***COM321 Documentary Writing***

***Syllabus***, ***Spring 2011***

Instructor: Jennifer Fulford, x1419

Office Hours T/Th, 12:30-1:30p

Cornwell 323, jfulford@mhc.edu

Class meets T/Th, 1:30-2:45p, CW210

This class should give you the know-how to produce mass media communications with fact-based images and words. Essentially, you become news reporters by enrolling in this course.

You will be assigned topics to cover that affect you, the campus and, possibly, the local community. You will learn basic skills of news reporting and journalism for publication.

Your work will be published. The primary outlet is the MHC student media website, *The Hilltop*, **www.hilltopmhc.com**. Your work may also be uploaded onto *The Hilltop* YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/hilltop) or appear in a newspaper edition of *The Hilltop*.

You will produce three mini-documentaries, one of which will be showcased at a public presentation on campus near the end of the semester.

**IN-CLASS WORK**

Class time will involve:

1. Lecture supported by readings
2. Current event/book quizzes
3. Story development and status reports
4. Problem-solving and troubleshooting
5. Interviews or field trips
6. Watching short documentaries
7. Editing or rewriting story assignments

**OUTSIDE CLASS WORK**

Outside of class, you will be expected to: 1) arrange and conduct face-to-face interviews, 2) take pictures for story assignments, 3) collect information from interviews with handwritten notes and/or audio/video recordings, 4) write and edit your story assignments **ON DEADLINE.**

**DOCUMENTARIES**

You will be responsible for preparing three documentaries over the course of the semester; ideas for the documentaries will come from your instructor or be generated by your own enterprise or discussions during class. The main element of each documentary will be your script based upon interviews and information you gather about your subject matter.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

Mini-docs will be worth 200 points each and will be graded on three criteria:

1. Content & Continuity (quality of writing and delivery of ideas), **100 pts.**
2. Workmanship/Adherence to Journalistic Principles, **50 pts.**
3. Quality of Multimedia Elements (pictures, audio, art, etc.), **50 pts.**

**MEETING DEADLINES – JUST DO IT!**

**You will be expected to meet deadlines for completing interviews and for writing your scripts.**

**ALL** first drafts of scripts will be written on deadline outside of class. Typically, deadlines will land on SUNDAYS at midnight. Work will be emailed to jfulford@mhc.edu. Rewriting may be done during class depending on time.

If you miss your deadlines, your grade will suffer. If you fail to turn in an assignment, a zero will be recorded. **NO** extra credit is available in this course.

If you are having trouble with a story, such as difficulty reaching an interviewee or getting enough information to write your assignment, it will be your responsibility to contact me (jfulford@mhc.edu) with enough time to troubleshoot your assignment (at least 24 hours; I check email, text and voicemail frequently). Consult me with any issue that may hamper your assignment.

**CLASS ATTENDANCE**

You should NOT skip class if you are unprepared or have missed a deadline. Quite the contrary, class time is your opportunity to work through issues you may be having with your assignment.

Upon your fourth unexcused absences from class, consecutively or not, your participation grade will be considered low to unsatisfactory.

The college requires instructors to report students to the Retention Office after two weeks of consecutive absences.

**OUTCOMES**

Presenting information in documentary style is a skill and an art. Focused listening, critical thinking and using effective communication are all necessary to produce documentaries. By semester’s end, you should be able to:

∞ Put together information clearly in a form appropriate for mass media distribution.

∞ Prepare and conduct interviews with confidence.

∞ Think critically, creatively and independently about how to present facts for news stories.

∞ Understand news values.

∞ Review your work for errors.

∞ Work ethically in the pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, objectivity and diversity in presenting information for mass audiences.

**FINAL GRADES**

Final grades will be based on your documentaries, news/book quizzes, a mid-term exam and participation. Grades will **NOT** be based on a curve.

Participation means showing up for class, doing the work it takes to get stories done and taking part in discussions. Participation is evaluated on five levels: high (50-40 pts), medium (40-30 pts), low (30-10 pts) and unsatisfactory (10-0 pts).

**Grades will be based on:**

3 Mini-Documentaries, 600 pts

Mid-term exam, 50 pts

Participation, 50 pts.

Weekly News/Book Quizzes, 15 pts/each

Total points will exceed 700, depending on the number of quizzes given.

Grades will be calculated as such:

A=95-100%, A-= 90-94%

B+=87-89%, B=83-86%, B-=80-82%

C+=77-79%, C=73-76%, C-=70-72%

D=60-69%, F=<60%

**PLAGIARISM**

Mars Hill College considers plagiarism as:

*Presenting someone else’s ideas but not giving credit for it (implying the idea is yours.)*

*Presenting someone else’s words without giving credit.*

*Submitting any work which was done by someone else (including another student) and claiming it is your own.*

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. Making up facts for an assignment is also considered a serious offense. Media workers who commit plagiarism or fabrication typically are fired. Depending on the gravity of any similar offense in this course, you have the potential of failing. DON’T DO IT!

**CLASSROOM PROTOCOL**

When classes start, please follow these rules of conduct:

Refrain from using cell phones to text, chat, talk, surf the web, play with apps.

No food, drink or gum near computers.

Respect each person’s right to learn unencumbered.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

**E-BOOK:** *Reality Radio: Telling True Stories in Sound*, Edited by John Bleiven and Alexa Dilworth.

**E-BOOK**: *Broadcast Journalism: A critical introduction*, Edited by Jane Chapman and Marie Kinsey

**E-BOOK**: *Writing, Directing and Producing Documentary Films and Videos*, revised edition, Alan Rosenthal, Southern Illinois University Press

*Hilltop Writing Guidelines* handout

A dictionary

**MARS HILL HONOR CODE**

Honor Code

We, the students for Mars Hill College, pledge ourselves to uphold integrity, honesty, and academic responsibility in and out of the classroom.

Honor Pledge

On my honor, I have neither given nor received any academic aid or information that would violate the Honor Code of Mars Hill College.