

# **BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING**

CREATIVE TEACHING IDEAS/METHODS FOR  
FOSTERING FREEDOM OF INNOVATION IN  
THE JMC CLASSROOM

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Sponsored by The Association for Education in Journalism  
and Mass Communication Elected Standing Committee on Teaching



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Best Practices in Teaching Creative Teaching Ideas/Methods for Fostering Freedom of Innovation in the JMC Classroom

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234 Outlet Point Boulevard, Suite A, Columbia, SC 29210


Ph.: 802-798-0271 | FAX: 803-772-3509 | E-mail: [Amanda@aejmc.org](mailto:Amanda@aejmc.org) | [www.aejmc.org](http://www.aejmc.org)

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**1st Place:** *Committing to Extracurriculars: Motivating Students with Experiential Learning and High School Football in Underserved Communities* (Charlie Gee, Lincoln Memorial University)

**2nd Place:** *Clippy Goes on the Job Hunt: Using AI Assistive Technologies to Learn About the Job Search Process, Careers in Mass Communication, and Develop Familiarity with AI Assistance* (Travis Loof and Lori Costello, University of South Dakota)

**3rd Place:** *The Wellness Workshop: Equipping and Empowering Future Digital and Social Media Professionals* (Abbey B. Levenshus, Butler University)

**Honorable Mention:** *Teaching Tornado: Telling the Stories of Rebuilding and Hope* (Leigh Landini Wright, Murray State University)

**Honorable Mention:** *The Slavery on Long Island Project: Using Experiential Learning to Teach Student Journalists How to Interrogate History and Talk More Confidently and Competently About Racism in America* (Karen Masterson, University of Richmond)

**Honorable Mention:** *Collaborating Across Continents & Languages to Create a Virtual Exchange Course in Environmental Podcasting* (Emilia Askari, University of Michigan)

**View ALL entries from the 2023 competition:**

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## FIRST PLACE

### **Committing to Extracurriculars: Motivating Students with Experiential Learning and High School Football in Underserved Communities**

**Charlie Gee**

**Lincoln Memorial University**

**Abstract:** An extracurricular activity was created to support underserved communities by providing high school football highlights to legacy media outlets. Undergraduate communications and media students volunteered. Outcomes included building student portfolios, meeting strict deadlines, using industry best practices, and promoting the program. Students' sport highlights were shown in four different television markets to an estimated 182,000 households.

**Rationale:** Many students from our university come from predominately underserved, underfunded, rural high schools. Their academic skill sets may be not as strong as those from urban/suburban environments. Combined with the lingering effects from the pandemic, they may be further behind than their contemporaries. Extracurricular activities may provide stronger relationships between mentors and students (Sutton, 2015) and participation in extracurricular activities enhanced student's academic success than those who did not (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015). We incorporated a journalism extracurricular activity providing Friday night high school football highlights to regional television sports departments (e.g. Malone, 2009) using a Teaching Hospital Model approach (Newton, 2015) increasing the experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) to enhance the student experience. The experience promotes student work, increases exposure within the community (Reed, 2018), and helps with retention and recruitment in the major.

#### **Objectives:**

- Improve media writing skills
- Portfolio building
- Instilling deadlines
- Instituting industry best practices
- Promoting program

**Explanation of Teaching Activity:** The instructor contacted different regional television stations to gauge interest in obtaining high school football highlights from schools usually found in the fringe of their designated market areas, mostly in rural areas. The university sits in an outlying county, which does not get much sports attention from a medium sized media market. This worked to our advantage in terms of drawing interest from the stations since they did not have the resources to travel the distance. Games were chosen based on potential media market interest and student availability. The extracurricular activity was solely based on volunteers that wanted to learn and try new things.

Students were expected to learn about using stats, shooting and editing video, as well as writing in a broadcast style (Ketterer, McGuire & Murray, 2013). And, they had to figure out time management and technical issues with FTP (file transfer protocols—uploading video/scripts) besides follow key players to convey the story. Most games were within a 30–40 drive from university location, allowing students the ability to return to computer lab to determine the key elements of the story, edit and write scripts for the sports anchors. Time management was based on travel time or availability of reliable local Wi-Fi hotspots for uploading edited content by a set deadline. Kickoff was at 7 pm with uploading highlights by 10:45 pm. Most sports shows started at 11:15 pm (EDT), which gave time for the anchors to review student work and make adjustments if necessary.

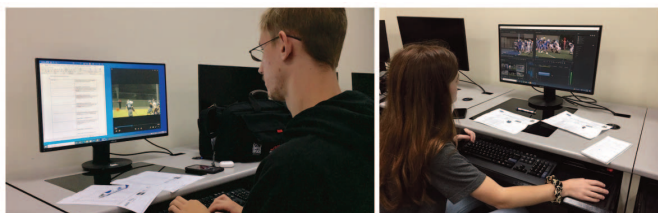
The pilot project covered six games during fall 2021 with three students. The second season of fall 2022 was utilizing two students covering 13 games. At times, students covered two games in one night. The instructor provided logistical support due to lack of reliable transportation that may hinder students in rural settings (Reed, 2018). The instructor provided guidance on tips for shooting football and writing scripts. Students received feedback from the sports directors about their needs and improvement. The instructor assumed the role of the executive producer to assure industry best practices were followed and to make deadline.

**Outcomes:** A total of 19 games were covered during the one and one half seasons. The second season of 13 games were distributed to six different televisions located, all in the Top 100 Nielsen markets representing a potential audience of 1.3 million total households with TVs in the U.S. Of those six, four different television markets received highlights in

which they orally or graphically gave to credit the “(university) Media Students.” Our highlights were estimated to be seen by more than 182,000 households, with one station reporting a 19% increase in viewership with the student provided highlight than previous week without. *“We had about 22,000 HH last Friday at 11 pm. We had 18,000 HH the previous Friday,”* (Sports Director’s (DMA #100).

Students learned that commitment means on someone else’s timetable (sports cast) instead of their deadlines. Motivation was increased when students act as stakeholders. On occasion, they covered games without instructor presence. They critically analyze and resolve situations on their own fostering critical digital literacy in storytelling (Matsoila, Spiliopoulos & Tsigilis, 2022). It is believed that those participating improved in the writing legacy media outlets. *“I believe filming on Friday’s was also beneficial for the TV News class I’m in because writing scripts for news stations on a time crunch,” – Jolee. “It has given me a head start for my internship last spring when I interned in sports for (local ABC affiliate)—Thomas.*

Students received feedback from Sports Directors. *“I think the video shooting is really well done. It’s not too close and it is not too far. Really nice!”* (Sports Director, DMA market #63). When inquired about a potential game at start of second season, *“We’d love to have highlights of the Campbell County game!!! Thanks so much for offering. BTW... Thomas did a great job interning with us in the spring. He’s been one of our most prepared interns since we restarted the program,”* (Sports Director, DMA market #62). *“Yes I’d love to collaborate with you and your students once again this season. They did great work for us last year!”* (Sports Director, rural station, DMA #62). Sports Director’s (DMA #100) response when he wanted to see examples of student work, *“I’m impressed that’s better than some paid employees here. Yes, I would love to have those games and scripts on Friday night delivered by WeTransfer.”*





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**Charlie Gee** (Ph.D. University of Tennessee-Knoxville) is an Associate Professor in Communication & Media at Lincoln Memorial University with a background in radio and television news. His research interest surrounds the world of storytelling exploring the roles of technology on journalism, legal responsibility of reality television, and media ethics. Gee’s background has taken him to Eastern Europe as a Fulbright Scholar and conducted workshops on newsgathering techniques. He is also an award-winning journalist and documentary filmmaker. Gee teaches applied theory courses such as Multiple & Single Camera production, Video Editing, Media Theory, Media Law and Television News. He has published in *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, *Electronic News Journal*, and *Journal of Film & Video*.

## SECOND PLACE

### **Clippy Goes on the Job Hunt: Using AI Assistive Technologies to Learn About the Job Search Process, Careers in Mass Communication, and Develop Familiarity with AI Assistance**

**Travis Loof  
University of South Dakota  
and  
Lori Costello  
University of South Dakota**

**Abstract:** This best practice for teaching uses AI assistive technology to help students learn more about the mass communication industry, the job search process, and how to responsibly use AI assistive technology. Through a series of guided prompts, students, with the help of their instructor and an AI, will develop customized feedback for tailoring job materials for specific media and journalism positions. In completing this activity students will have a better understanding of their industry and how to responsibly use AI assistive technology. This method has been tested with the newest iteration of ChatGPT 4 as of 3/15/2023.

**Explanation of Activity:** One of the aspirations of any higher educational institution is the gainful employment of their graduates. Indeed, as internship season and graduation looms near, students will often seek out respected instructors for assistance in crafting job application materials. At a time when instructors are focused on final exams and grading, one-on-one time with students can be difficult, which is why teaching students how use AI assistive technologies, such as ChatGPT, for this task can create a win-win for instructors and students. This “great idea for teaching” was designed to help students learn about specific industry career paths in media and journalism while building a compelling resume and cover letter and learning about limitations and potential for AI-aided work.

This teaching practice is effective in any settings where a discussion of employment in mass communication occurs but may be most impactful for students who are near matriculation. For this activity, students will need an internet connected device, access to ChatGPT or another as-

sistive AI technology, a job posting, and their resume. Students will engage ChatGPT through a series of guided prompts while the instructor will use their expertise to: Ensure the accuracy and clarity of output, elaborate on the skills outlined in the call, and connect the output and discussion to course content, perhaps as part of a unit on career preparation.

First, you will need to have students find a job or internship that interests them related to the class content. Next, have students begin a new conversation with ChatGPT. Students will then be instructed to enter a series of prompts to interact with the AI. Instructors may find it best to discuss the results of each prompt before continuing. The students will need to follow these steps so the AI can follow the sequence as predictably as possible. The prompts can be found in Appendix A.

Prompts 1–3 have the student interact with the AI to develop a better idea of what typical responsibilities and duties are for a particular position. Prompt 4 breaks the job description down to an outline where students can begin to see emergent themes and connections between the broad overview of that position, specific responsibilities outlined in the job posting, and how those responsibilities connect to course content. Prompt 5 takes the job outline and maps the students resume onto it (Job and Skills Outline). This is not an exact science, but this will give students (and instructors) a starting point for discussion about previous experiences as they may apply to a new job. Some of the output might be nonsense, but this presents a great opportunity for instructors to discuss the fallibility and issues of AI. For some instructors, this may be as far as they would like to go with the prompts as this output also allows instructors to provide feedback, instruction, and discussion about the industry. If instructors want to take the conversation and activity even further, our additional prompts may be of use. Prompts 6–8 develop a cover letter (prompt 6), an outline of a cover letter (prompt 7), and areas of emphasis to focus on in application materials (prompt 8). In our experience, using prompt 5 student output to generate a cover letter outline (prompt 7), is a much preferable teaching activity than providing an already completed cover letter as students tend to “stick” to what is already in front of them.

**Rationale:** The ability for students to write a cover letter and resume

that will stand out amongst the competition is an essential first step for those entering the workforce. Although students have learned the basic cover letter and resume formats, and can adequately list their employment history, leadership activities, and relevant skills, they often lack the proficiency to articulate how their specific experiences match employers' needs and qualify them to perform the duties and responsibilities of the job. Students will often seek out respected instructors for assistance in this process. As we all know, assisting students can be a rewarding, albeit time-consuming task, encompassing lengthy explanations of the rationale behind the changes, several rounds of edits, and explaining how to incorporate course knowledge into the material. This activity seeks to ease that burden and potentially allow for this discussion at the scale of a full class discussion.

Chat GPT is a tool that can help students create the kind of occupational descriptors that will give potential employers a clearer picture of their unique mix of knowledge, skills, and abilities developed through the activities and tasks they performed in the classroom and through internships and other work. Further, Chat GPT can help students organize their information to create an outline so students can better understand how they are communicating about their accomplishments. Finally, teaching students ways to use assistive AI technology responsibly may better prepare them for a work environment of the future where this technology is ubiquitous as email is today.

**Outcomes:** Broadly speaking, this activity will result in students having a better understanding of employment opportunities in mass communication and how to responsibly interact with AI. This activity will also produce outcomes related to each category of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Remembering	At the end of this activity students will be able to recall how to effectively search for a job using AI and prior knowledge.
Understanding	Students will be able to interpret and evaluate AI output and understand how to tailor application materials to specific mass communication positions.
Applying	At the end of this activity students will be able to create job-specific application material.
Analyzing	Students will evaluate the AI-generated output, identifying relevant connections between their previous experiences, the job requirements, and course content.
Evaluating	Students will assess the effectiveness and accuracy of their AI-generated job application materials, considering the limitations and fallibility of AI technologies.
Creating	Students will produce compelling and persuasive job application materials, including customized resumes and cover letters, by integrating their understanding of industry-specific career paths, AI-generated content, and instructor feedback.

## Appendix A: Prompts and Student Evaluation

### Prompts:

1. [What would a \*job title\* do?]
  - i. Output = general position overview
2. [What would a \*job title\* do at a company that “\*company description from post\*”]
  - a. Notes
    - i. Both prompt 1 and 2 essentially “frame” your conversation with the AI.
    - ii. Output = specific position overview
3. [Write this back to me: \*Paste job description here\*]
4. [Create an outline from the above text.]
  - a. Notes:
    - i. The text should be the job description.
    - ii. This creates our job outline.
    - iii. Output = Job Outline List
5. [Now to that list for each point add the relevant skills and experiences from the following: \*Paste student plain text resume here\*]
  - a. Notes
    - i. May want to remove student name and personal information here.
    - ii. The dynamic nature of AI ensures continued variation in the output. We recommend a discussion of AI output and decisions at this step.
    - iii. Output = Job and Student Skills Outline
6. [Take the above list and write a cover letter for a \*Job/Position\* at \*Place of employment\*]
  - i. Output = Cover Letter
7. [What are specific things that I could change in the following to highlight my experience and skills for this job: \* Paste student plain text resume here\*]
  - i. Output = General Suggestion List
8. [Create a detailed outline of the following: \*Paste cover letter from step 6 here\*]
  - i. Output = Outline for Cover Letter.

**Student evaluation:** “The ChatGPT activity used my real-world experiences to create an outline that I could follow when creating my cover letter. Although we learn the basics of the job process it can sometimes become overwhelming trying to find a way to stand out

against others. The activity took my experiences and showed how they overlapped with the hiring positions requirements. This helped me showcase how I was the best fit for the position and how I could sell myself to employers. Because of this activity, I received an internship offer from an advertising agency.” –Rachel S. (Junior)

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**Travis Loof** is an assistant professor in the Media & Journalism department at the University of South Dakota. He teaches in the areas of digital media, advertising, data analytics, and video games. His research focuses on media psychology and perceptions of artificial intelligence.

**Lori Costello** is a professor of strategic communication at USD. She teaches public relations, crisis communication, strategic communication, integrated marketing communication, and serves as the adviser for the National Student Advertising Competition. Her research interests include agricultural communication, consumer brand engagement, and pedagogy.

### THIRD PLACE

#### **The Wellness Workshop: Equipping and Empowering Future Digital and Social Media Professionals**

**Abbey B. Levenshus**  
**Butler University**

**Abstract:** This paper describes a co-facilitated wellness workshop incorporated into a strategic communication course. The faculty member partnered with a mental health professional to design a hands-on training to equip and empower students as future digital and social media communication professionals in order to bolster their mental health and trauma resilience. The pilot training offered promising anecdotal evidence of positive impacts worth further exploring.

**Explanation:** The workshop represented a new way of learning and training communication students in the face of heightened mental health challenges and burn out that have plagued digital and social media professionals in the wake of COVID among other societal stressors that have spilled over online (Dobies & Huffman, 2021). Undergraduate students, mostly juniors and seniors, in the Digital and Social Media Marketing for Strategic Communication class attended an interactive evening workshop and catered dinner. The faculty member partnered with a credentialed and trained mental health professional to co-facilitate the workshop. Students entered a large room with round tables and a catered dinner waiting for them. They had time to connect and eat before the workshop began, setting a positive and relaxed tone and getting them immediately engaged.

**Introduction** – In the introduction, the faculty member shared her own experiences with work-base stress and its impacts on her health. That vulnerability and personalization of the issue set the tone for an open and honest conversation about these topics and their importance.

**Industry Views of Mental Health and Workplace Wellness** – Data was shared with students about rising levels of burnout among com-

munication professionals. It was contextualized within rising trends and increased awareness around burnout and workplace mental health issues. These issues are particularly prevalent for those working in fast-paced, high-demand digital and social media jobs. This portion of content dovetailed with recent trade and scholarly readings about the profession that students had previously been assigned to read and discuss in class.

***Connecting Work Stress to the Body*** – The mental health professional introduced research on how stress and the nervous system can influence people's health.

***Bodily Intervention Tools*** – Students practiced multiple body interventions that could provide immediate relief when the nervous system and stress cycle are activated. They were given resources for practices that could help.

***Identifying Burn Out Signals*** – Thinking longer-term, the concept of burn out was addressed. As the readings had previously introduced, professionals working in public-facing social media may find it particularly isolating and heavy to serve as the public voice for an organization – especially during times of stress, conflict and crisis. Students took a quick quiz to see how well they understood work-life burnout and its signs.

***Setting Boundaries*** – Before concluding the workshop, students learned about how to set healthy boundaries in the workplace and the importance of doing so as a preventative measure that would bolster their resilience and decrease risk of burnout and stress.

***Additional Information*** – Students all received handouts and small takeaways linked to the different somatic interventions they practiced. Students debriefed about the experience during their next class. They also wrote reflection essays. Students who attended earned participation points. Because it took place during an evening outside of class, students who could not attend were asked to write a reflection essay that integrated the preparatory readings and answered question prompts.

**Rationale:** Several standards and assessment indicators put forth by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Commu-

nications address technology and a “rapidly changing digital media world” (ACEJMC, n.d.). However, both the standards and most pedagogy research about digital and social media emphasize teaching students how to effectively *use* these technologies and tools. They omit training or learning about how our students as future professionals can protect themselves from these potential workplace mental health hazards. To address this gap, a co-facilitated wellness workshop can pull experiential learning into a new realm and offer a transformative opportunity that benefits students personally and professionally in the short- and long-term. Public relations scholars have called for more trauma-informed teaching methods (Madden & Del Rosso, 2021). How can we help our students build *future* trauma resilience? A recent article called for more mental health resilience in the journalism curriculum given the potential harms and hazards journalists experience when covering trauma (Markovikj & Serafimovska, 2023). Social media managers are burning out and experiencing trauma (Dobies & Huffman, 2021; McCoy, 2021).

While some public relations and communication education research has addressed the need to improve students’ knowledge around digital and social media laws and ethics (e.g., Ballard & Swenson-Lepper, 2022), and how to use it mindfully (Golob, 2023), the pedagogy research has not yet addressed our ethical responsibility to our students to build resilience into our curriculum around digital and social media use and management. There are several reasons that communication faculty may generally shy away from addressing mental health needs with their students such as role conflict or feeling ill-equipped (White & LaBelle, 2021). Partnering with a mental health expert and addressing mental health education through a professional development frame around digital and social media may help overcome these challenges and empower our students with critical skills and knowledge.

**Outcomes:** Though anecdotal, the pilot workshop was a success. The 23 students were highly engaged in the workshop itself. Debriefing conversations and reflection essays pointed to several successful outcomes. The small size encouraged students to feel more comfortable sharing and interacting. Keeping it tied to a particular classroom topic was seen as relevant and useful. Their only regret was that they wished they had the experience earlier. Students enjoyed the evening setting, because it did not feel like a class. The food and so-

cial aspect reinforced this mentality. As one student noted, the skills were only part of the outcomes: *"The actual tactics and strategies were helpful, but what I really took away was how to be mindful about how to carry stress, how we deal with and categorize trauma and the connection of the mind and body in these moments. Lastly, the importance of boundary setting and knowing your own personal burnout threshold is something I want to be intentionally thinking about as I move forward both personally and professionally."* Having the faculty member share about her own past job stress helped personalize the topic's importance. As a student wrote, *"It was an excellent reminder, and encouraging as well, to hear her own personal testimony in relation to our lives or being in a similar position once..."* Besides the skills and knowledge, trainings like these can send important messages. One student said, *"it is very comforting knowing that I am cared for."*

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**Abbey Levenshus** serves as Associate Professor and Chair in the Department of Strategic Communication. Teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in basic and advanced strategic communication, Dr. Levenshus is committed to equipping her students to be successful in a critical and evolving field. In addition to communication pedagogy, she researches government and political communication; social media management; and risk, crisis, and disaster communication.

## HONORABLE MENTION

### Teaching Tornado: Telling the Stories of Rebuilding and Hope

Leigh Landini Wright  
Murray State University

**Abstract:** After an EF-4 tornado devastated several communities in far western Kentucky, one journalism instructor turned the journalism capstone class into a digital community newsroom to provide coverage of the recovery and rebuilding process and expose students to community journalism. The course ran like a newsroom, with rolling deadlines, students assigned to roles and a feedback mechanism in lieu of traditional grading. Students produced digital news stories, podcasts, social media and multimedia content, and they contributed print stories to a community newspaper through a news-academic partnership. The project continues to examine the recovery and rebuilding efforts more than a year later.

**Explanation of Teaching Activity:** Journalism textbooks might mention disaster coverage in a chapter about breaking news. The textbook gives vague advice about finding the incident command officer to talk to and other sources. It doesn't give advice about dealing with when a scene out of "Twister" happens in your town. Or how to cover the aftermath weeks, months, a year or more later.

After an EF-4 tornado devastated a rural area near my university in Kentucky, I designed a capstone journalism experience that exposed students to the nuances of community journalism and ran the course like a newsroom beginning in the spring of 2022. Students produced a digital news site called 270 Stories with a regional focus on the tornado recovery and the rebuilding of the communities. The site's name was chosen to reflect the area code in which the university and communities are in. Students were elected to roles such as editor, web producer, social media director, etc., depending on the number of students enrolled, and the course featured rolling deadlines. Students also decided on how many stories, podcasts and multimedia stories to pursue each semester in order to tell the best stories.

Much like an editor/publisher, I read stories and offered extensive feed-

back and coaching, rather than grading to a rubric like a traditional classroom. Students reported that the removal of the traditional grading pressures allowed them to focus on telling the story, not on hitting a word count or trying to get points. This practice is known as “ungrading” and can take many forms, but I chose to focus on feedback much like editors do with cub reporters.

Since the class is offered every semester, the course evolved along with the state of recovery efforts. For the fall 2022 and spring 2023 classes, I took students on familiarization trips to the two communities damaged by the tornado, which helped them establish sources and learn the community. This forced them out of their protective cocoon of campus and prepared them for work in community journalism as many students begin their careers in smaller, rural newsrooms. These orientation days allowed students to:

- a) see the breadth of destruction;
- b) learn their bearings in a new community;
- c) establish relationships with key sources, and
- d) learn how to refine interviewing skills before starting their stories.

With the site established through the efforts of the spring 2022 cohort, I decided to form a loose partnership with a community newspaper in hopes of having the students’ work published and distributed to a wider audience. Students produced stories that amounted to about a third of the content of a special commemorative section about the tornado, and the paper published their stories in the twice weekly editions throughout the fall.

At the end of each semester, students hosted an open house and shared their work with a panel of faculty members, professional journalists and community members. During the open house, students discussed their work and answered questions. This allowed them to build trust and relationships. They also shared their work on social media – Facebook, Instagram and TikTok – to engage the audience and draw attention to their content.

**Rationale:** At a time when community newspapers are shuttering, students need exposure to what it’s like to immerse themselves into a community and report on issues that matter to the public. The course also sought to establish a news-academic partnership, which

fills a need in understaffed community journalism newsrooms. Additional work in establishing a formal partnership will be pursued with a community newspaper as the course continues.

**Outcome:** Students each semester produced a variety of content – digital, print and multimedia – on the site. The intent was to run a digital community journalism newsroom that allowed students to practice their storytelling and reporting skills. This toolbox included instruction in solutions journalism, explanatory journalism, interactive technologies, podcasting, multimedia and social media, in addition to basic enterprise reporting and writing. One of the students had taken photos on his own the night of the tornado as soon as the storm passed. Another student actually rode out the tornado in a closet. Students were charged with finding stories along the path that spanned two states near the university, and they found stories about the beginning of the recovery process and the donations that poured into the region.

Their stories drew attention to several underreported stories such as a country market that provided relief efforts and the personal story of a man whose house was destroyed, yet his Bible remained intact.

By the fall semester, the region had worked through debris removal and had begun recovery/rebuilding efforts. The fall semester class focused their efforts on telling the stories of the recovery and rebuilding. They worked to find stories that had not yet been reported in local media. The fall cohort of five students produced three to four stories each, plus three podcasts and several multimedia promos. The students also managed existing Facebook and Instagram accounts and added a TikTok account, in which they promoted their stories as well as discussed the behind the scenes of running a digital community journalism newsroom.

Beyond the production of stories and content as outcomes, the students learned and appreciated the value of community journalism. A grade cannot be put on that. "The town of Mayfield deserves to tell its stories – not just the ones about the tornado or the devastation. The town looks to the media for information and community, and the local news outlet should serve that audience," one student wrote in a reflection. Another student wrote, "My biggest takeaway would probably be that covering communities, particularly those going through hardships, is very important and important to tell their stories."

<https://270stories.murraystate.com/>



### Outreach Proves Ample For Mayfield Long Term Recovery Group

Posted on November 29, 2022 by Dustin Wilcox

Donations: Mayfield has been no stranger to those in the past year or so. Yet even when considering the significant support from national organizations sent this way since the tornado struck, it seems just as much support has come from within the community itself.

Evidencing this local-to-local help is the **Mayfield Graves County Lone Term Recovery Group**, which has received three separate \$250,000 donations from the **Mayfield Community Foundation**, the **Mayfield First United Methodist Church** and the **United Way of Western Kentucky** since October. These donations are primarily put toward the recovery group's Home for the Holidays housing initiative.

**Leigh Landini Wright** is an associate professor at Murray State University in rural western Kentucky. Wright transitioned to teaching after a 16-year career as a newspaper reporter and features editor at The Paducah (Ky.) Sun. At Murray State, Wright coordinates a departmental podcast and alumni newsletter. She teaches courses in newswriting, in-depth reporting, feature writing, podcasting, multimedia writing, multiplatform news, and the journalism capstone. Her research focuses on community journalism and journalism education. Wright's academic work has been published in *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, *Teaching Journalism and Mass Communications*, the *Journal of Media Education*, *Community Journalism*, and the *Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy*. Besides academic writing, Wright continues to freelance for regional and local publications.

## HONORABLE MENTION

### **The Slavery on Long Island Project: Using Experiential Learning to Teach Student Journalists How to Interrogate History and Talk More Confidently and Competently About Racism in America**

**Karen Masterson**  
**University of Richmond**

**Abstract:** This course used experiential learning techniques to teach students how to interrogate history and talk more confidently and competently about racism in America. The professor used a grant to transform an advanced news reporting course into an investigation of the history of slavery on Long Island. A multi-cultural cross section of students in Fall 2019 explored research databases, archives, artifacts and oral histories. They then worked in groups using multimedia skills to craft never-before-told stories in print, audio and video. The coursework increased their comfortability around matters of race and their stories won national and regional awards.

**Explanation of the Teaching Practice:** Students sought to fill a reporting gap in the *New York Times*' "1619 Project." The newspaper had missed opportunities to include Long Island, which gave students at a public university on Long Island a "news hook" for their investigation.

To prepare for the reporting phase, students read comparative histories on relevant matters of land use and education, which showed older versus newer rhetoric in the language of race and racism. This provided students with an understanding of historiography while also giving them needed content for understanding why Long Island continued to be one of the most segregated regions in the United States. These works of history sparked conversations about separateness and its role in reifying tendencies toward *othering*.

Next, students in groups ran literature searches using the university's different research databases, tracking down scholarly examinations of slavery on Long Island (for which there was very little). They also searched the news databases for related stories dating back to the early 1800s. And finally, before going into the field to look for stories, students were required to read and reflect on a first-person account of en-

slavement on Long Island written by Venture Smith.

Students learned from Smith and throughout the reporting process that Long Island had no sprawling plantations where enslaved people lived together in large groups, as they did in the South—where they together developed strategies for physical and spiritual survival. What students learned was that nearly all well-off Long Islanders enslaved at least one person and usually no more than three (with a few exceptions in which households enslaved up to a dozen people). Enslavement on Long Island was lonely and isolating. Because Smith's story conveyed this, as well as many other idiosyncratic aspects of northern enslavement, students felt both the history of Long Island and the history of slavery in ways that were geographically authentic. A few students also attended a conference about slavery at Yale University with panel discussions that were specific to northeastern enslavement. (The students' ferry ride across the Sound was covered by the project grant.)

Once students were confident in their growing knowledge and sense of history, they set out to report on anything they could find. The process turned into a type of scavenger hunt, because the evidence was scattered in pieces across Long Island's 118-mile stretch of small towns. Students traveled in teams to conduct interviews on the meaning and context of the evidence. Classroom lectures with guest speakers shifted into brainstorming sessions to organize the materials into storytelling possibilities for video, audio and print. Each student was required to find and write a story for print, plus work on at least two group multimedia projects—which included four radio pieces, a podcast, and a video documentary.

Every group knew what the other groups were doing. They created a spreadsheet for source contact information. In Slack, they uploaded recorded interviews that were open for the other groups to draw from. All sources were told about the project and how their interviews might be of interest to the other groups. One important source for the project, Brooklyn College historian Lynda Day, spent an entire day on campus with students, first giving a lecture, then making herself available for interviews. She appeared in several of the print and radio stories, and in the podcast. In weekly brainstorming sessions, students took inspiration from each other's ideas. The total was greater than the sum of its parts, with a shared sense of accomplish-

ment. Students whose work failed to make it into publication were still given credit for the work they contributed.

**Rationale:** This course came about in response to student requests for more real-life reporting experiences, and to fulfill hiring editors demands that students receive this kind of experiential training—to help replace the apprenticeship-style training that shrinking newsrooms have long since lost the capacity to provide. The grant money allowed the professor to hire two working journalists as collaborators, one from *Newsday* and one from NPR affiliate WSHU. It also provided funds to reimburse students for expenses and needed equipment. This made the course feel more like a job, which students said elevated their commitment to the success of the project. Students operated as working journalists with the professor and two collaborating journalists as their editors.

No up-front requirements were made for students to consider diversity, inclusion, and equity. But the materials and subject matter raised obvious questions as to why Long Island remained so segregated. Students sought answers from the standpoint of local stakeholders. And because slavery was a topic for which the students knew very little (many even openly questioned whether slavery ever existed on Long Island), they were entirely dependent on their sources to help them make sense of the past—that is, to provide them with context, substance and perspective. They emerged from the process with an organic acquisition of diversity, inclusion, and equity both in their way of thinking and in their storytelling. One white student aptly explained that the project taught her to “shut up and listen.”

**Outcomes:** The course pedagogical goals were reached. They included: 1) teaching students how to engage community stakeholders—historical societies, librarians, church leaders, descendants, genealogists and local archivists—to find scattered evidence of where and how people had been enslaved; 2) transforming the teacher-student relationship into one of editor-reporter; and 3) using a workshop format to develop gathered evidence into written stories and scripts. An unintended outcome was that students grew more confident talking about racism and its roots, both in classroom discussions and in the field while conducting interviews. This was affirmed by a questionnaire sent to all 17 students three years after the course ended. It asked whether the course had any immediate and/or lasting impact on their ability to talk comfortably

about race. The answers from this multicultural, multiracial group were uniformly “yes” to both. White students said the focus on relics and archives helped them feel the pain of the past and better see the imprint of racism on Long Island. And Black students said the course was unique because they felt comfortable working on the topic of race even with students who had no experience with being Black in America.

Students produced outstanding works of journalism. Seven stories were printed in *Newsday* in two special sections (Aug. 16 and Sept. 13, 2020), and four radio pieces aired on WSHU (<https://www.wshu.org/environment/2019-08-26/the-decades-long-fight-to-save-the-long-island-pine-barrens>). The reporting won a national Edward R. Murrow Award and Hearst Student Journalism Award. And it won a regional Long Island Fair Media Council Award and New York Press Association Award.

This marked the first time *Newsday* published student work from this Long Island university. One student has since been hired by *Newsday* because of her work on this project.

**Supporting materials:** The professor and two collaborating journalists solicited student reflections on the course in January 2023 because they were curious to know whether their observations that students had grown more confident and comfortable talking about race during the course were real. The informal questionnaire was sent to 17 students who came from diverse backgrounds. (Of the Americans, seven were white, two were Black, one was Hispanic and two were South Asian; the five international students came from Senegal, Spain, Australia, China and India). While their answers cannot serve as a replacement for proper data collection, they are valuable in that they offer an anecdotal sense that the professor and two collaborating journalists were, indeed, accurate in their observations. All those who responded (11 out of 17) said this course had helped them talk more freely and confidently about race across racial divisions. The following are representative:

**A West African student** who has lived in the United States since she was 14 years old said this: “I wouldn’t say it changed my comfort level per se in terms of my interactions and interpretations of race (as I am Black), but it definitely made me feel more comfortable partici-

pating in class discussions surrounding race. Race is often seen as a heavy topic to discuss and people are not too keen to get into it, but this course made sure to address the issues at hand without shortcuts." And on whether the course helped in the aftermath of George Floyd, she said: "It definitely helped when talking about it with coworkers, especially white ones."

**A white student from upstate New York** said the project better equipped her for the aftermath of George Floyd: "I felt it was important to talk with my family about racism and how we contribute to this system, and the class made me better equipped for this, because I was already used to having difficult conversations and learning from my mistakes."

**A white student from Long Island** said this about the time she spent with sources: "The interviews were some of the most important I've ever conducted or reviewed, and they stuck with me for a long time. This is a history of my home island I never knew and that was personal history to many of the people I spoke with."

She added: "There are certain things as a white person I will never be able to viscerally understand or put into words as well as a person of color in this country, so more than anything the class taught me to shut up and listen. All of the pain, the heaviness, and the ugliness people have endured both past and present must be heard. I'm glad we were able to do this project and share this history of the island."

**And a student whose family was from Puerto Rico said this:** "Our classroom for the project was extremely diverse so it opened up a pathway for people from many different backgrounds coming together for one cause. ... it was much easier to communicate about difficult topics such as race after taking this class because we had to leave our comfort zones and speak about topics most people would rather not talk about."

The seven students who had their stories published in *Newsday* were interviewed and quoted by the newspaper for the two special sections it created for their work. Here is what they said:

**Brianne Ledda**, who is from Miller Place on Long Island, said of the work she did for this course: "It was fascinating for me to learn where I came from. I grew up on Long Island, but I was shocked to learn there was such a large population of enslaved people."

**Vaidik Trivedi**, from India, said this: “Reporting on this topic gave me a different perspective on how African Americans were treated in the past. If I hadn’t done this, I wouldn’t have understood the issue of racism—how issues now are related to what was faced in the past.”

**Felicia LaLomina** said this of her work on the project: “If the people of the North Fork [of Long Island] don’t understand that slavery was something that happened in this area, that has a domino effect that comes through today in terms of how people understand the black-lives-matter origins of the Black Lives Matter movement.”

**Antonia Brogna**, from upstate New York, said her work on the project taught her “that the history of slavery on Long Island got swept under the rug.”

**Wilko Martinez-Cachero Vas**, from Spain, said this about his and his classmates’ research on slavery: “You see what happened back then, and you see segregation that happens on a day-to-day basis—you think maybe the decisions made back then impact now.”

**And Gary Ghayrat**, from China, said he found research on the history of African Americans on Long Island “eye-opening.” He said: “One of the people I talked to said they weren’t able to trace back their history because there is no documentation, no data. I saw how deeply it affected them.”

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**Karen Masterson**, author of *The Malaria Project* (NAL/Penguin 2014), is assistant professor of journalism at University of Richmond. Before joining academia, she was a staff reporter at the Houston Chronicle and Philadelphia Inquirer. She has also written for the Washington Post, Nature, Time, The Lancet, The Baltimore Sun, and others. She started teaching as a part-time lecturer at Johns Hopkins University, where she won the 2017 Excellence in Teaching Award for undergraduate programs. She joined Stony Brook University as assistant professor, where she ran two award-winning experiential learning projects, including the Slavery on Long Island Project. She is currently working on her second book, about Liberia.

## HONORABLE MENTION

### **Collaborating Across Continents & Languages to Create a Virtual Exchange Course in Environmental Podcasting**

***Emilia Askari, University of Michigan***

**Abstract:** Journalism professors at a US university and a Colombian university partnered to create a bilingual, bicultural, virtual exchange course in environmental podcasting. The course meets by videoconference, with 12 students from each university. They work in international teams of six, choosing topics to explore at the intersection of poverty and the environment. Students interviewed people from both countries, then each team created two versions of the same podcast episode: one version in English, the other version in Spanish. Students collaborated to help each other develop global competencies, podcasting skills and deeper understanding of environmental justice issues in our two countries.

**Rationale:** As study-abroad courses were canceled during the pandemic, this teaching practice offers an alternative approach to collaborative learning: virtual exchanges.

Virtual exchanges – sometimes labeled collaborative online international learning, or COIL (<https://online.suny.edu/introtocoil/>) – have existed for many years, primarily in language-learning settings. Virtual exchanges increased in popularity during the pandemic, and now may be a permanent addition to some curricula.

**Explanation:** The English title of our collaborative course is “Public Discourse Around Poverty & the Environment in the USA & Colombia: An International Collaboration in Learning Through Podcasting.” The Spanish version of the course is called “Pódcasts para pensar el territorio.”

While we attempted to recruit students with skills in the second language, we did not require students to demonstrate any particular level of proficiency. Instead, we required patience and willingness to muddle through, with occasional translation assistance during class meetings from instructors and the automated translation feature of Google Meet.

To encourage international collaborations among the students, we created teams consisting of two to 4 students from each university. Teams chose a topic related to our broad theme of environment and poverty in our two countries. Their choices included automobile pollution, urban farming, Indigenous people's efforts to protect natural resources and governmental roadblocks to conservation efforts, using the Bogotá River and natural gas liquids pipeline as examples.

Each student recorded at least one interview related to the team's chosen topic. We worked closely with students to help them line up interviews with those who represented a range of perspectives on each team's topic. Instructors also created a list of common questions that we encouraged every student to ask their interviewees, starting with a description of our project and a request for recorded permission to publicly edit and post portions of the interview. Students were encouraged to add questions specific to the topic and flow of each interview.

Each team's final podcast episodes featured soundbites from the interviews. The scripts in Spanish and English were supposed to be nearly identical. We asked students to compare and contrast how their chosen topic was discussed in the United States and Colombia, with particular attention to how people in poverty were represented in these conversations — or not.

In the English versions of these podcast episodes, the soundbites from Colombia were translated into English by student voiceovers — and vice versa in the Spanish versions of the episodes. The Spanish versions of the episodes featured a student narrator from Colombia, while the English versions featured a student narrator from the US university.

**Outcomes:** One student said that the opportunity to interview Indigenous people and "hear so many new opinions and voices was irreplaceable — and will most certainly inform the way I select my news sources and my thought processes as I read, listen to or watch them." A second student was struck by "the dangers that environmental journalists face in Colombia."

A third observed, "There are more similarities than differences for journalism in the United States and Colombia, and many of the top-

ics that are reported on are similar. I now am aware of the significance of poverty and the environment and am grateful for the dramatic change of my thinking.”

For a fourth student, “It was truly meaningful to learn about these issues in both the U.S. and Colombia. ... [I am] realizing that the most difficult part of creating podcasts is truly gathering the full story and providing the entire truth of the situation.”

Reflecting on the challenge of working on a multilingual team, a fifth student said, “Yes, there was a language barrier, but I surprised myself with my confidence when it came to participating in the virtual exchange. ... I was able to contribute my ideas and deepen my relationships with my classmates to an unexpected degree!”

You can listen to some of our students’ short audio reflections (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/IGAvNXqeSQp3mnvglfD-HKmOtuoAmmDY6>) on the course.

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**Emilia Askari** teaches environmental journalism at the University of Michigan. She also advises a news nonprofit, Planet Detroit; judges the Oakes Award in Environmental Journalism; and serves on numerous committees of the Society of Environmental Journalists. Emilia was SEJ’s second president and co-chaired SEJ’s annual conference twice. Emilia earned a PhD in educational technology from Michigan State University; master’s degrees in Information Science from the University of Michigan and Journalism from Columbia University; and a bachelor’s degree in economics and creative writing from Brown University. She has been a staff reporter for the Detroit Free Press, the Miami Herald, and the Los Angeles Herald Examiner – winning numerous journalism prizes and fellowships, including the Knight Wallace Fellowship. Her education research is published in multiple peer-reviewed journals.

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