

J410

FALL SEMESTER 2019 :: ERIC THOMAS, instructor :: U of KANSAS

photojournalism

let's start with me...

Instructor Eric Thomas

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Office Hours: Wed 9:30 to 12:30 p.m.
Class Instagram: @KUphotoJhawks
Also available by appointment
See Blackboard for course details

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The study of photography including light, cameras, lenses and exposure combined with the practice of photojournalism. Students will engage the local community by creating images on deadline of local news, sports, features and portraits. The course will also stress the ethics and practice of digital editing using software. Students will need frequent access to a camera that conveniently allows for setting ISO, aperture and shutter speed. Prerequisite: JOUR 300 with a grade of C (2.0) or above.

MISSION STATEMENT

As you will read below, one of the core goals of this course is to get you out into the world to meet people face-to-face. As reporters we can contact sources in so many ways: email, text, call, FaceTime, Twitter DM . . . This class will encourage a different kind of contact: the personal face-to-face relationship required of photojournalists. It is exhilarating to meet the people who surround you. Indeed, the camera gives you a valid excuse to talk to anyone ("Excuse me. I'm working on a photo project for a journalism class."). My time as a photojournalism student and professional is most memorable for the people I met, even more so than the events I attended. Sure, I got to shoot NBA games; but I also got to be in the disheveled home of an NBA draft pick on the night he was drafted as he locked himself in his room crying while his agent sat on his family's sagging couch. Yes, I got to meet a Nobel laureate essentially

one-on-one. But I also got to be in a hotel ballroom room with a mayoral candidate right after his campaign pulled off a stunning upset. These intimate human moments are the storytelling building blocks of photojournalism. And you must be there -- in person and perhaps out of your comfort zone -- to experience them.

Finding these new and unexpected places to create images is a requirement in this class. I have asked you to list your closest friends, your involvements and your most common places. I don't want you to photograph those people, those groups or those locations.

There are other benefits to us photographing people we are unfamiliar with. Ethically, we avoid the conflicts of interest that come with family, friends and co-workers. We also help to build our audience rather than giving the same expected people publicity. And, of course, we give voice to the voiceless: people who have never met a photojournalist get to tell their story through you. It's time to reach out into the wide mysterious world as a journalist!

When you do reach out into that world, you will likely find people hesitant and suspicious of you and your camera. We will work on the disarming and reassuring language of the photojournalist. However -- and this is key! -- **all submitted images in this class will be published.** First, you will publish them on a publicly available website when you submit them for class. I will often publish them again on social media (Instagram: @kuphotoJhawks). So, please be honest with your subjects and explain that you are journalist who publishes his or her work.

GOALS

- Students will learn to meet people, talk with them about their lives and show their subjects the value of being photographed.
- Students will meet people unlike themselves and tell those people's

stories through images.

- Students will learn the basics of exposure: ISO, aperture and shutter speed.
- Students will practice photojournalism through focus on self-defined, specific, clearly-defined and well-researched subjects.
- Students will learn how to gather an audience on social media.
- Students will learn the techniques of capturing candid, emotional and everyday moments.
- Students will learn the fundamentals of light, whether natural or artificial.
- Students will learn technical aspects of photography, including equipment choices, lenses and image file types.
- Students will learn the ethics of photojournalism.
- Students will learn how to compose an image through patient exploration of a situation.

the stuff we will do...

MATERIALS

- *Photojournalism: The Professionals' Approach* by Kenneth Kobre. You can use either the sixth or seventh edition of this book. **But please know that we will read a handful of chapters and I have placed two copies of the book on reserve in the Journalism Resource Center.** So, maybe you don't need to purchase?
- Other (free) online readings
- An Instagram account (free)
- Access to Adobe software: free through university computer labs or available for purchase through Adobe.

CAMERA EQUIPMENT

You must have access to a camera in this class. Please bring the camera, a charged battery, a transfer cord and a camera card to each class. We will work with the cameras hands-on, and you will miss out without one.

That camera requirement may mean a variety of different possible arrange-

ments: using an existing camera, buying a camera, renting a camera, borrowing a camera or taking a camera out on loan. The kind of camera that you will need is this, at the barest minimum: an SLR with which you can adjust the shutter speed aperture and ISO. Most cameras like that look like this:



Buying a camera: My personal favorite place to shop online for a camera is B&H Photo and Video. Good prices, fast delivery and kind customer service. You can purchase a new body and lens for less than \$400. I am happy to help you shop for a camera at any price point.

Renting a camera: The website www.borrowlenses.com offers equipment rental. However, you will find a semester rental almost as expensive as buying.

Borrowing a camera: If you have a kind soul in your life who is willing to loan a camera, that is great. Please be sure to let them know that you will be using the camera all semester and, at a minimum, will need the camera every class period and likely two other days during that week. It is important that you each have a camera to use during class time.

Taking a camera out on loan: The equipment closet in the Journalism Resource Center has Canon equipment available for loan for the short-term: four camera backpacks with zoom lenses or fixed normal lenses. Unless we have just the right number of students in need of a camera, I would be nervous about relying on loaner cameras for every assignment.

LECTURES

Lectures will expand on readings. You will want to take good notes that go beyond the main points of slides. Material from the lectures will be on the quizzes, while also being applied to photography projects.

ASSESSMENT

Learning outcomes in this class will be evaluated through reading quizzes, photo projects and Instagram sets.

- **Semester Project.** This photographic project will be your showcase and your largest cumulative assignment for the semester. First, you will write a proposal for the project (10 points) explaining your concept and plan for the project. Next, you will commit to photographing three batches of images due a few weeks apart from one another. Finally, you will submit the project as your final assessment (90 points) in the class. (100 points total)
- **Mid-term Project.** Seldom have I learned so much about any one thing as I did as a student from this assignment as an undergraduate. The "Day in the Life" project will serve as your mid-term. You will be matched with a fellow J410 student and photograph that person's life from morning to end of day. You will be given two weeks to arrange the logistics of the project and prepare your images. You will learn so much about being a documentary photojournalist, but perhaps more about what it feels like to be the subject. (50 points)
- **Photo Projects.** We will complete nine other photo projects in this class. For each project, you will publish the completed images on your personal web page for the class. The software that we will use is Adobe Spark, so that is why you will see "On Spark" noted on your class schedule. If you submit all of your photo projects on time, I will allow you to drop the lowest of the photo project grades for the semester. (25 points total)
- **Reading Quizzes:** During the weeks that you read chapters in the *Photojournalism* textbook, you will complete quizzes on Blackboard that review our most recent lecture and your reading. Quizzes are open note and open book. If you complete all of the quizzes on time (by the start of class), I will drop the lowest score. I do not give makeup quizzes without a verifiable excuse. (20 points each)
- **Instagram Sets:** My goal is that you

J410

VISUAL STORYTELLING STUDENT CONTRACT

After reviewing this syllabus, please sign below.

In signing and submitting the syllabus, you acknowledge all of the policies, both of this class in particular and the school of journalism more widely.

You also acknowledge that you understand the requirements of the course, in terms of materials, supplies and assignments.

Finally, you agree to simply work hard to create original work that helps you to grow as a visual person.

Please sign below and date.

signature

your printed name

date

Please return to class on the second day of the course.

J410

DOODLING SPACE

On the other side of this piece of paper is your contract, so I couldn't print any important stuff here. But that doesn't mean that you can't doodle and draw and generally be a fun visual person.

Enjoy.

If you need a prompt for your doodling, here you go: draw a picture of someone taking a selfie at a famous place on campus!

begin thinking like a photojournalist during idle time: that you use your phone to document what is around you rather than distract from what is around you. For each two-week chunk on the semester schedule, you will post 5 photojournalistic images on Instagram. These will be images that are different from your Photo Projects described above. (15 points each)

finally, the details...

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

For email, please remember that I get a lot of it. Please write "YourName: J410" in the subject line. If you miss class, the responsibility is on you to gather notes. Please don't email me seeking materials you missed.

ORIGINAL WORK

The expectation when you come to this class is that you've come to learn, to be creative, to stretch your imagination, and expand your skills. Therefore, all the work you do in this class must be original. That means no "recycling" of assignments or papers from other classes, in the j-school or outside the j-school.

In this rare case, **don't recycle**. Don't recycle old high school assignments. If you photographed an event for a publication or an earlier class, you cannot revise that slightly and resubmit it as a new assignment in this class. If you are working for the *Kansan* or another publication, please do not submit work that you did for that publication in this class. Likewise, I expect the photos/images that you create to be created during this semester for submission to this class.

I assume the work you do for this class is original to this class. Any efforts to recycle material will be regarded as academic dishonesty.

ABOUT PLAGIARISM

In general, any student who turns in work that is not their own on any assignment will receive a zero on that assignment. You may also be subject to Journalism School penalties on cheating and plagiarism, which can include expulsion from the School of Journalism.

Policy on Plagiarism & Fabrication/Falsification: Adopted May 7, 2004:

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor(s) of this course.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

STUDENT WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The University of Kansas is committed to helping all students learn. If you have a special need that may affect your learning, please contact me as soon as possible. Please be aware that the KU Office of Student Access Services coordinates accommodations for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted this office, please do so as soon as possible.

Information about services can be found at <https://disability.ku.edu/>. Or you can visit the office on the first floor of Strong Hall. The phone number is 785-864-4064. The email is achieve@ku.edu

Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course.

CLASSROOM ATTENDANCE

I will collect attendance at every class

period. You are allowed two absences in this class. Once you miss a third class, you start to pay a penalty. **I will deduct 10 points (2 percent) from your overall grade for each absence over three absences.** The three absences don't include documented illnesses (doctor's note provided to me), funerals, KU-sponsored sports or other reasons approved in advance by me.

From the journalism school's policy:

"No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester.

"Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

"The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting."

"The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid.

"Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid."

COPYING OR RECORDING

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are my property. Video and audio recording of lectures without my consent is prohibited. On request, I usually will permit students to record lectures, on the condition that these recordings are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless I give explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and

must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

OTHER RULES TO LIVE BY

- All assignments are due at the start of class. Expect technical difficulties and do not wait until the last minute to print documents or post work online.
- Assignments turned in after the start of class (yes, this means even a minute or two late) will lose 20-percent credit.
- Assignments not submitted within 75 minutes of the start of class (12:15 p.m.) will lose 50-percent credit.
- No assignment will be accepted 24 hours after it was due without a verifiable excuse (see next bullet).
- Late & excused work is allowed if:
 - a signed physician note documents the absence and illness
 - a KU-sponsored athletic event in which you are participating conflicts with an assignment **and** you have notified me of the absence in advance
 - you notify me in advance of the conflict and convince me of its necessity
 - you have a death in the family that you can document with an obituary or funeral program.

EXTRA CREDIT

Students have two opportunities for extra credit in J410. You can do both extra-credit options to earn a total of 20 extra credit points. No other options available:

- **KSPA event.** Volunteering at the KSPA fall conference (Sept. 26). Volunteer slots for these events are first-come, first-served with limited slots. **The twist?** If you fail to show for the extra credit volunteer opportunity, I will deduct 10 points from your attendance in addition to your not earning the extra credit points. Please only sign up if you are sure you can help. (10 points)
- **Share your images:** If you are willing to share your images from this class with future generations of J410 students, I will ask you to confirm

that upon submission of final project and hand over a few more points. (10 points).

GRADING SCALE

The grading scale for this course is shown below. Grades are not rounded to the next percentage point. There is no curve. Please do not ask.

A = 100-93 // **A-** = 92-90

B+ = 89-88 // **B** = 87-83 // **B-** = 82-80

C+ = 79-78 // **C** = 77-73 // **C-** = 72-70

D+ = 69-68 // **D** = 67-63 // **D-** = 62-60

F = 59.9 and below

FINAL EXAM TIME

The university has scheduled the following time for the final exam: Monday, Dec. 16 from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. We will meet to present our final projects, to congratulate one another and to eat some food!

CHANGES TO SYLLABUS

As the instructor, I reserve the right to modify the syllabus and schedule, if necessary. You will notice that the class periods near the end of the semester on the schedule are very loosely defined at this point. As we get closer, I will give those more detail. Changes may include altering point values for assignments. Of course, I will notify you of any changes.

CAREER & OUTREACH OFFICE

If you need assistance with resume and cover letter development, job search strategy, internships, mock interviews and LinkedIn profile, schedule an appointment with Steve Rottinghaus at steve_rottinghaus@ku.edu. He's in Stauffer Flint room 120. Make sure to follow job and internship postings on Twitter at @Rhaus90.

THANKS

I am ready for a great semester and to see your inspired visual work.

Photojournalistically yours,

