



Fall 2007

Jour 655: Fundamentals of Interactive Journalism

Jour 655: Fundamentals of Interactive Journalism

Description: Introduction to the concepts and tools of interactive participatory journalism including blogging, social networking, and interactive publishing. Prerequisite: Journalism 720.

Instructor: Professor Edward Lenert | RSJ 303A | Office hours: Monday 11-12:30 PM and by appointment. Email: Lenert@UNR.edu | Cell: (646) 245-6200.

Requirements: Active class participation and weekly written assignments. Your participation grade is based on the following criteria:

Goal #1: Addressing actual audiences. Evaluation criteria: Does the student journalist publish often and interact daily with his or her sources and readers?

Goal #2: Having an authentic voice. Evaluation criteria: Does the student have a distinctive journalistic voice that addresses audience needs that are not met by existing media?

Goal #3 Sustained online engagement with real people. Evaluation criteria: Is the student journalist using an "architecture of participation" in his or her journalism? (I.e., conceptualizing readers as "the people formerly known as the audience.")

Goal #4: Publishing essential reading and creating compelling content. Evaluation criteria: Is the student journalist providing information and insight that cannot be obtained elsewhere so that there is a compelling reason to log on to OurTahoe?

Goal #5: Moving individual readers toward a civic focus. Evaluation criteria: Is the student journalist helping communities to identify and provide a foundation for solving public problems?

Readings: There is no textbook for this class. Readings will be handed out in class or posted online. The class website will be located at: www.complex.com/j655.

More details about the readings and assignments will be covered during class.

Tentative Schedule

We will meet as a class on Mondays and Tuesdays at the usual times. However, instead of our Thursday meeting you will be given a written assignment that requires you to conduct research and first-person observations using the Internet – think of these assignments as online field work.

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You will share the results of your research and observations during the following Tuesday class meeting.

Week 1: November 5 and 6 - Web 2.0 and an “architecture of participation”

Assignment 1: Create a WordPress site that expresses your identity as an OurTahoe.org journalist. (Due Nov. 12). You will continue to develop and add content to your site throughout the semester and you will present the sum total of your work in our final class session on December 11.

Tuesday class discussion: What is interactivity? Write a short definition of interactivity and then select three websites that best embody the characteristics of your definition of interactivity. Explain in what sense the sites are interactive.

Week 2: November 12 and 13 - Identity and interactivity

Assignment 2: Interactivity from Zork to Second Life.

Tuesday class discussion: In an online context, how is the concept of identity linked to interactivity?

Examine the practice of social identity by comparing and contrasting “Facebook” with “MySpace.”

Week 3: November 19 and 20 - Conversation and community

Assignment 3: Online community observation assignment.

Tuesday class discussion: What are the characteristics of “the people formerly known as the audience?”

Understanding Trust and Reputation: In an online context, how can journalism create connections and relevance and build trust and accountability?

Week 4: November 26 and 27 - Collective Intelligence

Assignment 4: Wikipedia Assignment:

Tuesday class discussion: In which ways can OurTahoe harness the collective intelligence of the audience? Assess the use of information architecture, tags and folksonomy in the OurTahoe site.

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Week 5: December 3 and 4 –The changing role of the editor and publisher

Assignment 5: Moderating online discussions and forums

Tuesday class discussion: How are Web 2.0 technologies changing the role of the editor in relation to “the people formerly known as the audience”? What is the tension between the “Daily Me” and the “Daily We”?

Week 6: December 10 and 11: Wrap up and final presentations

Presentation of your WordPress site to the group. Be prepared to reflect critically and analytically on your use of interactivity in support of “journalism as a social practice.”

Specifically, how did you embody your identity in your online presence via your WordPress blog? In what ways were you successful? In what way were you unsuccessful?

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More detail on these assignment will be presented in class.

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Academic integrity: I expect all of your work in this course to be your own, and that you will uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. This includes awareness of what constitutes plagiarism, and avoidance of it.

Jour 655 Capstone Assignment

Background

Recall that the initial assignment in Jour 655 was:

“Using the principles of professional branding discussed in the readings, use WordPress to define yourself as an OurTahoe.org journalist. You will need to create WordPress site that embodies and exemplifies these three elements:

- The purposes of OurTahoe.org
- Your online identity as a journalist working to solve public problems at Lake Tahoe
- Your personal qualities and talents that set you apart and distinguish you from others

These elements are guidelines only. You may choose to develop your site in anyway necessary for effective communication of your professional brand and identity.”

Part I

As we conclude our work this semester, please reflect upon the information below and the readings and class discussions in Jour 655. In an extended essay, answer two questions:

- (1) What is the future of your web log in the context of OurTahoe.org? What will you publish? How often? What audience are you intending to reach and with what impacts?
- (2) As you look at your career development, what might be the role of publishing by web log?

Please publish your answer on your web log **and** turn in a printed copy to the instructor.

Here are some factors you must consider in answering these questions:

(a) Rob Curley says that, “We believe that journalism has been a monologue for so long and now is the perfect time for it to become a dialogue with our readers”. In interactive journalism, **a journalist’s blog is an invitation to conversation about shared interests and concerns**. Using your web log publishing, how will you participate in public conversations?

(b) Paul Grabowicz says, “Web logs bring journalists into a larger community: ... **we need to drop grandiose claims of being aloof, objective observers and be more transparent about how we do our jobs.**” Do you agree or disagree, and why? How will to take Grabowicz’s observation into account in your own publishing?

(c) Rebecca MacKinnon says that, “We are entering an era in which professionals have lost their monopoly over information--**not just the reporting of it, but also the framing of what’s important for the public to know**”. Do you agree or disagree, and why? How will you take MacKinnon’s observation into account in your own publishing?

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Part II

Role models are an important part of your professional development.

Identify two journalists' sites from each group and, in an essay, discuss how your own publishing will be similar or different.

Print out this essay and turn it in to the instructor. You may also want to publish it on your web log.

- J-Blogs: Personal websites of journalists
<http://wiki.cyberjournalist.net/jblogs-personal>
- J-Blogs: Ongoing - Blogs published by news sites
<http://wiki.cyberjournalist.net/jblogs-ongoing>

(These are just suggestions and you may select any journalist you wish).

Which practicing journalists web log publishing comes closest to a model for your own version of “journalism as a social practice”?

Be sure to explain how your answers in Part I relate to your answer in Part II.

Due Date

Both Part I and Part II are due on Tuesday, December 11, 2007, prior to the start of class. There is no set length for this assignment. Your essays may be as long or as short as needed. However, please bear in mind that this assignment is your most significant opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and mastery of the material presented in Jour 655.

Also, the concepts and ideas in your essays should be used to inform your final oral presentation of your semester's work on your web log. These final oral presentations will take place during class (time TBA) on December 11, 2007.