

**MCOM 340.01 – PARTICIPATORY MEDIA**  
**SUNY Oneonta, Department of Communication & Media**  
**Spring 2019**

**Class Meetings:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:00-1:50 PM, Fizzelle 129

**Instructor:** Dr. Andrew Bottomley

**Office Location:** IRC B-9

**Office Hours:** Monday 2:00–3:00 PM; Wednesday 2:00–3:00 PM; or by appointment

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### **Course Description**

This course explores independent, non-profit community media that is established and run by local people (you!). You will present and develop their own (news and culture) programming that addresses topics you feel are important, and which is expressed in ways that other community members will understand. The aim is to “give voice to the voiceless.”

Specifically, this course facilitates the production of *Oneonta Voices*, a public affairs podcast/radio program that is distributed through WONY 90.9 FM, SUNY Oneonta’s student-run broadcast radio station. An approximately half-hour long documentary-style program, *Oneonta Voices* is an entirely collaborative production made by you and the other members of this class. You work under the supervision of the instructor, Dr. Andrew Bottomley, who is the WONY faculty advisor and Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Media.

The program follows the model of public radio-style news and talk radio/podcast programs like *The New York Times’ The Daily* and NPR’s *All Things Considered* and *Morning Edition*. While there is some flexibility, the basic format of each half-hour episode consists of 6 individual story segments dedicated to a single topic or subject (4-5 minutes long each) and a local Artist Spotlight segment, surrounded by connecting materials like an introduction, conclusion, credits, music beds, and segues between stories. Story topics may range from more “news-y” subjects like political issues impacting the SUNY Oneonta campus and local responses to national and international events to more individualistic matters of student life, identity, family and relationships, personal values, and so on.

As a documentary-style program, *Oneonta Voices* is talk-based, built around first-person experiences and conversation. The primary focus is on the voices of the SUNY Oneonta community: interviews with students, faculty, staff and administration, and “townies” about pressing social, cultural, political, and economic issues of significant public interest. These interviews may include a mix of more formal sit-down discussions and less formal “vox pop,” person-on-the-street style interviews and field recordings made in classrooms, lectures, sporting events, and other locations across the local area. Our aim is to capture a variety of experiences and perspectives, with special emphasis placed on highlighting marginalized and historically underrepresented voices, including native peoples and people of color, disabled persons,

people on marginalized ends of the socioeconomic, cultural, or religious spectrum, or people identifying within LGBTQIA+. Theme music and other interstitial music should be sourced from local artists, including student composers and performers. The goal is to capture an intimate portrait of the SUNY Oneonta community, with *Oneonta Voices* functioning as a platform to spark discussion and debate, and elevate the voices of the diverse people of our home in their own words.

### **Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

Participatory Media provides Media Studies students with an introduction to community media principles and practices. It also provides students interested in broadcast journalism, podcasting, and other news and documentary career pursuits with a unique hands-on learning experience. As upper-level Media Studies students, many of you are already in possession of basic audio production skills, theories, and models (obtained through Media Studies production courses and/or Music Industry courses in the Audio Arts Production Minor). This course creates an applied learning environment in which you may practice that classroom knowledge in a real-world setting. Most importantly, it introduces you to the workflow of a typical public radio-style radio/podcast program, developing stories from the initial stages of planning and preparation, on to production, and all the way through to publishing and promotion – all on a regular, fixed programming schedule, as you would encounter in a real broadcast media environment.

The *Oneonta Voices* series is broadcast on WONY 90.9 FM at a regularly scheduled time (Saturdays 12:00 PM). Re-broadcasts are aired during off-weeks. Episodes are also distributed online through the podcast format for timeshifted listening. Additional multimedia content is created to accompany the podcast series online, including photos, videos, and digital stories to be shared via social media (Instagram, Twitter, et al). Over the semester, the class will collectively produce no fewer than 6 half-hour episodes (i.e. an accumulated total of 3+ hours of content). This body of work will provide you with a substantial, professional quality creative project to present as portfolio work for the job market.

In addition to making the content, you will regularly reflect on your learning experiences, both through group discussions and individual writing exercises. The weekly class meetings are divided between pitch sessions, editing sessions, and “post-mortem” analyses, as well as occasional training sessions. Pitch sessions require you to propose your future story ideas to the entire class for feedback before you are given the green-light to pursue the story. Editing sessions enable you to get input on in-progress work, and especially to seek help with problem areas. Debriefing or “post-mortem” analyses involve the entire class listening to the finished work together, identifying strengths as well as areas for future improvement. In these ways, feedback is given continuously, both as the work is in-progress and immediately after its completion. The finished work is also shared online with the entire college community, enabling you and your team to get ongoing feedback from your peers and the broader public.

While I (Dr. Bottomley) direct your activity and supervise the production team in an “executive producer” type role, your work is self-directed. You are free to experiment and make your own creative decisions about how *Oneonta Voices* is recorded, edited, and presented. I evaluate your work based on the criteria of (1) its overall originality, creativity, and ability to create an engaging listening experience, (2) its adherence to journalism ethics and standards of public trust, truthfulness, fairness, integrity, independence, and accountability, and (3) the display of

production skill in accordance with professional expectations for broadcast recording and editing quality. In the spirit of academic freedom and creativity, I will not edit or censor your work, except if it insufficiently fulfills the assigned criteria or in extreme cases where it clearly violates these standards of ethical behavior or professionalism. All episodes are screened by me prior to broadcast to ensure compliance with FCC regulations.

### **Content Guidelines**

All episodes must comply with FCC broadcast regulations for obscenity, indecency, and profanity. Generally speaking, use common sense and keep the program “SFS” (safe for school). Do not include recordings of illegal or obscene acts, such as drug and alcohol abuse, physical violence, or sexual intercourse and other obscene content. You should also avoid extremely dangerous situations, including putting yourself in physical harm (e.g. recording a car motor from underneath that same car). Importantly, whenever you are recording someone else’s voice, always obtain informed consent. Make sure they are aware that their statements may be publicly broadcast and distributed online. This consent must be captured on tape, so there is a record of it if any issues arise later on (i.e. save the files in case they’re needed at a later date).

### **Attendance and Time Commitment**

Attendance at the MWF class meetings is absolutely mandatory. This is a workshop-based course – there is no textbook and there are no tests – and thus most of the learning and creative activity will be taking place in the classroom during our MWF 1:00-1:50 PM class meetings. The material covered in class is not easily reproducible.

To earn an “A” grade in the course you must have near-perfect attendance, meaning three (3) or fewer unexcused absences and three (3) or fewer tardies. To earn a “B” grade in the course you must have five (5) or fewer unexcused absences and five (5) or fewer tardies. Anything over five (5) unexcused absences and tardies is deemed excessive absence, and you will not be able to earn higher than a “C” grade for the course. Of course, excused absences are exempt from these policies. As per the College Handbook policies, religious holidays, official university activities (field trips, intercollegiate athletics, etc.), serious illness or injury, jury duty, military leave, and the like are considered legitimate excused absences. You will never be excused for work, including media production or schoolwork for another course. Always communicate the reason for your absence to me in writing (via email) – that way there is a searchable record of it for later reference. If you experience a prolonged absence of multiple classes, it is of utmost importance that you maintain clear communication with me and your team during your absence.

This course will also require a significant time commitment beyond the classroom. Media production is time intensive work, and **you should plan on spending at least 3-5 hours per week working on *Oneonta Voices* outside class**. This work includes researching, recording, editing and mixing material for the program – either independently or in collaboration with other team members. This is equivalent to the amount of time I would expect you to spend on readings/screenings, doing homework, studying for tests or writing papers, et cetera, in any other 3-credit Media Studies class. It is essential that you develop good time management skills.

Since a lot of work will be happening outside the classroom, you are responsible for making yourself readily available to your production team. Maintain constant communications with them,

answering everyone's messages quickly and clearly. If I hear that you are routinely ignoring your team's communications, missing scheduled recording/editing sessions, or otherwise not carrying your weight, the penalty on your grade will be severe. (See the Grading Policy below.)

## **Production Teams**

A portion of your creative work for this course will be produced in a team environment. During the first few weeks of the semester, you will be assigned to a production team and you will work with this team for the entirety of the semester. There are 18 students in the class and you will be divided into 3 teams of 6 students.

You will be assigned a defined role on the production team. Roles include: Host; Producer; Artist Segment Producer; Director; Editor; and Multimedia-Digital Content Manager. Your role will match your personal strengths and career goals. You will be able to choose your own role in consultation with the rest of your team. Also, these roles rotate midway through the semester, so most of you will gain experience in more than one role. While you will perform a designated role, you are nevertheless expected to assist your teammates – and even the other production teams – whenever and however possible.

## **Grading**

This course adopts a form of contract grading in which you will receive a single **letter grade for the entire semester**. Individual assignments will be not be graded – though you will be given regular qualitative feedback on your work over the course of the semester. Assessment will be holistic and based on your ability to satisfactorily fulfill the course objectives and learning outcomes described in this syllabus. If you prove yourself to be a valuable team member, you complete your fair share of the work, and you produce high-quality content, then you can be assured you will earn at least a “B” grade in the course. The letter grades translate as follows:

A/A-	Outstanding, thoughtful, and enthusiastic work
B+/B	Above average work, demonstrating good skills and insight
B-/C+	Needs improvement on ideas, skills, and follow-through
C & below	Flawed work that fulfills the bare minimum requirements and shows only rudimentary skills or inadequate commitment to the course objectives

More specifically, sufficiently fulfilling all 10 of the below-listed items earns you a “B” in the course. “A” grades are reserved for students who complete these items while also displaying exceptional effort and/or producing exceptional content.

- attend class regularly – not missing more than 5 class meetings;
- attend out-of-class production meetings and recording/editing sessions with team;
- participate in all in-class discussions and activities;
- meet due dates and evaluation criteria for all assigned audio or multimedia segments;
- complete all written assignments, including self- and peer assessment papers;
- work faithfully with your team on all collaborative tasks and give thoughtful peer feedback during class workshops (i.e. editing and pitch sessions, postmortems);
- make substantive revisions to your work, including incorporating instructor and peer feedback received during pitch and editing sessions, until the work conforms to conventions of professional-quality audio storytelling;

- sustain effort and investment on your team’s assigned episodes, contributing beyond your designated role and supporting your team members’ whenever needed;
- ensure the overall success of the *Oneonta Voices* series by assisting the other teams;
- participate in a “final exam” exit interview with the instructor.

## **Assignments**

**Production Notebook:** All students in the class must keep a production notebook: an actual pen-and-paper spiral notebook. It is your all-in-one repository for the semester. It organizes preproduction info, it is vital during the production, and it serves as a crucial archive after the production is complete. While the components of your notebook will be adjusted slightly depending on your team role, you should use the notebook to write down story ideas, class notes and peer feedback, team contact info and role responsibilities, interview subject leads and research notes, interview questions, production schedules, tape logs, script drafts, editing breakdowns, and various other notes relating to the production of your team’s episodes. Randomly throughout the semester, I will spot-check your notebook to check on your progress.

**Individual Story Segment:** Your assignments for this course will vary depending on the team role you take. These individual responsibilities will be determined on a case-by-case basis over the course of the semester, in discussion with the instructor and the rest of your team. However, regardless of your team role, every student in the class will produce their own 4-5 minute long individual story segment, or “audio package.” Additional details to follow.

**Audio Diary Segment:** You will also produce an “audio diary” segment. For this assignment, you will be given a handheld audio recorder for 1 week, during which time you will keep an audio journal, interview the people around you, and record the sounds of your daily life. You will collect at least a few hours of raw tape over the course of the week, which you will then edit into a short 3-5 minute long mini-documentary or audio portrait. Additional details to follow.

**The “Fun” Segment:** To conclude the semester, your team will collaborate on a themed final episode that explores a “fun” topic about life in Oneonta, such as urban legends, dating, or nightlife. You will produce the stories for this episode in pairs, and each segment should run 7-10 minutes. Additional details to follow.

**Oneonta Voices Critique:** Early in the semester, you will select a previous *Oneonta Voices* episode from Season 1 or 2 and write a short review of it. You will analyze the episode’s strengths and weaknesses, and explain how you might produce the stories differently if you made it yourself. This paper must be 1-2 pages long, typed and double-spaced.

**Brainstorming Paper:** For this short writing assignment, you will be given a handful of questions/prompts pertaining to your personal values and opinions, as well as various issues in the local community. For each prompt, you will write a paragraph describing: (1) Your answer/idea for the prompt and (2) How you might structure it as an audio story. The goal is to get you thinking about what would be interesting to make an audio story about.

**Self- and Peer Assessment Papers:** Periodically throughout the semester you will be asked to write short essays reflecting on your own creative work as well as the work of your classmates. Rather than simply a blow-by-blow description of what was done, these assessment papers are

especially focused on getting you to identify how well you and your peers are doing with your “soft skills”: problem solving, communication, teamwork, research, self-management. The goal here is to help you realize what it means to be productive and successful. These papers must be 1-2 pages long each, typed and double-spaced. You will write two (2) self-assessment essays and one (1) peer assessment essay. The first self-assessment is due the week after you complete the episode with your Audio Diary Segment; the second self-assessment is due the week after you complete the episode with your Individual Story Segment. All peer assessments are due at the end of the semester.

**Class Engagement:** This is a workshop-based course, and as such class time requires the total attention and involvement of all participants. Routinely throughout the semester, you will be called upon to participate in a variety of classroom activities that will familiarize you with key concepts and prompt you to reflect on the day’s lesson. Your responsibility here is to offer regular, informed contributions to class meetings. This participation is a designated assignment since you will regularly be asked to listen to your classmates’ work and to give detailed constructive feedback on that work during classroom discussions.

**“Final Exam” Exit Interview:** Your “final exam” for the semester will take the form of a ten (10) minute long exit interview. This will be a one-on-one sit-down conversation between just you and me (Dr. Bottomley). We will discuss your general takeaways from the course and how you feel you developed creatively and professionally throughout the semester. You will also be asked to give feedback on your team dynamics and your overall experience collaborating with your team members. These interviews will be held during the assigned final exam period on W, May 8. We will sign-up for individual time slots on the last day of class.

### **Classroom Accommodations**

If you have a disability or any circumstance that may impact your ability to perform in this class, you are encouraged to speak with me privately as soon as possible. Disclosure of a disability is always voluntary. All individuals who are diagnosed with a disability are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you are diagnosed with a disability, please make an appointment to meet with the Office of Accessibility Resources (133 Milne Library, 607-436-2137). All students with the necessary supporting documentation will be provided appropriate accommodations as determined by the Accessibility Resources Office. It is entirely your responsibility to contact Accessibility Resources and concurrently supply me with your accommodation plan, which will inform me exactly what accommodations you are entitled to. You will only receive accommodations once you provide me with an Accessibility Resources accommodation plan. Any previously recorded grades will not be changed. More information: <https://suny.oneonta.edu/accessibility-resources>

### **Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

If there is an emergency in Fizzelle Hall during class time, the prolonged evacuation site (ES) is the IRC Lobby. In the case of an evacuation, be sure to assist persons with disabilities, including visually impaired persons, people with hearing limitations, people using crutches/canes/walkers, or anyone else who has difficulty leaving the building on their own. Other general evacuation procedures are outlined at: <http://www.oneonta.edu/security/documents/EmergencyEvacuationProcedures.pdf>

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## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1 (January 16–January 18): Introduction**

W, January 16: Welcome (aka, What’s actually going on here?)

F, January 18: Introducing *Oneonta Voices*

### **Week 2 (January 21–January 25): Community Media**

M, January 21: Defining Community Media

W, January 23: Podcasting as Community Media

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 11 “Podcasting”

→ **Due: *Oneonta Voices* Critique Paper**

F, January 25: Talking About Audio: Tracks, Acts, Ambi

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 1 “Power of Audio”

### **Week 3 (January 28–February 1): Case Studies**

M, January 28: Stories about Individuals

W, January 30: Stories about Relationships and Groups

F, February 1: Stories about Family

### **Week 4 (February 4–February 8): Case Studies**

M, February 4: Stories about Places

W, February 6: Stories about Neighborhoods and Institutions

F, February 8: Stories about the Past

→ **Due: Brainstorming Paper**

### **Week 5 (February 11–February 15): Audio Recording 101**

M, February 11: Training: Using a Handheld Recorder

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 5 “Recording in the Field”

W, February 13: Training: Using Microphones

F, February 15: Training: Cage Equipment + Choosing Teams

→ **Checkpoint: Submit Equipment Release Form**

### **Week 6 (February 18–February 22): Case Studies – Audio Diaries**

M, February 18: Stories about the Self – Audio Diaries and Personal Documentaries, Pt. 1

W, February 20: Stories about the Self – Audio Diaries and Personal Documentaries, Pt. 2

F, February 22: Training: Finding Your Voice

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 4 “Finding Your Radio Voice”

### **Week 7 (February 25–March 1): “Audio Diary” Episode Production**

M, February 25: “Audio Diary” Workshop

W, February 27: Training: Preparing for the Edit – Layout Tape

→ **Checkpoint: Share Initial “Audio Diary” Raw Recordings**

F, March 1: Training: Editing and Sound Design

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 8 “Using Sound”

→ **Checkpoint: Share Production Notebook with Tape Logs**

## Week 8 (March 4–March 8): Spring Break

⊗ **No Class – Spring Break**

## Week 9 (March 11–March 15): “Audio Diary” Episode Assembly

M, March 11: Production Day: Team “Audio Diary” Episode – Scripting

→ **Checkpoint: Share Rundown of Team “Audio Diary” Episode**

→ **Due: Final Cut of Individual “Audio Diary” Segment**

W, March 13: Production Day: Team “Audio Diary” Episode – Recording + Editing

→ **Checkpoint: Share Written Edit of Host Tracks**

F, March 15: “Audio Diary” Episode Final Cut

→ **Due: Final Cut of Team “Audio Diary” Episode**

## Week 10 (March 18–March 22): Intermission

M, March 18: Postmortem on “Audio Diary” Episodes

→ **Due: Self-Assessment Paper #1**

W, March 20: Training: Finding Your Stories

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 2 “Finding a Story and Turning it Into Radio”

F, March 22: Pitch Session for “Story” Episode

## Week 11 (March 25–March 29): “Story” Episode Production

M, March 25: Training: Interviewing

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 3 “The Art of the Interview”

→ **Checkpoint: Share Focus Statement for Individual Story Segment**

W, March 27: Production Day: Individual Story Segment

→ **Checkpoint: Share Raw Interview and Ambi Recordings**

F, March 29: Training: Scripting and Story Structure

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 6 “The Art of Radio Packages”

→ **Checkpoint: Share Tape Logs**

## Week 12 (April 1–April 5): “Story” Episode Production

M, April 1: Individual Story Segment Workshop – Scripting

Listen: *The Masterclass Podcast*, Episode 7 “Writing for Radio”

→ **Checkpoint: Share Rough Cut of Individual Story Segment**

W, April 3: Production Day: Individual Story Segment – Recording + Editing

→ **Checkpoint: Share Written Edit of Individual Story Segment**

F, April 5: Production Day: Individual Story Segment – Editing

→ **Checkpoint: Share Rough Cut of Individual Story Segment**

## Week 13 (April 8–April 12): “Story” Episode Assembly

M, April 8: Production Day: Team “Story” Episode – Scripting

→ **Checkpoint: Share Rundown of Team “Story” Episode**

→ **Due: Final Cut of Individual Story Segment**

W, April 10: Production Day: Team “Story” Episode – Recording + Editing

→ **Checkpoint: Share Rough Cut of Team “Story” Episode + Written Edit**

F, April 12: “Story” Episode Final Cut

→ **Due: Final Cut of Team “Story” Episode**



**Week 14 (April 17–April 19): “Fun” Episode Production**

M, April 15: Postmortem on “Story” Episodes + Pitch Session

→ **Due: Self-Assessment Paper #2**

W, April 17: Production Day: Partner “Fun” Segment – Recording + Editing

→ **Checkpoint: Share Initial “Fun” Segment Raw Recordings**

F, April 19: Production Day: Partner “Fun” Segment – Editing

→ **Checkpoint: Share Production Notebook with Tape Logs**

**Week 15 (April 22–April 26): “Fun” Episode Assembly**

M, April 22: Production Day: Team “Fun” Episode – Scripting

→ **Checkpoint: Share Rundown of Team “Fun” Episode**

→ **Due: Final Cut of Partner “Fun” Segment**

W, April 24: Production Day: Team “Fun” Episode – Recording + Editing

→ **Checkpoint: Share Written Edit of Host Tracks**

F, April 26: “Fun” Episode Final Cut

→ **Due: Final Cut of Team “Fun” Episode**

**Week 16 (April 29): Conclusion**

M, April 29: Postmortem on “Fun” Episodes + “Final Exam” Sign-up

→ **Due: Peer Assessment Paper**

**“Final Exam” (May 8): Exit Interviews**

W, May 8, 11:00 AM–1:30 PM (special location: IRC B-19, Comm & Media Conference Room)