

IN-DEPTH REPORTING

JRNL 5512 | Spring 2020 | Term A

RacontR

We'll be building our stories this term in RacontR, which is an online platform designed for interactive storytelling. The good news: you don't need to know how to code! RacontR uses integrated media management, a drag and drop builder, a timeline function, and for interactive graphics.

Other Equipment

It's expected you will have access to a smart phone for video/photographic storytelling and the Adobe Creative Suite. Other equipment may be required depending upon how you decide to tell your story. If you need access to specific equipment, a short term loan may be available. Email me with any needs.

Books

There are no assigned books for the class. You will be assigned samples of long-form journalism, which we will discuss on the course discussion board.



About the Class

Investigative journalism. Broadcast news magazines. Interpretive journalism. New journalism. Gonzo journalism. Interactive news feature. Podcasting. Immersive journalism.

These are all elements of in-depth reporting in the 21st century.

In this asynchronous online class students will be introduced to in-depth reporting techniques. Through reading/watching key works in the genre and doing original reporting, students in this seminar will develop the skills to plan, report, produce and execute multimedia in-depth journalism using the online interactive storytelling platform RacontR (see sidebar).





About Me

I'm a former network news journalist, working in long- and short-format production at ABC News, NBC News, and Fox NewsChannel. After an 18-year career, I got my Ph.D. at the University of Oregon. I continue to do creative work, focusing on interactive documentary and immersive storytelling.

Email is an accepted official form of communication at the University of Colorado. I'll respond to email within 24 hours and generally sooner

- kathleen.ryan@colorado.edu

Office hours will be held on Zoom. You're welcome to drop in; students will be seen on a first come/first served basis. You can always make an appointment to guarantee a time during scheduled office hours. And if scheduled office hours don't work with your schedule, please set up an individual appointment.

- Scheduled Office Hours
 - General: Wednesday 3-4:30pm MT
 - JRNL 5512: Wednesday 10-11am MT
 - Zoom info on Canvas

The reporting will take place asynchronously online over the course of the first Spring term. Via weekly assignments, readings, and discussions this term you will:

- Appraise what qualities "good" in-depth projects share
- Identify compelling stories and "good" talkers
- Demonstrate advanced writing, video, and editing skills
- Practice telling a story in various ways
- Develop team storytelling practices while exploring a larger issue
- Analyze stories for what went right and what went wrong
- Apply ethics and fair use guidelines in online storytelling

Learning by Doing

The emphasis will be on creating actual content and reading/viewing key works in in-depth reporting. You will plan, report and produce at one in-depth piece by yourself, related to the overall course topic: the aftermath of the 2020 election. You will become familiar with a variety of story genres, with emphasis on depth of reporting and complexity of theme, material and structure. Lectures will help you finesse specific reporting and editing skills.



Course Assignments

There are three primary assignment types for the course: **screencasts**, **readings/discussions** (I'm using the term "reading" to include required samples of journalistic work, including text, audio, video, and immersive), and **reporting on an in-depth story**.

It is difficult for an individual student (or even professional reporter) to fully execute an in-depth story in five weeks. As a result, for this class we will be producing a story on a single topic, with reporting done by each of the students in the course. The story will be housed in an interactive platform, and published on the College of Media, Communication, and Information's in-house publication, *The Bold*. Individual segments will be a combination of 5-7 minutes of reading/watching/interacting, for a total project experience of approximately 1 hour. These multiple perspectives from multiple locations will enable us to produce in-depth reporting on the topic.

Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill is famously credited with saying "All politics is local." The 2020 U.S. election demonstrated that the country is fairly polarized politically, with a record-setting vote for both candidates and a violent coup attempt in the Capitol. People in countries worldwide closely monitored and analyzed the election results. This term we will be working on a story dealing with the fallout from the 2020 U.S. election and the inauguration of President Joe Biden. Does this polarization trickle down to the local level? Or, to circle back to the former Speaker, are all politics truly local?

Just because the U.S. election is the overall story topic, that does not mean that stories have to deal with national politicians or political divisiveness. While those could be valuable topics, other topics for investigation this term could also include:

- First time voters
- Partisan divide for non-partisan objects (masks, flags, vaccines, etc.)
- Voter engagement efforts
- Climate change
- Immigration
- Engagement in local city councils or commissions
- Gun control
- Right to life/right to choose
- Anti-racism/colorblindness
- Extremist groups
- Economic concerns
- The view from "abroad" (i.e. non-US perspectives)
- Political protest art, music, or theater
- The COVID-19 pandemic

Of course, this is not an inclusive list. Whatever story you decide to cover should be of local importance to your community.

You can expect feedback on your assignments within 48 hours after the due date. Be sure to refer to the “modules” tab in the course Canvas site for access to materials, tools, grading matrices and expectations, and other information to help you in the planning, building, and preparation of your story for class such as background information, online free tools, aesthetics standards, and more!

Story Proposal

This is a three-part assignment. It consists of the story proposal, posted to the course discussion board, feedback on other students’ proposals, and a meeting with me to discuss the story, approach, and other issues.

The proposal should include a one-line short summary, and a one paragraph summary of the story, format, and key characters (250 words or less). You’ll post the pitch on Canvas for feedback from your fellow students.

This assignment helps you to meet the following course objectives:

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- Analyze stories for what went right and what went wrong

Due (Proposal): Midnight, Friday January 22nd

Due (Feedback): Midnight, Sunday January 24th

Due (Meeting): Friday, January 29th

Storyboard and Outline

Your outline should show evidence of research (i.e. how well do you know your topic?). It should be between 2-3 pages single spaced, and should give an idea of the story and the approaches (text, video, audio, graphics, etc.) you will take. Include:

- A 1-2 sentence summary
- A synopsis of the story angle
- A description of the specific elements you will use in your story (i.e. three :15 audio elements with ... , a 1:20 video story about ... , an infographic featuring ..., narrative text of xxx words). Be specific.
- A description of your main characters and/or sources, including names and contact information
- Potential b-roll, archival footage, photographs, and graphics to help you translate your story from page to screen
- A schedule for gathering planned interviews and other elements
- What has been done on the subject in the past and how your approach will differ?

In other words, be sure to answer what is your story and why should we care? This should be a compelling case for the importance of your story and your approach.

Your storyboard can use Twine (<http://twinery.org/>) to rough out how *at this point in time* you envision the format and links in the immersive format. There will be a tutorial of Twine in a screencast.

This assignment helps you to meet the following course objectives:

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- Practice telling a story in various ways
- Develop team storytelling practices while exploring a larger issue

Due: Midnight, Friday January 29th

Story Draft

The draft should be your first rough edit of the story. As many elements as possible should be completed, either as a word doc for textual elements, sample photoshop files, or scripting of audio/video components. Scripting should include exact transcripts of completed interviews, expected quotes garnered from pre-interviews, and (as appropriate) indication of b-roll or audio. An updated storyboard is welcome.

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Due: Midnight, Friday February 5th

Story Revisions

This is a two-part assignment. It consists of an edited version of your story uploaded to the course RacontR site and feedback, posted to the course discussion board, for your classmates' stories.

The story revision will will be judged on the following matrix:

- Writing: Does the package use a variety of elements to tell a compelling story, using proper spelling and grammar?
- Aesthetics: Does the audio and visual aesthetic style make sense for the story and work with the overall look of the project as a whole?
- Technical: Is audio/video/photographs/graphics of a professional quality (i.e. easily understandable, good composition, etc.)?
- Creativity: Do you approach the subject in a creative and interesting way?

Feedback will be judged on the following matrix

- On-time production: Was the edit ready by the deadline for feedback?
- Did you provide comments by the deadline for each of your classmates?

The Story Revision and Feedback are both graded out of a score of 100, with each element/discussion post weighted equally.

This assignment helps you to meet the following course objectives:

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Due (Revision): Midnight, Friday February 12th

Due (Comments): Midnight, Sunday February 14th

Story Final

The final story will be judged on the following matrix:

- Writing: Does the package use a variety of elements to tell a compelling story, using proper spelling and grammar?
- Aesthetics: Does the audio and visual aesthetic style make sense for the story and work with the overall look of the project as a whole?
- Technical: Is audio/video/photographs/graphics of a professional quality (i.e. easily understandable, good composition, etc.)?
- Creativity: Do you approach the subject in a creative and interesting way?
- On-time production: Was the edit ready by the deadline?
- Did you incorporate the feedback from your classmates and professor?

The Story Final is graded out of a score of 100, with each element weighted equally.

This assignment helps you to meet the following course objectives:

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Due: Midnight, Friday February 19th

Discussion Lead

The discussion board is where we’ll discuss our course readings. Students will be assigned to lead the discussion for 1 reading over the course of the term.

Please use the following guidelines:

- Use the post to raise an issue about the way the story was reported, edited, or presented.

- Use the post to relate the story to other stories, either seen in past weeks or to stories you have read outside the class.
- Include links to any external stories you include.
- Posts should be 150-250 words.
- Posts should use proper spelling/grammar.

Discussions help you to meet the following course objectives:

- Appraise what qualities “good” in-depth projects share
- Identify compelling stories
- Develop team storytelling practices while exploring a larger issue
- Analyze stories for what went right and what went wrong

Due: Midnight January 20, January 27, February 3

Collaborative Discussion Board

The discussion board is where we’ll discuss our course readings. Students are expected to respond posts for all readings for which they are not acting as the discussion lead (5 posts per week).

Please use the following guidelines:

- Comments should demonstrate a knowledge of course readings and screencasts.
- Comments should engage with the ideas presented in the post lead and/or replies. Comments like “cool!” or “WTF?” without explanation will be graded down.
- For the week you are discussion lead, one response must be a reply to someone in your lead post.
- Comments should be between 100-150 words.
- Comments should use proper spelling/grammar.

Discussions help you to meet the following course objectives:

- Appraise what qualities “good” in-depth projects share
- Identify compelling stories
- Develop team storytelling practices while exploring a larger issue
- Analyze stories for what went right and what went wrong

Due: Midnight January 22, January 29, February 5

Screencasts

I see screencasts as a way to replicate classroom lectures for key “big picture” points students should take away from the readings or to give greater detail to important trends in in-depth reporting that would otherwise be covered by lectures or a formal textbook. The screencasts will also be used to introduce you to techniques for posting your story elements onto the digital interactive storytelling platform. Screencasts for the term are posted on the course Canvas site and will be available for the duration of the term for reference. Posted deadlines are so that you can use the screencasts to help develop the various elements of your project.

I am using the system PlayPosit to record your viewing of screencasts. To get credit for watching, place an emoji at the prompt at the end of the screencast.

Due: Midnight Wednesday Weekly (no Screencasts due February 17)

Grading

The overall course score will be assigned based on the following criteria:

• Story Proposal	10%
• Storyboard and Outline	15%
• Story Draft	10%
• Story Revisions	20%
• Story Final	25%
• Reading Discussion Lead	10%
• Collaborative Discussion Board	10%
• Course Screencasts	10%

Students should understand that an “A” is considered outstanding. Students who earn an “A” are students who have gone well beyond the class requirements and who have outperformed their fellow students. By contrast, a “B” is an above average performance. A “B” indicates that a student has displayed due diligence and standards of excellence while completing their requirements. A “C” represents an average performance, indicating merely that the class requirements have been adequately completed. A “D” indicates a below average performance by a student who completes the class requirements. An “F” indicates a student has not met the course requirements and so will not receive credit for having done so.

Grades will be weighted to reflect the above percentages. Individual grades will be available on the course Canvas site.

Grade Distribution

94-100%	A
90-93.9%	A-
87-89.9%	B+
84-86.9%	B
80-83.9%	B-
77-79.9%	C+
74-76.9%	C
70-73.9%	C-
67-69.9%	D+
64-66.9%	D
60-63.9%	D-
Below 60%	F

Course Calendar

Weekly readings and screencasts are divided by theme. They are designed to help you prepare for your upcoming assignments and to analyze excellence in in-depth reporting.

Module One: Firsts and Other Noteworthy Examples

January 14-20

Required Viewing: Screencast Series 1

Required Readings (explore entire project except as noted):

John Branch. "Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek." *New York Times*. 2012. Won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Reporting, a first for an immersive project. <https://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/index.html#/?part=tunnel-creek>.

Teresa Carpenter. "Death of a Playmate." *The Village Voice*. November 1, 1980. The 1981 Pulitzer Prize in Feature Writing was first awarded to Janet Cooke of The Washington Post, but it was returned two days later after The Post learned that the winning story was fabricated and the award was given instead to Carpenter. <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/teresa-carpenter>.

Ira Glass. "New Beginnings." *This American Life*. November 17, 1995. First edition of the program. Listen to Acts 1 and 2. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/1/new-beginnings>.

Morley Safer and Suzanne St. Pierre. "Leonard Geter's in Jail." *60 Minutes*. 1983. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/morley-safers-pick-lenell-geters-in-jail-02-07-2011/>.

Hunter S. Thompson. "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved." *Scanlan's*. June 1970. As reprinted in: Michael MacCambridge, "Director's Cut: 'The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved' by Hunter S. Thompson," *Grantland* (May 3, 2012). First example of "gonzo" journalism; also example of new journalism. <https://grantland.com/features/looking-back-hunter-s-thompson-classic-story-kentucky-derby/>.

Module Two: Traditional Genres

January 21-27

Required Viewing: Screencast Series 2

Required Readings:

Sarah Koenig, Julie Snyder, and Emmanuel Dzotsi. "Episode 1: A Bar Fight Walks Into the Justice Center." *Serial, Season 3 (Cleveland)*. 2020. <https://serialpodcast.org/>. Podcast.

Jessica Pressler. "How an Aspiring 'It' Girl Tricked New York's Party People." *The Cut*. May 2015. <https://www.thecut.com/2018/05/how-anna-delvey-tricked-new-york.html>. Investigative journalism.

Claudia Rankine. "I Wanted to Know What White Men Thought About Their Privilege. So I Asked." *New York Times Magazine*. July 27, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/17/magazine/white-men-privilege.html>. Interpretive journalism.

James Longwell. "Journey to the Edge." *Nightline*. May 20, 2019. <https://abc.com/shows/nightline/episode-guide/2019-05/20-052019-researchers-brave-brutal-conditions-to-research-climate-change-in-antarctica>. Television newsmagazine.

Janet Reitman. "Jahar's World." *Rolling Stone*. July 17, 2013. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/jahars-world-83856/?print=true>. Profile.

Module Three: Immersive and Interactive Genres, or "The Snow Fall Effect"

January 21-February 3

Required Viewing: Screencast Series 3

Required Readings (view entire projects except as noted):

Kiln.it, Francesca Panetta, Lindsay Poulton, Alex Purcell, Stephen Moss, Nabeelah Shabbir, and Lily Brazier. "First World War: The Story of a Global Conflict." *Guardian*. 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2014/jul/23/a-global-guide-to-the-first-world-war-interactive-documentary>
ProPublica, *Documenting Hate*, <https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/hatecrimes>. 2016-2019. Be sure to investigate the website, the Google News Lab databases, the social media profile pages, and a minimum of six stories.

Sue Schardt. *Localore: Finding America*. 2016-2018. Explore the website and at least two stories each from the sections "Our Communities," "Their Stories: Video," and "Their Stories: Audio." <https://www.localore.org/>.

Jim Cantore. "A Tornado Hits the Weather Channel." *The Weather Channel*. 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0cODBQqaGTw&list=PLki90Aw2GjdeFFwqlQXOaMy6UKihs0TUc&index=2&t=0s&app=desktop>. Also read: Matthew Cappucci. "Weather Channel Bets on Immersive Reality for Simulations of Local Weather Forecasts." *Washington Post*. October 21, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2020/10/21/weather-channel-immersive-reality/>. Watch the full *Weather Channel* video. Scan the *Washington Post* story for background and context.

Kate Worth and Michelle Mizner. "The Last Generation." *Frontline*. 2018. <http://apps.frontline.org/the-last-generation/>.

Module Four: Editing

February 4-11

Required Viewing: Screencast Series 4

No Required Readings

Module Five: Production

February 12-19

No Required Screencasts or Readings

Course Resources and Policies

Readings, tutorials, and other resources designed to help you develop your story. Other resources are on the course Canvas page.

Anna Fiegenbaum and Aria Alamalhodaie. *The Data Storytelling Workbook*. London and New York: Routledge, 2020. 115-200. Offers advanced resources for data visualization. PDF.

RacontR YouTube Channel. Videos are both in English and French and should be used to supplement our screencasts as needed. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-HPcUcjtKjfoX_a0tgvN2g

Twine. The is an open source tool to tell interactive non-linear stories. It's very useful for storyboarding and other planning. <https://twinery.org/>

Be sure to check out the Canvas Courses Policies page for information about communication and engagement expectations, late assignment policies, prerequisite knowledge and other regularly updated information.

University of Colorado Policies

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Classroom Behavior

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. This class is offered asynchronously, and so should not have these conflicts. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

Disability

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

Requirements for COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

- maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
- wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
- clean local work area,
- practice hand hygiene,
- follow public health orders, and
- if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert CU Boulder Medical Services.

Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. For more information, see the policies on COVID-19 Health and Safety and classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct. If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the "Accommodation for Disabilities" statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course. Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a Daily Health Form.

Since this class is offered fully remotely, if you are sick or quarantined, you will still be expected to complete your assignments on time unless you are otherwise unable to do so. Please email me at least 24 hours before any assignment due date, if your illness prohibits you from doing asynchronous work on time so that we can arrange potential accommodations.

CMCI Policies

A Commitment and Invitation from Our College

CMCI strives to be a community whose excellence depends on diversity, equity, and inclusion. We aim to understand and challenge systems of privilege and disadvantage in higher education, such as those based on class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and dis/ability. We seek to reach across social and political divides and to make space for voices historically underrepresented in higher education and marginalized in society. In other words, diversity is not just a future reality for which we try to prepare students. It is a priority we want to put into practice here, now, and together, in order to foster places of learning where all members can thrive.

Our question for you is, how are we doing? Please contact the CMCI diversity team (email [Lisa Flores](#) or visit the [CMCI Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Staff](#)).

- If you need support or other resources but don't know where to turn
- If any aspect of your educational experience with CMCI does not reflect the commitment expressed here, or if you want to share a positive instance of this commitment in action
- If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas related to diversity

We want to hear from you so that we can do better, and to support you however we can!