

# LFS 400

## Audio Storytelling

This course teaches you to use audio technology and a journalistic framework in order to tell powerful stories and present academic content in new ways. It is a seminar course with a lot of personal attention, critical feedback and weekly lab-based work. By the end of the term, students will have the ability to share their knowledge in effective and creative ways.

### Instructors

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### Learning Outcomes

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

- Synthesize information to form an original personal narrative or a story;
- Apply technological tools to convey their content in podcast format;
- Develop media literacy for critical engagement with disciplinary knowledge.

During this course, students will learn to:

- Apply critical and creative thinking skills in the collection and analysis of information;
- Compare different channels and purposes of journalistic communication (e.g., traditional media outlets, social networks);
- Integrate discipline specific knowledge in powerful messages through 'humanizing the content';
- Understand the basic mechanics of creating a message for a purpose (e.g., story for emotional engagement, dissemination, awareness building, advocacy, news etc.);
- Develop skills to effectively critique their own and peers' work;
- Give and receive meaningful feedback

### Course Requirements

Active participation in the class and completion of all assignments by the deadlines indicated in the course schedule is a pass/fail issue.

## Assignment Descriptions

### **Streeter (with transcript)**

**Worth:** 10%

Each student will create a one minute podcast based on street interviews (i.e., a 60 second-long series of questions and answers recorded and edited by the "student reporter"). The topic/question is decided in advance in consultation with instructors and should connect to the student's academic interests (i.e., a topic within LFS's domain). Students are encouraged to approach at least ten (10) other students on campus to record their comments/opinions/ideas on the questions asked. Once recorded, 10 mins of the material is to be transcribed (this is a tool for characterizing the material you have gathered—from there we will make editorial choices about which audio you will use) and transferred to a digital editing system (e.g., Audacity) and edited for time and content by students. Final "streeters" should demonstrate technical proficiencies as follows:

- 1) produce good quality audio recordings,
- 2) edit recordings (e.g., copy/paste, time-shift), and
- 3) insert introduction and conclusion with relevant fade-ins/fade-outs.

A note on file naming: For this and all other submitted assignments, please name your file: LFS400\_FirstnameLastname\_Assignmentname

(i.e., LFS400\_DuncanMcHugh\_Streeter.mp3,  
LFS400\_AndrewRiseman\_outline.pdf)

Core Learning: Develop proficiency in technological skills for interviewing, audio recording, editing, and podcast construction.

### **Voicer**

**Worth:** 10%

Each student will create a 1.5 minute sound story based on one of their academic interests (i.e., a topic within LFS's domain). Students will write, perform and record material that tells a compelling and complete story (i.e., beginning, middle, and end). Topics will be developed collaboratively. Assistance will be provided for writing, editing and story development. Students will be required to contact and interview at least 1 (one) source/character.

Core Learning: Develop proficiency in audio recording and editing, narration, and story development.

### **Project Outline for Final Podcast**

**Worth: 10%**

Each student will submit a completed 'Project Outline,' a detailed proposal of your subject matter, possible contacts, rationale and story plan. Additional information will be provided in class.

### **Group Piece**

**Worth: 10%**

In groups of 3-4, students will create a short piece on a tight deadline. Additional information will be provided in class.

### **Draft Podcast**

**Worth: 10%**

Each student will produce a draft of their final podcast based on the outline. This draft will serve as an opportunity to provide and receive feedback that will be incorporated into the Final Podcast. This draft will be reviewed by instructors and colleagues. This is a collaborative approach to storytelling which will help you to determine which storytelling methods are most effective for the story YOU choose to tell. You must be prepared to defend your editorial choices (e.g., language, characters, scenes developed) and be open to constructive suggestions.

### **Final Podcast (with description)**

**Worth: 25%**

We will provide guidelines for storytelling and techniques for audio recording in order for polished projects to be created. **Your stories will be compiled and integrated in to a group podcast which will be available for public consumption.** Each student will contribute a seven to 12 minute audio story. The subject of the podcast should centre on some aspect of Land and Food Systems. In addition, submit a brief text summary/description (20-30 words max) that is enticing but not exhaustive or complete. This will be used to index your podcast. Additional details will be given in class.

## **Post-podcast Reflection**

**Worth:** 15%

Each student will produce a post-podcast reflection in a form and format of your choice. For example, it could be in the form of a video diary, a poem, or an audio essay, as long as at least one digital medium is used. It should provide us with your story.

Specifically, each reflection should include the following:

1. what was it like to participate in this course/on this project? How was your creative journey?
2. your thoughts about your podcasts including its production and how the final product was different from the ones originally envisioned;
3. identification of opportunities for improvement to your podcast including what you could have done better/different or included if you had more time;
4. a summary of what you learned during the process and what tools or techniques will you apply in your professional life?;
5. a suggestion of what your next foray in to digital storytelling may be...

## **Grading**

Streeter	/	10%	/	Due: Wednesday, January 13
Voicer	/	10%	/	Due: Wednesday, January 27
Project Outline	/	10%	/	Due: Friday, February 5
Group piece	/	10%	/	Due: Friday, February 12
Draft Podcast	/	10%	/	Due: Wednesday, March 23
Final Podcast	/	25%	/	Due: Wednesday, April 6
Reflection	/	15%	/	Due: Wednesday, April 22
Participation	/	10%		

**Course Schedule**  
**Subject to change**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
Week 1	Introduction to LFS 400 Audio Editing Workshop I: Basics & Audacity	Audio Editing Workshop II: Multi-track editing Streeter pitches
Week 2	Audio Storytelling Making sense with sound <b>Due: Streeter</b>	Creative Commons Workshop
Week 3	Story Structure: what works best for audio stories? Voicer pitches	Interview Skills
Week 4	Listening session How to create scenes in sound? <b>Due: Voicer</b>	Writing for the Ear
Week 5	Journalism, advocacy and finding your voice. Outline pitches	Radio station tour at CiTR Student Union Building, Room 233 <b>Due: Outline</b>
Week 6	Journalism Ethics Group piece assigned	<b>Due: Group piece</b>
	Reading Break	Reading Break
Week 7	Guest lecture: Media Relations: Getting your message out	Drop-in
Week 8	Guest lecture: Investigative Journalism	Drop-in
Week 9	Individual feedback sessions to help students refine and design their stories	Drop-in
Week 10	Performing your audio stories Lifting words off the page and creating scenes to tell stories	Drop-in
Week 11	Draft podcast due: Group feedback and suggestions <b>Due: Draft</b>	<b>Good Friday</b>
Week 12	Workshopping	Drop-in
Week 13	<b>Due: Final podcast</b> <b>Listening Party</b>	Last day of class TBA

## **Topics and Intellectual Territory Flow:**

1. Course introduction
2. General Journalism and Storytelling
3. Interview Skills
4. Journalist, Citizen journalist, or Advocate? It all depends on your purpose
5. Podcast Story Construction and Paper edit Plan/Story Boarding
6. Technology 'platforms' and Communication/Traditional Media Outlets vs. Social
7. Networks: Implications, Advantages and Disadvantages; Using Data
8. Media Relations and Message Positioning

## LFS 400 Grading Rubric

(Process steps are described on the following page)

Component	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Host (student) Speaking Audio (25%)  Process steps: c, d	Clear speaking voice, good pace and rhythm; high quality recording free from distractions and faults.	Clear speaking voice; good pace/rhythm; moderate audio quality.	Rhythm/pace of speech off by either speaking too quickly or too slowly; moderate audio quality with a few faults.	Difficult to understand words, poor quality audio with many faults.
Structure (25%)  Process steps: b, c, d, e, f, h	Story is well organized and has a clear introduction, meaningful substance, and concise ending/conclusion.	Story is well organized but lacks either a clear introduction, meaningful substance, or conclusion.	Story organization is unclear but is still able to convey information.	Story is disorganized and without identifiable structure.
Audio Engineering (25%)  Process steps: a, c, d, g, i, j, k	External recordings of high quality free from faults; transition/splices are smooth and without distraction.	External recordings of moderate quality free from faults; transitions/splices are smooth and without distraction.	External recordings of moderate quality with a few faults; transitions/splices are noticeable but only a minor distraction.	External recordings of low quality with faults; transitions/splices are abrupt and distracting.
Engagement / Content (25%)  Process steps: b, c, d, e, f	Story highly engaging and entertaining delivering accurate information.	Story engaging and informative.	Story neither engaging nor entertaining but delivers accurate information.	Story boring without delivering accurate information.

## General Podcast Production Process Steps

Steps/Objectives	Details/Examples	Avoid:
a. Obtain and test a digital audio recording device	Laptop with mini-jack or USB microphone; borrow a field recorder from the Learning Centre;	Recorders with unique and incompatible formats; anything without a USB or DV connector
b. Pre-podcast documentation-determine and clearly state the topic and focus of the audio recording	Topic: Duck feeders vs skunk feeders in Stanley Park  Focus: Stella G thinks the skunks should be allowed to eat the ducks, JoJo favours duck rights.	
c. Identify and record or secure sources of audio material	Record yourself, other people who are ready to talk; set time; place; record wild sound, on location sound; download from Creative Commons web sites	Copyrighted material
d. Secure permissions if required	Written or recorded consent stating purpose, names, dates	
e. Review, transcribe recorded material, rejecting unusable material	Either approximate or exact text of spoken content, with your notes about quality, tone, feel eg:  15:18-15:23 Billie: Get me some data - sarcastic	working information only, helps you know your recordings
f. Produce a rough paper edit / plan; e.g., a storyboard	Printout from transcript showing clip times, cut into pieces and rearranged into story; word processing document,	
g. Upload source material to a computer with audio editing software	Connect audio source to computer with USB cable; import file from within editing application	
h. Arrange clips into planned sequence (rough edit)	Music, Introduction, location sound, interviews, commentary, conclusions, wrap-up sound	
i. Review and fine-edit sequence	Ask "Does this work?" e.g., Second interview segment rambles, shorten	
j. Fine-tune timing	Billie starts to say "...and" trim clip tail end, cut sooner	
k. Fine-tune levels	Second interview too loud, music up	
l. Export to a playback file format: mp3	Export to mp3	Lab computers may delete your project if you leave it. Check lab policy; save Audacity project <i>and</i> media folder.