

COMM 490 – Special Topics in Communication: Multimedia Journalism in Italy - The Urbino Project

University of Jamestown

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

May 22 – June 20, 2020

Welcome to The Urbino Project! This month-long course in international multimedia reporting will introduce you to the essentials of multimedia journalism — how to tell stories with images, text and video. Students will gain basic skills in still photography, shooting and editing video, international reporting and writing for the Web. You will learn by doing, using the city of Urbino as a laboratory.

Students will also study basic Italian language and learn about the culture and history of Urbino and the Le Marche region. You will gain skills in interviewing with an interpreter and navigating through a foreign culture.

OBJECTIVES

In this course you will:

- learn the fundamentals of multimedia storytelling
- learn how to work with an interpreter and conduct interviews
- learn how to use a camera to produce interesting and storytelling photos to accompany your text
- learn how to plan, shoot and assemble a slideshow
- learn how to shoot and edit a video story for the Web
- learn how to live and function in a foreign culture
- demonstrate that you have mastered the skills of finding, researching, and producing a compelling multimedia 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 of your work.

FACULTY

Faculty

- Steven Anderson – Urbino Program Director (anderssd@jmu.edu), professor in the James Madison University School of Media Arts & Design. He is also a former environmental reporter/weathercaster at KCNC-TV in Denver.
- Anthony Adornato – an assistant professor of journalism at Ithaca College's Roy H. Park School of Communications. Adornato specializes in teaching and researching the use of mobile and social media in journalism.
- Susan Biddle - 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.
- Bob Marshall - Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist at New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, now with *The Lens* (New Orleans non-profit, nonpartisan public-interest newsroom).
- Greg Luft – Chair of the Journalism and Technical Communication department at Colorado State University. Former television news reporter and anchor; documentary, educational, and corporate video producer.
- Bob Reeder – Spent 16 years at the Washington Post as a staff photographer, before going on to help start the wildly successful Politico as photo editor/photographer just prior to moving abroad.
- Susan West – 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 a 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 multimedia reporting.

Week 1 (Monday – Thursday): We'll begin with an immersion in Italian language and culture and the basics of reporting, writing and multimedia storytelling techniques. There will be a focus on developing stories, reporting and using photography to add information to the story. You'll get to know the community of Urbino and flesh out your story. At the end of the week, you'll have a *three-day free weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)* to explore the town, the region or to travel even farther.

Week 2 (Monday – Thursday): We'll focus intensively on video shooting and editing, study Italian and get to know the people, customs and culture of Le Marche. Your team will meet with faculty to develop your stories and begin to report, write and shoot your multimedia stories. Some evening sessions may be scheduled for critiques and cultural activities. At the end of the week, you'll have a *three-day free weekend free (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)* to explore the town, the region or to travel even farther.

Week 3 (Monday – Sunday): You'll report, shoot and write your stories and begin the editing process. Throughout the week there will be Italian lessons and consultations with faculty during the day. Some evening sessions may be scheduled for critiques, work sessions and cultural activities. This will be a busy weeks as you'll need to stick around Urbino through the weekend in order to complete your stories.

Week 4 (Monday – Friday): You'll edit, complete and submit your stories (including slide shows and video) and we'll post your work to our website. Your work will be due toward the beginning or middle of the week. We'll have an awards ceremony where we'll give out the prestigious "Raffie" awards, followed by a final banquet. You'll have a final day to just explore those unvisited areas of Urbino and complete your packing. The bus will leave early in the morning on the last day of the program to take you back to the airport in Rome.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Students are expected to bring a laptop computer and digital camera. Digital high-definition video cameras, microphones (handheld, lavalier and wireless) and tripods are provided by ieiMedia. Some digital still cameras will also be provided for those who need them.

REQUIREMENTS

Each student will be responsible for producing a "web package" that includes at least one text feature story of 750 to 1,000 words with hyperlinks, images, and photos. All students will write a text story with inline images and will create a photo slideshow. Students will work in two-person teams to produce a video piece on one of their stories. Students are encouraged to use other media elements as well, such as photos, panoramic photos, interactive maps or graphics to tell stories. Your web package should focus on something unique or special to Urbino or this area of Italy. It might be a profile of an interesting person, an exploration of a cultural or culinary tradition, a destination piece, a look at a local industry or craft, or a story about local music, sports or the arts.

All work worthy of publishing will be posted on the project website. This is a public website 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 such poor quality that it would be an embarrassment to the whole project.

MODULES, ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Students will learn the basic concepts of multimedia reporting – how to tell a compelling story using a mix of media. Related modules will introduce students to a set of multimedia skills that help tell stories. The skills taught will depend in part on the interests and skill base of the students and may also include creating panoramic photos, maps or time lines.

The photo slideshow will include audio or captions and should be more than simply a series of photos. It could include both audio and captions. The video project will utilize our small HD cameras and will be edited in a video editing application such as iMovie. The video must incorporate audio translation of Italian speakers into English via voice or use subtitles. The video could also incorporate some still images.

Reporting/Writing

Students will learn the basics of reporting and writing feature stories for the Web and how to work in a foreign country and culture. You will learn how to develop compelling stories in a foreign city, report with an interpreter and craft a compelling narrative. The result will be a 750 – 1,000 word story that will be ready to publish on our website.

Grading: 30%

Photography

Students will learn how to use their cameras as storytelling tools. Technical basics will be covered and the limitations of different cameras will be demonstrated. (You will learn strategies to work around these limitations). In addition to mastering the skills and techniques involved with journalistic portraiture you will learn how to shoot and produce slideshows that will be posted on the web with your stories. Photo assignments will consist of the following:

- *Urban Photo Project*
- *Portrait Assignment*
- *Inline Images for Web Package*
- *Slideshow for Web Package* (usually, 10 - 12 images that form a story, with captions and/or audio)

All students will receive instruction on creating a photo slideshow that will be used as part of their web package. We will hold some evening critique sessions as a full group and discuss the photos from the first two assignments. Your grade on this module will include the urban photos, portrait photos, slideshow photos and the inline images that will be used as part of your web package.

Grading: 30%

Video

Students will learn the basics of camera operation, shooting technique, sound acquisition and editing in the realm of subject-based video storytelling. Students will work in two-person teams to complete video assignments consisting of the following:

- *Shooting and Editing Exercise*: Students will shoot video, record sound and edit a short piece for a provided script to learn the equipment and editing software and to illustrate the concepts learned in class. The project will be used to critique video, audio, editing and storytelling techniques in preparation for the next assignment.
- *Video for Web Package*: Students will create a short (usually about 1:30 to 2:00 minutes) video including compelling use of natural sound up-full. Italian speakers may be used to help with subtitles or to provide a transcription to be recorded by an English speaker.

Depending on the number of students in the program, two teams (4 students) might have to share a package of video equipment. Otherwise, each two-person team will have their own package of gear for the two video assignments. Both students on the team will receive the same grade on the two assignments.

Grading: 30%

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 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 that you respect 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:

1. Exploring the culture, attractions, foods and traditions of Le Marche and Italy.
2. Being respectful of the local environment and local customs.
3. Being a responsible neighbor/guest.
4. 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:

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

Grading Rubric

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

A Work is excellent in all respects, meeting the highest standards of journalism. It 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.