
DIGITAL JOURNALISM in Spring 2021 (CM2012)

Course Code	CM2012	Professor(s)	Matthew Fraser
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	Grenelle 4th floor
Class Schedule	M: 15:20-16:40 in G-009 R: 10:35-11:55 in G-009	Office Hours	Wednesday 12 – 3 pm or by appointment
Credits	4	Email	mfraser@aup.edu
Semester	Spring 2021	Office Tel. Ext.	0689263247

Course Description

This course prepares students for careers in digital journalism, providing tools and training as well as a critical understanding of trends that have transformed the profession in the digital era. Students acquire practical, career-driven experience in digital writing, website curation, and personal branding. Students also gain a critical understanding of digital media to prepare them professionally for careers in journalism, social media, branding, marketing, communications, advertising, public relations, and NGOs.

The course has three main components:

1. **Digital Curation:** Students will learn how to curate on their own Medium page, blog or website that will serve as a platform to develop a portfolio of work — articles, opinion pieces, gifs, graphics, photos, video and podcasts.
2. **Social Media:** Students will learn how to use social media strategically as journalism tools and for personal branding as digital journalists.
3. **Digital Trends:** Students will learn digital industry trends (SEO, engagement metrics, advertising, business models, etc.) so they possess a critical understanding of the dynamics transforming digital journalism.

Course Learning Outcomes

gaining critical understanding of the journalism profession in the digital sphere
building practical skills building online portfolios while using tools and techniques for
writing, editing, curation, and podcasting
using social media networks as journalism tools
learning metrics and search engine optimization as journalism tools

developing skills for entry-level positions in a professional newsroom

General Education

Course Outline

Please note: This is a tentative schedule which may be revisited as the course progresses.

January

Week I – 18th – 22nd

Session I

TOPICS: Course Overview – Introduction to digital journalism.

READINGS: “The rise of the content creator”, Axios (on course blog). “The Most Engaging Stories of 2020”, Chartbeat (see course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>).

Session II

TOPICS: Journalism history – partisan newspapers, muckraking, New Journalism, “high modernism”, digital disruption.

READINGS: Eric Alterman, “Out of Print: the death and life of the American newspaper”, *The New Yorker*; and “The Crisis of Journalism Did Not Start with the Internet”, Slate (see course blog).

Week II – 25th – 29th

Session I

TOPICS – Researching a story – techniques and tools.

READINGS – “18 data sources for investigative journalists”; Journalist’s Toolbox on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Session II

TOPICS – **First story pitches.** Working on backend curation (tutorial).

READINGS – Articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

January 24th – last day to drop/add courses online

February

Week III – 1st – 5th

Session I

TOPICS – **Social media and journalism.**

READINGS – See “Journalists and Social Media” (on course blog) and “How Silicon Valley re-engineered journalism”, Emily Bell and Taylor Owen (see course blog). Also “Distrust of social media is dragging journalism down”, *The Guardian*.

Session II

TOPICS – **Social media and personal branding for digital journalists – how to use Twitter as an engagement tool.**

READINGS – “How journalists can start creating a personal brand online”, Journalism.co.uk; “Your Twitter bio is your calling card”; Course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Week IV – 8th – 12th

February 8th – 10th, Mini break 1, (no classes)

Session I

TOPICS – **Digital journalism in the “attention economy”.** Click culture, analytics and metrics.

READINGS – “The battle for consumers’ attention”, *The Economist*; articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Week V – 15th – 19th

Session I

TOPICS – Digital journalism in the “attention economy” II.

READINGS – “Goodbye attention economy, we will miss you”, Neiman Lab; articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Session II

TOPICS – Story review and second story pitches.

READINGS - Course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Week VI – 22nd – 26th

February 24th – 28th, Mini break 2, (no classes)

Session I

TOPICS – Digital journalism and online advertising.

READINGS – “The media’s post-advertising future is also its past”, *The Atlantic*; Articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

March

Week VII – 1st – 5th

Session I

TOPICS – Threats to journalism – Google.

READINGS – “Should Google and Facebook be forced to pay for content?” *Columbia Journalism Review*; “Google pledges \$1 billion to pay for news”, *Financial Times*. Articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Session II

TOPICS – Threats to journalism – Facebook.

READINGS – “Facebook is eating the world”, Emily Bell; “Where the battle with Google and Facebook to pay for news is the hottest,” *Digiday*. Articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Week VIII – 8th –12th

Session I

TOPICS – Journalism, Native advertising and content marketing.

READINGS – “Should journalism worry about content marketing?” *Columbia Journalism Review*: “The native advertising deception”, European Journalism Observatory; articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Session II

TOPICS – Story review and third story pitches.

READINGS - Course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Week IX – 15th – 19th

TOPICS – Public relations and “spin” in the digital sphere.

READINGS – “Rise of the Image Men”, *The Economist*; articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Session II

TOPICS – “Fake news”, misinformation and the “trust” crisis in journalism.

READINGS – “Fake news and bots are worrisome, but their political power is overblown”, *New York Times*; “Yes, there’s a crisis in trust in journalism – but it’s inside newsrooms too”, *Columbia Journalism Review*; Reading on course

blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

March 17th, Mid-semester

March 19th, Mid-semester grades due

Week X – 22nd – 26th

Session I

TOPICS – Digital cauldron: Gossip, lies slander.

READINGS – “The Oxygen of Amplification”, Whitney Phillips, *Data & Society*; “A honey pot for assholes: inside Twitter’s 10 years of failing to stop harassment”, BuzzFeed;
Course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Session II

TOPICS – Story reviews. Student presentations

Week XI–29th – 2nd

Session I

TOPICS – Journalism - “post truth” and democracy.

READINGS – “Do social media threaten democracy?”, *The Economist*. “No, Twitter shouldn’t ban Donald Trump”, *Columbia Journalism Review*; “Social media’s long march to banning Trump”, Axios. Articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Session II

TOPICS – #Hashtag campaigns and media activism — objectivity vs advocacy.

READINGS – “Advocates are becoming journalists, is that a good thing?”, Matthew Ingram, *Columbia Journalism Review*; “When Greenpeace hires journalists, it’s a double-edged sword,” Matthew Powers. Also see, “Practising media activism, shaping networked journalism”, Adrienne Russell. Articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

April 2nd, last day to withdraw from a course.
Last day to choose the CR/NC grading option.

April

Week XII – 5th – 9th

April 5th, Easter Monday (no classes)

April 6th, Faculty retreat (no classes)

Session I

TOPICS – Politics, bias and propaganda.

READINGS – “We’re not going to be part of the resistance: How Trump aggravates the New York Times long-running identity crisis,” *Vanity Fair*. Articles on course blog: <https://journalism2aup.wordpress.com>

Week XIII – 12th – 16th

Session I

TOPICS – Social media audits.

Session II

TOPICS – Student presentations

Week XIV – 19th – 23rd

Session I

TOPICS – The future of digital journalism.

READINGS – John Micklethwait, “The Future of News”; “Digital news outlets are in for a reckoning”, *The Economist*;). See also “Does Journalism Have a Future?” Jill Lepore, *New Yorker* (see course blog).

Session I

TOPICS – The future of digital journalism.

READINGS – John Micklethwait, “The Future of News”; “Digital news outlets are in for a reckoning”, *The Economist*;); and “Coronavirus rips a whole in newspaper business models,” *Financial Times*. See also “Does Journalism Have a Future?” Jill Lepore, *New Yorker* (see course blog).

Session II

TOPICS – Journalism in the post-Covid era

READINGS – “Coronavirus rips a whole in newspaper business models,” *Financial Times*

Week XV – 26th – 30th

Session I

TOPICS – Final exam review.

April 28th, Last day of classes,
April 29th, – May 2nd, Reading days (May 1st, holiday)
May 3rd – 12th, Final Exam
May 26th, all grades due

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example

attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Excessive absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the department to decide if the student will receive an “F” for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student's absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and *especially during the Spring Periods*.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATEMENT: As an Anglophone university, The American University is strongly committed to effective English language mastery at the undergraduate level. Most courses require reading and formal written and oral presentations in English, and AUP students are expected to strive to achieve proficiency in English in all domains as part of their course work. To that end, professors include English proficiency among the criteria for evaluation, often referring students to the university Writing Lab where they may obtain help on specific assignments. Proficiency in English is monitored at various points throughout the student's academic career, most notably during admissions and advising processes, while the student is completing general education requirements, and during the accomplishment of degree program courses and senior theses.

Grading Policy

- **30% -- Blog Articles & Curation**

This portion of the final grade will be based on evaluation of work produced and curated on a personal Medium page, blog or personal website. Students will be evaluated on their capacity to write and edit articles based on their own topic ideas, write headlines, and find relevant photos, GIFs, audio and video for their posts. **Three** stories will be assigned during the term in the class “newsroom” sessions.

- **10% -- Social Media Engagement**

Student engagement on social media, especially Twitter and LinkedIn, will be evaluated and assessed.

- **25% -- Mid-term Exam**

Midterm exam will cover lectures on industry issues and trends till term mid-point.

- **25% -- In-class Presentation**

Students work in groups of two to “unpack” a digital journalism case study: digital news site, brand, fake news, advertising model, #hashtag campaign, etc. Presentations should be tightly focused, 15-20 minutes.

- **10% -- Participation and Discussion Leading**

This portion of the grade will take into account attendance and active engagement and participation in class discussions.

Other

COURSE MODIFICATIONS:

This syllabus is subject to change. Any modifications will be announced in class. It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of any changes.