

The Department of Media and Communications

Media Production Project

Journalism

MC53034A (Autumn term 2011 and Spring term 2012)

Updated September 2011

This course is taken by third year Media and Communications students.

Introduction to the area of study

The course aims to enable you to:

1. Build on and improve your skills
2. increase your understanding of the media industries
3. Express yourselves creatively, and critically, within the conventions of journalism
4. Understand the basic elements of magazine publishing and media law

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU SHOULD TAKE MEDIA LAW AS A THEORY OPTION ALONGSIDE THIS COURSE.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course you should be able to:

1. Situate journalism within a broader knowledge of the media and critically analyse and comment on the work of journalists
2. Apply greater confidence in pursuing stories, gathering background material and analysing research material.
3. Organise material and shape a story to suit the subject matter and the intended context and audience.
4. Use background information and quotation. Write to length. Choose good intros and endings. Develop a prose style that makes what you write compelling reading.
5. Devise, write and edit your own magazine, in a group.
6. Be aware of the possible legal problems you may encounter in your work.

The Qualities and Transferable Skills acquired will be:

7. The development of interpersonal skills through working in a group

8. The exercise of initiative, personal responsibility and decision making skills in relation to your personal work and the work of the group.

Learning Methods

All practical teaching will be in a small group. You will learn through doing and through feedback from your tutor in the group or in tutorials. You will be expected to participate in group and individual projects and to involve yourself fully in discussion and analysis of work. Workshops (some with visiting speakers), writing and editing exercises and individual tutorials will be held on practice days.

Projects

1. You will be involved in running the EAST LONDON LINES project. You will be divided into groups. Each of these groups will take on the responsibility of editing the site for one week, during which time you will source pictures, sub-edit submitted copy, check for legal issues, and decide which news and features go up on the site. When you are not editing the site, you will be expected to be helping out wherever necessary, finding stories and generating content and you will be expected to contribute regular news stories and one feature (max 600 words).

2. You will learn how to use publishing software, produce a magazine proposal, and research and write one profile (max 2000 words) and one major feature (max 2000 words). Ideally one of these should be included in your group magazine so must be angled towards your target audience. You will work in groups to produce magazines based on the best student proposals. You must have a clear idea who your audience is, and for the individual work, which publication your article is intended for, and produce it in a suitable style for that publication. Your work should be designed and laid out using a Adobe Indesign

Assessment

The assessment of your achievement of the learning outcomes is by the examination of:

1. A portfolio [2 copies in 2 separate folders] consisting of:

Five news stories and a short feature for East London Lines (you will also be assessed as a group on your work running the site), plus screen grabs of ELL for each of the days you were involved with editing the site.

and

One magazine profile and one major magazine feature laid out using Adobe In Design.

and

Your magazine proposal (which should include a SWOT analysis, a rationale, a mood board and an indicative cover and inside page.

and

Your magazine (two printed copies plus an emailed PDF) you will get a joint mark for the magazine).

2. A Log (1000 words max) recording the progress of your specific contribution to the magazine. The log should include a description of YOUR OWN contribution(s) to the project through its conceptual development to its final realisation. You can include samples of your own contributions as an appendix.

The log and your contribution to the magazine should demonstrate outcomes 7 and 8.

3. An essay (2000 words max). 'Consider the ways in which your theoretical understanding has directly or indirectly influenced your practical work.' Your essay should demonstrate evidence of outcome 1. (More detailed guidance is provided separately (details in your Programme Handbook).

This course is worth 2 course units. 66% of your mark comes from your project and log and 33% from your essay. Assessment criteria are as follows.

Project Assessment Criteria

For The Portfolio: 80% (7 criteria, equally weighted)

1. The understanding of genre and audience
2. The variety and appropriateness of interviews and research
3. The quality of analysis
4. The structure and style of the work
5. The ability to organise independently and work to deadline.
6. The ambition/creativity of the work.
7. The originality of the story idea

For The Log and magazine contributions: 20% (2 criteria, equally weighted)

1. The application of design and production skills
2. The exercise of interpersonal skills in a group project.

(The group's self-assessment will be taken into account.)

Essay Assessment Criteria (5 criteria, equally weighted)

The essay accounts for 33% of the overall mark

Consider the ways in which your theoretical understanding has directly or indirectly influenced your practical work:

- Writing quality (presentation, grammar, punctuation, structure & style)
- Defining the theoretical understanding from degree courses
- Analysis of the ways the theory has directly or indirectly influenced practical work
- Reflective insight into and critical appreciation of the student's practical work
- Evidence of background reading and academic research to support this essay assignment, its relevant notation within the body of the essay, and explanation in bibliography

Please ensure you refer to the handbook 'Pocket guide to media law and ethics' available on learn.gold when writing all articles.

Timetable

Autumn Term

Weeks 1-5 In teams you will produce and edit the East London Lines website. You will also produce one short feature (max 600 words) on a subject of your choice that will be suitable for an East London Lines audience. Please note that East London Lines should be updated daily and you will be asked to work flexibly across the week in a rota organised by the editorial group.

Weeks 7-11 you will begin to learn Adobe Indesign.

You will discuss magazines, and produce a magazine proposal including: a rationale, a mood board, a swot analysis, an indicative front page and an indicative inside page.

Each week there will be a variety of writing/ production exercises to help you think about feature writing and magazine production. Over the course of the two terms you will write one profile (max 2000 words) and one major feature (max 2000 words). Deadlines for drafts will be set and you are expected to meet these. These features can be included in your magazines if they are suitable for the chosen publication.

You are expected to devote at least one and a half (and probably more) additional days every week to your journalism. This course provides half your marks for the year.

Week Seven

Objectives

1. To get started with Adobe InDesign

2. To learn what makes a successful magazine and come up with the idea for your own

Morning

What makes a good magazine? In groups, imagine that you are an editorial board being given a dummy mag: think about design, target audience, positioning of each element within the magazine, content, balance of news/features, the people featured - case studies, celebs, members of the profession, etc. Does the magazine work? If so, why? What would you do differently? Finish with brainstorm within groups on what your own magazine will be, considering all the elements that make up a successful

magazine. Over lunch come up with a shortlist of three mag ideas per group which will then be voted on.

Afternoon

Getting started with Adobe - basic page creation, text boxes, image boxes.

Exercises: create a magazine page using either the supplied text/images or your own text and images - ideally your short features for East London Lines.

FOR NEXT WEEK: bring moodboard materials plus ideas for assessed feature/profile (one needs to be part of your magazine)

Assignment: Describe the following briefly using your words with care: a meal you have had this week, a person you have encountered this week, an object or garment. Email your description to your tutor by Friday 10am .

Week Eight

Objectives:

- 1. Learn how to create and save master pages on Adobe and experiment with typography and colour, saving your preferences as paragraph styles**
- 2. Understand the importance of a magazine's look, feel and target by creating a moodboard, a target reader analysis and a rationale**

Morning

Adobe - master pages and libraries, typography, paragraph styles

Exercises - create a master page for a magazine's news section, save it in library, apply typographical effects (eg drop caps), create paragraph styles

Afternoon

Designing your magazine - look and feel. Think about target reader: he/she should inform everything you do with the magazine. Write your target reader profile. Then come up with words/pictures/images/events/fabric/whatever that contributes to the look and feel of your magazine. Get on Adobe and produce a couple of dummy pages - think about colours. Alongside the moodboard, work on your target reader analysis and your rationale.

Assignment: write a first person experience piece that could work in your magazine. Deadline next Tuesday 10am. Please take or source a photograph to go with your report. Please also read interviews in at least three different kinds of publication. FOR NEXT WEEK: Bring one-par summary of a feature and profile idea. Think about how each might fit into your magazine. Ensure you have completed your moodboard, target reader analysis and your rationale.

Week Nine

Objectives

- 1. To become familiar with using colours and images on InDesign**
- 2. To learn how to generate and refine ideas for features and profiles**

Morning: InDesign using colours and pictures

Exercises - create a feature double-page spread. magazine section for your group's magazine. Create paragraph styles to use on that master page. Consider colours and styles as per the moodboard you put together last week. Come together with your group to discuss your work at the end of the session.

Afternoon

Ideas workshop. Discussion: where do ideas come from? Ideas brainstorming exercise. Hooks and angles. Examples of good features, timely features, features

inspired by different things - anniversaries, pictures, links between news stories, reports, studies, personal experience, etc. How to work out whether an idea is a goer. Finding ideas through research.

Topicality - lead times, etc.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Think up a list of potential ideas for your magazine and bring them to class.

Week Ten

Objectives:

- 1 to consolidate knowledge gained so far.**
- 2 understand how to generate feature ideas.**

Morning: to bring together previous sessions on InDesign, make a start on design and mop up any unanswered questions

Afternoon: writing features and profiles.

Exercises on putting together a feature and profiles - intros, hooks, angles, conclusions, structure, adding colour to your writing, writing for your target audience, quotes, research, description, structure, setting. Examples of good features, why they worked, what didn't work. Come together in groups to discuss ideas for your magazine. Individually discuss feature and profile ideas.

FOR NEXT WEEK: Start researching either a feature or your profile. Provide a short summary of who you have/will contacted, sources used, etc. Come to next week's class with at least five ideas for your magazine.

Week Eleven

Objectives

- 1. To bring together previous morning sessions on InDesign and mop up any unanswered questions**
- 2. To understand the basics of flat-planning and putting together a magazine**

Morning

Continue working on your basic design palette. Put together dummy cover, contents page, news page, features page. Troubleshooting.

Afternoon

Making a start on flat-planning. Consider all elements - contents page, classifieds, ads, features, news, regulars (eg letters page), cover, contents, news, features, regulars (letters page, reviews, etc), end page, advertising, masthead page, captions, pictures, subs page, classifieds. Think about where each element should go - look at mags for examples.

Individual tutorials on your features/profiles

Spring Term

There will be speakers from industry each week in the morning.

You will complete your features and, in groups, continue to produce the magazine started last term. The computer rooms are heavily used in the Spring so make sure that you do as much of the research and writing as you can outside workshop days. That way you can use workshop days to make maximum use of the computers and

software. You are free to use the room until 8pm and you should expect to make use of this facility.

Deadlines will be set and you are expected to meet these. These features can be included in your magazines if they are suitable for the chosen publication.

You are expected to devote at least one and a half additional days every week to your journalism. This course provides half your marks for the year.

Hand-in: You must supply two copies of your portfolio and log on the last workshop day of the Spring term.

The timetable for each week will depend on the stage each group is at. Your tutor will set deadlines for features and for key elements of the magazine to be completed, and for editing.