Overview

FMMC 0285 Sustainable Television
Professor Jason Mittell, Axinn 208, 443-3435
Office Hours: Wed 10-12 / Thu 11-12
Class Meetings: T/Th 1:30 - 2:45 pm, Axinn 001

In this project-based course, we will collaborate to produce a nonfiction television program that addresses sustainability and environmental issues with the goal of showing the final program on local cable, online, and possibly on the PBS series *Planet Forward*. Students will collectively serve all roles in the project, from research and writing, to shooting and editing, creating a team-based environment, with screening and readings focused on the rhetoric of environmental media.

Given the project-based approach, the course's syllabus and assignments will evolve throughout the semester. Students will be expected to use the course website to share information, discuss projects, comment on screenings and share examples that relate to the topic.

**Learning Goals:**

- Gaining proficiency in skills of non-fiction video production, including pre-production, shooting, editing, and sound design
- Developing a critical eye to evaluate and critique non-fiction video, focused on exploring the rhetorical goals and strategies of moving image media
- Exploring contemporary environmental issues and considering how to communicate effectively about both social and scientific materials
- Gaining experience in collaborative, project-based learning, and developing team-building skills

**Required Readings available at the college bookstore:**


**Course Policies**

**Class Participation & Attendance:**

You are expected to attend all class meetings on time, having done the readings, thought about the material, and prepared the necessary online, video, and written assignments. Attendance will be regularly taken, but it is the individual student's responsibility to attend class in order to gain the most from their education. If a student misses a class, it is up to them to find out what they missed from their classmates and make-up the necessary material. Your final grade will be lowered one mark (B becomes B–) for each unexcused absence in excess of two. If you know that you will be absent from class, please contact Professor Mittell as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements and avoid penalties.

The class participation component of your grade will reward students who actively participate in class, collaborate effectively with classmates, meet with the professor outside of class, and otherwise demonstrate their engagement with the material. Likewise, this grade will be used to downgrade students who are clearly disengaged with the class or fail to uphold their end of the course policies. If you are concerned with your participation grade at all, please discuss the matter with Professor Mittell.

**Required Work:**

The main requirement for the course is contributing to collaborative effort of producing a television program. Students will be responsible for being active members of their teams, carrying out the tasks they commit to undertaking. Grades will be based on active participation, hard work, creative ideas, and successful collaboration. There is one individual paper assignment due at mid-semester, and there will be a written self-evaluation at the end of the semester. All students must complete both of these papers to pass the course.

**Grades:**

You will be graded based on the following scale, using a 4.0 scale on all assignments:

- A (4.0) indicates truly excelling on assignments, demonstrating mastery of the material and significantly surpassing the expectations of the assignment.
B (3.0) indicates above-average work, clearly achieving the course goals and completing all assignments in a strong fashion.

C (2.0) indicates satisfactorily meeting the course requirements in an adequate fashion.

D (1.0) indicates not achieving course goals and not adequately meeting expectations.

F (0.0) indicates dramatically failing to meet course goals and course expectations.

Submitting Work:
Videos will be submitted via the Axinn server, as discussed in class. Late papers are highly discouraged, as they throw off schedules for both student and professor. If you must hand in any assignment later than the deadline, please contact the professor in advance as soon as the situation becomes apparent – together arrangements can be made, often without penalties. If a paper is not turned in on time without making advance arrangements with Professor Mittell or a Dean’s excuse, the paper will be penalized by one mark (e.g. an A- becomes a B+) for each day of lateness.

All papers should be submitted via the course website as an attached .doc or .rtf file format document. Please do NOT slip papers under the door to Professor Mittell’s office.

Academic Dishonesty:
All work you submit must be your own and you may not inappropriately assist other students in their work beyond the confines of a particular assignment, in keeping with the Middlebury College Honor Code. All papers and exams must include the statement of the Honor Code along with the student’s name (as a digital signature) in order to be graded. There is a no-tolerance policy for academic misconduct in this course! The minimum penalty for academic misconduct will be a failing grade (F) for the course – further academic and disciplinary penalties may be assessed. The definitions of plagiarism and cheating used in this course are consistent with the material in the College Handbook, Chapter V.

Course Policies:
Any student with a disability or who otherwise needs accommodation or assistance should make arrangements with Professor Mittell as soon as possible. If you know that you will have conflicts due to athletics or other college activities, you must notify Professor Mittell in advance and arrange to make up missed work – athletic absences are not excused and it is the student’s responsibility to make all arrangements.

Email is Professor Mittell’s preferred mode of communication (besides face-to-face conversation!), generally checking regularly during the work week – if you email him asking for a response and do not receive one within one working day (M-F), assume that your email may not have been received. Office voicemails will typically be answered less promptly. Please do not call Professor Mittell at home.

Printing & Computer Use Policy:
Writing assignments for this course are managed through the course website, with no printing required. Many readings are online – students are welcome to print or not print at their choosing, with the understanding that students should take notes on readings either via digital annotation or separate notebook or word processing file. You should bring readings to class each day, either via paper or on a computer screen. Feel free to use laptops throughout all class meetings except during screenings, where the light from the screen can disrupt the viewing experience. If you are on your laptop, you are expected to engage with course materials, not free-range surfing the web, checking email, Facebook, etc.