

MCOM 391.101 Photojournalism I, Fall 2020

Towson University, Towson, MD

*****DRAFT ONLY - JUST FOR SHARING THE FACEBOOK EDUCATORS GROUP*****

Instructor : Kaitlin Newman (410)-294-4862 or knewman@towson.edu (preferred)

Prerequisites: MCOM 258 or consent of instructor. Lab/Class fee will be assessed.

Course Description

MCOM 391 Photojournalism I (3.00 units) – Photography for the mass media. History, aesthetics and ethics are covered.

Course objectives - The class will provide an understanding of photojournalism as it pertains to its history, technical aspects and practical applications. Students will learn to plan and photograph news stories for the mass media.

Note: Students may not attempt a class for the third time without prior permission from the Academic Standards Committee.

Course Requirements

1. Participate in weekly class discussions and critiques of student work
2. Complete 7 photography assignments covering the following topics:
 - Smartphone Photo Essay
 - Portrait
 - News (spot news / general news)
 - Feature
 - Sports (skateboarding, yoga, climbing, hiking, etc ok due to COVID19 restrictions on team sports)
 - Documentary Photo Essay MIDTERM
 - In-Depth Photo Story FINAL

Each assignment to include several selected images from your edited shoot.
The picture story will be presented as a slide show with multiple images.

3. Shooting notes for captioning should also be included that identify who, what, when and where.
4. Save each assignment as a digital file that can shown in class for critiquing.
5. During the first month you will spend five to ten minutes a day scanning a newspaper or news website, selecting photos or picture stories you find interesting and well done, or poorly done. We will critique them in class. Please have these clippings ready for the start of each class.
6. **Mid-semester portfolio + MIDTERM Story** - This should include each assignment to date.
7. **Final exam/portfolio + FINAL Story** – This must include all assignments, with any upgrades.

Weekly Topics & Assignments

Week 1 – Photojournalism, a General Overview (8/26)

- A The range of assignments a photojournalist might have
- B Working the scene
- C Approaches and techniques
 - Candid and intuitive
 - Tight shot, medium shot, over all shot, detail shot
 - Shooting from different perspectives
 - Shooting with different focal lengths and shutter speeds
 - Lighting- available ambient light / fill flash (only when necessary)
- D Being Visual and capturing viewers' attention
 - Informational
 - Graphically appealing
 - Emotional
 - Intimate
- E Collecting caption information in a photojournalist's notebook
- F Ethical considerations and law
- G Sources of photojournalism employment and freelance work - all news media, magazines, TV, the web, public relation and public information departments, local and national government offices, non-profit organizations, and just about any business that uses pictures to tell its story.

Assignment #1: Clipping the professionals - Clip from one paper or website twice a week - any photos or picture stories that grab your attention. Be sure to include the captions. This should take no more than 5–10 minutes a day. **Bring each week's clippings to the next class for general critique, and plan to keep your clippings to refer to throughout the semester. THIS WILL BE FOR EACH WEEK.**

Week 2 - ETHICS (9/2)

Ethics are the difference between a photojournalist and a photographer. They are some of the most important things we will discuss in this class. We will discuss popular ethics cases in photojournalism history as well as situations that you may find yourself in while completing your assignments.

Assignment on Ethics: You will read the Photo Bill of Rights and write a few paragraphs on your thoughts and takeaways from it.

Week 3 - Smartphone Photo Essay (9/9)

Use What You Have - Reporters are often on breaking news scenes without a photographer. They have to rely on a smartphone to create a cohesive photo story for instant posts on a news site's social media platforms. You will use teachings from class one to complete this assignment. This will also give you time to rent a DSLR camera for the duration of the class.

Assignment #1: Hunt for and shoot eye-catching photos. Make shooting notes in your photojournalist notebook that identify the who, what, when and where and why. CAPTIONS ARE NECESSARY, EVEN WITH SMARTPHONE PHOTOS. **Bottom Line of Assignment #1: Capture what's happening, the environment, and people present using the tools you have on you.**

Week 4 - Journalistic Portrait 9/16

Journalistic portraits are always shot on location in the subject's environment. This is typically a business, their home, or a place they are connected to. The portrait tells something about the person's character and mood as well as interests and work. The portrait can be posed and/or candid and attention must be given to background, composition and light.

Assignment #2: Arrange a portrait session with someone that interests you. Research the person BEFORE you photograph them. The session must visually tell us their story. Be sure to shoot both candid and posed while paying attention to light, composition and environment. You will deliver 5-8 images that you feel tell the story best as well as images that give variety. **Bottom Line of Assignment #2 : Capture a telling portrait of someone in their environment that gives the viewer context to their personality and emotion.**

Week 5 – Sports/Action 9/23

Sports photojournalism encompasses anything you might read about in the news. Any type of sport can be included. You are free to photograph yoga, hiking, rock climbing, horseback riding, skateboarding as well. Due to COVID19, many team sports such as baseball and football will be inaccessible unless it is a private game. You are free to photograph these as well, as long as you prepare ahead of time to obtain access.

Assignment #3: Photograph a sports event or practice, working the scene and experimenting with various techniques. Be sure it includes peak action, reaction, and tight shot. **Bottom Line of Assignment #3: Capture a person participating in a sport, whether it is a team sport or single player sport. You will produce wide shots that show the environment in which the sport is played, emotion on the subject's face during play, detail shots of what it is they are doing as well as a reactionary shot - for example, a baseball player hitting the ball or a swimmer coming up for air.**

Week 6 - News (Spot or Breaking) 9/30

News photojournalism is what you see in everyday news. It can be tame or crazy! It is timely visual that reflects what is happening RIGHT NOW. Sometimes it's political, like a press conference, other

times it's business, like a new store opening. A news photo assignment is the most basic of all - you are simply visually illustrating what is happening in front of your face that didn't happen the day before. *The key word here is timely.*

Assignment #4: Photograph the news. Find something timely happening that you think the community you are apart of would like to know about. This can be about a business, a person, or an area. Community calendars are a good way to locate what's happening, as well as following reporters on social media. **Bottom Line of Assignment #4 : Capture a timely newsworthy situation whether it's about a place or a person. You will produce 5-8 images that focus on the action and reaction of the people and environment involved.**

Week 7 - Feature Story (Human Interest) 10/7

Feature stories are fun! A feature story isn't always timely, though it can be. Feature stories are "soft news". They are human interest stories that are often celebrated for their creative take on a story. Feature stories make up the bulk of content featured in magazines and publications that are not daily print.

Assignment #5: Photograph a human interest story that you find appealing. You can feature a person, place or a business that is unique in what they do and that will prompt interest from multiple demographics. **Bottom Line of Assignment #5: Capture an interesting place, person or business that you think readers would love to know about. You will use tight, medium and wide shots to tell the story and produce 5-8 DIFFERENT images spotlighting what is so interesting about your chosen focus.**

Week 8 – The Photo Story aka The Ultimate Goal of Photojournalism 10/14

This is your MIDTERM. You will have two weeks to complete it. The first week we will talk and the second week we will check in on progress. **Your midterm project is due on 10/21.**

Your picture story can be a focus of any of the above category of assignments, just longer than your typical 5-8. This time we are aiming for 12-15 images/frames that tell the whole story, not simply for variety.

This week we are going to discuss what is needed and necessary for a photo story.

- A. Beginning, development, resolution
- B. Defined theme
- C. Shoot tight, shoot wide, shoot detail, making sure each is informative in telling the story. Also make sure you shoot verticals as well as horizontals.
- D. Notes and captions

Assignment #6. Start your midterm engines! Use this week to contact and set up shoot times for the subject of your photo story. PLEASE START EARLY, sometimes dates and schedules fall through. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE. **Week eight (the following week) will be a midterm checkpoint, we will**

discuss issues, challenges, and any problems that may have arisen during your first week of working on the assignment.

Week 9 – The Photo Story aka The Ultimate Goal of Photojournalism 10/21

This week is a midterm checkpoint! We will discuss challenges, changes, and concerns. You must have several photos from week seven to present to me so I can see the progress you are making.

Bottom Line of Midterm: On 10/21, you will turn in a completed photo story of 12-15 usable images that focus on an interesting subject or place with various shots that clearly tell the story.

Week 10 - MIDTERM DUE 10/28 + Intro to In-Depth Photo Story (FINAL)

Congratulations, you made it halfway through Photojournalism one! We will use this class period to view and critique everyone's photo stories. We will also talk about your final project which will be an in-depth photo story.

So, what's an in-depth photo story? Isn't that the same as our midterm? Not quite! An in-depth photo story will require you to extensively research a subject, think of it as the next level to a feature story. This story should be completed over the course of several weeks (you will have until the end of the semester) because I want you to spend time with and get to know your subject on a personal level.

Here are some guidelines to get you started which we will discuss.

- A. Identify a lead photo.
- B. Select story telling photos that provide visual variety and impact and include a scene setting wide shot along with tighter shots and a detail shot.
- C. Seek emotional appeal and intimacy
- D. Be objective and/or subjective depending on the message you are communicating.
- E. Strive for novelty and innovation when appropriate
- F. Avoid cliché
- G. Consider black and white versus color treatment
- H. Consider cropping – any unnecessary information should be eliminated.
- I. Consider the following for page slide show/layout:
 - Varying image sizes
 - Overall Design
 - Image flow
 - Picture sequencing
 - Integrating captions

Week 11 - Presenting Yourself + FINAL Idea Checkpoint 11/4

You will provide your final in-depth photo story idea and reasoning behind it. We will also discuss the points below in reference to your chosen idea. This does not have to be your final idea, this class is a brainstorm.

- A. Covering a specific theme
- B. Photojournalism ethics
- C. Multi media presentations
- D. Promotional considerations

Assignment #7: Submit in writing your idea for your in depth photo essay on a person, place or thing of interest, and include a plan for achieving it. Multimedia is an option as well if you are proficient in video/audio.

Week 12 - Covering Issues In Depth Photo Essay 11/11

We will discuss how to approach your in-depth photo essay. This week you should have decided on your subject. We will discuss these guidelines for your essay, please do NOT miss this class.

- A. In-depth coverage
 - Objectivity
 - Subjectivity
 - Flexibility
 - Organization
- B. Background on the issue – research your subject
- C. Magic in the moment
- D. Ethics
- E. Shooting notes
- F. Preparation
 - Do your homework regarding your subject so you know what photos you need
 - Make contact and arrange date and times for photographing
 - Discuss your thoughts with your subject and get his or her thoughts.
 - Plan your approach, jotting down a basic outline. Coming up with a title helps.
- G. Types of documentary essays
 - Single subject or issue
 - Highlights of a topic
 - A specific place
 - A Personality
- H. The shoot
 - Help your subjects to be comfortable with you.
 - Show your interest in them, their work, their place.
 - Spend time listening before you start shooting.
 - Be sure to cover the different aspects of your story outline.
 - Also shoot intuitively any interesting unplanned situations.
 - Work each scene.
 - Capture the magic of a moment.
 - Balance any hard-hitting images with ones showing tenderness or care
 - Keep a small notebook and make shooting notes as you go along and when you finish.
 - See what you have and return for more shots if needed.
- I. Editing
 - Identify a lead photo.
 - Identify the strongest visually interesting photos that tell the story.
 - Achieve visual variety.

- Pay attention to sequencing.
- J. Write informative well-composed captions.
- K. If you decide to present your story in multi media form write a short script that you can read as voice over.

Assignment: You have **four weeks** to complete this assignment, and the class and the instructor will provide feedback after the first week. Have your edited shoot ready for this purpose. **The topic of your essay should be a person, place or thing of interest. Photograph, in-depth, a subject that really interests you.**

***Note,** the photo essay is an essential part of a photojournalist portfolio, and should demonstrate your proficiency in various aspects studied in this course.

Weeks 13, 14, 15 - Finalizing In-Depth Photo Essay 11/18, 11/25, 12/2

We will use these weeks to fine tune your final essay by addressing issues and challenges. We will also class critique what you have completed so far.

- What is working
- What is not working
- What is still needed
- Editing
- Sequencing

Week 16 - FINAL IN-DEPTH STORY DUE 12/9

Assignment: Turn in the photo story - You are encouraged to submit your story on spec for publication.

Grades

Final letter grades will be given out using the following scale:

A = 94-100%	B- = 80-83%	D = 60-66%
A- = 90-93%	C+ = 77-79%	F = Below 60%
B+ = 87-89%	C = 70-76%	
B = 84-86%	D+ = 67-69%	

The following criteria will determine the grade you receive on individual assignments, as well as the overall grade you receive for the course.

90-100%, A+, A, A-: The work meets and exceeds assignment objectives. It is exceptionally clear, well written, thorough and free of errors. It is organized well and contains effective transitions, quotations, citations, descriptions and anecdotes. It also is an effective discussion of the topic. The information is extremely well researched and compellingly original and insightful. Overall, the assignment demonstrates a thorough grasp of the issues/concepts involved. In terms of the course, this means you have almost perfect attendance, scores in this range on assignments and tests and make constructive, insightful contributions to discussions.

80-89%, B+, B, B-: The work meets assignment objectives, and is adequate but not exceptional. It is well researched and organized, with appropriate citation usage. However, the assignment contains a few minor errors and might be more interesting, thorough or cohesive. Overall, the assignment demonstrates adequate knowledge of the issues/concepts involved. In terms of the course, this means you have good attendance, scores in this range on the assignments and tests, and make constructive, insightful contributions to class discussion.

70-79%, C+, C, C-: The work minimally meets assignment objectives; however, it may omit important information or require extensive editing. The assignment may be disorganized, may need further research, and/or may contain several minor errors. Some sentences may be, for instance, vague, complicated and use passive rather than active verbs. Some sentences may have to be rewritten because they are awkward, wordy, or confusing. Citations are used, but may be used inappropriately or inadequately. Overall, the assignment demonstrates an incomplete understanding of the issues/concepts under study. In terms of the course, this means you have poor attendance, scored in this range on the assignments and tests, and have not participated in class discussions.

60-69%, D+, D, D-: The work does not meet assignment guidelines and is superficial, confusing or requires extensive rewriting. It also may contain an unacceptable number of punctuation, spelling, and/or grammatical errors. Citations are used inappropriately or not at all. In terms of the course, this means you have missed more classes than you attended, scored in this range on the assignments and tests, and have not participated in class discussions. Students may receive upper level elective credit with a D, but this course will not count among MCOM credits.

Below 60%, F: The work may be so poorly organized, ineffective, or outside assignment objectives that it cannot be revised effectively. The information presented is completely incorrect. It does not meet the requirements in page length, focus or format. It may also contain significant misspellings and/or grammatical and/or factual errors. Citations are not used. In terms of the course, this means you have missed more classes than you have attended, scored in this range on the assignments and tests, and have not participated in class discussions. If you are caught cheating in any way, you will automatically receive an F on the assignment. If you attend the final exam and your average is below 60, you will receive an F rather than an FX. If you receive an F or FX, you may only repeat the course once. After repeating the course, students will only receive credit for the course once and the highest of the grades will be calculated. The lower grade will remain on the transcript with an "R" before it to indicate the course was repeated. For the transcript to reflect the repeated course, students must submit a Repeated Course Form to the Records Office. Transcript adjustments are not automatic.

FX: This is an administrative failure for non-attendance or failure to withdraw. If you stop attending class and do not withdraw from the course, this is the grade you will receive. If you receive an F or FX, you may only repeat the course once. After repeating the course, students will only receive credit for the course once and the highest of the grades will be calculated. The lower grade will remain on the transcript with an "R" before it to indicate the course was repeated. For the transcript to reflect the repeated course, students must submit a Repeated Course Form to the Records Office. Transcript adjustments are not automatic.

I, Incomplete: According to the Undergraduate Catalog, students may receive an incomplete only when “verifiable medical reasons” or “documented circumstances beyond their control” prevent students from completing a course within the term.”

Grades are based—

1. Attendance and participation: 20%: 2 unexcused absences/4 late arrivals will lower the final grade one letter grade.

Attend every class, arrive on time, remain until dismissed, come prepared. In the event of unavoidable absence, late arrival, or early departure, request an excused absence from the instructor BEFORE class and arrange to make up the work. Three unexcused absences results in the loss of one letter grade.

2. Weekly assignments: 30%

Turn assignments in on time to receive timely feedback, full credit, and the opportunity to upgrade the work to improve the grade. Work turned in late forfeits one letter grade and maximum opportunities to upgrade. Work may be turned in late without grade penalty IF an extension is requested and approved PRIOR to the due date.

3. Photo stories: 50%

The photo story is the essence of photojournalism and greater weight will be applied to this portion of your work for your final grade.

Common Language for All Syllabi

Academic Integrity Policy

All student work including assignments, presentations, and tests must adhere to the university's Student Academic Integrity Policy <http://towson.edu/studentaffairs/policies/>. The policy addresses such academic integrity issues as plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, cheating, complicity in dishonesty, abuse of academic materials, and multiple submissions. See the last page of this syllabus for the department's policy concerning plagiarism and cheating. Penalties to violation of academic integrity ranges from F for the assignment to F for the course, in addition to a report filed in the Office of Student Conduct and Civility Education.

COFAC Civility Code and classroom behavior

COFAC places a priority on learning. We value the inherent worth and dignity of every person, thereby fostering a community of mutual respect. Students have the right to a learning environment free of disruptive behaviors and offensive comments. Faculty have the right to define appropriate behavioral expectations in the classroom and expect students to abide by them. Faculty have the responsibility to manage and address classroom disruption. Staff have the right and responsibility to define appropriate behaviors necessary to conduct any university activity free of disruption or obstruction.

We believe that in order to achieve these ideals, all COFAC students, staff, and faculty are expected to exhibit and practice civil behaviors that exemplify: (1) respecting faculty, staff, fellow students, guests, and all university property, policies, rules and regulations; (2) taking responsibility for one's choices, actions and comments; (3) delivering correspondence – whether verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic – with respectful language using professional writing standards and etiquette; and (4) accepting consequences of one's choices and actions. The use of offensive, threatening or abusive language, writing, or behavior will not be tolerated and can lead to academic dismissal. Further information about civility can be found in Appendix F of the university catalog.

(Note: The inclusion of examples is a per professor prerogative. Faculty members are encouraged to discuss expected classroom/student/teacher behaviors.)

Examples demonstrating civility in the classroom as a student include:

- Being respectful of the professor and other students.
- Not texting or using cellular phones and other electronic devices.
- Not using your laptop for activities other than class work.
- Not eating or drinking in class.
- Not reading newspapers or listening to music during the class.
- Not sleeping in class.

Examples demonstrating civility in the classroom as a faculty member include:

- Being respectful of the students.
- Attempting to understand individual student needs and learning styles.
- Discussing civil behavioral expectations during the first class.
- Taking time to talk with students whose behaviors negatively affect the classroom.
- Encouraging students to follow your civil behavior.

Liability Statement

In all assignments, students must comply with all laws and the legal rights of others (e.g. copyright, obscenity, privacy and defamation) and with all Towson University policies (e.g. academic dishonesty). Towson University is not liable or responsible for the content of any student assignments, regardless of where they are posted.

Students with Disabilities Policy

This course is in compliance with Towson University policies for students with disabilities as described in <http://www.towson.edu/dss/>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Disability Support Services (DSS), 7720 York Road, Suite 232, 410-704-2638 (Voice) or 410-704-4423 (TDD). Students who suspect that they have a disability but do not have documentation are encouraged to contact DSS for advice on how to obtain appropriate evaluation. A memo from DSS authorizing your accommodation is needed before any accommodation can be made.

Weapons Policy

To promote a safe and secure campus, Towson University prohibits the possession or control of any weapon while on university property. See the university policy at <http://www.towson.edu/studentaffairs/policies/>.