitates academic misconduct. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

When I discover cheating, my default policy is to fail all involved for the entire course and report the details to the Dean of Students Office.

Students with Disabilities
Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to me when requesting accommodation. Please request that accommodation and letter in the spring, before we depart.

Help With Coping
The UF Counseling and Wellness Center is a terrific, free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive after-hours assistance, call 352-392-1575.

If you need assistance while we're in Europe, call on any faculty member or AIFS staff member.

Course Evaluations
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. You will be notified by email when the evaluations are open, near the end of Summer C. Summary results are available to you and the general public.