

**COMM 489: Senior Seminar in Digital Media**  
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**DESCRIPTION: What is this course all about?**

As the capstone course for the Digital Media Major, you will plan and execute projects that utilize all of the skills and knowledge that you have acquired through the major. Ultimately, the projects you produce in this class should demonstrate what you're capable of doing with a degree in Digital Media, and as such, would serve as excellent pieces in your professional portfolio.

*Course objectives/goals:*

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Conduct research about a particular issue, platform, and/or technology;
2. Analyze the context and situation, including information about circulation, audience, historical context, social context, etc.;
3. Make strategic rhetorical choices in the design of communication artifacts;
4. Create powerful and effective digital media artifacts.

**GRADES: What will you have to do in this class?**Projects (80%):

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Analytical Project: Blog Post:     | 30 points |
| Service-Learning Project: Podcast: | 30 points |
| Professional Project: Website      | 20 points |

Participation/Reflection (20%):

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Engaged Participation in Class | 5 points |
| Engaged Use of Slack           | 5 points |
| Final Reflection Paper:        | 5 points |
| Senior Exit Survey             | 5 points |

Total possible: 100 points

Extra Credit: There may be opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. The number and types of opportunities will vary depending on the semester and class. The **maximum** amount of extra credit any single student may earn is **2%**.

**Analytical Project: Blog Post****Blog Post Assignment**

1. Research (5 points)
  - a. Trace the public conversation:
    - i. Gather 10 resources that represent the public discussion of your topic (these might come from news outlets, blogs, TV coverage, etc.).
    - ii. List the bibliography entries for these 10 sources
    - iii. In 300-500 words, summarize the public conversation: Overall, what is the public conversation about your issue?
  - b. Explore possible scholarly sources to use for your intervention:
    - i. Gather 10 scholarly sources that would be relevant to your topic (some of these should be from your digital media classes, some of these should be new sources coming from your own library research)
    - ii. List the bibliography entries for these 10 sources
    - iii. In 300-500 words, which source seems most promising to use in your blog post? Why?

2. Rough Draft (5 points)
  - a. Bring a rough draft of your blog post to class for peer review. The blog post should discuss some sort of digital media topic. You should make some kind of analytical intervention—a call to view a current event differently, a new angle that criticizes the current event, or something else that the rest of the public seems to be missing. Your analytical intervention should reflect your digital media expertise. The blog post should be 400-800 words. It should follow the genre conventions of the blog posts we read in class (for example, informal academic writing and the use of hyperlinks).
3. Final Blog Post (10 points)
  - a. The final blog post should be something you would be proud to post—something that you would show your parents, your friends, and possible employers.
  - b. With your final blog post, write a Facebook and Twitter post that can be used to share your blog post. Pull from what you learned in COMM 433: Social Media Strategy in particular. Write a Facebook and Twitter post that will achieve a goal of convincing people to read your blog post.

### **Blog Post Components**

1. Attention-getter
2. Analytical Intervention:
  - a. What has everyone else already said? (This is the public conversation)
  - b. What new thing are you saying? Put another way, what is everyone else missing?
  - c. Thesis: What is your main point? (What is your central claim?)
3. Justification: Why does what you're saying matter? Put another way, why should the reader bother to keep reading?
4. Reference to/summary of scholarly research (can be something we already read in one of the Digital Media Major classes or something new you find)
5. Analysis (likely an application of scholarly research)
6. Conclusion

### Tips:

- Cite through links rather than APA in-text citations/bibliography

### **Rubric Criteria:**

- Use of digital media research
- Insightfulness of the intervention and thesis
- Extent of revision
- Quality of writing

## Timeline and Schedule (5 weeks):

### Week 2:

- Tuesday (1/16):
  - \*\*Read sample blog posts
  - In class, discuss blog post structure
  - In class, research session

### Week 3:

- Tuesday (1/23):
  - \*\*Research due
  - In class, exercise to find the kernel of your blog post idea
  - In class, talk with Dr. Jennie Keohane (University of Baltimore) about the process of writing an analytical blog post

### Week 4:

- Tuesday (1/30):
  - \*\*Draft due for peer review
  - In class, peer review

### Week 5:

- Tuesday (2/6):
  - \*\*Revised version due
  - In-class, revision workshop
- Friday (2/9):
  - \*\*Blog post due (you will get approval to submit at this stage or be asked to do one more round of revisions before Tuesday)

### Week 6:

- Tuesday (2/13):
  - \*\*Final Blog post due (including text and images for Facebook and Twitter posts about your blog post)
  - In class, transition to next unit; introduce next assignment
  - In class, choose partners for podcast project

## Service-Learning Digital Production Project: Podcast

### Podcast Components

1. Research paper for client (in partners) (5 points)
  - a. Your client, NAMI for Southwest Ohio (National Alliance for Mental Illness), has a challenge. Nonprofits like NAMI often rely on the stories of their clients to build their public image, win grants, and raise funds. But because mental health is so stigmatized, NAMI's clients are often hesitant to share their stories in video. Even in print materials like brochures, clients are hesitant to have their images shared along with their stories. I suspect that podcasts may be a good solution. NAMI is intrigued, but we need to convince them.
  - b. In a 3-6 page report, make an argument for why NAMI should consider using podcasts. In the report, explain what podcasts are, how they work, and how they circulate. Explain how podcasts might fit into NAMI's overall storytelling strategy. Remember that your client may not be familiar with podcasts—the staff may not listen to them at all personally, and podcasts certainly aren't common in the nonprofit sector.
  - c. In class, we will choose which report to hand in to NAMI.
2. Interviews (in partners) (5 points)
  - a. Conduct one interview with a NAMI client that is at least 40 minutes long. Record the interview using the Blue Snowball microphone from the Digital Media Lab. At the same time, make a backup recording with a smart phone.
  - b. Get informed consent either verbally or on paper. Follow the example shown in class.
  - c. Backup the audio file you made with the Snowball microphone in three places, following the 3-1-1 rule we learned in COMM 235 (3 copies, 1 off-site).
3. Rough draft of audio story (in partners) (5 points)
  - a. Edit the 40-minute interview into a 7-10 minute audio story. Be sure to use a pseudonym for the client you work with. The audio story should have an introduction and a conclusion.
4. Call for Music (in partners) (2 points)
  - a. We are partnering with a Xavier music class for the music for our podcasts. They will write original music for each podcast. Your task is to write a short call for music. This should include: a description of what the podcast is about, the mood and tone you want to set, and the music you need (intro, outro, and/or transition). This should be 2-4 pages.
5. Final draft of audio story (in partners) (5 points)
  - a. The final draft of the podcast should fit the audio-story genre (think: This American Life) and should be suitable for a public audience. This should be a very polished final version that would be appropriate for NAMI post.
6. Launch materials (3 points)

- a. NAMI has also asked us to create branding and launch materials for the podcast. We will divide these tasks up amongst ourselves (i.e. not everyone will create all three items). You can find branding guidelines for NAMI on the Comm Department Major/Minors Canvas course.
  - i. Podcast name, tagline, and/or logo
  - ii. Press release announcing the launch of the podcast.
  - iii. Facebook posts announcing the launch and the premiere of each episode.
7. Client presentation (in partners) (2 points)
  - a. Date and requirements: TBD
8. Service-Learning Reflections (individually) (3 points)
  - a. Service-learning (also called community engaged learning) provides unique opportunities to apply academic material and to serve our Cincinnati community. Throughout this unit, we will reflect on the service-learning process, thinking about our relationship to service, the Cincinnati community, and public issues like mental health. Each reflection should be 2-3 pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font).
  - b. Reflection #1: What do you already know about mental health? Where does that information come from? What are your expectations about talking with someone who has experienced mental illness-what do you think it will be like?
  - c. Reflection #2: What was it like working with NAMI clients who have had mental illnesses? Did this match your expectations? How did that affect your approach to the podcast?
  - d. Reflection #3: How has your view of mental illness changed over the course of the process for this project? Connect that to the role of the podcast. What role can the podcast play for a public audience? How might your podcast affect discourses about mental health and people's lives?

#### **Rubric for the Final Podcast:**

- Quality of writing in the audio story
- Quality of sound recording
- Extent of revision

#### **Timeline and Schedule (7 weeks):**

##### Week 6:

- Tuesday (2/13):
  - \*\*Final Blog post due (including text and images for Facebook and Twitter posts about your blog post)
  - In class, upload blog post to Comm Department blog and Exhibit
  - In class, transition to next unit; introduce next assignment

- In class, complete in-class partner questionnaire

Week 7:

- Tuesday (2/20):
  - \*\*Read and comment on everyone's blog posts
  - \*\*Read about mental health on NAMI's website. In particular, dig through the infographics: <https://namiswoh.org/about-mental-illness/>
  - \*\*Watch Ellen Syks' Ted talk: [https://www.ted.com/talks/elyn\\_saks\\_seeing\\_mental\\_illness](https://www.ted.com/talks/elyn_saks_seeing_mental_illness)
  - \*\*Watch client presentation video: <https://app.ilosvideos.com/view/QpXaRPLqXnLP/?sr=eSQRvIxnV9zr>
  - In class, take CIPR pre-test survey.
  - In class, discuss mental health and service-learning: What is mental illness? What is the state of mental health services in the US? Why is there a need for the service for NAMI? Why does NAMI need our help?

Week 8:

- Tuesday (2/27):
  - \*\*Research report due (in partners)
  - \*\*Interview should be scheduled by today (in partners)
  - \*\*Reflection #1 due (individual)
  - In class, work on interviews (discuss informed consent, practice interviewing activity, and write interview questions)
  - In class, practice using microphone equipment.

[spring break]

Week 9:

- Tuesday (3/13):
  - \*\*Interview due (in partners)
  - \*\*Reflection #2 due (individual)
  - \*\*Listen to this podcast about the history of podcasts: <https://toe.prx.org/2015/10/secret-histories-of-podcasting> (individual)
  - \*\*Read Nancy Updike's tips for writing for audio: <https://transom.org/2006/nancy-updike/> (individual)
  - \*\*Read Ira Glass's manifesto for radio/podcasts: <https://transom.org/2004/ira-glass/> (individual)
  - In class, do an audio writing exercise.
  - In class, Audacity demo (both review and new tools).

Week 10:

- Tuesday (3/20):
  - \*\*Rough draft due
  - In class, peer review
- Friday (3/23):

- \*\*Final draft due [your final draft will be approved or you will be asked to make one more revision]

Week 11:

- Tuesday (3/27)
  - \*\*Call for Music due
  - \*\*Reflection #3 due
  - \*\*Launch materials due
  - In class, transition to next project: Unit 3: Professional Portfolio Website
  - In class, do reflection exercises about how you want to pitch yourself, your skills, and your brand

\*\*Client Presentation: [TBD]

### **Community Engaged Project Background**

*COMM 489 is participating in a larger community engaged project, led by Dr. Maxian, through our Podcast Project (Unit 2):*

“This course is part of a larger project, the 2017-2018 Conway Fellowship, of which the goal is increase the impact of community-engaged partnerships. Community impact tends to be overlooked in partnerships between community organizations and university classes. The Conway Fellowship project attempts to concentrate the impact that communication arts students and faculty can have. This academic year, all community-engaged (or service-learning) projects in COMM classes will be completed for one client, NAMI Southwest Ohio. Ideally, the impact of our collective efforts will increase the effect NAMI has in their communities. If you would like more information about the Conway Fellowship project, contact Dr. Maxian.”



## Professional Project: Portfolio & Website

### Website/Portfolio Components

1. Website proposal (2 points)
  - a. In a 2-3 page proposal, explain your vision for your professional website and portfolio. Your proposal should include:
    - i. An explanation of whether you plan to use a platform like WIX/SquareSpace/Weebly or whether you plan to revise your website from COMM 235. If you plan to revise your COMM 235 website, be sure to explain how much work that will take. If you plan to use WIX, which will take less coding, be sure to explain what extra work you plan to put into the website. In other words, a website made with WIX should demonstrate more extensive writing, artifacts, and/or design work. Justify your choice to use a platform like WIX or to use HTML/CSS. What makes your choice appropriate for what you want to accomplish/your particular professional goals?
    - ii. An outline of your website: What will be the main sections of your site (reflected in your navigation bar)? What will those sections include? Explain why you made these choices.
    - iii. What work and how much time will it take to create each section? Is the project doable (Is it small enough)? Is the project significant (is it big enough)?
2. Rough draft (5 points)
  - a. Bring a full draft of your website to class for peer review. This should be a completely finished version. You may still have 1-2 things you want to tweak, but no more. This version should reflect how far you were able to get on your own before getting feedback or help.
3. Final draft (13 points)
  - a. This final version should be polished and professional. This is something you should be proud to show employers as well as your family and friends.
  - b. Requirements:
    - i. Your website should have 3-6 sections reflected in the navigation bar. Each section should include text, images, and other artifacts that both show who you are as a person and demonstrate what you can do. Your website should also demonstrate strategic design choices in terms of color, proximity, alignment, contrast, and repetition. Ultimately, your website should be persuasive.
  - c. Purpose:
    - i. The website should serve the purpose of a professional website and an online portfolio. As a professional website, it should include basic information about you (think of what people want to know when they

google you). As an online portfolio, it should have extensive artifacts and work samples. Big picture: *Use your website to communicate your expertise, perform professionalism, and persuade folks that you are worth hiring.*

d. Audience:

- i. It should be aimed at an audience of bosses and colleagues in your intended area of work, and thus should take on a professional tone throughout.

### Timeline and Schedule (4 weeks):

#### Week 11:

- Tuesday (3/27)
  - \*\*Call for Music due
  - \*\*Reflection #3 due
  - \*\*Launch materials due (Name/tagline/logo & report)
  - In class, Caroline Tighe talks about her digital media job
  - In class, transition to next project: Unit 3: Professional Portfolio Website
  - In class, do reflection exercises about how you want to pitch yourself, your skills, and your brand

#### Week 12:

- Tuesday (4/3)
  - \*\*Launch materials due (Press release & facebook posts)
  - \*\*Website Proposal
  - In class, HTML & CSS refreshers
  - In class, start work on your website

#### Week 13:

- Tuesday (4/10)
  - \*\*Rough draft due
  - In class, peer critique

#### Week 14:

- Tuesday (4/17)
  - \*\*Final draft due
  - In class, start planning the client presentation

#### Week 15:

- Tuesday (4/24)
  - \*\*Client Presentation for podcast project: CLC 406

#### Week 16: Finals Week

- Tuesday (5/1)
  - \*\*Senior Exit Survey
  - \*\*Final Reflection Paper



### **Engaged Use of Slack:**

During class, we will learn how to use Slack, a messaging system designed for teams. This will give us an opportunity to learn a new digital media platform, while also facilitating your group-work in an effective way. You might think of this as replacing an email/text combination. You will message your groupmates in Slack and share files in Slack. This is where you will work with your group when you are not meeting face-to-face.

*Points:* 5 points

### **Engaged Participation in Class:**

I expect you to use our in-class time effectively. That means I expect you to bring all your materials with you to class (so that you can use class time to work on your project). I also expect you to be prepared for class, having completed whatever assignments your group may have tasked you with.

*Points:* 5 points

### **Final Reflection Paper:**

Individually, write a reflective essay that answers the following questions:

- How do you hope to use your Digital Media Major skills in your career after graduation?
- How does your liberal arts knowledge with your Digital Media major? How have you integrated the two? How do you plan to integrate the two in the future after graduation?
- What skills, experience, or knowledge do you hope to further develop after you graduate?

*Points:* 5 points

*Requirements:* 4-6 pages (Times New Roman, size 12, 1-inch margins, double-spaced)

*Due:* at our Final Exam timeslot

**Senior Exit Survey:**

During our scheduled Final Exam time, you will complete a Senior Exit Survey. The survey is an assessment tool designed to give the faculty feedback about the Digital Media Major.

*Points:* 5 points