

## **Application for 2007 TLI Instructional Innovation Grant**

*Project Proposal:* Online Journalism/Multimedia Reporting Course

*Instructor:* Jennifer Rauch, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism

### **Rationale**

The media landscape has changed. Newspaper readership is declining as people access news through Internet portal sites, handheld devices, blogs, and podcasts. Audiences can now interact with news content and exercise more control over the reading/viewing experience. And multimedia convergence gives journalists a wide range of new tools for storytelling. Students planning a career in any aspect of media—TV reporting, public relations, print/online journalism, advertising, radio broadcasting, or Web editing—must understand today’s rapidly changing digital environment.

This project to develop a new “Online Journalism/Multimedia Reporting” course will have a significant impact on teaching and learning in the University. It will help the Journalism Department adapt its curriculum to reflect changes in the professional world. It will enhance students' technical and writing skills as well as their conceptual understanding of the new role played by online journalists. And it will provide a forum exploring urban issues, where not only students can participate but also people from throughout the Brooklyn campus and its community.

The Online Journalism course, to be taught in Spring 2008 (and once per year thereafter), is innovative because students will perform reporting projects that focus on neighborhoods surrounding the Brooklyn campus. Students will use multimedia news-gathering techniques that build on the skill sets and values that they learned in introductory print and broadcast classes. They will use digital cameras and tape recorders to collect photographs and audio clips that enhance the stories they write. They will then assemble multi-media story packages about each neighborhood, to be published online. The course Web site, which will welcome feedback from readers within and beyond the University, will continue to gain content and depth over time.

### **Methodology**

The first steps to launching this initiative are already underway: increasing the multimedia capacity of the Journalism Department’s Newslab, in which the course will be taught. This classroom also has cross-disciplinary uses, such as by Creative Writing and Online Writing courses in the English Department. The computers are being upgraded and new software (such as Adobe Photoshop for photo editing and Dreamweaver for Web design) are being installed. A small supply of digital cameras, to

be signed out by students who assume liability for their loss or damage, is also being established. Several digital audio recorders also will be ordered.

The next step is for the instructor, Jennifer Rauch, an assistant professor of journalism at the Brooklyn Campus, to attend multimedia training workshops to build her skills and gain insight from professional journalists regarding new trends in this ever-evolving field. She will apply next month to prestigious workshops for mid-career journalists and journalism educators sponsored by the Knight Foundation this spring and summer. Should the Knight application be declined due to lack of space, other workshop opportunities in multimedia reporting (offered this fall through the Poynter Institute and the Society for Professional Journalists) will be pursued. Concurrently, she also will develop a syllabus for the new course, which the Journalism Department has already decided to offer in Spring 2008.

### **Timeline**

As detailed above, the timeline for this initiative launching the new Online Journalism course has already begun.

Jan.-Feb. 2007	Upgrade Computers in Newslab—DONE Acquire Digital Cameras for Student Use—DONE Install Multimedia Software in Newslab—IN PROGRESS
Mar.-Oct. 2007	Apply to and Attend Multimedia Training Workshops Develop Syllabus for New Course in “Online Journalism”
Nov. 2007	Enroll Students in “Online Journalism” for Spring 2008 Order/Install Additional Multimedia Equipment/Software
Dec. 2007	Prepare Progress Report
Jan.-Apr. 2007	Teach “Online Journalism” Course Publish Student-Produced Reporting Online
May 2008	Prepare Progress Report

### **Resources Needed**

Several investments of both time and money already have been made by the instructor, the department, and the division in order to acquire the equipment and expertise necessary to launch this project. In terms of equipment, the Online Journalism course will require a minimum of four digital cameras (of which three have already been purchased) and four digital voice recorders, which will be shared by student teams. The project budget allows for four digital voice recorders at approximately \$100 each. It is

anticipated that one additional digital camera of a consistent model may be needed to enhance the department's current supply, estimated at \$750.

The workshop experience, which will help anchor the course curriculum in current media-industry practices, is available with some travel costs and/or fees covered by sponsoring organizations. If accepted to the three-day Knight Foundation multimedia training or Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) multimedia reporting workshops, expenses will be approximately \$750. If not accepted by Knight or SPJ, the five-day Poynter Institute seminar expenses are estimated at \$1500.

In addition to equipment and the workshop, some extraneous materials such as software training manuals and videos will be needed for the instructor, graduate/teaching assistants and students to use in the classroom. These are expected to cost no more than \$150.

*Project Budget*

One camera, e.g. Canon Digital Rebel XTI	\$ 750
Four digital audio recorders, e.g. Olympus WS-300M	\$ 400
Knight, SPJ, or Poynter workshop	\$ 750-1500
Books, videos, other materials	\$ 150
TOTAL	<u>\$ 2050-2800</u>

**Outcomes**

Many significant teaching and learning outcomes are anticipated for this initiative, as follows:

- First, the classroom environment will be invigorated by hands-on practice with new story-telling tools that are applied to producing a group project in which everyone has ownership.
- Second, students will learn to use new technology that not only exercises their creative talents but also provides them with marketable skills.
- Third, the Web publication that results from this course will educate and inform students within the classroom as well as people outside of it... connecting the campus with the community and creating space for dialogue.
- Fourth, this course will mark the first step in the department efforts to reform its curriculum and its teaching strategies to align with new realities of the digital media environment.

The results of the Online Journalism course will be disseminated in several ways. The multimedia story packages that students produce will be available publicly once the

course has completed. The instructor also will attend a TLI session to present the project and discuss its results with other members of the faculty and staff.

### **Assessment**

To evaluate the accomplishments of the Online Journalism/Multimedia Reporting initiative, the instructor will seek assessments from several parties:

- Course evaluations, including both the standardized form and open-ended questions, will be collected from students to determine its impact on their learning.
- Other instructors will be invited to attend, participate in, and offer feedback on class meetings.
- Members of the community whom students have interviewed for the class project will be invited to share their evaluations of the resulting multimedia story packages published online.
- Finally, the Web site will offer readers/viewers in the University and public-at-large to interact with these stories (and their student-producers) by sending e-mails and posting comments.