

# MEMO

To: Mark Stewart  
From: Josh Davidsburg  
Date: 7/28/14  
RE: Chesapeake Project

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## **Objective:**

To rework the Journalism 361 curriculum to include projects explaining and promoting sustainability. Through hands-on assignments, we'd like to push students to think critically about sustainability, how it fits into a all manner of reporting and journalism and how to properly cover an environmental story through a broadcast medium.

## **Problem:**

Journalism 361, Television reporting is a hands-on, skills-based class, that spends very little time on traditional university-style case studies and long term papers. The classroom almost functions as a newsroom, with students pitching story ideas, then going out into the real world as reporters. Students are responsible for four news stories (packages) a semester. These must be fair and objective, looking at both sides of every issue. As journalism lecturers, we have to push students to think critically about every issue including sustainability and not just blindly promote it.

## **Current curriculum:**

The first month of semester consists of a mix of lectures and exercises meant to teach and reinforce the basic fundamentals of broadcast reporting. These exercises include, but aren't limited to: advanced camera techniques, such as shooting sequences; mock press conferences and interviews; and video editing practice. Subject matter of these exercises are not substantial; for instance, to teach the students how to shoot a sequence, one lecturer brings in cupcakes and asks volunteers to frost the cupcakes, while the students shoot video of the repetitive action.

At the same time students are asked to start looking for their first story idea. Students are expected to find and produce their own story ideas through traditional beat reporting, social media and word-of-mouth. Stories are currently open to all types of subjects as long as they are deemed newsworthy. The first package is open to any type of newsworthy story the student pitches, the second must be off campus and the third must be an issue driven story. The fourth story is usually a quick-turn, shot at the students' discretion, but written and edited in class (Maryland Day in the Spring, but open in the fall).

## **Sustainability implementation**

There are several opportunities to implement sustainability into the Journalism 361 curriculum while staying true to nature of the class. The aim is to create real world situations for the students to "cover" sustainability without it seeming to forced. Both the in-class exercises and

the final quick-turn package offer great options to construct a sustainability learning experience and introduce the students to environmental reporting.

### **In-class exercise**

In-class exercises are one opportunity to implement a lesson focused on sustainability. I plan to reach out to my former colleagues at the Department of Natural Resources to see if they are interested in setting up a mock press conference highlighting a sustainability initiative. I would ask DNR to provide a speaker, a podium and a mult-box. Students would be required to set up cameras, microphones and ask questions. Students would then be required to get/find subsequent B-roll (associated video). After shooting, students would be required to choose soundbites, write voiceover and edit a news package.

### **Quick-turn packages**

The final package is also a good opportunity to implement a sustainability lesson, although it would be calendar dependent. In the spring, students are generally assigned to find stories at Maryland Day, but if there's an event highlighting sustainability on campus, students would be assigned to cover that. It might be an overload for the group holding the event, so it would have to be carefully crafted, but it would also offer that group a public relations boost.

In this assignment, students would be required to shoot video, conduct interviews, write and edit a news story. The final package would be a full minute-thirty, television news package.