# COMM 284 - 201 Video Storytelling
Fall 2017
Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-11:15 a.m.
School of Communication Room 015

## Professor Lee Hood, Ph.D.

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♦ **Course Goals and Objectives**

    This course is designed to help you learn reporting and storytelling for TV and other video formats, improve your broadcast-style writing, and develop the necessary camera and editing skills to communicate stories visually. You will develop story ideas and learn how to present them for TV and digital video platforms. You will work on honing skills in the basics of news reporting -- finding sources and gathering information, with the extra demands of a camera or other visual device along with a note pad. You will practice visual storytelling and the art of writing to video. This class provides the foundation for COMM 358 Newscasting and Producing, the course that produces newscasts in our state-of-the-art convergence studio.

    ***Please note: Video Storytelling is not a performance class. Opportunities to practice on-air presentation will be in the context of reporting and conveying information.*

    An informed public depends on journalists who are up to date on issues and events, both locally and around the world. Therefore, you will be expected to keep up with the news. Watch TV news and follow local, national, and international news events. Listen to news on radio and/or podcasts. Read newspapers and credible online news sources. We will discuss contemporary issues in news, to enhance your critical reflection about the practices of broadcast and other forms of journalism.

    Covering news inevitably raises issues of ethics and diversity. We will assess the ethical implications of story selection and framing, word choices, "expert" opinions, fairness and balance. Your work also will be evaluated for sensitivity to issues of race/ ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other cultural issues on which news coverage often can improve.

    Before taking this course, you must have completed **COMM 205** Reporting & Writing Across Platforms (or equivalent), and it is also helpful to have taken **COMM 256** Broadcast News (or equivalent). Please note: If you have not taken **COMM 135** Intro to Video Production, you will need to learn videography and non-linear editing skills normally taught in that course.

## ♦ Text
(required) <u>Aim for the Heart: Write, Shoot, Report and Produce for TV and Multimedia</u>
(2nd edition) by Al Tompkins, 2012, CQ Press.

## ♦ Supplies
We will be using the **Sony XDCAM**, a new camera that the school has purchased this year. They will be in backpacks. When checking out equipment, make sure to ask for the camera and backpack designated for our class.

For gathering video and sound in the field, you will need*:*
-- SD Card(s), class 6 or 10, minimum of 8GB (two cards recommended)
-- External hard drive that meets the following specifications/recommendations:
  ➢ Mac-formatted, minimum USB 3.0
  ➢ 120GB (the larger, the more versatile), min. 5400 RPM (7200 RPM recommended)

Also needed/recommended:
  • "AA" batteries (to power microphones);
  • lens cleaning tissue;
  • clear medical tape (for affixing microphones)

**Supplemental Materials**
    Expect a number of handouts to supplement the reading material. I recommend a folder or notebook to keep the handouts together. Some, such as the microphone and editing guides, you will need as an ongoing reference.

## ♦ Grading
### Grades will be weighted as follows:
| | |
|---|---|
| TV stories & video assignments | 35% |
| Other reporting-related assignments | 20% |
| Readings & smaller assignments | 20% |
| Final project | 20% |
| Attendance/Punctuality/Professionalism | 5% |

**<u>Grading scale</u>**
Assignments will be graded on a point system. At the end of the semester, the cumulative points will be converted into a letter grade based on the following scale:
A  94-100%; A-  90-93%; B+  87-89%; B  84-86%; B-  80-83%;
C+  77-79%; C  74-76%; C-  70-73%; D+  67-69%; D  64-66%

Loyola does not recognize a grade of D-, so a grade below 64% is failing.

  ➢ There may be opportunities for extra credit in some categories, but the total you can earn in each category is capped at 100% of the total points for that category.

**TV Stories and video assignments (35%)**
  The main focus of the class will be on reporting and producing packages and other forms of TV/video stories. Work will be evaluated for accuracy, clarity, reporting effort and story impact, as well as writing and visual elements (both aesthetics and technical proficiency).

Basic requirements for TV packages:
1) You must work alone on at least one TV package, though you may shoot other packages and video assignments with a classmate. (Each partner will write and edit her/his own story individually, and you cannot choose the same partner for more than one package.)

2) At least one package must focus on a social/cultural issue or concern. This year the School of Communication has adopted a social justice theme on the topic of **mental health.** Stories on this topic are particularly valued, but there are many other worthy topics, as well. We will discuss the challenges of covering these issue for visual media.

3) At least one package must include diverse sources from a recognized community that is typically underrepresented in media coverage. Examples include: Identified racial or ethnic communities; the GLBTQ community; the disabled; the elderly; the poor. *(Note: College-age students as a group, fraternity and sorority members are not examples of underrepresented groups for the purposes of this assignment.)*

> ➢ *Criteria can be met with one of two packages during the semester and/or with the final project.*
> ➢ *If you have a question about whether your story meets requirements 2 and 3, please check with Professor Hood in advance.*


**Additional Story considerations**
> ➢ Script Review: To help you improve your stories before they are finished, script review with Professor Hood is *required* on TV packages **_before editing_.** This can be done in person, by email or phone. Plan ahead to allow time for shooting additional elements, if necessary. ***Failing to get script review will result in a deduction on your package grade.*** You are also encouraged to discuss story ideas with Professor Hood before you shoot, to help in developing well-balanced, well-sourced stories.

> ➢ Story Subjects: For objectivity and in keeping with standard professional practice, **avoid** doing stories using your own family members, significant others, close friends or roommates as subjects. The best rule of thumb is: Don't build stories around people you are related to or are particularly close to. Likewise, **avoid** doing stories about groups you belong to. Such stories will receive a grade reduction, unless: 1) it is a unique circumstance, 2) the story is *about* your connection to the story subject, *and* 3) the connection is revealed in the story.

> ➢ Fact error deduction: Facts are vitally important in journalism, so fact errors in receive an automatic deduction. Take care to spell names correctly and ensure other facts are accurately presented. In the words of the late President Lyndon Johnson, "In the arsenal of truth, there is no greater weapon than fact."

## Assignment Redo's

Because video assignments require technical proficiency, and videography and editing may be new for you, each video assignment (except the final project) may be redone and resubmitted for grading. They are subject to these provisions:

1) The redone assignment must be submitted within one week of when the original feedback and grade are returned to the class.
2) If you make adjustments to the original project, you will receive the average of the original grade and the new grade.
3) If you shoot a new project (with a new *subject*), you will receive a new grade.

*Note: This provision is only for video assignments (including packages), not for other assignments.*

## Other Reporting-related Assignments (20%)

Some assignments throughout the semester will highlight information-gathering and formulation of story ideas, as well as writing, story presentation on the web and other aspects related to TV news, such as the increasing importance of social media.

**Social Media Entries:** Social media has become a vital part of a reporter's job, so posts will be required to coincide with your stories, either through the class account or your own site(s).

In addition, you will choose a TV reporter who uses social media regularly and monitor their social media presence throughout the semester. Additional requirements and guidelines for the posts and monitoring will be distributed separately.

## Readings & Smaller Assignments (20%)

Reading assignments have been carefully chosen to coincide with the class topic for the day. To get the most out of the synergy between the readings and class, make every effort to complete assigned reading before class time. To help you synthesize the material, written reflections will be required for each reading. Instructions will be the same for each assignment: Write a short reflection (4-5 sentences) on what you got out of the reading and any questions or comments you have about the material. These may be submitted via Sakai or in hard copy (typed). Though each reflection is worth only 5 points, cumulatively they are worth 75 points, a significant portion for this section.

Though you should complete the reading before class on the assigned day, written reflections for that week will be due by 11:55 p.m. on Friday of the same week (after Week 1). They will not be accepted later than that. (Please note: On occasions where more than one chapter is assigned, plan to write 4-5 sentences *on each*.)

Expect other short assignments pertinent to the course material, some of them done in class. These will be assigned throughout the semester.

## Final Project (20%)

There will be a final project in lieu of a final exam, which will give you the opportunity to demonstrate the skills you have acquired throughout the semester. The final project will include a TV package and additional elements. Details will be distributed later in the semester and on Sakai.

***Note: We will meet for showing the final projects on the day and time of our scheduled final, **Tuesday, December 12, 1-3 p.m.**

**Attendance/Punctuality/Professionalism (5%)**
You are expected to attend every class, and absences will impact your ability to get the most out of the course. If you have a genuine emergency, please notify me *prior* to class if possible. Assignments missed for unexcused absences may not be made up.

At Loyola, we respect that you may miss class due to religious observances. In these circumstances, please notify me ahead of time that you will be gone.

Because timeliness is an important attribute in TV News, as in many professions, timely arrival to class will be part of your attendance grade. In addition, points may be deducted for excessive disruption or obvious disengagement from class sessions (such as Web surfing). Deductions are also given for not returning equipment on time.

**Deadlines:** Meeting deadlines is vital in broadcast news. Assignments not turned in on time will receive an automatic reduction in grade. Packages and other TV stories will be reduced the equivalent of one letter grade for every day they are late.

## ♦ Rules and Responsibilities
**Academic Integrity**
Loyola University and the School of Communication expect academic integrity and have policies regarding academic dishonesty. Specifically for the SOC:
**1.** Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (e.g., failing to properly credit a source or using someone else's words or ideas without clarifying that they are not yours). In an academic community, being uninformed or naïve is not an acceptable excuse.

**2. It is dishonest to:**
  ➢ Turn in the same work for two classes*;
  ➢ Turn in a paper or other assignment you have not done yourself
*Specifically for this course:*
  ➢ *You are not allowed to copy someone else's video work from the Internet, DVD, or any other source without proper attribution in the script and on-screen – and any use of such work in your stories should be limited to a few seconds with a <u>very clear purpose</u> (e.g., YouTube video). You **<u>cannot</u>** use video from a TV station or network in your work.*
  ➢ *Do not copy wording from another news source or website. **<u>Always</u>** rewrite.*
  ➢ *You are not allowed to have people outside the class do any of the work on your stories, including shooting, editing and any other creative/editorial work.*

*\*If you are in two courses that generate news stories (for example, this class and Mosaic), it may be permissible to cover the same story for both courses if: 1) <u>the stories are in different formats</u> (such as broadcast and print), and 2) <u>both professors know about and approve of the arrangement</u>.*

*Turning in work that is not your own and representing it as yours will result in failure on the assignment and possible dismissal from the class.*

You can find Loyola's policies regarding academic integrity at: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml.

**Special Needs**

If you have a special circumstance that may impact your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so arrangements can be made with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). We will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes (such as the demands of working on tight deadlines). Loyola's policy is that it is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SSWD website: http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml.

**Classroom Conduct**

Electronic devices are increasingly ubiquitous, and are often quite distracting. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before class begins. If you use a laptop computer to take notes in class, you will be required to send Professor Hood a copy of the notes at the end of class. <u>Do not use your computer for any activity not directly related to the class</u>. The Internet and social media are tremendous resources, but the convenience of using your computer (or cell phone) in class may be revoked if you abuse the privilege.

♦ **Electronic Communication & Information**

**Sakai:** Course information and assignments will be available on Sakai, and you will be able to submit some assignments there (not counting scripts). Please notify me if you have any problems using the class Sakai site.

**Email:** I will answer email within 24 hours on weekdays but will not always access it on weekends. You may not receive a response to a late Friday email until Monday.

♦ **About your professor**

This is my ninth year at Loyola, after several years teaching at the University of Colorado. I have 18 years of experience in television news, most of it as a newscast producer in a Top 20 market (Denver), as well as earlier experience in Huntsville, Alabama and Columbia, Missouri. My newscasts earned regional Emmys and other awards. I also have experience in reporting and anchoring (both news and sports), photography and editing, and worked in radio and newspapers before starting my television career. I hold a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Colorado. My research interests include several aspects of local news: reporters' use of social media, the audience relationship to news, as well as corporate and consolidation influences and local news outsourcing. I have a master's degree from the University of Colorado and a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Missouri. I am a member of the Chicago regional board of directors for the National Television Academy as well as the Radio-TV-Digital News Association (RTDNA).

**Video Storytelling**                                              **Fall 2017 Schedule\***
*Note: Reading assignments are to be completed before the start of class on the assigned day.*
*Corresponding reading reflections are due by 5 p.m. on Fridays.*
*Also note: Some additional assignment due dates may be added throughout the semester.*

Week 1
**Tues Aug. 29**    General introduction: The power of the visual.

**Thur Aug. 31**     News characteristics and covering current events
*Reading:* Tompkins Preface and Introduction (no reflection)
      ➢   Oral current events quiz

Week 2
**Tues Sept. 5**    Basics of field videography; intro to new field cameras
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 9 Video and Visual Techniques
**Due:** TV or mobile video news viewing assignment I (via Sakai or in hard copy)

**Thur Sept. 7**    Video aesthetics and expectations; tips for working alone
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 12 Working as a Backpack, VJ and One-Man-Band Journalist

Week 3
**Tues Sept. 12**    Video & cameras II: shooting and visualizing interviews
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 6 The Art of the Interview
**Due:** TV/mobile video viewing assignment II (via Sakai or hard copy, typed)
        \*\*\*Begin working on first video assignment (will need SD cards by this point)

**Thur Sept. 14**    Broadcast writing review and Basic TV stories: vo's and vo/sot's
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 5 Verbs and Adjectives; Ch. 7 Why Pictures Are So Powerful
*(double reflection);* Professor Hood's Broadcast Style Guide

Week 4
**Tues Sept. 19**    Digital, non-linear editing
**Due:** Raw footage for first video assignment
\*\*\*Bring external hard drives and computer connectors to class

**Thur Sept. 21**    News sources and generating story ideas; visualizing serious topics
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 3 Find Memorable Characters

Week 5
**Tues Sept. 26**    The A/B's of TV vo/sots (writing, timing, editing)
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 11 The Sound of the Story
**Due:** First videography assignment, edited

**Thur Sept. 28**    Social media in reporting: Tools, tips, and tricks

Week 6
**Tues Oct. 3**   Tales from the Field; Guest speaker: Dana Rebik, WGN-TV Reporter

**Thur Oct. 5**   Vo/sot screening day
*Due:* Edited vo/sots and scripts; related social media posts by 5 p.m. Friday

Week 7
**Tues Oct. 10**        **FALL BREAK, NO CLASS**

**Thur Oct. 12**   Packaging for TV
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 1 Aim for the Heart; Ch. 2 The Shape of the Story

Week 8
**Tues Oct. 17**   TV Packaging continued: Intros, tags, standups
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 4 Writing Inviting Leads

**Thur Oct. 19**   On-air performance and delivery
*Supplemental reading on Sakai*
*Due:* Package #1 story ideas

Week 9
**Tues Oct. 24**   Multimedia writing for TV and online
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 10 This May Get Graphic; Ch. 13 Tell the Story Online

**Thur Oct. 26**   Package Editing Techniques

Week 10
**Tues Oct. 31**   Work day for Package #1
(No class session, but Professor Hood will be available for help as needed)

**Thur Nov. 2**   Package Screening Day
*Due:* Package #1 (edited & uploaded)

Week 11
**Tues Nov. 7**   Let's Mobilize: Shooting packages on your phone
*Due:*  Web writing assignment and related social media posts

**Thur Nov. 9**   Live Lab #1, using mobile platforms (Dress to appear on-camera)
*Due:* Package #2 story ideas

Week 12
**Tues Nov. 14**   Law and ethics: Visual applications
*Reading:* Tompkins Chapters 14-16 *(longer reflection)*

**Thur Nov. 16**  Work day for Pkg #2 (No class session, but help available as needed)

Week 13
**Tues Nov. 21**   Package Screening Day
*Due:* Package #2 (edited and uploaded); related social media posts by Wednesday

**Thur Nov. 23   THANKSGIVING DAY, NO CLASS**

Week 14
**Tues Nov. 28**   Final Project planning
*Reading:* Tompkins Ch. 17 Let's Get Critical

**Thurs Nov. 30**   Live Lab #2

Week 15
**Tues Dec. 5**   News careers & job searches
*Reading:* Skim Tompkins Ch. 19 Surviving & Thriving in Today's Newsroom
(Reading reflection optional)

**Thurs Dec. 7**   Work Day for Final Projects
        (No class session, but Professor Hood will be available for help as needed)

Week 16
**\*Tues Dec. 12   Final Projects due; showing in class 1-3 p.m.**

\* We will try to stick to this schedule, but there may be changes if circumstances dictate or special opportunities arise.