

People, Planning, and the Story: An Applied Media Workshop

The purpose of this four-day module course is to explore why storytelling is important to the practice of urban planning. Students will learn to identify and construct a meaningful story. Each activity in the course will expose students to media gathering and sharing tools, both new and old. The final deliverable for the course is a story produced in a multimedia format of the student's choice. By the end of the course, we will have published a record that enables anyone to replicate the experience. Portions of the course will be open to the public in real time.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Etherpad: Students are not required to take notes throughout the course, but if they do we ask everyone to contribute to an etherpad: <http://brownbag.me:9001/> The idea is that we can all learn from each other and we should create and share collective knowledge throughout the course.

Twitter: In the etherpad, everyone should include their twitter handle so we can all follow one another and engage with each other throughout the course. On the fourth day, when we share our final projects, we will also host a twitter chat around those projects. The hashtag will be #storiesinplanning.

Blogging: This course will be archived on [CoLab Radio](#). You'll be able to write about and reflect on the course each day. The notes from the etherpad should help you write these posts, and each day you will produce media -- from recordings to photos to prose -- that you can also include in the post. These posts will become part of a public record of the course that will allow others to replicate it.

SELECT ACTIVITIES OVER FOUR-DAY WORKSHOP

See the story.

Purpose: Learn how to observe your environment and record your observations with a camera; learn how to see, how to look, and how to take pictures of your surroundings and people.

Method: Together we will look at a handful of photo essays and single photos. What are the elements of a successful photograph? What are the elements of a successful photo essay? We will then review basic technical photo concepts including: aperture, shutter speed, film speed, and depth of field. Next, you will explore the environment at a nearby site, where a local host will meet with you. What seems curious to you? Further investigate it with your camera and be prepared to share your images with your classmates. What were you trying to see, figure out, or show? How did you use your camera to do it? While the primary objective of this activity is to tell a visual story, you are also encouraged to combine your images with prose, audio recordings, and video

Just listen.

Purpose: Learn intensive listening skills for interview and in-person contexts; learn to listen for the natural story without guiding storyteller down a path or probing for specific information.

Method: Participants pair off. Each person will have seven minutes to tell her life story to her partner. It is completely up to the storyteller how to structure her story and what information to include. The listener must not speak while the storyteller is speaking or any clarifying questions that might guide the storyteller down a specific path or tangent, or even mutter "ah ha" and "mm". When time is up, the

listener will have a few minutes to tell the storyteller what she thinks her strengths are. Stories are confidential.

You and me, jargon-free.

Purpose: learn alternatives to using jargon words; practice storytelling; learn to use audio recorder; learn to compose blog post.

Method: The class will see a list of city planning jargon words, such as “stakeholder” and “urban fabric”. First we will identify what the words have in common, then we’ll add more jargon words from our various work experiences. Each student will be assigned one jargon word, and then make up a story that embodies that word without ever using the word in the story. The rest of the class will then guess which jargon word the student was assigned. In the weeks following the course, each story will become one blog post in a new “Jargon Tuesdays” series.

Anatomy of a story.

Purpose: Understand what makes a story interesting; examine what story elements motivate people to take action.

Method: Facilitators present example media pieces for students to analyze, each employing a different format (radio, video, print, photography, et cetera). All pieces cover the same topic -- immigration -- a hot topic of current debate. The activity concludes with a talk about elements of a good story that works -- story arcs, conflict, characters, setting, plot, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of different media formats.

Make the story.

Purpose: Students create their own media pieces using methods they’ve explored.

Method: Students choose one of the formats that we have explored in previous activities to create their own stories. You can go deeper into the project site we examined in “See the story”; tell a new story from that site; complete (with permission) your partner’s story from the “Just Listen” activity; or create a story of your choosing from material you’ve collected from recent research or work. Facilitators will provide clinics in particular storytelling methods upon demand -- radio, print, video, and photography.

SELECTIONS FROM COURSE READING / LISTENING / LOOKING / WATCHING LIST

Forester, John. *Planning in the Face of Power*. Chapter seven, “Listening: The Social Policy of Everyday Life”. University of California Press. 1989.

For “See the story.”

1. Anne Whiston Spirn: <http://www.annewhistonspirn.com/photographer/>
2. Prashanth Wishwanathan: <http://www.prashanthpix.com/wp/>
3. One in Eight Million by New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/nyregion/1-in-8-million/index.html>
4. Camilo Jose Vergara: <http://invinciblecities.camden.rutgers.edu/intro.html>
5. Martha Cooper: <http://www.nycitysnaps.com/>

For “Just listen.”

1. Cizek, Katerina. *Unexpected*. National Film Board of Canada. 2008. <http://www.nfb.ca/playlists/filmmaker-in-residence/viewing/unexpected/>

2. Abumrad, Jad and Robert Krulwich. "Yellow Rain". *Radiolab*. September 24, 2012.
<http://www.radiolab.org/2012/sep/24/yellow-rain/>
3. Yang, Kao Kalia. "The Science of Racism: Radiolab's Treatment of the Hmong Experience". *Hyphen*. October 22, 2012. <http://hyphenmagazine.com/blog/archive/2012/10/science-racism-radiolabs-treatment-hmong-experience>
4. Chung, Sewon. "An Interview with a Hmong Tour Guide". *CoLab Radio*. July 30, 2012.
<http://colabradio.mit.edu/an-interview-with-a-hmong-tour-guide/>
5. Boo, Katherine. "The Marriage Cure". *The New Yorker*. August 18, 2003.

For "Anatomy of a story."

1. "An Immigrant in Limbo between Two Americas" (article) and "Undocumented Dreamers" (video). Los Angeles Times. June 8, 2012.
Article: <http://www.latimes.com/mynews/j0hnte5t/la-me-maria-20120608,0,6661546.story>
Video: <http://www.latimes.com/videogallery/70344641/News/Undocumented-dreamers>
2. "Just One Thing Missing," last segment in "Nice work if you can get it" episode, from This American Life: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/329/nice-work-if-you-can-get-it>
3. Dream Act Students Movement. "Dream Summer 2011" Video.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yogg_bV8Dew
4. Vargas, Jose Antonio. "Not Legal Not Leaving". *Time Magazine*. June 25, 2012.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2117243,00.html>