INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL JOURNALISM – Fall 2017

M&W, 12:00-1:15
Weinstein Hall, Room 418
Robert Hodierne, instructor
Office: 424 Weinstein Hall
Office hours: 10:30-11:45 am, Monday and Wednesday. Other times by appointment
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Required equipment

An external hard drive of at least 250 GB capacity. It must be Mac compatible. (If your personal computer is a PC you can partition the drive so half is for Mac, the other half for PC. The Help desk can do that for you.) The Macs in the journalism lab have USB ports and a Firewire 800 port. They do not have a Firewire 400 port (go figure). So it is important that whatever drive you pick has either a USB port and/or a Firewire 800 port. Also, you want a drive with a high data transfer rate. In excess of 150 mps is good. You should be able find a suitable drive for about $100. A word of caution: Except for expensive ones, flash drives (aka thumb drives USB drives or jump drives) do not have data transfer speeds fast enough to deal with video. They might work for the still photo assignments but they will cause nothing but heartache for video. This external hard drive is a piece of equipment that will be useful to you beyond this class. And they are easy to sell used.

We will be using Adobe PhotoShop for still photos and Adobe Premiere for video. All of that software is loaded on the computers in Weinstein 418 as well as various other locations on campus (e.g. the TLC). You may also rent those apps from Adobe for $19.99/month if you choose. They run on both Macs and PCs. It is not required that you have those apps on your personal computer.

All other gear, including still and video cameras, will be loaned to you by the journalism department. You will check them out and be held responsible for their care. If you break or lose the gear you will be expected to replace or repair it. You will not get a grade and thus no credit for the course until broken or lost gear is repaired or replaced.

The course

The course will be divided into two segments: The first half of the semester will be devoted to digital still photography; the second half to video.

By the end of this course you should feel confident that you could produce still photos suitable for publication either in print or online. You should also feel confident that you could produce short Web videos.
In the still photo sequence, you will learn the basics of what makes a good news photo, the ethics of news photography and something of its history and traditions. But most of the effort will go towards learning basic digital camera operation, composition and exposure. You also will learn the basics of PhotoShop: importing photos, cropping, sizing and adjusting brightness, contrast and color balance. You will learn how to export photos either for Web use or for print publication. Exercises will put an emphasis on photographing people in real world situations with each exercise focused on a particular technical or artistic challenge. For example, you may be sent to photograph someone giving a speech, the most boring and unimaginative sort of photo assignment but one that in the real world you will be expected to do. We will learn ways to bring some life to such an assignment. There will be about 10 graded exercises in the still photo sequence.

In the video sequence, you will learn the video story telling vocabulary including how to shoot a sequence and how to shoot an interview. Video will be edited in Adobe Premiere. You will learn the basics of importing video to Premiere, cutting it into clips, stringing clips together and exporting. A typical assignment in this sequence might be to produce a 60-second story about a student with an off campus job. There will be about 10 graded exercises in the video sequence. You will typically work in teams of two on these projects.

Grading

Assignments will be screened and critiqued in class. We will all take part in the critique. My in-class critique will be translated into a letter grade that will be emailed to you. In most cases there will be no written critique.

Exercises that accomplish the technical goals with originality and creativity will earn As. Exercises that accomplish the technical goals but in an unimaginative manner will get Cs. Make no mistake, your grade will rise with the amount of effort and creativity you put into each assignment. Late assignments fail.

Final project

There will be no final exam. In lieu of that each student must produce either a picture story or a video story suitable for The Collegian Web site. That project will constitute 25 percent of the final grade. The exercises will constitute the other 75 percent.

Attendance

You are expected to attend each class. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. If you miss more than one class without an adequate excuse your grade will be lowered half a grade for each class missed.

To be successful in this course, you should expect to devote 10-14 hours each week.

Cell phones

No cell phone use, either voice or text, is allowed during class. If your cell phone goes off, you will be asked to leave the class and not allowed to return during that period. That will
count as an unexcused absence. Unless told specifically otherwise, no computers will be turned on during class.

Reaching me

I will be in my office from 10:30-11:45 am, Monday and Wednesday. Feel free to call me at home at 804-484-4759 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. If you need me in person at other times that can be arranged by appointment. You may e-mail me at rhodiern@richmond.edu.

A special note about e-mails to me: Treat them like the business communication they are. Begin with a conventional salutation (Dear. Prof. Hodierne) and end with a polite closing (Sincerely, Jane Doe). Write in complete sentences with proper capitalization and punctuation. I don’t think emoticons are cute. Finally, I don’t respond to text messages, Facebook postings or Tweets.