

COMM 490 – Special Topics in Communication: Magazine Journalism and Photography in Italy - The Urbino Project

University of Jamestown

In cooperation with: Institute for Education in International Media (ieiMedia)

May 27 – June 25, 2022

Welcome to the Urbino Magazine Project!

This month-long course in writing and photography will introduce you to the essentials of magazine journalism. You will create the text and photography for a full-length feature story in *Urbino Now*, a magazine about the people, culture, life, food, and arts of Urbino, Italy, and the surrounding region of Le Marche.

You will learn by doing, using the city of Urbino as a laboratory. The final product will be a digital and print-on-demand magazine, available through MagCloud/Blurb. All magazine content will also be posted on a project website, along with the work of students in a parallel multimedia track.

In addition, you will study basic Italian language and learn about the culture and history of Urbino and the Marche region. You will learn to work with an interpreter and to navigate a foreign culture, getting a taste of what it's like to be a foreign correspondent in the 21st century.

OBJECTIVES

In this course you will:

- Learn the fundamentals of magazine reporting and writing: interviewing and reporting, clear and engaging writing, and story structure
- Learn the fundamentals of magazine photojournalism and how to use a camera to produce interesting and storytelling photos to accompany text
- Learn how to identify, conceive, and shape a story idea in both words and photos
- Learn to work with a text editor and a photo editor throughout story development and execution
- Learn how to work with an interpreter and conduct interviews
- Learn how to live and function as a journalist in a foreign culture
- Demonstrate that you have mastered the skills of finding, researching, and producing a compelling magazine feature story package

We will achieve these objectives through a combination of lectures, seminars, assignments, and small-group sessions. You will also meet with faculty members for individual consultations and feedback on your work.

FACULTY

- Steven Anderson – a professor in the James Madison University School of Media Arts & Design. He is also a former environmental reporter/weathercaster at KCNC-TV in Denver.
- Susan Biddle – Photography instructor. Former *Washington Post* and White House photographer, now freelancing
- Francesca Carducci - Italian Instructor, Interpreter Coordinator
- Michael Gold – Magazine program co-director. Co-founder of *Health*, former editor of *Strings*, book author and consultant who helped launch *Dwell* magazine and other prominent publications and websites.
- Susan West – Magazine program co-director. Founding editor in chief of *Afar*, former executive editor of *Smithsonian*, and consultant who has advised magazines and websites from *Cooking Light* to WebMD.

CALENDAR

Orientation Weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday): You'll arrive in Rome on Friday morning and we'll take a chartered bus together to Urbino. The weekend will be spent in orientation, getting to know each other, and learning some of the basics of magazine writing and photography.

Week 1 (Monday – Thursday): You'll start getting acquainted with Urbino and the surrounding area, putting to immediate use your daily lessons in Italian language and culture. In “boot camp” classes, you'll learn or review the basics of reporting, writing, photography, photojournalism, and how to pitch a story. Much of your time this week will be devoted to researching and refining your story idea, and you'll be asked to present a detailed and compelling pitch for your story at the end of this week. You'll have *a three-day free weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)* to explore the town or the region or to travel even farther.

Week 2 (Monday – Thursday): Once your assignment is approved, you'll focus on reporting and photographing. The faculty will work with you in these areas, both in seminars and during one-on-one coaching. Language class will continue daily, along with in-depth sessions about magazine writing and photography. Some evenings, we will hold critiques and cultural activities. At the end of the week, you'll have *a three-day free weekend, (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)* to explore the town or the region or to travel even farther.

Week 3 (Monday – Sunday): Reporting, writing, and photographing will again be the focus this week—as will re-writing and re-photographing, depending on the feedback from your instructors. Throughout the week, you will have Italian lessons and consultations with faculty during the day. Some evening sessions may be scheduled for critiques, work sessions, and cultural activities. The first drafts of both your text and photoessay will be due, as will any revisions. This will be a busy week, so you'll need to stick around Urbino through the weekend in order to complete your stories.

Week 4 (Monday – Thursday): On Monday and Tuesday, you will work with your editor on final changes to your text and with your photo instructor on photo selection and sequencing. You'll develop captions, heads, subheads, and other display copy that tell the story at a glance. When the final edits are done, we'll post your article and photos to the project website. We'll have a Wednesday night awards ceremony where we'll give out the prestigious “Raffie” awards, followed by a banquet. Thursday will be your last day to explore those unvisited areas of Urbino. Thursday will also be the packing day. The bus will leave early in the morning to take you back to the airport in Rome.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Students are expected to bring a laptop computer and digital camera. A digital voice recorder for interviews is also recommended. Some digital cameras may be provided by ieiMedia.

REQUIREMENTS

Each student will be responsible for producing a feature story package that consists of a text story of 1,000 to 1,500 words as well as 10 to 15 photos that tell the story visually. You will work with an interpreter to report these stories and will be assigned a text editor and a photo editor with whom you will develop and polish your text and photos. You will also be expected to make sure the story is factually correct and to document all sources.

The digital and print-on-demand magazine we will create will be a lively, in-depth guide to Urbino and Le Marche, aimed at English speakers. Your job is to find, report, and write articles that reveal the heart and soul of the region and its people, re-creating on the page the experience of life there. Your story might be a profile, an exploration of a cultural or culinary tradition, a destination piece, a look at a local industry—such as shoe design, fashion, hat-making, accordion production, or lace-making—an historical analysis, a practical guide to some aspect of the city or region, or a report or critique related to music, sports, or the arts.

All work worthy of publishing will be published in the magazine and posted on the project website. These are public media that will be available for the entire world to see. Faculty members reserve the right not to publish any work that is offensive, libelous, or of poor quality.

MODULES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND GRADING

Students will learn the fundamentals of magazine writing and photography – how to tell a compelling story using both text and images. Each module will introduce students to a set of skills that helps journalists tell stories. The skills learned will depend in part on the interests and existing skill base of the student.

Magazine Making

We will explore how a magazine projects its identity and connects with its readers through cover images, design and layout, story approach and tone, the types of departments and features, pacing and organization, and so on. In addition, we will look at the special chemistry between words and images that exists in print magazines and their digital equivalents. Students will learn the importance of understanding a magazine's audience and how to produce a story package that answers the readers' needs, desires, and habits. They will learn what distinguishes magazine writing and photography from other types of journalism, and will practice employing these characteristics in their own work.

Grading: 10%

Magazine Reporting and Writing

Students will learn and practice the skills necessary for successful magazine writing: Identifying and developing compelling story ideas aimed at a specific audience; targeting appropriate sources; effective interviewing; selecting an approach appropriate to the publication and the material; and weaving interviews and background material into a well-structured, clear, and engaging article. You will also learn to work with an editor in all aspects of story development and creation, accepting criticism and working creatively and collaboratively while framing the story concept, reporting, and writing.

Grading: 35%

Magazine Photography

Students will learn how to use their cameras as storytelling tools. Technical basics will be covered as will the basics of lighting, composition, and photo editing. In addition to mastering the skills and techniques involved with journalistic portraiture your major task will be to learn how to shoot and produce a sequence of images that visually complement, enhance, and expand your written text. All students will receive instruction on creating a photo slideshow so their images can be shown on the project website. We will hold some evening critique sessions as a full group and discuss the photos from assignments.

Grading: 35%

International Reporting

Students will learn the basics of working as a reporter in a foreign country and culture. You will learn how to find compelling stories in a foreign setting, report with an interpreter, uncover the cultural context, and convey an understanding of the culture to an English-speaking audience.

Grading: 10%

Italian Language and Culture

Over the course of our four weeks in Urbino you will have approximately 15 hours of Italian language instruction. Group work will be targeted to beginners, and those with previous knowledge of the language will have special projects to complete in Italian. Students will learn survival Italian – how to order in a restaurant, how to buy something in a store, how to introduce yourself to a source, etc. You will also learn about cultural aspects of working in Italy.

Grading: 10%

Attendance

The safety and security of everyone is of the utmost importance to our program. If someone has gone missing and we don't know they are gone, it's a problem for everyone. Attendance is critical if you want to do well in the modules and produce quality work. For these reasons, participation in our classes is mandatory and attendance will be taken at classes and at required group activities. Poor attendance will result in a lowering of your module grade by an amount determined by the instructor(s) of the module.

Only serious illness or disability will be permitted as excuses for absence or lateness. Lackadaisical participation will be considered a serious breach of the professionalism required in this course. Students are expected to come to every class prepared, to be attentive, and to participate in all activities.

Citizenship

One of the goals of the program is that students get to know the local culture and customs of Urbino. Good citizenship means being respectful of those local customs, being a responsible neighbor, and respecting what the town and region have to offer.

One of our biggest problems in the past has been noise. University of Urbino students are living among you in the dorms and many will be studying for exams while we are there. We do not want to receive complaints of noise or excessive drinking from our hosts at the university or from within the community. Good citizenship includes:

- Exploring the culture, attractions, foods, and traditions of Le Marche and Italy.
- Being respectful of the local environment and local customs.
- Being a responsible neighbor/guest.
- Getting to know Urbino residents.

Poor citizenship will result in a lowering of your final course grade by an amount determined by the director of the program.

Professionalism

Program participants are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. This includes:

- Treating faculty, staff, and fellow students with respect and courtesy.
- Coming prepared to group meetings with suggestions and ideas.
- Attending all class sessions and showing up on time.
- Acting respectfully toward interview subjects and interpreters.
- Using the equipment responsibly.
- Working through challenges and conflicts in a mature, responsible way.

Grading Rubric

The instructors will give grades for each module (Magazine Making, Magazine Reporting and Writing, Magazine Photography, International Reporting, Italian Language and Culture) and grading will be based on the following standards:

A Work, including student participation and behavior, is excellent in all respects, meeting the highest standards of journalism. Work is complete, well done and turned in on deadline. Work could be published in a professional publication/website with little to no editing or reworking.

B The work meets most but not all of the requirements of excellence. Work could be published in a professional publication/website with some editing or reworking.

C The work meets the deadlines but only barely meets requirements of excellence. The work may lack a strong grasp of the principles of journalism. It could be published in a professional publication/website only with significant reworking.

D Work fails to meet most deadlines and/or basic journalism standards. It could not be published in a professional publication/website without a total reworking.

F Work is not turned in on deadline or breaches basic journalism standards. It is absolutely unpublishable.