

Audio Basics (JMC:3660:0001)
Monday/Wednesday 2 – 3:15 p.m.
W332 AJB / Online

Instructor: Dr. Brian Ekdale, Associate Professor, brian-ekdale@uiowa.edu

Drop-in Hours (via Zoom): Mon. 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & Wed. 12:30 – 2 p.m. or by appointment

DEO: Dr. David Ryfe, david-ryfe@uiowa.edu, E305B Adler Journalism Building

Course Description: This course is designed to help you produce professional-quality audio stories. You will learn how to use high-end audio recorders and editing software as well as mobile apps to capture, trim, polish, and mix digital audio content. Throughout the semester, we will discuss current industry trends and preferred practices in audio storytelling, covering a broad landscape from news radio and podcasting to advertising and branded content. You will work individually and in groups to produce narratively compelling and technically sound audio stories.

SJMC Learning Outcomes: The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

This course contributes to these learning outcomes by helping you develop the abilities to access, analyze, evaluate, and create video content to be distributed across multiple media platforms and to communicate effectively with the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work.

Achieving these outcomes means:

- You will demonstrate an ability to create and disseminate media messages in various forms.
- You will demonstrate an ability to gather factual story elements and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple distribution outlets.
- You will demonstrate an ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.
- You will demonstrate an ability to produce media that serve the needs and interests of diverse communities and reflect their voices and experiences.

In addition to the SJMC Learning Outcomes identified above, I have identified the following learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time he or she finishes the semester:

- You will improve upon the narrative and technical skills in audio storytelling learned in Introduction to Multimedia Storytelling.
- You will demonstrate proficiency at planning, producing, and editing audio stories.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is dedicated to equity, anti-racism and social justice. To this end, we will be listening to stories that capture and celebrate the life experiences of marginalized and vulnerable communities. If you have suggestions for me on how to make the course or my teaching more equitable, inclusive and anti-racist, please reach out to me. If you feel more comfortable doing so anonymously, please contact David Ryfe, director of SJMC.

Text: There is no required text for this course. You can find course readings and audio exemplars on ICON. If you are interested in developing your audio storytelling skills further, I highly recommend picking up a copy of *Sound Reporting* (2008) by Jonathan Kern.

Technology: You are required to own:

- A 320 GB or larger external hard drive (for editing audio projects)
- A 16GB or larger Class 10 SD card (to use with the Zoom H4n recorder)

ASSIGNMENTS / GRADING

You will be graded on professionalism, participation, one exam, story pitches, several small exercises, and four major story assignments. Grading of assigned work in this course corresponds with the ways in which audio professionals are evaluated.

Specifics details and requirements for each assignment will be provided during the semester. There are 400 points possible.

In-Class Work and Participation (170 points):

- Professionalism & Participation: 40 pts
- Audio Checklist: 40 pts
- Audio Principles Exam: 20 pts
- Story Pitches (4 @ 5 pts each): 20 pts
- Questions for Guest Speakers: (2 @ 5 pts each): 10 pts
- Song Sync: 20 pts
- Sponsor Message: 20 pts

Audio Stories (230 points):

- Interview Story: 50 pts
- Conversation Story: 50 pts
- Call-in Show: 30 pts
- Final Project: 100 pts

This course will use the +/- system with the following grade distribution for total points:

A+	388-400	B+	348-359	C+	308-319	D+	268-279	F	0-239
A	372-387	B	332-347	C	292-307	D	252-267		
A-	360-371	B-	320-331	C-	280-291	D-	240-251		

COURSE POLICIES

***waves hands* All This:** These are extraordinary times, and we are being asked to do extraordinary things. I don't know what the rest of the semester will look like, but I seek to make the most of a difficult situation. That said, I recognize that this semester will be particularly challenging for some

of you. I will try my best to be understanding and accommodating. If you find yourself struggling to keep up or in a difficult spot, please let me know, so we can work together to figure out a way forward.

Accommodations: If you have an SDS or a TALA accommodation, please meet with me during drop-in hours or by making an appointment by the end of the second week of the semester. For more information, please see the section titled Accommodations for Disabilities under The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources page at the end of the syllabus.

Course Modalities: This course has been designated as “hybrid,” meaning there are both in-person and online components. Online days will take place synchronously over Zoom, while in-person days will take place in W332 AJB with half of the class scheduled to attend Monday and the other half scheduled to attend Wednesday. In the schedule, the modality is listed beside each class period. Here is a more detailed explanation of each modality:

- **Online:** Class meets online during our regularly scheduled time. Online instruction and discussion will take place synchronously. Everyone is expected to attend.
- **Individual Meetings:** Individual meetings will occur online, synchronously during our regularly scheduled time. Meetings will be scheduled in advance so you know when to sign in to Zoom. You are expected to sign in at least 5 minutes before your scheduled time.
- **In-Person A/B:** In-person meetings will take place in 332 AJB. Check the list on ICON to see if you should attend during the “A” or “B” period. During in-person class periods, I will be available on Zoom for those not in attendance, but be prepared to wait as I may be helping another student. Attendance for in-person meetings is optional.
- **Extended Drop-in Hours:** During exercise work days and the final two weeks of the semester, class time will convert into extended drop-in hours. I will be available on Zoom during this time, but attendance is optional.

Professionalism & Participation: The success of any course depends on the professionalism and participation of its students. To that end, you will be graded on your attendance, preparedness, contribution, and cooperation:

- Attendance means showing up. Simply put, you should be in class on time for the full time. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class (e.g. documented illness, family emergency, religious holiday, etc.) and want your absence excused, you must let Brian know via email about your absence prior to the start of the class period you are missing. If your absence is related to COVID-19, I will receive a report from the university with this information and will follow-up with you to discuss how to proceed.
- Preparedness means doing the necessary work prior to the start of class. You should engage with the assigned readings/exemplars before class and come prepared to discuss and ask questions.
- Contribution means sharing your ideas. Each of you offers a unique perspective based on your beliefs, upbringing, and areas of expertise. When you share your thoughts, opinions, and ideas, it provides an opportunity for all of us to learn and grow.
- Cooperation means working well with others during group exercises and class discussions. If working with partner(s) on a class exercise, you must prove yourself to be dependable. Also, our class should be a place where everyone feels comfortable sharing their views, even if those views are uncommon or unpopular. At the same time, you must always be aware of

how your words and actions affect those around you. Intolerance, antagonism, and demagoguery have no place in the healthy exchange of ideas.

Zoom Guidelines: Most of our time together will be online. Therefore, please abide by the following guidelines for meeting via Zoom:

- Sign in with your name as indicated in the first day of class. If your preferred name changes during semester, please send me a private message so I can note that change in my records.
- Please enable your video when possible. It is helpful for me to see you during class. If you have limited bandwidth, no working webcam, or are in an environment with a lot of visual distractions, please let me know via email.
- Please mute your microphone when you are not talking and do what you can to eliminate background noise (e.g., pause music, turn off the TV, etc.) so we can hear you when you are talking. Occasionally I will call on you, so be prepared to unmute yourself before you speak.

Zoom Backups: I will record and make available Zoom videos from online class periods. I am making these video back-ups available for (1) students who miss all or part of a class due to technical difficulties, (2) students who are unable to attend due to excused absences, and (3) students who wish to refresh their memories at a later date. These videos are to be used as a substitute for attending class during our regularly scheduled time. Under no circumstances can these videos be shared with anyone outside of the course. Doing so is a breach of the CLAS Code of Student Conduct and potentially a violation of the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). For more information, please see the section titled Class Recordings: Privacy and Sharing under The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources page at the end of the syllabus.

Makeup Work: If you miss class, it is your responsibility to learn what was covered that day by watching the Zoom backup video. Please, do not send me emails asking “What did I miss?” or “Did I miss anything important?” The answers are “Lots” and “Yes.” I am happy to discuss missed materials during my office hours, but I cannot cover the material in the same amount of detail as I can during class.

In-Person Guidelines: You must observe the following expectations and procedures from the Office of Student Accountability (OSA) for in-person class periods:

- Wear a face covering (cloth covering, disposable or cloth mask, face shield) in all university buildings, at all times.
- To the extent possible, maintain an appropriate social distance (6 ft. if possible).
- Stay home if you have been exposed to, are diagnosed with, or experience symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

The labs have been rearranged to ensure student and faculty safety. You may not move tables and chairs around. If you fail to adhere to these guidelines, I will ask you to comply. If you refuse to comply, I will ask you to leave. If you refuse to leave, I will cancel class and report you to the OSA. For more information, please see the section titled Classroom Expectations under The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources page at the end of the syllabus.

Late Policy: Each assignment will have a specific due date/time. Work submitted after the assigned due date/time will be considered late and will be marked down 10% immediately. Late work will be

marked down an additional 10% for each 24-hour period after the original due date. Assignments turned in more than 5 days after the due date will be awarded no points.

Original Work: Everything you submit for credit must be original content produced for this course. If you have a relevant job or internship and you want to use content produced in this course for those purposes, you must speak with me in advance to request permission and work out arrangements. You cannot simply repurpose or repost content you have produced for another course or venue. Doing so is considered academic misconduct.

Academic Misconduct: Academic misconduct occurs when you (intentionally or unintentionally) present someone else's work as your own. The University of Iowa's Code of Academic Honesty does not directly address audio material, but the principles still apply to our work in this course. With that in mind, academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Incorporating music, recordings, or other sounds created by someone else without obtaining permission from the creator(s), obtaining permission from the course instructor, and providing proper attribution
- Submitting music, recordings, or other sounds created by yourself prior to the start of the semester without obtaining permission from the course instructor
- Submitting music, recordings, or other sounds created by someone else as your own work

Students are responsible for understanding this policy. If you have questions, please ask me for clarification. Clear evidence of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly the course. Per college policy, I am required to report academic misconduct to the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. For more information, please see the section titled Academic Integrity under The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Resources page at the end of the syllabus.

Electronic Communication: As per university policy, you are responsible for all official correspondences sent to your University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu).

Communication with Brian: I make every effort to respond to student emails within 24 hours. Typically, I respond sooner than that. While I prioritize my interactions with my students, I do have other commitments (e.g., meetings, research, family, sleep, etc.) that may keep me from immediately responding to your emails. I am happy to offer feedback and answer specific questions over email, but I will not answer a barrage of questions or review full drafts of assignments over email. If your email would take me more than 5 minutes to answer, I will advise you to visit my drop-in hours or schedule an appointment.

Equipment: Equipment used in this class is available for checkout in the equipment room located on the first floor of the Becker Communication Studies Building. You will have semester-long checkout for the primary equipment used in this course — 1 H4N audio recorder, 1 lavalier microphone, 1 handheld microphone. Make a plan to check out your equipment during the first or second week of the semester. All equipment must be returned by Monday, December 14.

You must reserve equipment using Checkout@UIowa: <http://checkout.uiowa.edu/>. First, make a reservation using the same process as before. Then, on the main Checkout page, click the link to schedule an appointment to pick up your equipment. Pick up appointments after 1pm are encouraged, but morning appointments may be accommodated.

You are welcome to use your own equipment, but I will only provide technical support and training for the equipment reserved for this course. The same goes for software – you are free to use other software for editing, but I will only provide support for the software provided by SJMC.

Technology Help Site: If you need help with hardware or software furnished by SJMC, please reference our help site: <http://multimedia.jmc.uiowa.edu/help/>.

SCHEDULE

The schedule is subject to change, including topics, readings, and assignment due dates. Brian will announce any changes to the course schedule in class and on ICON.

Part 1: Digital Audio Principles

Monday, 8/24 – Introductions (Online)

Wednesday, 8/26 – Studio Production (Online)

- Read: Norman J. Medoff and Edward J. Fink. (2012). *Portable Video*. Chapter 9: Audio (pp. 233–255)
- Listen: *The Daily*. (May 5, 2020). “[Bursting the College Bubble](#).”
- Assigned: Audio Checklist

Monday, 8/31 – Field Production (Online)

- Read: Jonathan Kern. (2008). *Sound Reporting*. Chapter 5: Field Producing (pp. 73–91)
- Listen: Kate Payne. (August 17, 2020). “[Living in the unlivable in the Aftermath of the Derecho](#).” *Iowa Public Radio*.

Wednesday, 9/2 – Sound Design (Online)

- Read: Jessica Abel. (2015). *Out on the Wire*. Chapter 4: Sound (pp. 147–165)
- Listen: *Song Exploder*. (April 8, 2020). FKA Twigs: “[Mirrored Heart](#).”

Monday, 9/7 – LABOR DAY (No Class)

Wednesday, 9/9 – Files and Formats (Online)

- Read: Wallace Jackson. (2015). *Digital Audio Editing Fundamentals*. Chapter 3: Data Sampling, Chapter 4: Data Formats, and Chapter 12: Compression. (pp. 19–32, 107–117)

Monday, 9/14 – Work on Audio Checklist (In-Person A)

- Watch: Adobe Audition Training, Part 1

Wednesday, 9/16 – Work on Audio Checklist (In-Person B)

- Due: Principles Exam (open-book, open-note, online)

Friday, 9/18 @ Noon: Audio Checklist DUE

Part 2: Interview Stories

Monday, 9/21 – Conducting and Recording Interviews (Online)

- Read: Jessica Abel and Ira Glass. (1999). *Radio: An Illustrated Guide*. The Art of the Interview (pp. 10–14); Eric Nuzum (2020). *Make Noise*, Chapter 4: Asking Questions (pp. 73–91)
- Listen: *How I Built This with Guy Raz*. (July 9, 2020). “[How I Built Resilience: Sharon Chuter](#)”
- Assigned: Sync Song Exercise & Interview Story

Wednesday, 9/23 – Guest Speaker: Shereen Marisol Meraji (Online)

- Listen: *Code Switch*. (July 15, 2020) “[What’s a ‘Karen?’](#)”
- Due: Questions for Meraji

Monday, 9/28 – Interview Story Pitch Meetings (Individual Meetings)

- Watch: Adobe Audition Training, Part 2
- Due: Interview Story Pitch

Wednesday, 9/30 – Sync Song Exercise Work Day (Extended Drop-in Hours)

Friday, 10/2 @ Noon: Sync Song Exercise DUE

Monday, 10/5 – Interview Story Work Day (In-Person B)

Wednesday, 10/7 – Interview Story Work Day (In-Person A)

Friday, 10/9 @ Noon: Interview Story DUE

Part 3: Discussion-Based Stories

Monday, 10/12 – Being Conversational, Having Conversations (Online)

- Read: Jonathan Kern. (2008). *Sound Reporting*. Chapter 3: Writing for Broadcast (pp. 25–38); Buzzsprout (January 13, 2020). “[How to Write a Podcast Script: 3 Examples](#)”
- Listen: *Pop Culture Happy Hour*. (July 15, 2020). “[Floor is Lava.](#)”
- Assigned: Sponsor Message Exercise & Discussion Story

Wednesday, 10/14 – Discussion Story Pitch Meetings (Individual Meetings)

- Due: Discussion Story Pitch

Monday, 10/19 – Guest Speaker: Janelle Bouie (Online)

- Listen: *Trumpcast*. (July 2, 2018). “[Civility as a Cudgel.](#)”
- Due: Questions for Bouie

Wednesday, 10/21 – Sponsor Message Exercise Work Day (Extended Drop-in Hours)

Friday, 10/23 @ Noon: Sponsor Message Exercise DUE

Monday, 10/26 – Discussion Story Work Day (In-Person A)

Wednesday, 10/28 – Discussion Story Work Day (In-Person B)

Friday, 10/30 @ Noon: Discussion Story DUE

Part 4: Personal Essay

Monday, 11/2 – Personal storytelling (Online)

- Read: Jessica Abel. (2015). *Out on the Wire*. Chapter 3: Story Structure (pp. 107–143). Meg Dalton, *Columbia Journalism Review* (December 12, 2017). “[Podcasting is the New Personal Essay](#)”
- Listen: *Story Corps*. “[Just Pass It On](#)”
- Assigned: Personal Essay

Wednesday, 11/4 – Personal Essay Pitch Meetings (Individual Meetings)

- Due: Personal Essay Pitch

Monday, 11/9 – Introducing the Final Project (Online)

- Assigned: Final Project

Wednesday, 11/11 – Personal Essay Work Day (Extended Drop-in Hours)

Monday, 11/16 – Final Project Pitch Meetings (Individual Meetings)

- Due: Final Project Pitch

Wednesday, 11/18 – Final Project Pitch Meetings (Individual Meetings)

Friday, 11/20 @ Noon: Personal Essay DUE

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Part 5: Final Project

Monday, 11/30 – Final Project Work (Extended Drop-in Hours)

Wednesday, 12/2 – Final Project Work (Extended Drop-in Hours)

Monday, 12/7 – Revise Final Project (Extended Drop-in Hours)

Wednesday, 12/9 – Revise Final Project (Extended Drop-in Hours)

Finals Week (day/time TBA) – Listening Party (Online)

- Due: Final Project

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Policies and Procedures

Administrative Home: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other policies. These policies vary by college (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>).

Electronic Communication: Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Accommodations for Disabilities: UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student should then discuss accommodations with the course instructor (<https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/>).

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom: UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University's Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity at diversity@uiowa.edu or diversity.uiowa.edu.

Academic Integrity: All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address.

CLAS Final Examination Policies: The final exam schedule for each semester is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this final exam information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources-examination-policies>.)

Making a Complaint: Students with a complaint should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the departmental executive officer (DEO), also known as the Chair. Students may then bring the concern to CLAS (<https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities>).

Understanding Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, definitions, and the full University policy, see <https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/>.