

DRA 131's planning for the Showcase!



Introduction

For the Student Showcase on December 6, 2012, two sections of “DRA 131 Self, Media and Society” will be preparing some form of media-themed presentation.

Previous presentations by DRA131

Last year, students in this course created a “citizen journalism” project where they generated an online report on the Showcase as it was in progress. Our mission statement was to make the Showcase available to anyone, anywhere, with an Internet connection, on or off campus, as it was unfolding. This was done using a Wordpress blog to which the students posted video interviews with Showcase presenters and guests, reports on some of the presentations by other courses, newsflashes, and so on. Since DRA 131 is an introductory media course, the Showcase project allowed students to think about the operation of digital media in today’s world, while making media their own media. To visit this project online, go to:

<http://showcasecitizenjournalismproject.wordpress.com/>

For the 2012 Showcase, the students in DRA131 may do something similar... or something completely different.

Start early and devote class time to the Showcase

In the first week of October to get their project started—since an obvious lesson from last year is start planning the Showcase as early as possible in the semester, Nancy Yang and other representatives of FYE will come to my classes to introduce the Showcase and explain why students should be involved in it. This full-class session will be a first opportunity for the students to begin thinking about what their project will be. In early November, an additional full class session has been put aside so that students can “brainstorm” towards their project. Also, immediately prior to the Showcase two more full class sessions have been put aside for preparing any content or technical infrastructure we need for our Showcase presentation. The use of student online blogs and Flip Cameras is fully integrated into the course; by the time of the Showcase all students should be comfortable with these tools.

The process is the project

In DRA131 we study a range of media-related themes, including citizen journalism and participatory media making, media justice, media ethics, as well as the language of the media (the different kinds of shots, the operation of editing, and so on). Through their own media making activities for the Showcase, students will be able to apply to their own media making concepts and ideas explored throughout the semester. In tandem with linking the media content of DRA 131 with the Showcase in this way, the process of preparing for the Showcase is a learning experience for students; it requires the development of a group project over the semester, peer-to-peer working and learning, the staging of a public presentation, and effective communication with an audience—all valuable skills for students to master, as well as being a way for Freshman students to establish themselves within the John Jay College community.

Two obvious headaches for instructors

Student availability: This year the Showcase has been scheduled on a day that DRA 131 does not meet. Therefore, I expect some students will not be present for the staging of the Showcase. Anticipating this, there will be plenty of back-end work this time around, and whatever the student project is this year there will be plenty of opportunities for student involvement even if they cannot be present on the actual day.

Technology: The use of technology is always a headache at JJ: we suffer perennially slow Internet connections and, in some (many?) areas, intermittent wifi access. Since DRA 131's project will likely require a lot of Internet use including the transfer of large data files, I expect to use Ethernet connections rather than wifi. In the hope of making this work smoothly, as well as testing all the technology early on the day of the Showcase, my students be testing it a few days beforehand. (Also, if your class needs ITSS equipment for your presentation, place your reservations early!)