

Chesapeake Project @ Merrill College
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May 2013 Chesapeake Project Cohort

After the Chesapeake Project training, I have numerous ideas for how to incorporate the concepts of sustainability into the multimedia journalism classes I teach at Merrill College. I will outline a few here, including concepts that I have already worked into the summer class in Session I.

Learning Objectives / Assignments for Journalism 504: Intro to Multimedia Skills

- Green (Paperless) classroom
- Listen and discuss: *This American Life* - "Hot in My Backyard."
(<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/495/hot-in-my-backyard>)
- Soundscapes: Noises of things.

Green (Paperless) classroom

I officially turned J504 into a paperless classroom. Besides the addition to the syllabus, we had a discussion about why this was a good objective. I'm happy to share that we met the goal. I never printed anything during the semester. All projects and assignments were turned in electronically, via a class blog, twitter or email. This was successful and very well received by the graduate students. I plan to add this goal into all of my syllabus going forward. All of my classes are held in Knight Hall and I pointed out that it is a LEED Gold rated building.

From the J504 syllabus:

Green Classroom

Our class is held in Knight Hall, UMD's first LEED Gold rated building, and we aim to continue that mission of sustainability. This includes being a paperless semester and paying attention to our impact, as citizens, students and journalists, on the environment around us.

<http://www.sustainability.umd.edu>

<http://www.merrill.umd.edu/deadline/index.php/2010/08/27/knight-hall-certified-as-first-green-building-at-university-of-maryland-college-park/>

Listen and discuss: *This American Life* - "Hot in My Backyard."

In Journalism 504: Intro to Multimedia Skills, I assign numerous assignments listening to the quality reporting and storytelling by *This American Life* by WBEZ Chicago, a NPR radio station. The powerful pieces, with the quality production, story development, and compelling topics lead to good discussion for journalism students. After listening to the This American Life episode #495, I will add it into the required listen list for classes going forward. It is absolutely worth a listen, and provides a good opportunity for discussion of covering sustainability, even for non-journalism

majors. I hope it will inspire students to think about researching sustainability stories in their future reporting, even beyond my assignments:

Listen: This American Life. Hot in My Backyard (May 17, 2013)

(<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/495/hot-in-my-backyard>)

From This American Life website:

“After years of being stuck, the national conversation on climate change finally started to shift — just a little — last year, the hottest year on record in the U.S., with Hurricane Sandy flooding the New York subway, drought devastating Midwest farms, and California and Colorado on fire. Lots of people were wondering if global warming had finally arrived, here at home. This week, stories about this new reality.”

Soundscapes

For the multimedia learning objective of capturing and editing audio, I added in the soundscape exercise. The students used an audio recorder to capture sounds during their day and edited them together. When they turned in the assignment we had an active discussion, including: What would the soundscape sound like if the power went out? How would it have sounded different 10 years ago? Or 10 years from now? How much energy goes into the electronics we use everyday? Many students used the sounds of their commute, so we also discussed how the sounds varied if they took the metro or drove.

Example Soundscapes created by students in J504 Summer 2013:

<https://soundcloud.com/erb5087/gas-outing-mixdown>

<https://soundcloud.com/amirahalidrus/in-transit>

Above are the themes and assignments that I worked into J504 for Summer Session I, but here is one that I plan to add into future classes:

*Environmental reporting. As climate change and sustainability become increasingly important stories for newsrooms to cover, it will help our students to have practice covering this politically complicated issue. When I teach the advanced reporting class later in the year, I will add an environmental assignment:

- Research a controversial environmental issue and identify the sides involved, the parties invested. Who would you interview? How do you present a balanced representation of the issue?

Thanks,
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