

**Reporting Seminar, Spring 2005
University of the Virgin Islands
Dept of Communications**

Professor: Terri Senft (with Alex Murray)

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Office Hours: TBA

Required Texts:

Xeroxed materials will be handed out in class; other reading materials will be available online at our class BlackBoard site at <http://blackboard.uvi.edu>

Other Required Materials:

A working UVI email address (and knowledge of that address), a calendar, notebook devoted to planning our reporting project, access to a computer with Web connectivity, folder with pockets to create a portfolio of your work.

Course Description

In this course, we will work as a team to brainstorm, research, and produce a feature piece of non-fiction on a topic of local concern to residents of the Virgin Islands. The course begins by asking each member to pitch possible story ideas that we then deliberate as a group. By doing this, you'll learn how the constraints of time, budget, personnel and expertise constrain all working non-fiction producers. We as a group will decide the topic of our forthcoming story and the form of media we feel might best deliver that story (e.g. written word, radio or television broadcast, live performance, etc.) Because our final objective for this class is to get our work in front of consumers, our next task will be to pitch our story to media producers we've deemed appropriate. Once we get our pitch accepted, we turn our attention to project management, learning the skills of delegation, benchmark setting and spot research assessment. As we do our research, we will focus closely on issues of ethnographic authority, foregrounding questions like, "How does my position as an interviewer allow me to see some things about this situation, and be blinded to others?" This is a mixed level class (combining students from Reporting 1 and Reporting 2) and we will be thinking critically about this mix throughout the semester, continually asking how our individual abilities are meshing with needs of the group as a whole.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate in their half-day conference a satisfactory mastery of the following:

1. The ability to work in groups in order to conceptualize, deliberate, pitch, research and execute a feature-length piece of non-fiction writing.
2. Knowledge of the complexities of group work in general and reporting groups in particular. Knowledge of the overlap between producers, editors, researchers, writers, technical staff and talent in the publishing and broadcasting industries. Knowledge of the difference between brainstorming an idea, selling an idea and executing a final product.
3. A familiarity with the Communication Studies concepts of deep listening, thick description and ethnographic authority.
4. The ability to think about reporting from an interdisciplinary perspective, using techniques from the fields of business, humanities, social sciences and the performing arts.
5. Facility with the latest developments from the field of remote knowledge management, particularly online bulletin boards and research tools such as Lexis/Nexis.
6. As appropriate to the agreed upon project, familiarity with technologies from the fields of radio, television, and video documentary.

Teaching and Learning Methods

Class meets for three hours, once weekly. Class will consist of group discussions and deliberation sessions with an occasional short lecture. Learning will be measured by students' follow-through on their assigned tasks, by their commitment to the team, and by a final portfolio that will serve as documentation for their role in the semester's events. Success and achievement in this course requires attendance, participation, active listening, openness to new ideas and approaches to communication, and the willingness to learn to express oneself both in person and through electronic media.

Student Responsibilities.

As a student, you will be required to do the following:

1. **Attend classes regularly, arrive on time, turn off all electronic devices while in class and stay until the end of the class.** (see specific attendance policies for details).

2. **Participate in class discussions and exercises with honesty, integrity and care for fellow classmates.** During discussions, we follow the principles of “no shame, no blame” and “nothing leaves the room,” so that we can ask hard questions of ourselves and others. We also acknowledge and praise contributions toward our project and team-mates who are making progress on personal challenges (and we all have personal challenges.) PLEASE NOTE: We will discuss this in class, but if you find yourself uncomfortable with public critique or praise, let me know, and we’ll figure out a solution. If you don’t feel safe, our team won’t gel, and it is ALWAYS better to say if you aren’t feeling comfortable in an environment early on. Chances are, we are far more adaptable than you think.
3. **Go online AT LEAST every three days to check the BlackBoard site for assignments and bulletin board entries.** Although we will meet in person only once a week, you are responsible for contributing a “virtual presence” every three days.
4. **Each week, you must create 2 bulletin board entries on BlackBoard.** In the first one, you should give a **progress report on your assigned task for the group to read BEFORE class meets.** Your second entry can consist of:
 - a. **Notes and impressions** from our last in-class session. I will periodically give **short essay assignments** in class; these should be completed in your journal.
 - b. **Reading notes** from Xeroxes or Web links given to you in the previous class.
 - c. **Any other observations** you want to make. These can be URLs you find online in which you think the group might be interested, follow-up reporting notes, etc.
5. **Develop a portfolio of your process in this class.** Some portfolio requests are merely academic; this one is not. We want you to come away with a tangible demonstration of your ability to plan, research, execute and document a complex group activity. You should bring this portfolio to future job and graduate interviews as a way to show people that you have analytical, leadership and team-building skills beyond those of most undergraduates. Your portfolio will consist of:
 - a. A printed version of your pitches
 - b. A printed version of your best bulletin board entries
 - c. A detailed project management schedule, showing your assignments
 - d. A copy of the team project management schedule
 - e. Your research and reporting notes
 - f. A copy of the final product you’ve created.
 - g. Other materials TBA

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Although this is a group class, your personal bulletin board entries and essay assignments must be original. Claiming the work of another person as your own is called plagiarism and is a serious breach of academic integrity. Plagiarism is also a punishable offense at the university and can result in failure in the course as well as dismissal from the university. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

1. Submitting an assignment that has been wholly or partially created by another person.
2. Presenting as your own work the ideas of another person without acknowledgment of the source.
3. Cutting and pasting information from the Internet without proper and complete source citation and a URL where the information can be found.
4. Forgetting to cite your sources.

Any instances of plagiarism will result in immediate failure of the course. If you have any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism, ask the professor. Do not guess, or it may have severe consequences. No academic dishonesty will be tolerated. For additional information, see the section on academic honesty in the University of the Virgin Islands catalog.

Evaluation and Grading:

In this class, we are responsible for assigning half your grade, and you are responsible for the other half.

We will grade on the following:

- Attendance (10%)
- Individual bulletin board entries (20%)
- Portfolios (20%)

Team members will grade one another on:

- Commitment to in-class discussion and team exercises (10%)
- Ability to meet responsibilities to the group (30%)

- Evidence of personal growth and development (10%).

Attendance and Timeliness Policy

- Due to the nature of this course, a great deal of learning takes place during in-class activities. Regular attendance, therefore, IS REQUIRED.
- You are allowed ONE absence, for any reason. If there are any emergency situations that would necessitate exception to this policy, student MUST give ADVANCE notification of such situations. Without advance notice via phone or email, no exceptions will be granted.
- Regular attendance means **timely attendance**. If you arrive five minutes after the class begins, the team will give you an extra assignment toward our story planning and execution. Arrival ten minutes after the course begins count as 1/3 absence. Arrivals more than fifteen minutes after the course begins count as 2/3 absence. If you arrive more than fifteen minutes late, you will be marked as entirely absent.

Course Schedule

Course schedule will provided on shortly.