

Multimedia Storytelling Atelier COMM-3015 (3 credits)

Portugal: Multimedia Storytelling and Intercultural Communication

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

In this course, students develop the technical, editorial, and artistic skills needed to create compelling, creative multimedia content and artistic pieces on a range of critical global issues. Utilizing a slow learning approach to creative production, much of the class time in this course will be devoted to workshopping and pursuing student-generated ideas under the guidance of the course instructor and professional experts working in the fields of video/film production, radio/sound art production, graphic design, the visual arts, and the performing arts (depending on student interest). Students work independently, in small groups with SIT classmates, and collaboratively with local peers on a range of projects, with a focus on process over product.

The course is divided into four modules, with the first two modules focusing specifically on visual and sonic sensemaking and content creation. Through readings, reflection discussions, and creative assignments, students interrogate the ways in which they understand and interpret the world and consider how values and biases influence content creation and artistic production decisions especially in intercultural contexts. In module three, students work collaboratively on an environmental advocacy assignment with students in SIT's Portugal: Sustainability and Environmental Justice program to consider artistic, media, and narrative representations of environmental issues. The last module brings these various strands together to consider how multimedia pieces and transmedia projects and campaigns can be utilized to raise awareness about critical global issues and advocate for social change.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Apply their sensing and sensemaking abilities to artistic projects and media representations of lived experience;
- Demonstrate a broad understanding of contemporary visual, sonic, and multimedia storytelling tools and platforms;
- Enhance multimedia production and editorial skills needed to tell true-life or professional stories in an intercultural environment;

- Explain the importance of post-production editing and project management skills in multimedia storytelling;
- Produce and design innovative media, artistic pieces, and campaigns on a range of critical global issues facing Portugal and the EU.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of economic change and development through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Required Software/Hardware

All assignments in this course can be completed with applications found on most smartphones and laptop computers. Advanced students should bring with them to Portugal any post-production software and hardware that they typically use. Additionally, most digital software can now be purchased through short subscriptions at discounted student rates. The University Autónoma de Lisboa also has radio and television studios that students have access to for specific projects. Technical needs are discussed at the start of the course, and students should speak directly to the course instructor about any specialized software or equipment they may need.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Please note that all assignments are flexible in this course, and students are allowed, even encouraged, to redesign these projects in ways that support their personal, professional, and academic goals. Students planning to deviate from these assignments should speak to the course instructor prior to starting their work for support and advisement. The course assignments

encourage process over product to encourage risk-taking, innovation, and exploration of new ideas. For all assignments, students may choose to work individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

1) Art, Story, or Activity Curation (10%)

Each student is responsible for curating and presenting a short introduction to one of the class sessions. The curation can be a piece of art, music, a multimedia piece, a journal article or book, a podcast, or any activity that inspires creativity and collaboration. Regardless of the selection, the student is required to present briefly to the class on their choice, and how it relates to previous, current, or forthcoming class content or creative projects. Students should speak to the course instructor at least 24 hours before the class about any technical requirements needed for their selection or activity (i.e., projection, speakers, artmaking materials, etc.)

2) Ways of Seeing Assignment (20%)

Students produce a visual story or visual artistic piece that draws from readings, class discussions, experiences, and collaborative experiments. The format can vary, from journalistic, narrative, and representational to abstract. All assignments should be accompanied by a 1-page abstract or artist's statement describing the work and citing any references which inspired the work. Some possible examples are listed below, and ideas will be workshopped with peers in class:

- Short film
- Photo essay (4-10 photographs with or without captions)
- Illustration(s)
- Comic or cartoon
- Infographic
- Collage, painting, sculpture, found object bricolage

3) Deep Listening Assignment (20%)

Inspired by the sonic methods and sound art explored in Module 2, students create a short sound piece. As with the previous assignment, the form can vary, from journalistic and narrative to abstract, but must be theory-driven or issue-oriented in some way and be accompanied by a 1-page abstract or artist's statement. Some possible examples are listed below, and ideas will be workshopped with peers in class:

- Soundwalk or listening walk recordings
- Conversational podcast, audio essay, or radio story
- Composition, music production, or song
- Portfolio of field recordings or musique concrete

4) Environmental Advocacy Assignment (20%)

In collaboration with students from SIT's *Portugal: Sustainability and Environmental Justice* program, groups utilize their various skillsets in the sciences, arts, and communications to create

a narrative or multimedia piece; or design a trans/multimedia environmental advocacy campaign. Building on readings from environmental humanities literature, groups approach the work by carefully interrogating how we represent the natural world in story work, and how these representations influence narratives of environmental advocacy work. Whatever the choice, the product (or design) should utilize at least two mediums (i.e., a written op-ed is insufficient, but should integrate photos, illustrations, scientific data tables, videos, etc.). Options for this assignment are also varied and the design of a larger social change or advocacy project or event (without actually carrying it out) is also possible. Some possibilities include:

- Op-ed or other non-academic piece
- Trans/multimedia environmental advocacy project
- Social media campaign design
- Research-creation event design

5) Reflection, Storyboard, or Multimedia Project (20%)

For the final assignment, students have a choice of three options:

Option A: Students complete a multimedia piece integrating various threads from throughout the course on a topic of their choosing. As before, the piece should be issue-oriented or theory-driven and be accompanied by a 1-page abstract or artist statement.

Option B: Building on a recent assignment in the course, or towards the ISP, students construct an in-depth storyboard of a future project, either the ISP or other project of interest. Depending on the medium, the storyboard may include shot lists, a narrative map, or other constructive visual charts which help to organize the storytelling or artistic project at hand.

Option C: Students write a 3–5-page reflection on the various assignments undertaken, challenges encountered and any successes, along with intended areas of future improvement. Students should describe any technical or production skills gained during the course, and how they will be utilized in the ISP or other future projects. Students should also reflect on the power and limitations of multimedia and transdisciplinary work.

5) Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

- Art, Story, or Activity Curation - 10%
- Ways of Seeing – 20%
- Deep Listening – 20%
- Environmental Advocacy – 20%
- Reflection/Storyboard/Multimedia Project - 20%
- Participation - 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination (projects, ISP, case studies, internship, etc.). It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Example: Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the semester. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.*

Module 1: Ways of Seeing

This introductory module focuses on visual journalism, visual artmaking, and sensemaking through an investigation of photography and Western social constructions of beauty and order. Through discussions and practice assignments, students explore the ways culture is made visible (or invisible), the relationship between humans and their built and natural environments, and how Western visual ideals inform fashion, urban planning, development, race, cultural values, media narratives, and more in Portugal.

Sessions may include:

- Production and post-production tools and tricks of visual storytelling
- Ethics of photography
- Discussion of Lisbon's "shadow places"
- Peer-review of in progress assignment development;
- Class time devoted to assignment production and post-production

Required Readings:

Berger, J. (1980). Uses of photography. In *About looking*. Pantheon Books. (pp. 27-63).

Mbembe, A. (2017). *Critique of Black reason*. Duke University Press. (1-37).

Plumwood, V. (2008). Shadow places and the politics of dwelling. *Environmental Humanities* 44. <https://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2008/03/01/shadow-places-and-the-politics-of-dwelling/>

Roberts, J. (2013). The power of patience. *Harvard Magazine*, November-December, 40-43.

Recommended Reading:

Caldeira, S. (2021). "It's not just about Instagram models": Exploring the gendered political

potential of young women's Instagram use. *Media and Communication* 9(2), 5-15.

Ways of Seeing Assignment due.

Module 2: Deep Listening

This module complicates and challenges visual ways of knowing through explorations of sound in our everyday lives, from voices to music to radio to technology and urban soundscapes. Students reflect on and discuss their socio-cultural sonic expectations and upbringings and compare and contrast these against their host community in Portugal. Through class activities and assignments, students mobilize field recordings, compositions, and voice recordings to meditate on the phenomenon of sound and how it can be utilized as an artistic and narrative tool in a variety of mediums and forums.

Sessions may include:

- Production and post-production tools and tricks of radio, audio storytelling, and sound art
- Lisbon's soundscape and socio-cultural constructions of sound and noise
- Group soundwalking activity, and post-walk reflection
- Peer-review of in progress assignment development
- Class time devoted to assignment production and post-production

Required Readings:

MacAdam, A. (2017, December 6). The journey from print to radio storytelling: A guide for navigating a new landscape. NPR Training / Sources.

<https://training.npr.org/2017/12/06/the-journey-from-print-to-radio-storytelling-a-guide-for-navigating-a-new-landscape/>

Paquette, D., & McCartney, A. (2012). Soundwalking and the bodily exploration of places. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 37, 135-145.

Sterne, J. (2003). *The audible past: Cultural origins of sound reproduction*. Duke University Press. (pp. 1-29).

Lisbon City Council. (n.d.). Noise: The importance of environmental quality in the city.

<https://www.lisboa.pt/en/translate-to-en-actualidade/reports/noise>

Recommended Readings:

Gallagher, M. (2015). Sounding ruins: Reflections on the production of an 'audio drift'. *Cultural Geographies*, 22(3), 467-485.

Oliveros, P. (2005). *Deep listening: A composer's sound practice*. Deep Listening Publications.

Springgay, S., & Truman, S. (2019). A walking-writing practice: Queering the trail. In *Walking Methodologies in a more-than-human world: Walkinglab*. Routledge. (pp. 130-142).

Deep Listening Assignment due at end of module.

Module 3: Multimedia Storytelling for Environmental Advocacy

While the first two modules encouraged open-ended exploration of human frames and sensemaking in the world, this module turns towards the urgent challenge of telling compelling

stories about global climate change and environmental injustices. Through a collaboration with students in SIT's *Portugal: Sustainability and Environmental Justice* program, this module focuses on the creation of an environmental advocacy storytelling or art project. Students start with an introduction to the field of environmental humanities, which focuses on the ways in which artists, storytellers, and social researchers can work collaboratively with climate scientists to contribute to creative problem-solving of environmental challenges. This module allows students to utilize their editorial and production skills in collaboration with student peers in the sciences in interdisciplinary ways.

Sessions may include:

- Introduction to the environmental humanities
- Survey of environmental artists and projects in Portugal
- Peer-review of in progress assignment development
- Class time devoted to assignment production and post-production

Required Readings and Listening:

Bjork & Kimmerer, R.W. (2022). *Artists on writers: Bjork and Robin Wall Kimmerer*. Artforum. <https://www.artforum.com/video/the-musician-artist-and-author-scientist-discuss-how-to-live-in-right-relationship-to-the-land-167697/>

Emmett, R., & Nye, D. (2017). *The environmental humanities: A critical introduction*. MIT University Press. (pp. 1-22).

Kirksey, E., Schuetze, C., & Helmreich, S. (2014). Introduction: Tactics of multispecies ethnography. In *The multispecies salon*. Duke University Press. (pp. 1-24).

Recommended reading:

Davis, H. (2015). Life and death in the Anthropocene: A short history of plastic. In *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters among aesthetics, politics, environments, and epistemologies* (Eds. Davis, H., & Turpin, E.). Open Humanities Press. 347-358.

Module 4: Multimedia Storytelling on Critical Global Issues

In this final module, we bring all the strands of the course together, both technical and theoretical as we think about how to design and execute multimedia storytelling projects. Students are encouraged to concurrently begin to take an inventory of production skills and tools needed for the production of their multimedia ISP. The content of this module is largely student-driven and depends on the assignment choice of the student (see options A, B, C, above).

Sessions may include:

- TV and film production
- What is a storyboard?
- Planning for and organizing multimedia storytelling projects
- Peer-review of in progress assignment development
- Class time devoted to assignment production and post-production

Required Reading:

Gitner, S. (2023). *Multimedia storytelling for digital communicators in a multiplatform world (2nd edition)*. Routledge. (Chapter 8: Multimedia storytelling in journalism: How can multimedia storytelling be used to tell true-life stories?; pp. 276-347).