Engaged Journalism Course Summaries Portfolio

Information gaps are where misinformation breeds, and accountability goes to die. The Engaged Journalism course has dual objectives: to enhance local news and civic information's quality and reach and to build stronger, more resilient community bonds. Rooted in the conviction that a well-informed public is essential for a functioning democracy, Engaged Journalism aspires to be a conduit for community-driven solutions and democratic participation. Recent SCYP partnerships with three Oregon communities and the specific Engaged Journalism projects follows.

What is the Sustainable City Year Program?

The Sustainable City Year Program is an innovative university-community partnership program founded by the Sustainable Cities Institute at the University of Oregon in 2009-10. In this unique model, existing courses, faculty, and students from across campus are purposefully directed toward a single Oregon community over an academic year to address vexing issues identified by the partner. SCYP and the students, faculty, and communities it engages with are an example of Oregon innovation, leadership, and how leveraging resources can contribute to meaningful, additional, and society-wide value. SCYP creates a conduit for translating knowledge into practice, and provides significant workforce development opportunities for students, adding 'hard' and 'soft' skills and hands-on experience to all levels of students' education.

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Engaged Journalism:
Listening to Salem's Hispanic Community

Partner: City of Salem
Instructor: Andrew DeVigal

Project Description: To better understand the information and communication needs of Salem's Hispanic population, students developed a survey aimed at gathering information on the news and information habits of Salem's Hispanic community. Emphasizing community engagement, the students met with peers from the Salem-Keizer School District and Willamette Academy, engaged in community networking, conversed with residents, promoted both English and Spanish versions of the survey, and distributed informational flyers in high-traffic areas. This effort aimed to increase survey participation and gather extensive data about the community's news and information sources. Based on the survey findings and recent research, the report offers community-centric recommendations for Salem staff and officials, high schools, and local media outlets to enhance news and information dissemination for Hispanic students, consumers, and the broader community.

Recommendations: The recommendations for improving information access and engagement for Salem's Hispanic community include:
- **Youth Engagement:** Develop digital strategies, such as educational partnerships and youth journalism programs, to engage young people. Create a weekly Instagram show, "Salem 10," produced by students and professional journalists to teach media literacy and multimedia production.
- **Bilingual Resource Guides:** Create bilingual resource guides that contain civic information and distribute them digitally and physically in community spaces like schools and community centers. Prioritize short-form video content on social media to enhance engagement.
- **Community Listening Sessions:** Conduct listening sessions with "Radio Poder" and "Mano a Mano" to identify community needs and improve coverage based on these insights.
- **General Information System:** Develop an online hub to provide accessible local news and resources, integrating both mainstream and Spanish news sources. This hub would foster collaboration among community organizations to boost media and citizen engagement.

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Information Needs Assessment for the City of Hermiston

Partner: City of Hermiston
Instructor: Andrew DeVigal

Project Description: Students aimed to understand Hermiston's information ecosystem, which involves the distribution and impact of information within the community. The class focused on what information is consumed and shared in Hermiston, which media outlets are most influential, and how these entities can better meet the community's needs. Students conducted a community survey and after analyzing the results, visited Hermiston to meet with residents, see community spaces, and talk to leaders. Students also focused on how the Hermiston Public Library could more effectively reach the City's Hispanic population. They also held virtual roundtables with survey respondents to discuss and gather insights on the City's information dissemination and potential improvements.

Recommendations:

Upgrade Hermiston Library Spaces:
- Create a makerspace in the basement.
- Establish a "living room" space for families and community groups on the first floor.

Host and Advertise More Library Events:
- Allow community bookings for events.
- Organize events for children and homeschooling families.
- Promote events via Facebook, Parks & Rec website, and local news outlets.

Support Spanish Speakers:
- Translate the City website and local media into Spanish.
- Translate Facebook group information into Spanish.

Use Online Platforms Effectively:
- Encourage news media to engage in community Facebook groups.
- Facilitate communication between government officials and the public on Facebook.
- Create a moderated Facebook page for community engagement.
- Have school officials post events on community Facebook pages.

Enhance Physical Gathering Spaces:
- Improve the Hermiston Food Pod with communal events, additional vendors, and amenities like heaters and toilets.
- Use event calendars or bulletin boards to share information about community events.

Collaborate on Communication Platforms:
- Have community leaders write columns for local news outlets.
- Share information platforms between entities like the library and news outlets.
- Collaborate with Eastern Oregon University's communication school to address community information needs.

WINTER 2018

Wikiup Junction Community Advisory Council

Partner: City of La Pine
Instructor: Andrew DeVigal

Project Description: Students conducted an information ecosystem assessment in La Pine, Oregon. Project goals included finding out what and how media is consumed, which outlets are doing well engaging the community and why, and how the media can better serve the needs of La Pine. The assessment involved community engagement events, interviews with residents, media representatives, and government officials, and nearly 100 surveys completed both online and in-person. The surveys followed guidelines from The Listening Post Collective Playbook, which helped the student journalists engage with the community. The results showed that La Pine residents have specific media consumption habits and a strong desire for more hyper-local information

Recommendations: Based on their assessment, the team recommended several strategies to enhance La Pine's information ecosystem:

For the Local Government:
- Leverage Community Information Networks: Utilize popular platforms like the "What's Really Happening in La Pine" Facebook group by assigning a city official to monitor and engage with the platform. This can help build positive relationships, provide official information to counter rumors, and understand community trends.

For Local News Outlets:
- Build Relationships with Community Members: Strengthen ties with residents by crowdsourcing story ideas, involving community members in reporting, and hosting discussions. Tools like Hearken and GroundSource can facilitate these interactions, leading to improved community engagement and news coverage.

For La Pine Community Members:
- Create Opportunities for Youth Experience: Encourage youth involvement by setting up student-run media projects (radio station, newspaper, blog) and offering internships with local businesses. This can provide valuable experience and increase youth engagement in the community.

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