MERRIMACK COLLEGE
Communication & Media

Course Title	Special Topics in Digital Communication – Audio & Video for the Web
Course #	COM5011
Credit Hours	4-credit
Location	Cushing Hall 220
Prerequisites	COM5010: Principles of Communication

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor	Professor Christopher Previte
Office Hours	Weekly, Online Office Hours will be posted in Announcements in Canvas.
E-Mail Address	previtec@merrimack.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Course Description

This course will explore emergent topics in the fields of social and visual media. Due to the rapidly advancing landscape of media and communications, topics covered will inevitably vary. Specific course descriptions for each section of this course are available below:

This course is an introduction to audio & video content for the web, specifically motion graphics and podcasts. Students will explore the relationship between visual design & time-based media and narrative creation & audio production – all with an eye toward advanced storytelling techniques.

Communication and Media Student Learning Outcomes

The Communication and Media department focuses on the following graduate student learning outcomes, with this course's particular emphasis in bold:

1. Engage communication history and theory to be an informed and critical producer/consumer.

2. Plan and execute targeted oral, written, and mediated message strategies.

3. Draw from leadership and group communication skills to be an effective member of a team.

4. Demonstrate artistic, technical, and aesthetic skills for visual, audio, and moving media design.

5. Apply communication and media ethical competencies to decision-making.

Additional student learning goals include:

6. Research, design, and storyboard motion graphics sequences for video.

7. Research, develop, and publish an audio podcast.

8. Use current desktop and mobile-based digital audio and video creation and editing software to create content for web consumption.

9. Prepare multimedia files that are small enough to be accessible to a wide audience but of sufficient quality to maintain the integrity of the original.

10. Thoughtfully critique media and be critiqued by other students.

Grading and Assessment Methods

Your progress is assessed based on attendance and class participation and assignments. Each of these are graded using rubrics or guidelines published under Assignments in Canvas. Critiques follow the Functional Criticism technique. Students are expected to make use of critiques to revise and improve projects.

1. THE FOLLOWING IS THE BREAKDOWN OF YOUR GRADE:

Motion Graphics Projects (3) - worth 60%
Motion graphics projects serve as a principle means through which the student demonstrates the objectives of their learning. See the requirements in each project handout.

Podcast Creation Project (1) – worth 20%
The podcast creation project serve as a principle means through which the student demonstrates the objectives of their learning. See the requirements in each project handout.

Discussion Board – worth 10%
See the Discussion Board Course Policy

Attendance and Participation – worth 10%
See the Attendance and Participation Course Policy

2. DUE DATES

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE
PROJECT 1 – Lower Third	WEEK 3
PROJECT 4 – Podcast – Step 1	WEEK 4
PROJECT 4 – Podcast – Step 2	WEEK 6
PROJECT 2 – Lyric Video	WEEK 7
PROJECT 4 – Podcast – Step 3	WEEK 8
PROJECT 4 – Podcast – Step 4	WEEK 9
PROJECT 3 – Title Sequence – Step 1	WEEK 10
PROJECT 3 – Title Sequence – Step 2	WEEK 12
PROJECT 4 – Podcast – Step 5	WEEK 13
PROJECT 3 – Title Sequence – Step 3	WEEK 14
PROJECT 4 – Podcast – Step 6	WEEK 15
PROJECT 3 – Title Sequence – Step 4	WEEK 16

Extra Credit: Some projects contain an option for extra credit. It is strongly suggested you take advantage of these.

Final Grading Scale

A (90% and above): "A" indicates outstanding work

B (82% to 89.99%): "B" means that the work is satisfactory

C (72% to 81.99%): "C" (2.0) is deemed unsatisfactory at the graduate level. No more than two courses at the C level (2.0 or higher) will be counted as acceptable toward a graduate degree. Students may be permitted to repeat only two courses and may repeat each course only one time. Those who receive more than two C level grades will automatically be dismissed from their program of study. "See Repeat Policy" to understand how to repeat a course.

Any grade lower than a C- will not be acceptable for graduate-level work and cannot be counted as credit towards the degree. However, the grade will be counted toward the graduate student's GPA. If a student receives a grade lower than a C in a required course, the student will be required to retake the course. A course may only be retaken one time. The most recent grade will replace the first grade and will be factored into the student's GPA.

Credit Justification Statement

Activity	Weekly Time Commitment
In-Class Time incl. Final Presentations	230 min. x 16 weeks = 61.3 hours total
Consumables	3 hours x 15 weeks = 45 hours total
Project Research, Ideation, and Prep	2 hours x 16 weeks = 32 hours total
Deliverable Creation	2 hours x 16 weeks = 32 hours total
Discussions and Critiques	1 hour x 10 weeks = 10 hours total
Total Hours	**180.3**

COURSE MATERIALS

Software
Adobe Creative Cloud (After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator); Apple GarageBand; Anchor; YouTube; SoundCloud

File Storage
Portable, external hard drive (200GB min.) *OR*
Access to cloud storage (OneDrive, DropBox, iCloud, etc.)

Other Supplies
Sketch Book, Drawing or Layout Paper, Pencils, Pens, and Markers/Colored Pencils

Consumables
All weekly consumables, which can include readings, videos, and podcasts, will be included in the Weekly Modules and/or Announcements in Canvas. Students are expected to consume and take notes on all of these as they are made available.

There is no textbook in this class.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Class Participation
Traditional attendance is not taken in this class. Instead, students are expected to be active online, in Canvas, periodically throughout each week of the term/semester. Being active means participating fully in **discussion boards**, providing classmates with thoughtful **critiques** of their submitted work, completing and submitting weekly **assignments** on time, and working on, completing, and submitting larger **class projects** as scheduled throughout the term. Additionally, students are expected to participate in any **group work** that may be required and respond to **emails** from their professor and classmates in a timely, professional manner. In these ways, students will earn credit for attendance and participation in this class.

If a student does not participate in any way online (in Canvas) or in-person during the first week of class, they will be dropped from the course.

Discussion Boards
Students are required to fully participate in all discussion boards by the Friday of the week they are assigned (by 10PM). To "fully participate" in a discussion board means to reply to the given prompt in a thorough, well-researched, and thoughtful manner that addresses all given instructions. Additionally, all students must respond to *at least* <u>two</u> classmates' posts within each discussion board in an equally thoughtful manner. *Any research referenced in your posts must be cited*.

Timely participation in discussion boards is essential to the relevancy of the given discussion. Late participation, within the assigned week, will result in a reduced grade. Participation after the Saturday of a given week or not at all will result in a '0' for that discussion boards.

Course Writing Guidelines

All written assignments and content for class will be written using the following guidelines:

- A page of writing is approximately 250 to 500 words per page. So, if an assignment requires 3-pages, that's 750 to 1,500 words.
- You must write in 11-point font, with 1.5 line spacing throughout the whole document.
- You can use any of these fonts: Times New Roman, Avenir, Calibri, Helvetica. Only 1-font per document. You can use any included type styles (bold, book, italic, etc.) for emphasis.

While you may certainly do your initial writing by hand, on paper, all *submitted* writing must be done using one of the following digital writing tools: Microsoft Word, Google Docs, Apple Pages.

Late Work

Students are expected to turn assignments and projects in on time, based on posted deadlines. The expectation is that work will be completed on time. Any work that is not submitted when due may be marked down by one letter grade ("B" to "C", "C" to "D"…) for each week that it is late.

Students must submit the final assignment no later than the last day of the term/semester. No assignments are accepted after the last day of the term/semester.

Students needing extra time to submit work are expected to contact the instructor via email to explain their circumstances and request an extension. The instructor will then decide whether or not to grant an extension or maintain the failing grade ('F').

Missed Assignments

Failure to submit an assignment will result in the assignment receiving a failing grade ('F').

Plagiarism or Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty

"Plagiarism is the act of stealing or passing as one's own the ideas or words of another" or "re-submitting work in whole or in part that has previously been submitted in another course, without the permission of the current instructor."

As this is a visual design class, I extend that definition to include any imagery such as photography, illustration, iconography, or graphics that are not your own original creation. Using photography as reference when creating an original illustration or graphic, is not the same as plagiarism. We will discuss the difference in detail, in class.

Any instance of plagiarism or academic dishonesty as defined, will result in an "F" for that assignment and will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs.

AI Use Policy

Introduction & Purpose

I recognize the importance and benefits of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, which is why my position is to embrace and integrate them into certain course activities with full transparency about their use. Any use of AI in this course is to enrich your learning experience with interactive activities and as a way for you to gain practical experience with important technologies. However, using any AI tools without permission is not permitted.

Examples of AI Tools

ChatGPT	Replika	MidJourney
ChatSonic	ELSA	Adobe Firefly
Jasper	Bing Chat	Claude
Socratic	Wolfram Alpha	Poe
Ai-powered Bing	Bloom	DALL.E
Google Bard	YouChat	QuillBOT
TruthGPT	Megatron-Turing	

Specific use rules for AI in this course:
• Do not use any AI tools during any exams or quizzes.
• Do not use AI tools during any assignments without specific permission and instructions.
• Credit and cite any time you use AI.
• You may use AI to check your written work for grammar and punctuation.
• You may use AI to paraphrase your own, original writing.
• AI should not be used to write or change the style and composition of your writing.
• Never enter any personally identifiable information into AI tools

Academic Accommodations from the Accessibility Services Office

Regardless of whether the course or the student is on-campus or remote, Merrimack College provides reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities through the Accessibility Services Office. Students who have, or think they may have, a disability are invited to contact the Accessibility Services Office via the online request form found on the Accessibility Services website, email accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu or by visiting us on the third floor of McQuade Library (subject to change if the college is remote).

Students are encouraged to contact the office as soon as possible via the website or via email at accessibilityservices@merrimack.edu to ensure adequate time to meet and create a plan. Students already registered with Accessibility Services are encouraged semesterly to request for their letters to be emailed and students are responsible to then email the letter to their instructors personally. The Accessibility Services Testing Center remains available to students whether in-person or remote. While it is understood that some students will not use all accommodations in all courses, accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

If you have an academic need or learning disability that should be taken into account in either classroom activities or exams, you must provide the proper documentation detailing the accommodations necessary in the first two weeks of the semester.

Health Message

Your mental health is a top priority. Licensed mental health professionals at the Counseling Center are available to help you address personal challenges and learn strategies and skills to help you navigate the college experience. Please call them at 978- 837-5444 to schedule an appointment via Zoom. For more information, visit the Counseling Center.

Diversity Statement The commitment of Merrimack College to honor and advance diversity embodies a vigilant, constructive and creative pledge to ensure that all racial, ethnic, cultural and social groups dedicated to discourse and mutual respect are full partners in our common educational quest. The unique experiences and particular perspectives of such partners in the search for knowledge and wisdom contribute to a rich interdisciplinary and multicultural curriculum.

- See Merrimack College's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative HERE
- See the Department of Communication & Media's Anti-Racism Statement and Initiatives HERE

WEEKLY MODULES

Week	Date	Weekly Topics and Events
0	**WEEK OF 01/14/23**	**COURSE INTRODUCTION** Prior to the beginning of class on, be sure to thoroughly review our Canvas site including all modules, announcements, course policies, and projects. **Consumables:** **Read** Tools, Tools, and More Tools **HW:** Download, set up/plan access to Adobe After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator, Apple Garageband, Anchor, YouTube, and SoundCloud.
1	**01/22/24**	**AFTER EFFECTS BASICS** **Class Goal:** Introduce industry-standard motion graphics software Adobe After Effects. Get to know the workspace, tools, and panels. Compare to Adobe Photoshop and others. Also introduce Animation Basics and All About Storyboarding. Introduce PROJECT 1. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** After Effects Basics, Animation Basics, All About Storyboarding **Consumables:** **Video** 00:00:49 2.1 What Is After Effects? 00:10:46 2.2 Main Panels 00:20:50 2.3 Settings 00:28:36 2.4 After Effects Tools 00:37:28 2.5 More AE Tools (stop at 00:43:45) **Read** Animation Basics All About Storyboarding --- **DUE:** Access to Adobe After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator, Apple Garageband, Anchor, YouTube, and SoundCloud. **HW:** PROJECT 1

2	01/29/24	**HISTORY OF PODCASTS** **Class Goal:** An introduction to the history and world of podcasts. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** From MP3 to SoundJam to the iPod to a former MTV VJ and beyond. **Consumables:** **Read** History of Podcasts Submission Guidelines – After Effects --- **DUE:** PROJECT 1 (draft) **HW:** PROJECT 1
3	02/05/24	**AFTER EFFECTS COMPOSITIONS AND LAYERS** **Class Goal:** Explore and demonstrate what a composition is (within a project) and the use of layers in AE. Compare to layers in PS. Introduce PROJECT 2. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Compositions and Layers **Consumables:** **Video** 00:43:46 3.1 After Effects Composition 00:52:39 3.2 Precomposing 01:00:49 3.3 After Effects Layer Properties (stop at 01:10:21) --- **DUE:** PROJECT 1 **HW:** PROJECT 2
4	02/12/24	**PODCAST – CREATE YOUR TEAMS** **Class Goal:** Introduce PROJECT 4. Create and name your podcasting team. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Creating a brand-new podcast is a lot of work. As such, we will be working in teams of 2 or 3. Not only do many hands make lighter work, but collaboration helps to enrich the creative process. Plus, in the real world, even the most independent podcasts have multiple people involved to write, produce, promote, and be on-air talent. While your team won't be that big, you will have to play to your strengths, divide up the work, and successfully work together. **Consumables:** **Read** Discover Pods --- **DUE:** PROJECT 4 – Step 1 **HW:** PROJECT 2

5	02/19/24 (REMOTE?)	**AFTER EFFECTS KEYFRAMES** **Class Goal:** Understanding the importance of keyframes and the crucial role they play in creating time-based motion and animation. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Keyframes **Consumables:** **Video** 01:10:22 4.1 After Effects Keyframe Basics 01:17:01 4.2 After Effects Keyframe Easing 01:27:39 4.3 Spatial Interpolation (stop at 01:35:43) --- **DUE:** PROJECT 2 (draft) **HW:** PROJECT 2
6	02/26/24	**PODCAST – DECIDE WHAT YOUR PODCAST IS ABOUT** **Class Goal:** Choose and narrow the topic your podcast will be about. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Using the FPU Research & Inquiry Process, you will choose and narrow the topic your podcast will be about. Start by discussing with your team what topics interest you. Think about your hobbies and interests in and out of school. Next, conduct some *background research* and decide on an *inquiry question*. **Consumables:** **Read** Research & Inquiry Process --- **DUE:** PROJECT 4 – Step 2 **HW:** PROJECT 2
7	03/04/24	SPRING RECESS (no classes) **PODCAST – INVESTIGATE YOUR INSPIRATIONS** **Class Goal:** Research and seek out your own "mentor" podcasts. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Whether you are new to podcasts or you already have a list of favorites, we can learn a lot by selecting some episodes from a variety of well-produced podcasts, critically listening, and taking some notes. These efforts will help you decide on the content and tone of your podcast. **Consumables:** **Listen** Episodes of various podcasts --- **DUE:** PROJECT 2 **HW:** PROJECT 3 –Step 1

8	03/11/24	**AFTER EFFECTS MASKS, SHAPE LAYERS, AND TEXT** **Class Goal:** Exploring the use of masks, shapes, and text in motion. Introduce PROJECT 3. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Masks, Shape Layers, And Text **Consumables:** **Video** 01:35:44 5.1 How to Mask in After Effects 01:44:27 5.2 After Effects Shape Layers: Part 1 01:53:51 5.3 After Effects Shape Layers: Part 2 02:03:57 5.4 Text in After Effects 02:11:14 5.5 Text Animation and More (stop at 02:21:22) --- **DUE:** PROJECT 4 – Step 3 **HW:** PROJECT 3 –Step 1
9	03/18/24	**PODCAST – COLLECT YOUR SOURCES** **Class Goal:** Secondary Source Research **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Continuing with the FPU Research & Inquiry Process, you will dive deeper into your research (Secondary Source Research) and create an Annotated Bibliography for all of the content you will source for your podcast. **Consumables:** **Read** Research & Inquiry Process --- **DUE:** PROJECT 4 – Step 4 **HW:** PROJECT 3 –Step 1
10	03/25/24	**PODCAST – PRE-PODCAST CONTENT** **Class Goal:** Write your script(s) and create your cover art. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** It's time to write the script(s) for your podcast episode(s). You can choose to create one episode at 45 to 60 minutes *or* two episodes at 15 to 30 minutes each. Be sure to pick the format that will work best for the podcast you are working to create. Additionally, your team will design the cover art for your podcast. Every good podcast needs some eye-catching cover art. **Consumables:** **Read** How to Write a Podcast Script Cover Art Specifications --- **DUE:** PROJECT 3 – Step 1 **HW:** PROJECT 3 – Step 2

11	04/01/24	EASTER RECESS (no classes) **AFTER EFFECTS 2.5D** **Class Goal:** Explain what the heck '2.5D' is and how it is different from 3D, but much more than 2D. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** 2.5 D **Consumables:** **Video** 02:21:23 6.1 What Is 2.5D? 02:30:01 6.2 More 2.5D (stop at 02:35:06) --- **DUE:** PROJECT 4 – Step 5 (Draft) **HW:** PROJECT 3 – Step 2
12	04/08/24	**AFTER EFFECTS MOTION TRACKING** **Class Goal:** Practice with and explore the ability to have different elements synch how they move together in space. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Motion Tracking **Consumables:** **Video** 02:35:07 7.1 Motion Tracking, Camera Tracking, and 3D Text 02:44:18 7.2 More Motion Tracking 02:50:34 7.3 Camera Tracking in After Effects 02:58:09 7.4 3D Text in After Effects (stop at 03:09:11) --- **DUE:** PROJECT 3 – Step 2 **HW:** PROJECT 3 – Step 3
13	04/15/24	**PODCAST – PRE-PODCAST CONTENT** (cont.) **Class Goal:** Finalize your script(s) and cover art. Begin recording your episode(s). **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Preparing and setting up to record your podcast episode(s). Finally, we have arrived at the main event – the recording, editing, and creation of your podcast episode(s). Be sure to review all of your deliverables up to this point so as to stay focused and on task. **Consumables:** **Read** The Best Quiet Places to Record a Podcast Inexpensive USB Microphones --- **DUE:** PROJECT 4 – Step 5 (Final) **HW:** PROJECT 3 – Step 3

14	04/22/24	**AFTER EFFECTS MATTES AND COOL EFFECTS** **Class Goal:** Exploring the use of special effects and filters in AE. The frosting on the cake. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Mattes and Cool Effects **Consumables:** **Video** 03:09:12 8.1 Mattes 03:20:08 8.2 EFFECTS! 03:30:58 8.3 MORE EFFECTS! 03:42:18 8.4 Mind-Blowing Third-Party Effects --- **DUE:** PROJECT 3 – Step 3 **HW:** PROJECT 3 – Step 4
15	04/29/24	**PODCAST – YOUR PODCAST EPISODES** **Class Goal:** Complete your podcast episodes. **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Finalize recording, editing, and creation of your podcast episode(s). **Consumables:** **Watch** Garageband Tutorial One Garageband Tutorial Two Anchor Tutorial **Read** How to Write Better Podcast Show Notes --- **DUE:** PROJECT 4 – Step 6 **HW:** PROJECT 3 – Step 4
16	05/06/24 --- (Finals Week)	**FINAL PRESENTATIONS** **Class Goal:** Professional presentation of PROJECT 3 **Discuss & Demonstrate:** Your Final Title Sequence Project **Consumables:** NA --- **DUE:** PROJECT 3 – Step 4 **HW:** Take a long nap

The schedule and material in this syllabus may be updated or changed upon the instructional needs of students in the course and any changes in college schedules.

Created by: Christopher Previte

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