

Multimedia Studio

COMM-3015 (3 credits)

Portugal: Communications & Media

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.

Through experimentation, reflection discussions, readings 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. 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 Portuguese vocabulary related to course content 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.

Course Schedule

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

Module 1: Multimedia Storytelling: Ways of Seeing Ourselves and Others

Students are introduced to multimedia storytelling as both a creative practice and a way of making sense of experience. Through examples drawn from journalism, documentary, digital media, and personal storytelling, students explore how narratives are constructed across different media forms and reflect on

the ethical implications of representation. Practical activities encourage students to experiment with storytelling techniques while considering questions of identity, perspective, voice, and audience.

Sessions may include:

- Principles of storytelling across media
- Narrative structures and transmedia
- Representation and positionality
- Ethical considerations
- Creative experimentation

Recommended Readings:

Berger, J. (1972). *Ways of seeing*. Penguin Books.

Bernard, S. C. (2016). *Documentary storytelling: Creative nonfiction on screen* (5th ed.). Focal Press.

Freeman, M. (2018). *Global Convergence Cultures: Transmedia Earth*. Routledge.

Freeman, M. & Gambarato, R. (2018). *The Routledge Companion to Transmedia Studies*. Routledge.

Harbers, F. (2023). Digital storytelling as sociotechnical imaginary: The performative power of journalistic innovation discourse. *Journalistica*, 17(2), 111–128. <https://doi.org/10.7146/journalistica.v17i2.140636>

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press

Kramer, M., & Call, W. (Eds.). (2007). *Telling true stories: A nonfiction writers' guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University*. Plume.

Lambert, J. (2013). *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives, creating community* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Van der Nat, R., & Müller, E. (2021). Navigating interactive story spaces: The architecture of interactive narratives in online journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 9(10), 1431–1450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1974911>

Van der Nat, R., Bakker, P., & Müller, E. (2024). The imagined user: Creating interactive narratives in journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 18(11), 3191–3208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2023.2293215>

Module 2: Visual Storytelling: Photography

This module introduces photography as a tool for observation, documentation, and visual storytelling. Students explore composition, framing, light, perspective, and visual ethics while developing greater attentiveness to everyday environments and intercultural encounters. Practical exercises encourage students to use photography to communicate meaning and emotion through images.

Sessions may include:

- Photography and camera fundamentals
- Composition, light and visual language
- Portrait and documentary photography
- Observation and visual literacy
- Ethics of image-making

Recommended Readings:

Bate, D. (2020). Photography: The Key Concepts (3rd ed.). Routledge.

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

Freeman, M. (2020). The Photographer's Eye: Composition and Design for Better Digital Photos (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Kobre, K. (2021). Photojournalism: The Professionals' Approach (8th ed.). Routledge.

Lester, P. M. (2018). Visual communication: Images with messages (7th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Marien, M. W. (2023). Photography: A Cultural History (6th ed.). Laurence King Publishing.

Mortensen, M. (2020). Visuality and witnessing in the age of social media. Media, Culture & Society, 42(5), 773–785. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720904587>

Rose, G. (2022). Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials (5th ed.). Sage.

Schreiber, M. (2021). Visual storytelling in the digital age: The changing role of photography in journalism. Journalism Practice, 15(7), 941–957. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1805798>

Zelizer, B. (2021). Why visual literacy matters in journalism. Digital Journalism, 9(6), 733–748. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1920966>

Module 3: Deep Listening: Audio Storytelling

Students examine sound as a powerful narrative medium. Through listening exercises and hands-on activities, they develop technical and creative skills related to audio recording, interviewing, voice work, and podcast production. The module emphasizes the importance of listening, atmosphere, and vocal performance in shaping audience experience.

Sessions may include:

- Audio recording techniques
- Interviewing for audio
- Voice placement and delivery
- Sound design and editing
- Podcast storytelling

Recommended Readings:

Biewen, J., & Dilworth, A. (Eds.). (2017). Reality radio: Telling true stories in sound (2nd ed.). University of North Carolina Press.

Bottomley, A. J. (2020). Podcasting and platform studies: The evolution of audio storytelling. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, 27(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19376529.2020.1718661>

Kern, J. (2008). Sound reporting: The NPR guide to audio journalism and production. University of Chicago Press.

Lindgren, M. (2021). The podcast reader. Routledge.

Lindgren, M. (2023). Intimacy and authenticity in podcast storytelling. *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media*, 21(1), 3–18. https://doi.org/10.1386/rjao_00078_1

Markman, K. M. (2021). The podcast as medium and method. *New Media & Society*, 23(11), 3237–3253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820969605>

McHugh, S. (2016). How podcasting is changing the audio storytelling genre. Routledge.

Spinelli, M., & Dann, L. (2019). Podcasting: The audio media revolution. Bloomsbury Academic.

Module 4: Stories in Motion: Video Production and Editing

This module explores the fundamentals of video production and documentary storytelling. Students move through the stages of planning, filming, and editing audiovisual narratives, developing practical skills while reflecting on the responsibilities involved in representing others through moving images.

Sessions may include:

- Documentary storytelling
- Documentary Ethics
- Storyboarding and scripting
- Camera techniques and shot selection
- Production planning
- Video editing and post-production

Recommended Readings:

Aston, J., & Odorico, D. (2022). Interactive documentary and participatory storytelling. *Convergence*, 28(4), 1007–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565211070456>

Aufderheide, P. (2007). Documentary film: A very short introduction. Oxford University Press.

Bernard, S. C. (2016). Documentary storytelling (5th ed.). Focal Press.

Dowling, D., & Vogan, T. (2023). Documentary storytelling and audience engagement in digital environments. *Media Practice and Education*, 24(2), 175–191.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2022.2065755>

Nichols, B. (2017). Introduction to documentary (3rd ed.). Indiana University Press.

Nash, K., Hight, C., & Summerhayes, C. (Eds.). (2014). New documentary ecologies: Emerging platforms, practices and discourses. Palgrave Macmillan.

Nash, K. (2021). Documentary for the digital age. *Studies in Documentary Film*, 15(1), 1–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17503280.2021.1881140>

Nichols, B. (2016). Speaking Truths with Film: Evidence, Ethics, Politics in Documentary. Oakland: University of California Press.

Rabiger, M., & Hurbis-Cherrier, M. (2020). Directing the documentary (7th ed.). Routledge.

Winston, B. (2017). The Act of Documenting: Documentary Film in the 21st Century. London: Bloomsbury.

Module 5: Designing Meaning: Design and Data Visualization

Students explore how design principles shape communication across digital environments. Combining foundational concepts of visual communication with introductory data visualization practices, the module examines how information can be organized and presented ethically, clearly, and creatively.

Sessions may include:

- Principles of design
- Typography and hierarchy
- Layout and composition
- Information design
- Introductory data visualization

Recommended Readings:

Cairo, A. (2020). Visualizing uncertainty: An information design perspective. *Digital Journalism*, 8(3), 317–335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1737246>

Cairo, A. (2019). How charts lie: Getting smarter about visual information. W. W. Norton.

D'Ignazio, C., & Klein, L. F. (2020). Data feminism and the ethics of data visualization. *Journal of Cultural Analytics*. <https://doi.org/10.22148/001c.13186>

Kennedy, H., Hill, R. L., Aiello, G., & Allen, W. (2016). The work that visualisation conventions do. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(6), 715–735.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1153126>

Knafllic, C. N. (2015). *Storytelling with data: A data visualization guide for business professionals*. Wiley.

Lupton, E. (2014). *Thinking with type* (2nd ed.). Princeton Architectural Press.

Norman, D. A. (2013). *The design of everyday things* (Revised and expanded ed.). Basic Books.

Ware, C. (2021). *Information visualization: Perception for design* (4th ed.). Morgan Kaufmann.

Assignments and Evaluation

Ways of Seeing Myself – 10%

Multimedia Storytelling Portfolio:

Photography Activity – 15%

Audio Production Activity – 15%

Video Production Activity – 20%

Design Activity – 10%

Field Journal – 20%

Participation – 10%

1) Ways of Seeing Myself (10%)

In this assignment, students create a multimedia self-representation that explores how they see themselves and how they choose to be seen by others. Using any medium or combination of media (such as video, audio, photography, illustration, performance, text, collage, or interactive formats), students will produce a creative piece that reflects their identity, values, experiences, and positionality. The work should engage with themes discussed in class related to visual and sonic sensemaking, authorship, representation, and bias, encouraging students to critically reflect on how personal perspective shapes creative choices. Students are invited to experiment with form, aesthetics, and storytelling approaches, prioritizing process and exploration over technical polish. Each project must be accompanied by a short artist's statement reflecting on the chosen medium, creative process, and ethical considerations involved in representing oneself in an intercultural learning environment.

2) Multimedia Storytelling Portfolio (60%)

Throughout the semester, students develop a portfolio documenting their practical work across the course modules. The portfolio serves as an archive of experimentation, skill development, and creative growth. Students will revise and curate selected works produced during workshops and module activities, accompanied by brief reflective statements discussing their process, challenges, and learning.

Consistent with the course's slow learning and workshop-based approach, emphasis will be placed on process over product. Students are expected to engage in iterative development, peer feedback, and creative experimentation, and to collaborate closely with classmates and, where relevant, local peers or contributors. Projects should demonstrate thoughtful consideration of representation, ethics, intercultural context, and audience, as well as intentional creative and technical choices.

The lecturers for each module will provide a more detailed briefing on the exercises that should be included in the portfolio, which will be carried out in a mix of classroom setting and independent work time.

3) Field Journal (20%)

Throughout the semester, students will maintain a Field Journal as a creative and reflective studio practice that supports visual and sonic exploration, sensemaking, and artistic development. The journal will function as an evolving visual, auditory, and experiential archive, where students document observations, ideas, and experiments emerging from class activities, site visits, excursions, workshops, and everyday encounters in Portugal.

Across the different modules, students are encouraged to experiment with multimodal forms of documentation. Combining text, images, collected ephemera, audio references, and conceptual sketches, and to reflect not only on what they observe, but how they perceive, listen, and make meaning. The Field Journal will inform studio projects by fostering attentiveness, creative risk-taking, and ethical awareness, and by supporting the translation of lived, sensory experience into thoughtful multimedia and artistic production.

4) 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.

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.

Note on the Use of Generative AI Tools

This course emphasizes creative process, experimentation, sensory observation, and embodied ways of making. Students are encouraged to develop ideas through hands-on practice, collaboration, fieldwork, listening, looking, and iterative studio exploration. For this reason, while generative AI tools may be used selectively, they should not replace or short-circuit the creative, observational, and reflective processes at the core of the course.

Acceptable uses of generative AI may include early-stage brainstorming, organizing notes, clarifying concepts discussed in class, or supporting light revision at the sentence or structural level. AI tools may not be used to generate core creative content, artistic concepts, interview questions, scripts, visual narratives, sound compositions, analyses, or final multimedia pieces that are presented as the student's own creative work. Students are expected to remain the primary source of ideas, aesthetic decisions, interpretation, and meaning-making.

Students are strongly encouraged to experiment with ideation and creation without AI, especially in assignments focused on seeing, listening, interviewing, and making. Part of the learning process in this course involves grappling with uncertainty, subjectivity, and creative risk—experiences that cannot be delegated to automated tools.

Expectations for AI use may vary by assignment and will be discussed explicitly in class. In some cases, faculty and students may collaboratively establish boundaries for appropriate AI use depending on the nature of the project. Students are responsible for following these guidelines and for seeking clarification when expectations are unclear.

When generative AI tools are used in any stage of an assignment, their use must be clearly and transparently acknowledged, specifying the tool used and the nature of its contribution (e.g., brainstorming, outlining, or language revision). Transparency supports creative integrity and academic honesty and does not imply inappropriate use.

Policies regarding AI use may differ across courses within the program. Students should follow course-specific guidance and understand that responsible AI use is defined at the course level.

Sample AI Acknowledgment Statement:

I used [tool name] for [specific purpose, e.g., early brainstorming or sentence-level revision]. All creative decisions, interpretations, and final content are my own.