

Tebben Gill Lopez
Creative Multimedia Journalism
IDM final assessment

At the start of the creation of my individually designed major, I had a number of goals I wanted to achieve through the process. These goals have driven every academic choice I have made prior even to announcing my major or starting university.

Through my studies I was looking to facilitate crossover of simple stories into online content. I wanted to embellish a written report with engaging visual and interactive content that can only be found in digital journalism. This was one of the base driving goals of my academic decision-making. It was to this end that I chose courses that involved digital and visual skills.

I wanted to achieve a considerable literacy in the digital and multimedia side of journalism and the postproduction aspects of the process. I feel that I have made great bounds toward this goal. Since the start of my major, I can edit digital photos in my sleep. I have done the task so often. I also can navigate my film equipment with satisfying proficiency, be it the actual filming or the post-editing software. I have also noticed myself analyzing other film and photography too, learning from the unique angle in one shot or the equipment used for a certain scene. I have a whole list of bookmarks of web pages I just enjoy the aesthetic of. I might inspect one of the elements on the page to find the CSS coding and reason how I might be able to get the same effect on my own web page. I am not often in the dark when having a technical conversation with a professional or other enthusiast. My literacy adds a whole new level of appreciation and engagement with the visuals I come across on television, online or in print.

Web design was a nebulous concept full of enigma and complexities before I started academically investigating it. I wanted to come out of university very familiar with the software and programs for web design. I am so glad I finally got to take a class in web design. While I have recreationally been teaching myself web design, it was enlightening to have a structured induction into the seemingly complex worldwide web. Through my class and general self-education, I have gotten pretty friendly with the different programs to use and the language of design.

More familiar to me was film. Where I was going into web design cold, I have dabbled in video since I was in elementary school. But I need more than just a casual understanding of what the auto settings are on a camera. I wanted more experience with film and also radio broadcasting, two elements of multimedia journalism that I have not had years of professional experience in. I had joined WVOF, the Fairfield Campus' radio station but had to disengage because of an overload of extracurricular. When I heard that NPR was opening an office on our campus, at the end of my sophomore year, I was very excited for the opportunity. To prep me for NPR, I joined the radio station in Galway. While I was there I received a great introduction to the equipment and the process for news broadcasting.

I joined the Ham Channel in my freshman year but also backed out because of how little hands-on experience I was getting. I didn't feel like I was contributing at all. But in my sophomore year I took the introduction course to new media and from there I continued to build on my editing skills. Through small personal projects I have become very familiar with Final Cut Pro. Lately, in light of a Magis Grant, I have been able to purchase more film equipment for my camera to noticeably improve the quality of my film. I believe that the caliber of my media can impress or disengage a viewer depending. I am very excited at the potential of the raw footage that I have been collecting and so far have been satisfied with the edited product and how it fits into my stories.

I wanted to learn the technicalities of moving picture and the mechanics behind creating a finished product. Having several multimedia projects open right now, I can say that I have a comprehensive concept of the practicalities of reaching a final package. I think of the setting and the best way to maximize the amount of media I can get. Being a one-woman project team, I have to carefully plan where I am going to mount one camera for video that with maximize image and clear audio, I have to consider if the use of a separate audio recording is necessary or possible, I need to diligently take notes on what is happening but also be cognizant of photo opportunities. It is a lot to handle but as I practice, I feel I am getting a better handle.

To best reach an audience, I wanted to explore and analyze communications. While I did not take any courses in the communications department, I did consult a great deal

with Dr. Mike Serazio about what courses I should be looking at. We came to several conclusions in different scenarios where a communications course would not be the best option for me at that given time. That being said, I have tried to develop an awareness of current trends in media. By critiquing the methods of connecting with the audience, I have built a pretty good idea of what works in design and presentation. This is one way that I have been pursuing a goal of gaining a familiarity with the main and most effective means of visual communication and reporting. This has also been seriously fortified through my work on The Mirror.

By the end of my education, I wanted above-average literacy in all aspects of visual communication. I think the fact that my position at the newspaper was revised to Visual Art Director is telling. After weeks of production and critiques in The Mirror office, I feel confident giving advice to other people in the office about what pictures are the best, what layouts will have the biggest impact, and what photographers should look for at an event and how they should approach composition. I have had a hand in every visual aspect of the newspaper and often tried to give feedback about the lack of visuals on line and provide recommendations on how to fix the shortcomings.

I was looking to develop a distinct insight into the composition of images. I am now far more lucid in the qualities of a shot. For example on a sunny day, I know I have to close my aperture, raise my shutter speed and test my aperture compensation as well as white balance to guard against wasted shots. After many conversations it is also evident now that much of the artistic composition is intrinsic instinct. And I have been shooting long enough to build that particular right-brain muscle.

By expanding my major over several fields, I wanted to achieve a multimedia major that would raise interests of future employers and lay the masonry for several steps in my professional climb. From the internships I have had, the jobs I have shadowed, and the professionals I have spoken with, I feel confident that my expertise are sought after and that my prospects for job opportunities and gainful employment are there. I just have to find them.

My goal with my studies as a whole, including my minors and my experience abroad, is to allow me to investigate multiple perspectives and deepen my understanding of ethical issues and social justice that I feel journalism and reporting can bring. My

ultimate objective is to bring the truth to people and the justice and change that follow the dissemination of knowledge. I have tried my best to start on that path with my most recent project and independent study this past semester. I created an online magazine called *be cause*, which offers a platform for important topics that should either be addressed or appreciated through prose, poetry, composition and art. The current subjects range from fair trade to mindfulness and there are more stories in the work. I have also began circulation of submission requests across campus hoping for more contributed work.

I anticipated that by spreading out my studies into multiple departments, I would have access to more opportunities for internships and connections. This has certainly come to fruition in my opinion. I got my internship with Sustainable America last summer, which not only paid by also got me on the ground level of a startup green organization. I have received honors in Best College and High School Photography competition run by The Photography Forum, which was shown to me by a professor. And I was introduced to the new Fulbright-National Geographic Digital Storytelling Fellowship, which I wouldn't have had a clue about without my professors' help.

These past four years have been an expedition of trail blazing, finding a yet-unexplored path. With the experience in photography, film, technical editing, web design, journalism, anthropology and environmental studies, I feel I have a unique set of tools to create something new and open many doors for future possibilities. And while I am not professionally engaging in Environmental Journalism or Visual Anthropology, I have created a forum for those very genres in my online magazine.

In this online portfolio, I have listed the courses I have taken from my curriculum in chronological order so that my progress can be best observed. The following are the results I have attained in knowledge and skills through the curriculum and design of the Creative Multimedia Journalism major.

SA 134 Digital Photography was my first introduction to the basics of photography. I took it in the fall after graduation (I took a gap year before starting university as a full-time student). Through this class I learned about levels and curves, the

important tools to perfect the potential contrast and color in photos. I also learned about the process of creating an exhibit, which is the same as a photo story in photojournalism. Most significantly, this class helped me realize that I wanted to become a photojournalist after seeing an assigned photojournalism exhibit about women in the Congo.

ENW 220 News Writing gave me a refresher in the structure of a news story. I also discovered how little I cared for hard news and between Dr. James Simon and myself, discovered my strength in feature story writing. I also had my first experience with blogs, which I took to pretty quickly as I started to help other students in class.

ENW 320 Writing the Feature Story allowed me to further explore whether my suspicion that I enjoyed feature story writing was valid or not. It was. I was able to write some very strong stories about environmental and anthropological topics. This process gave me a greater concept of the kind of work I would like to do professionally. It also provided me with material that I have continued to use to help conceptualize websites and the direction I want to work in.

NM 10 Intro New Media Arts Film TV Radio was for the most part, a review of tools I already knew. That is, until we reached the video portion of the class. It was then I got the most useful experience in handling camera equipment and in producing a video. Because we used the top end software, Final Cut Pro, for the postproduction, I am still up to date on the most popular methods of nonlinear editing.

ENW 323 Photojournalism was a practice in reflection and honing of my photography skills. By this time, in the second half of my sophomore year, I had been doing professional photography for around a year and a half. But with this class, I worked closely with Dr. Tommy Xie, finding the weaknesses in my photos and exercising thematic and storytelling through one or multiple photographs.

FSGA 306 Intro to Visual Culture was a course I took at NUIG. I wasn't supposed to be able to take any courses in the Huston School of Film & Digital Media. But after speaking with the professor, Dr. Aimee Mollaghan, we agreed that this would be a valuable asset to my studies and she wrote me into the class. I explored visual culture in a broad scope, which was certainly useful in my understanding and

appreciation of current visual work. We covered the history and different philosophies and practices within the visual culture. It was equally interesting to see the visual world through a different cultural lens.

SPGA 394 Power of Story & Narrative was the other course I took at NUIG towards my major. This was a course in the sociology department, but was very focused on the art of the interview. I really enjoyed this course for the emphasis it put on storytelling. I appreciated the perspective that interviews were a respectable form of investigation. And although there was a sociological overtone to the class (not that that was a bother, in fact it was very interesting and engaging), I realized that there is a lot of intersect between it and journalism. Which only escalated my enthusiasm for journalism.

FTM 120 Beg Screenwriting for Film & TV was a perfect class to address the pre-production process of a film project. The logistics of writing scripts for documentaries was particularly useful for the larger-scale projects that I hope are in my near future. The class workshops were also very useful (I really enjoy critiques because I get a different perspective and a more realistic idea of what level my work resides at the moment).

SA 133 Photo I: Alternative Processes gave me insight into the history of photography. Because of this class, I not only know how to produce large-scale photography, but my level of appreciation for traditional photography has exponentially increased. I love the tactile and arduous process of creating a print and the fact that each print is unique is a lovely novelty in the age of digital replication.

ENW 397 Journalism Practicum was a logical choice since I was the acting Visual Art Director for The Mirror this past year. The critiques we gave the paper each week was very useful in getting an idea of what designs work best to appeal to readers. Through the midterm and final, which was a clip book of all my work in the paper that semester, I realized how much work I have actually done. It was a confidence booster at a time when I felt overwhelmed.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention my other extracurricular, which all have used some element of my multimedia skill set, and the three courses I am taking right

now. I have previously mentioned that I am taking IS 135 Fundamentals of Web Design and ENW 348 Independent Writing Project. Both of these classes have allowed me to stretch my creative capabilities and test my limits. I have been on the e-board of PFC since my sophomore year, designing the promotional art through posters and tickets, as well as using my art within the performances to express the social issues acted out. I have produced promotional art for LEAF, including their current logo and I have been the Art Extraordinaire of Wagner, the student literary magazine, overseeing and generating the art for the magazine that came out every 2 weeks.

Overall, I feel that this academic adventure has been infinitely beneficial to my future. I have consistently and constantly been engaged, interested and enthusiastic about my courses because of the practical applications they have and the content that genuinely appealed to me. I consider myself very fortunate to have had the opportunity to design my own major and reap the benefits of this wonderful and very personal journey.