

## COM-123: Multimedia Journalism Syllabus

**Room:**

**Course Meeting:**

**Instructor:** Dr. Paul Mena

**Email:** [pmena@westmont.edu](mailto:pmena@westmont.edu)

**Office:** Deane Hall 107B

**Office Hours:**

**Required Texts**

- Bradshaw, P. (2024). *The Online Journalism Handbook*. Third Edition. New York, NY: Routledge.

Supplemental materials will be added to Canvas

**Course Description**

This course examines the impact of technology on journalism and introduces students to the basic elements of multimedia journalistic storytelling. The course gives students knowledge, principles, and practices of multimedia journalism. Students will study the evolving world of digital journalism and learn how to create online stories using multimedia elements (text, photos, videos, audio, data visualization, infographics, interactive maps, timelines). In this written communication course, students will produce writing that observes journalistic strategies and conventions, follow journalistic norms of accuracy and verification, and work on individual and group storytelling projects that include multimedia elements. Students are expected to already know what makes a story newsworthy, what the principles of writing for the media are, and how to write a print story. No experience in creating multimedia stories is required. Assignments in this course will help students understand what it means to be a multimedia storyteller and the role of multimedia journalism in making information more engaging and accessible. Assignments will include a podcast, a social media video, and a final multimedia project presentation. In this sense, this is also an oral communication course where students will be encouraged to develop skills to articulate information in a clear and professional manner in the context of journalism. In addition, students will have opportunities to express Christian values through their work.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

Because this course is one part of your broader Westmont education, the course learning outcomes have connections to that broader education. This course is part of the Communication Studies major, so it will contribute to your achieving some of the outcomes of that program as well. You can see below the connections between the course and the Communication Studies program.

Communication Studies Program Learning Outcomes

1. Create effective and appropriate written and oral messages
2. Employ communication theories, perspectives, and principles knowledgeably
3. Apply ethical and biblical principles and practices

COM-195 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Create journalist content in a variety of multimedia forms.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and practices of multimedia journalism.
- Articulate what it means to be a multimedia storyteller, how new technologies impact journalism, and how multimedia journalism can make information more engaging.
- Demonstrate strategic written communication that is informed by rhetorical situation, audience, genre, and purpose
- Effectively communicate orally as informed by rhetorical situation, audience, genre, and purpose.
- Articulate how their faith informs their multimedia storytelling.

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COM Program Outcomes -> Course Outcomes	Oral and Written Communication	Disciplinary Knowledge	Biblical and ethical principles
Creation of multimedia journalistic content	Assignments, Final Project	Lectures, Readings, Assignments,	Lectures, Readings, Assignment
Knowledge of conventions and practices of multimedia journalism	Assignments, Final Project, Exam	Lectures, Readings, Assignments, Final Project, Exam	Lectures, Readings
What it means to be a multimedia storyteller and the impact of new technologies on journalism	Assignments, Papers, Final Project, Exam	Lectures, Readings, Papers, Exam	Lecture, Readings, Assignments
Faith and multimedia storytelling	Lectures, Class Discussions, Exam	Lectures, Class Discussions	Lectures, Assignments

### Assignments

- **Website Creation:** Students are required to create a free website where they can display their work in the course, using tools such as Wix, Weebly, SquareSpace, or WordPress. Class sessions will provide opportunities for feedback from the instructor and peers. All written work must follow the AP Stylebook.
- **Photo Story:** Students will tell a news story through a combination of photos and text. The story will include at least 7 photos, 2 direct quotes from interviewees, and 3 hyperlinks. The story should be no less than 300 words.
- **Podcasting:** You will prepare a 10-minute audio podcast in which you interview two people about a topic for which they have some expertise. The podcast should include an audio news package. Write a 200-word story to run alongside the podcast. This assignment should be done in pairs.
- **Social Media Video:** Students will produce and edit a minute-long video news story for social media. The video should have at least two interviewees. A voiceover will allow students to add a

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recorder narration to the video. Students can combine voiceover and standup. Write a 200-word story to run alongside the social media video.

- **Interactive Story:** You will create a story map, timeline, or infographic to tell a journalistic story. Write a 300-word story to run alongside the interactive multimedia element.
- **Data Journalism Story:** You will analyze a data set and use that information to create a journalistic story. The story will include data visualizations like charts or graphs to reveal trends or insights. The story should be no less than 700 words. This assignment should be done in pairs.
- **Short Papers:** Students will write two 1,000-word papers exploring the changing world of digital journalism and the impact of new technologies on journalism. Use APA Style.
- **Reading Notes/Quizzes/Participation:** It is expected that students bring written notes on the assigned readings and come to class ready to participate in reading discussions. Pop-up quizzes will be given in class, without advanced notice.
- **Final Project:** Students will work in groups of 2 or 3 to create a substantive, in-depth multimedia journalism project. The multimedia journalism project will require considerable research and journalistic reporting. The completed project should contain a minimum of 1,000 words. Students will propose a topic for their final project. They will explore how to effectively choose and integrate various multimedia elements into a story package. Oral communication skills will be evaluated (audio news packages, podcasts, social media videos, and video for the web). Each final project will be presented for the class.
- **Final Exam:** A final exam will include material from lectures and readings. A final exam will include material from lectures and readings, as well as a self-assessment of what you have learned in the course.

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## Course Grading

Your course grade will be made up of the following:

Website Creation	4
Photo Story	8
Podcasting	8
Social Media Video	8
Interactive Story	8
Data Journalism Story	12
Short Papers	16
Reading Notes/Quizzes/Participation	8
Final Project	20
Final Exam	8
Total	100 points

## Final Grade Total

A 94 - 100	C+ 77 - 79.99
A- 90 - 93.99	C 74 - 76.99
B+ 87 - 89.99	C- 70 - 73.99

B 84 – 86.99  
B- 80 – 83.99  
F 0 – 59.99

D+ 67 – 69.99  
D 60 – 66.99

### **About your instructor**

Dr. Paul Mena teaches Writing for the Media/Introduction to Journalism, Multimedia Journalism, Media and Mass Communication, Misinformation and Fact-Checking, Studies in Communication Ethics, and Public Speaking. He received his Ph.D. in Mass Communication from the University of Florida. His research on journalism, fact-checking, misinformation, and credibility has been published in Journalism, Journalism Practice, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Social Media + Society, Policy & Internet, and Media and Communication. He worked as a professional journalist in Ecuador for around 18 years, reporting for BBC News Mundo, El Pais (Spain), and Ecuadorian media. As a Fulbright scholar, he obtained his master's degree in Mass Communications and Journalism Studies at the University of South Florida. Before teaching at Westmont College, he taught at the University of California Santa Barbara for four years.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Attendance**

Consistent class attendance is very important. Missing more than six classes without excuse (e.g. varsity athletic events) will be grounds for failing the class. After more than six absences, the instructor can also request that the student be dropped from the class. Students who arrive 15 or more minutes late will be marked as absent. Let the instructor know ahead of time via e-mail if you need to miss class and why. Each student may miss three class sessions without a penalty on his or her grade. These three class sessions include excused absences. Save them for when you really need them—e.g., sickness, emergency, a field trip for another class, etc.

### **Deadlines**

You are responsible for readings and turning in assignments the day they are due. Punctuality is key in assignment submission. Lateness will lower the assignment grade. Assignments will be penalized 10% if they are submitted late and 10% for each additional day that they are late up to 50% off. If you cannot meet the deadline for an assignment, it is your responsibility to contact me at least 24 hours in advance. Extensions are not guaranteed, but are at the instructor's discretion, on a case-by-case basis.

### **Professionalism / AP Stylebook**

This course promotes excellence in journalism. Please develop a practice of consulting the AP Stylebook as you write and of assuming the role of first editor and proofreader before you submit your assignments. In addition, please conduct yourself accordingly when contacting and interviewing sources.

### **Westmont's expectation regarding honor and respect in the classroom**

Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself." In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. Please review the following webpage <https://www.westmont.edu/about/community-commitments/community-life-statement>. You may also find it helpful to access the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

## **Technology**

As a way of showing respect to each other and giving our minds space to engage with the course content, all cellphones should be on silent/do not disturb and tucked away out of sight (your sight and ours) during class. Laptops are not allowed in class except when permitted by the instructor.

## **Academic Integrity**

Honesty and integrity are fundamental values in academia. When students join our college community, they are expected, as apprentice scholars, to search for truth with integrity and accuracy. This quest requires humility about our abilities, respect for the ideas of others, and originality in our thinking. Since Westmont is a Christian community, the integrity of our scholarship is rooted in the integrity of our faith. We seek to be followers of Christ in the classroom, in the library, and at the privacy of our computers. Violations of academic integrity are a serious breach of trust within the Westmont community because they violate the regard for truth essential to genuine learning and Christian consistency. Such deception also hurts those students who do their work with integrity. Violations of Academic Integrity may consist of cheating (the use of unauthorized sources of information on an examination or other assignment), falsification (misrepresentation of facts in any academic project or obligation) or plagiarism (the use of someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit).

Dishonesty of any kind may result in loss of credit for the work involved and the filing of a report with the Provost's Office. Major or repeated infractions may result in dismissal from the course with a grade of F. Be familiar with the College's plagiarism policy, found at <https://www.westmont.edu/office-provost/academic-program/academic-integrity-policy>

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools: A student should NOT substitute AI-generated text for original academic work.

Westmont's [academic integrity policy](#) prohibits us from "present[ing] another's work as our own." Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing and other creation for their users. Therefore, students should NOT substitute AI-generated content or ideas for original academic work. Westmont faculty members design assignments for students' incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic generative process in which a student does the work of critical thinking and message construction.

## **Reasonable Accommodation and General Wellbeing**

Students who have been diagnosed with a condition that meets the criteria of a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Accessibility Resource Office (ARO) as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by ARO. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. Please email [aro@westmont.edu](mailto:aro@westmont.edu) and see the website for more information <https://www.westmont.edu/accessibility-resources>

## **Library resources for this course**

Westmont librarians are available to advise and consult with you on your research assignments. You can drop by the Research Help Desk or schedule an appointment with a librarian assigned to your course. To identify a specific librarian and find subject-specific resources, consult Voskuyl Library's Research Guides or email [askalibrarian@westmont.edu](mailto:askalibrarian@westmont.edu).

## COM-123 WEEKLY SCHEDULE

THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE BY THE INSTRUCTOR DEPENDING ON THE PROGRESS OF THE COURSE.

*Additional readings and resources will be posted on Canvas  
Do all of the readings BEFORE class and come prepared to discuss them.*

Week	Topics	Readings	Due
Week 1: Jan 12, 14, 16	Syllabus review Multimedia storytelling. What's a multimedia story? The evolving world of digital journalism	Bradshaw, Chapter 2: "Histories, futures, and the changing business and technologies of journalism"	
Week 2: Jan 20, 21, 23	Creating a free website. Usability, web design basics Finding stories, finding sources	Bradshaw, Chapter 3: "Finding leads and sources online"	
Week 3: Jan 26, 28, 30	Writing across platforms Search engine optimization	Bradshaw, Chapter 4: "Writing for the web" Filak, Chapter 2: "Writing across platforms"	<b>Jan 26</b> , Short paper 1
Week 4: Feb 2, 4, 6	Photojournalism basics: Content, composition, lighting Photo stories	Filak, Chapter 6: "Photography"	<b>Feb 2</b> , Website creation assignment
Week 5: Feb 9, 11, 13	Audio journalism Audio stories: Script writing Podcasting	Bradshaw, Chapter 8: "Online audio"	<b>Feb 13</b> , Photo story assignment
Week 6: Feb 18, 20	Video journalism Story structures Editing styles	Harrower, Chapter 9: "Broadcast Journalism"  Bradshaw, Chapter 9: "Video for the web and social media"	
Week 7: Feb 23, 25, 27	Visual storytelling	Gitner, Chapter 5: "The building blocks of visual storytelling"	<b>Feb 23</b> , Podcasting assignment
Week 8: March 2, 4, 6	Mobile journalism	Gitner, Chapter 10: "Visual storytelling with mobile devices"	
Week 9: March 9, 11, 13	Infographics Interactive timeline stories Story maps	Bradshaw, Chapter 11: "Interactivity and code"	<b>March 9</b> , Social media video assignment
Week 10: March 23, 25, 27	Data journalism and data visualization Data visualization tools	Bradshaw, Chapter 10: "Data journalism"	<b>March 25</b> , Interactive story assignment
Week 11: March 30, April 1	Working with databases Telling a story with data	Filak, Chapter 9: "Data Journalism"	<b>March 30</b> , Final project proposals
Week 12: April 8, 10	Research on data journalism, data visualization and storytelling	Tran, Chapter 7: "Data visualization and storytelling"	<b>April 10</b> , Data journalism assignment

	Creating multimedia packages in journalism		
Week 13: April 13, 15, 17	The impact of AI and new technologies on journalism	Columbia Journalism Review, "Artificial Intelligence in the News: How AI Retools, Rationalizes, and Reshapes Journalism and the Public Arena" Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, "AI and the Future of News," 2025	<b>April 19</b> , Short paper 2
Week 14: April 20, 22, 24	Expressing Christian values through multimedia storytelling Final Project Workshop		
Week 15: April 27, 29	<b>Final Project Presentations</b>		<b>April 28</b> , Final Projects
Week 16	Final Exam		<b>May 7</b> , Final Exam

#### RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Westmont's emergency procedures

<https://www.westmont.edu/emergency>

Tutoring

<https://www.westmont.edu/voskuyl-library-home/tutoring>

Writer's Corner

<https://www.westmont.edu/writers-corner>

Research Help Desk and other Library Services

<https://www.westmont.edu/library>

Accessibility Resource Office (ARO)

<https://www.westmont.edu/accessibility-resources>

CAPS

<https://www.westmont.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services>

The COVE Career Services

<https://www.westmont.edu/cove-career-center>

Peer Coaches

<https://www.westmont.edu/center-student-success/peer-coaching>

Student Success Coaches (SSCs)

<https://www.westmont.edu/center-student-success/student-success-coaches>

WCSA's Take a Professor to Lunch/Richie's Program

<https://www.westmont.edu/student-life/campus-activities/westmont-college-student-association>