Digital Storytelling (UP 494FM)

Instructor: Faranak Miraftab, faranak@illinois.edu

TA: J.D. McClanahan jamesdm3@illinois.edu

Class Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:50 Pm

Location: Online via Zoom Meetings--synchronous

Office Hours: Scheduled By Email

Land Acknowledgement Statement

We begin this course by recognizing and acknowledging that we are on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands were the traditional territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced removal; these lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution for the past 150 years. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward for the next 150 years. [https://chancellor.illinois.edu/land_acknowledgement.html](https://chancellor.illinois.edu/land_acknowledgement.html)

Official Course Description

One of the primary requirements of planning education is to prepare students to understand and address multiple dimensions of social inequalities based on class, race, gender, age, religion etc. as they relate to urban realities. Toward that end, storytelling can play a central role in planning education and practice by democratizing knowledge, sharpening critical judgement, and expanding our practical tools.

But stories we tell are not innocent. How we frame our stories determines what we place at the center and what we place at the margin, and yet more what is left out. How we communicate our stories also determines who we reach and connect with and who we leave out or further alienate by intimidation. Stories have power and how we tell them are intimately connected to what message we want to convey and who we want to reach. Text is only one medium toward such goal, but academia by in large has driven on textual communication, which is more biased towards privileged groups.

This course by exploring other mediums of communication seeks to move beyond the hegemony of textual communication and introduce means that might further democratize both production and dissemination of knowledge. In this course we offer a range of digital communication tools that are critical to inclusive planning and education.

The course is offered in a mixed format. Some session s are carried out as seminar and others as workshop with “hands-on” in-class activities. Students’ final project is a digital story that they produce along the way and present to class by the end of the semester. The course is organized in three main sections:

The initial section of the course (Why Stories) establishes the broader rational for the course. Namely why stories and what kind of stories. Through series of readings and discussions, in this initial section of the course we establish the importance of ethnography as the base of just planning decisions: Firstly, the importance of storytelling as an epistemic shift which validates people’s direct voices in knowledge production. Secondly, why such knowledge base for inclusive planning needs to
be co-produced by all affected by planning decisions—namely stories that are told with people not about people.

The second section of the course (How To Tell Stories) is organized around specific hands-on exercises that expose students to a broader range of storytelling tools. Within this broader field we will focus on four specific tools that expose students’ to:

(a) Storymaps and Interactive Timeline;
(b) Data storytelling;
(c) Video and audio making and editing (Adobe Premier) and
(d) Audio production and editing (Podcast software—eg Hindenburg)

*An additional software tool for interactive storytelling Twine and its tutorial instructions are available on Compass. Students are encouraged to explore and experiment with that tool.

In the third and final section of the course (Making a Digital Story), we apply the understandings and skills we have learned in prior sections of the course to make and present a story of choice. This final section of the course offers students the opportunity to make and present a story from scratch and grapple with the critical elements of digital storytelling and framing.

**Learning Objectives**

Over the course of the semester, students will learn:

- History and trajectory of ethnographic and story-based research and action;
- Critical elements in digital storytelling as a planning and communication skill;
- How to tackle issues of social justice as they relate to urban realities through digital storytelling;
- Mediums in digital storytelling and their varied possibilities and limitations;
- Inspiring projects and how they have used digital storytelling to make a difference in communities they serve.

**Course Requirements**

- Synchronous online participation
- Free software available to UIUC students
- Regular and reliable access to computer and internet
- Regular and reliable access to computer and internet is essential for this class, both in respect to its online class time as well as class assignments. If you have any concerns in this regards please feel free contact me to talk about resources here at UIUC. There are certain programs that we will use for class assignments and final projects, those software will be free and available to UIUC students at no cost.
- **Slack:** due to the nature of this course and its interactive assignments we will use Slack. This is a free App accessible via a web address. Through Slack we can more easily share links related to our readings and check in on progress on major assignments. Slack can also be used for course-related conversations private messaging as well as group chat. During the first class we will discuss the use of Slack. Please contact me and the course TA ASAP if you
have questions or concerns about use of Slack or particular messages you’ve seen or received on Slack.

Course Materials and Readings

Course reading are outlined in the semester calendar. Readings will generally be accessed in two ways: via course syllabus where some material is hyperlinked (in some cases if you are not on campus you need to be logged onto VPN); and via course Compass site where I will upload those texts that are not hyperlinked in the syllabus.

Additional Resources: Inspiring Example of Digital Storytelling

There will be a set of examples on Compass where you can draw inspiration for your final projects. Some of these examples will be very professional and are meant to be viewed with a critical mind and you are not expected to reach that level of sophistication in this class. We suggest that you view these resources early in the semester in order to develop initial ideas for your final project. We will experiment with some of these mediums in form of our class activities throughout the semester as well.

Course Policies

I expect my students have signed up for this elective course because they are interested in the subject matter and as much of the learning for this course happens during the class time I expect students’ regular attendance, participation in class discussions, keeping up with the readings and assignments, active presence in Slack for peer exchange and peer learning. I expand on these expectations below. If you have concerns about your ability to meet particular course requirements or assignment due dates, please email me during the first week of classes.

Course Grades: Basically, an A grade goes to a student who thoughtfully contributes to class discussions, reads the texts carefully and thoroughly, conducts research, and writes intelligent reflections and term project for the course. The less the student works, the lower the grade. To get a decent grade, students must always attend class; but attendance alone is not adequate for a good grade. By the end of the semester, your final grade will reflect the quality of the work you have produced. I encourage you to make appointments with me throughout the semester to discuss any questions you may have about the class and your work.

Total Points to Letter grades will be according to the schedule below:

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Attendance. Offered as an online class does not reduce my expectation of students’ attendance. Attendance is mandatory and a pre-requisite for passing the class. Only students who are in a location with unreasonable time difference to central time zone can ask for exemption to this rule. Granting an exemption requires student to (a) petition a waiver for this requirement and obtain instructor’s approval and (b) to submit this petition during the first week of classes. Petitions for past classes will not be approved. In absence of an approved petition, students will need to attend class during the scheduled hours synchronously. Those students with approved waiver, will
be provided with the class recordings and with Compass discussion forum to facilitate their participation.

All other students please see below for attendance requirement.

Students can miss up to three sessions without need for a justifying reason. If you miss more than three sessions without a valid (and documented) excuse you cannot get an A; if you miss five or more sessions you cannot receive a B; if you miss more than seven sessions you cannot receive a C.

For those attending class synchronously, I strongly encourage you to have your cameras on. To protect your privacy you may use background screens available thorough Zoom. If for any reason you are unable to participate with your video on, you need to inform me and I will work with you on a case-by-case basis.

Please note it is the instructor’s decision as to when a student’s absences become excessive and should be reported. If in the opinion of an instructor the attendance of a student becomes so irregular that his or her scholarship is likely to be impaired, the instructor may submit an irregular attendance form to the Associate Dean of the student’s college. A copy is forwarded to the student, who should contact the instructor immediately to work out a solution. If irregular attendance continues without excuse, the instructor may request the student be withdrawn from the course. This request for withdrawal would result in a grade of E for the course. Extenuating circumstances will always be considered when supporting evidence is presented. See Rule 1-501 and Rule 1-502 in the Student Code for more information.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism of any kind will be investigated and penalized in accord with the University’s Code of Policies and Regulations Pertaining to All Students. Penalties include failing the course and having a letter inserted into your permanent file. All students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Code’s definitions of infractions of academic integrity. According to the Code, “ignorance is no excuse.” The Illinois Student Code states: “It is the responsibility of the student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions.” Note that you are subject to the Honor Code, as well as procedures for addressing violations to the Code, regardless of whether you have read it and understand it. The student guide to academic integrity may be found here: http://www.provost.illinois.edu/academicintegrity/students.html

On citation, quotation and copying (how to use a source) please consult http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&pageid=icb.page342054

Respect in the classroom and other learning environments: By enrolling in a course at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, students agree to be responsible for maintaining a respectful environment in all DURP activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. We will be governed by the University Student Code. See Student Code Article 1—Student Rights and Responsibilities, Part 1. Student Rights: §1-102

Counseling and support Please beware and if needed consider the availability of the Counseling Center at our campus, https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/. Their services are fee and are paid for through the students’ health services fee. The Counseling Center a UIUC campus is committed to providing a range of services intended to help students develop improved coping skills in order to address emotional, interpersonal, and academic concerns. The Counseling Center provides individual, couples, and group counseling. The Counseling Center offers primarily short-term counseling, but they do also provide referrals to the community when students could benefit from longer term services.
Major Assignments

Major Assignments and Grading Breakdown

- 20% Reflection on assigned readings or audiovisual material, posing questions
- 10% Leading class discussion (at least one session)
- 5% Class participation
- 25% Short in-class exercises (5 in-Class Activities)
  - 1 story of injustice (done in pairs) + 4 tools tutorials
  [Declare the final project “client” (Feb 17)]
- 40% Final Digital Storytelling Project:
  - 10% Research about “your client”) (Due March 26)
  - 10% Medium and narrative description (Due April 2)
  - 20% Final digital stories (Draft due April 21, Final due April 28th)

Reading Reflection and Question (20% of final grade —due by noon on the day class meets):

The purpose of these reading reflections is not to summarize the entire reading for the day (though some summary or quotation can be included in order to make the reflection more effective). The main goal of a reading reflection is to provide your perspective on the reading(s) for the day in a way that you think creates a constructive setting for class discussion. Please in two or three hundred words convey the main take away point of the reading for you: what were the main arguments and what stood out for you (argument, evidence, approach); how did the reading challenge your thinking, if that is the case. And make sure you include your question for further class discussion clearly labeled at the bottom of your reflection as Questions for class discussion. Submit your reflection in the space on Compass labeled as READING REFLECTIONS.

Expected readings for Undergraduate and Graduate students:

When more than one reading is assigned for a session, undergraduates choose one, graduate students choose two and the assigned lead discussants read all three.

Leading Class Discussion (10% of final grade)

This course is carried out partly in a seminar format and partly in a hands-on workshop format. For sessions carried out in a seminar format we will have one or two lead discussants to facilitate discussion of the assigned material. Lead discussants will also bring to class any audiovisual representation of the assigned text that might be available to public and valuable to the class discussion of the assigned readings for that session. See Guideline for Lead Discussant and Participation on course Compass.

Participation and Reflective Sharing (5% of final grade)

Participation. Students are expected to be active participants in their seminar meetings as well as the weekly lectures. Although attendance is necessary for participation; it is not a sufficient indicator of students’ participation. Students are expected to actively take part in opportunities for class discussion by sharing their reflections on the relationship between the class material, the assigned readings, the students’ own experiences or knowledges.
See Guideline for Lead Discussant and Participation on course Compass.

**In-Class Exercises (25% of final grade):** Starting in the second section of the course, “How to Tell Stories”, we will have five in-class activities, one focused on developing your written storytelling skills (without bringing in software), and four focused on learning different digital storytelling tools. We’ll experiment with different forms of digital storytelling, efforts designed to get you thinking about your final project and the various factors informing approaches to storytelling in digital contexts.

For these exercises, the previous class session will include discussion of the tool and how it has been used for the purpose of storytelling, as well as providing students with resources on the tool. The next class session will be devoted to producing a basic version of this storytelling medium. All in-class exercises should be achievable within the class period, but the assignment submission will be open until the following class session if students wish to put on any finishing touches. The last part of class will provide an opportunity for a few students to present their work.

As previously mentioned, the 5 in-class exercises will cover

- Using the narrative structures and strategies learned in class to write the “story of an injustice” you care about.
- Using online tools developed from both ESRI and Knight Labs (Storymaps and Interactive Timelines), to experiment with telling a story through maps.
- Using software introduced for Data Storytelling, to experiment with telling a story through data.
- Using video and audio editing software (Adobe Premier), to experiment with making a brief, documentary style-video.
- Using Hindenburg or alternative podcast software, to experiment with making a brief podcast.

More information on all of these assignments will be provided on the course Compass page, particularly the Assignments tab. Further resources will also be uploaded to the Resources tab or sent to you via Slack. The assignments will also be submitted via Compass. In some cases, you may have specific files to upload for submission, while in others, you will simply share the link to your online creation.

**Final Digital Storytelling Project (40% of final grade):**

For the final project, you will develop and create a public-facing digital storytelling project. The course is structured so that the final project is developed through benchmarks established throughout the semester allowing you to brainstorm, research, draft, and refine these efforts over time. You will be required to articulate your project’s aims, audience(s), and metrics for success.

- You will choose a “client” that has some sort of online presence, i.e. there are digital materials such as photos, videos, etc. to work with. This semester our “clients” are among social movement and grassroots organization that do not have explicit governmental or market-based institutional support or infrastructure.
- Throughout the project, you should think about what is useful to this social movement. This project is about giving back and not just building a portfolio. This is meant to be an engaged digital storytelling project. You should ask yourselves: How does my project help this movement to better tell their core story?
• Students should use the course material to help build and critically reflect on their own project throughout the semester.

Component 1: Research (10% of course grade-Due March 26)

• Approximately 1000 words

• Introduce the Final project’s social movement. Tell us why you selected this group; what is the core story there? In short share the outcome of your research about the group: their history, their cause, their struggle and composition, their goals and aspirations, philosophy and principals that guide their strategy and practices. For this section you need to have identified and reviewed any books, papers, newspaper articles, audiovisual documentaries produced about them, as well as the group’s own social media and online presence (FB, Instagram, twitter, website…).

• What is the message they want to communicate?
• How can you help them in putting forth their story/their message?
• Who is the audience they are trying to reach with your digital story?

Component 2: Medium and Narrative Description (10% of course grade-Due April 2)

In approximately 500-750 words address the following two main themes:

• Narrative Structure (Story Arc)
  ○ Using the knowledge we have gained about narrative structure and how to tell a good story, communicate the basic structure/arc of your final project narrative. This can be an outline, diagram, or other structure that you find helpful in describing your story.

• Choice of Medium
  ○ What is the medium or combination of mediums you chose?
  ○ Why did you select that?
  ○ What opportunities does this provide?
  ○ How does this medium might limit you?
  ○ How does this tool help you better illustrate your story?
  ○ What is your level of proficiency using this tool and how are you planning to improve that?
  ○ Is this compatible with what this social movement needs?

Component 3: Final Digital Story (20% of course grade-Due draft April 21, final April 28)

Using the tools and strategies learned throughout the class, you will present a digital narrative about your chosen group. Although the digital project itself can be longer or more expansive, you should be prepared to summarize and present the project in 5 minutes for the final class session.

Grading components tentatively include the below but is subject of April 1: interactive session for participatory rubric decision making.
• **Quality of Research** – Are you demonstrating a deep understanding of your focus group and the issues that they face?

• **Utilization of Storytelling Tool** – Is the medium that you selected effective for communicating your story? Have you made the most of the specific abilities in that medium?

• **Quality and Clarity of Narrative** – Is your narrative structured in such a way to illicit the feelings or response that you wanted? Does the user have a clear understanding of your focus group after experiencing your narrative?

• **Incorporation of Course Content** – Does this project demonstrate an understanding and application of the course content from readings, lectures, and discussions?

• **Design and Professionalism** – Is your final project refined, proofread, and edited? Does the final interface demonstrate comprehension of your storytelling medium? Does it appear to be professional work that your chosen group would be proud to publicize and share?
2021 Schedule and Readings

Digital Storytelling UP494-FM

[Last updated Jan 25 2021]

Please Note: When more than one reading is assigned for the session, undergraduates choose one, graduate students choose two and the assigned facilitators/lead discussants read all three.

Jan 26: Introduction to the course

I. Why Stories

Jan 28: Why stories? History and role of storytelling in society and academia


Additional resources


Feb 2: Planning and storytelling


Additional resources

Feb 4: Multimedia explorations in planning


Feb 9: Planning practice and art of storytelling


Additional resources

Feb 11: Stories and counter-stories (Race and Gender)


Recommended:


Feb 16: **Digital storytelling and social justice work** [Guest: Sarah Bassett, MUP alumni 2013: co-director of Peoples Culture, an arts-collective in Chicago and New York]


➢ Wednesday Feb 17 Declare the “client” for your final project

### I. **How to Tell Stories**

Feb 18: **Makings of a Good Story I** [form two person groups in prep for next session]

Dr. Kate McDowell [https://uofi.app.box.com/s/xf9sga6sb7hgigk9dzixnv9vvoom6unz](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/xf9sga6sb7hgigk9dzixnv9vvoom6unz)

Dr. Kate McDowell [https://uofi.app.box.com/s/3dqtemuak7e72uepcpae1flk9v vguk](https://uofi.app.box.com/s/3dqtemuak7e72uepcpae1flk9v vguk)

Additional resources:


Useful for elements of good story. [https://www.khanacademy.org/computing/pixar/storytelling](https://www.khanacademy.org/computing/pixar/storytelling)

Feb 23: **Makings of a Good Story II** [In class activity]


Additional resources:

Jason B. Ohler 2013. Part II: The Art and Practice of Storytelling (Chapters 5 to 10) in *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom: New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning, and Creativity* ebook UIUC library).

Feb 25: **Digital Story Mapping in Planning** [FM/JD]:

Story Maps and Timelines - [ArcGIS Storymaps](https://www.arcgis.com/apps/StoryMaps) + [Knightlab Tools](https://www.knightlab.com/) + [HistoryPin](https://historypin.org/) + …

March 2: Digital Story Mapping: Knightlab Storymaps and Interactive Timeline [In-class activity-- JD]

- Overview of Knightlab tools https://knightlab.northwestern.edu/projects/
- Introduction to storymap: Build a trial storymap in class https://storymap.knightlab.com/
- Introduction to Interactive Timeline
  https://timeline.knightlab.com/
  https://neatline.org/about/ (extra and more advanced resource for students who are interested to learn more about interactive timeline.)

March 4: Data Storytelling I [Guest: Ouafa Benkraouda, PhD fellow DURP]

Essential Methods for Planning Practitioners Skills and Techniques for Data Analysis, Visualization, and Communication. Springer International Publishing.

*Selected chapters in Ramasubramanian and Albrecht (2018) TBD.

March 9: Data Storytelling II [In-class activity, Guest: Ouafa Benkraouda, PhD fellow DURP]

March 11: Video storytelling >>> Humanizing Deportation Project

http://humanizandoladeportacion.ucdavis.edu/en/ (Web site of the UC Davis Humanizing Deportation Project. includes many short clips about peoples stories.)

https://youtu.be/ncpoHcSmiiE One hours tutorial about video digital storytelling. Its not about tech of digital, its about how to capture the heart of the story. How the interaction between the interviewee and interviewer goes. Dynamic of digital documenting. So in class we discuss the dynamics of that relationship and how the methodology facilitates or frustrates certain relationship.


March 16: Audio Visual Storytelling [In-class activity--JD]

Working with Adobe Premier—Video making video and audio editing

March 18: Audio Visual Storytelling [class activity continued JD]

Working with Adobe Premier—Video making video and audio editing
March 23 and March 25: [Final project research]

- **Due March 26: Research for final project**

March 30: Audio Storytelling: Podcast [Guest: Kim Nederveen Pieterse, podcast producer at TED, shows include the TED Interview, TED Business, Far Flung.]

[session includes in-class activity]


*Podcasts to listen to TBD*

Students need to experiment/practice with the Hindenburg software prior to attending this class. Last part of session you will get help with your Hindenburg questions/ troubleshooting.

Also explore Story Corps Chicago [https://storycorps.org/](https://storycorps.org/)

April 1: interactive session for participatory rubric decision making

**Additional resource and medium:** Interactive storytelling [http://twinery.org/](http://twinery.org/) 20 min tutorial
Build a trial interactive story [https://youtu.be/pZsUYirII2U](https://youtu.be/pZsUYirII2U)

- **Due April 2: Medium and Narrative Description**

April 6: Digital Ethnography


**[Lecture by Dr. Kim Fortune, UC Irvine, presented at DSUP seminar, UIUC Fall 2020]**

April 8: Photo Diaries [Guest: Penn Ip, Gender and Urbanization research project]

Using Photo Diary as a feminist methodology” [https://www.voxphotoproject.com/](https://www.voxphotoproject.com/)

Harper, Douglas. 2002. Talking about pictures: A case for photo elicitation, Visual Studies, 17:1, 13-26, DOI: 10.1080/14725860220137345 To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860220137345

Additional reading
Pink, Sarah (2011) Sensory digital photography: re-thinking ‘moving’ and the image, Visual Studies, 26:1, 4-13, DOI: 10.1080/1472586X.2011.548484 To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2011.548484

April 13: NO CLASS at UIUC

April 15: Campus resources: Digital humanities + Scholarly Commons
Intro to Scalar + Omeka etc.

Jason B. Ohler Chapter 15: Copyright, Fair Use, and UOPS: Living in the Gray Zone, Doing the Right Thing, and Protecting Yourself. In Digital Storytelling in the Classroom: New Media Pathways to Literacy, Learning, and Creativity. Chapter DOI:http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/97814522777479.n15

April 20: Community engaged storytelling
[Explore Independent Media Center or Hip Hop express]
https://publish.illinois.edu/hiphopxpress/


https://doi.org/10.3390/soc10030064

II. Making a Digital Story

➢ Due April 21: Draft of final project for peer review

April 22: In class student peer review (Final project draft due)
*** Student should sign up for time slots beforehand to save time in class.

April 27: In class student peer review

➢ Due April 28: Final project (max 5 minutes deliverables)

April 29: Final presentations

May 4: Final presentations