Telling Stories: Journalists and Ethnographers  
Freshman Seminar, UA 663  
Prof. Robert S. Boynton (robert.boynton@nyu.edu)  
Class: Wednesday, 2-4:30, room #659, 20 Cooper Square  
Office hours: Wednesday, 12-2, room #620, 20 Cooper Square

New York City is a cornucopia of sub-cultures. No matter what you are fascinated by--art, music, fashion, sports, or particular ethnic or economic groups--you will find it here. In this course you will learn how to transform your passions into print, audio and photo journalism.

We will read nineteenth century chroniclers of New York City’s immigrant poor, like Jacob Riis and Stephen Crane. We’ll listen to audio stories from StoryCorps and Radio Diaries. We’ll look at photographs by Jim Goldberg and Margaret Morton. And we’ll study oral history and journalism by Studs Terkel, Joseph Mitchell, and Gay Talese.

Inspired by this work, you will create your own projects in print, photography and audio, combining the three, using slideshow and photoshop. Your final project is a multimedia portraits of the community and individuals you choose to follow. No prior technical skills are required.

Readings  
I will provide all the readings, via links and PDFs stored on Google Drive. I have placed several books of photography on reserve at Bobst so that you can look at them there.

Assignments  
Most weeks, you will respond briefly (2-3 paragraphs) to the assigned readings, photographs or audio. All responses must be posted to the appropriate Google Drive file by Tuesday at midnight.

In addition, there are three written assignments: A short essay (1,200 words) due October 4; the first draft of a character sketch (1,500 words) due October 25; and the final draft of your character sketch (2,500 words) due November 29.

You will produce one photo essay, due November 15. The final project--composed of photos, audio and print--is due December 8.

Grading  
The grades of A and A- are reserved for outstanding work. Your final grade will be based on:

Weekly responses: 20%  
Class participation: 20%  
Essay: 10%  
Character sketch: 10%  
Photographic essay: 10%  
Final multimedia project: 30%

Class Participation  
Class participation is a large part of your grade. You are expected to complete the reading/listening/viewing before class and come prepared to discuss it. Joining the class discussion only a few times during a class period will earn a “B” for class participation. Only active engagement, as evidenced by contributions made in the classroom, will earn a higher participation grade.
Missing a class without an excused absence will result in a reduction in your final grade. The university recognizes the following as excused absences: documented illness, family emergency, and religious observance. You must email me in advance if you are going to miss class.

**Academic Integrity**
You are in a community of scholars in which academic integrity is a primary value. All work must be your own. Ideas and quotations must be properly sourced. Students who plagiarize will fail the course and possibly be expelled from the University.

**Electronic Devices**
Turn off all electronic devices, including cell phones, during class. You may bring a laptop to class, but it must remain closed unless you need it to find material related to the course. No email, tweets, messaging, or other electronic communication during class time is permitted.

**Readings**
Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*
Stephen Crane, *The New York City Sketches*
Joseph Mitchell, *Up At the Old Hotel*
Gay Talese, *The Bridge*
Mitch Duneier, *The Urban Ethnography Reader*
Studs Terkel, *Working*
Jennifer Toth, *Mole People: Life in the Tunnels Beneath New York City*
John Biewen/Alexa Dilworth, *Reality Radio: Telling True Stories in Sound*

**Photography**
Margaret Morton, *The Tunnel: The Underground Homeless of New York City*
David Isay, *Flophouse: Life on the Bowery*
Jim Goldberg, *Rich and Poor*
10 Composition Tips
NYT Slideshows

**Audio**
Podcasting with Garageband, Lynda
Radio Diaries, Joe Richman
This is Actually Happening, Whit Missildine
StoryCorps, David Isay

**September 6 - Introduction**

**September 13 - Jacob Riis**
- Due: Reading response
- Read: Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Introduction, chapters 1-4)
- Look at: Riis’s photos
- Watch: “The Other Half ... Revisited”
- Watch: Why use the iPhone for photography?
- Watch: Photo Composition 101
- In class: Mic technique and sound recording
September 20 - Stephen Crane
- Due: Reading response
- Read: Stephen Crane, “Men in the Storm,” “When a Man Falls,” “Experiment in Misery”
- In Class: Introduction to audio editing, part I

September 27 - Joseph Mitchell
- Due: Reading response
- Read: “The Old House at Home,” “Mazie,” “Lady Olga”
- Read: Asking Good Questions
- In Class: Introduction to audio editing, part I

October 4 - Working
- Due: Essay comparing Riis, Crane and Mitchell (1,200 words)
- Read: Studs Terkel, Working, pp 126-158 (Link to audio)
- Read: Bowe, Gig, selections
- Listen: “Seltzer Man,” “Watertower Builder,” “Grinder,” Radio Diaries
- Listen: “What if you got a job transporting dead bodies?” This is Actually Happening
- In Class: Introduction to audio editing, part II

October 11 - StoryCorps
- Due: Audio editing assignment
- Due: Project pitch (2 page)
- Listen: Listening is an Act of Love, On Being
- Listen: David Isay, The Sunshine Hotel
- Read: David Isay, Harvey Wang, Flophouse: Life on the Bowery
- Read: David Isay, “Radio Documentaries Take Listeners Into Dark Corners”
- Watch: David Isay, “Everyone around you has a story the world needs to hear”
- In class: Michael Garofalo, producer, StoryCorps
- In class: Discuss project pitches

October 18 - First Person
- Due: Listening response
- Listen: What if you spent 15 hours on the edge of sanity?, This is Actually Happening
- What if you woke up in the morgue?, This is Actually Happening
- What if you narrowly escaped with your life?, This is Actually Happening
- Listen: Interview with Whit Missildine, The Podcast Digest
- In class: Whit Missildine, creator, This is Actually Happening
- In class: Critique select audio editing assignments

October 25 - Narrative Photography, I
- Due: First Draft of written character sketch
- Look at: Jim Goldberg, Rich and Poor
- Watch: “Jim Goldberg on his documentary practice,” SFMoma
- Watch: “Everybody Street”
- In class: Lori Grinker, photographer, photo essay assigned
November 1 - Photography
- Due: Reading response
- Look at: Margaret Morton, *The Tunnel: The Underground Homeless of New York City*
- Read: Jennifer Toth, *Mole People: Life in the Tunnels Beneath NYC* (pp. 1-72)
- In class: [Margaret Morton](#)
- In class: Slideshow and Photoshop basics

November 8 - Gay Talese and Bridge Builders
- Due: Draft of audio interview, transcript, photos, list of subjects
- Read: Gay Talese, *The Bridge* (chapters 1, 2, 4, 5)
- Watch: Gay Talese: [A Man of Record](#), *The New Yorker*
- In class: Project checkpoint

November 15 - Narrative Photography, part II
- Due: Photo essay
- In class: Lori Grinker critiques student work

November 22 - No Class

November 29 - Photography update
- Due: Final character sketch
- Due: Final project photos
- In class: Workshop photos

December 8 - Audio update
- Due Final project audio
- In class: Workshop audio

December 13 - Last Class
- In class: Present projects