

#CannabisJournalism

Studying the Culture of America's New Normal

M-F, 9-5

On-Campus/Local Travel

Instructor: [Andrew Matranga](#) | Andrew.Matranga@gmail.com | [@AndrewMatranga](#)

This course will examine the legalization of marijuana – both medical and recreational – across the country. Ten states and Washington, DC, have now legalized marijuana for recreational use for adults over 21. In the USA, 33 states have legalized medical marijuana.

In 2019, North America will be an open cannabis enterprise zone unlike any seen before in history, with the Canadian market fully open for business and Mexico soon to follow. A recent poll by the Pew Research Center found that 62% of Americans said they supported legalizing marijuana.

The legalization of recreational marijuana by Colorado voters in 2012 signaled a historic change that continues the debate in election referenda and in state legislatures across the country. Denver, and the University of Denver, sit at this historic crossroads, and as student journalists, we will be able to dig into all the issues that legalization poses, from medical and legal.

Not only will we be investigating the scope of the marijuana legalization movement and its many political and practical intricacies, we also will be presenting this project with original data and multimedia elements conceived and designed to push and promote enterprising storytelling on a national level. Students will visit and interview dispensaries, industry professionals and private citizens to produce a portfolio piece of narrative journalism using the modes and methods of their choice, with direction of the instructor.

We will question this topic using Bruce Barcott's book *Weed the People* as our lens, along with regional dailies across the country for a local angle:

The magnitude of the change in America's relationship to marijuana can't be measured in only economic or social terms: There are deeper shifts going on here – cultural realignments, social adjustments, and financial adjustments. The place of marijuana in our lives is being rethought, reconsidered, and recalibrated. Four decades after Richard Nixon declared a War on Drugs, that long campaign has reached a point of exhaustion and failure. The era of its winding down as arrived.

SCHEDULE

	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI
Topic	Opening lecture. Story pitches. Watch Rolling Papers documentary about Denver Post. Discuss workflow and AP style for writing.	Field Trip On campus lecture in PM	Visit bakery and/or dispensary tour.	Guest speakers and editing in class	Morning Field Trip. Final media work and publishing to medium.com collections

Before class meets Read the Barcott book and AP book, plus other articles assigned. Start tweeting and follow the [#cannabisjournalism](#) hashtag on Twitter in advance of the course.



INSTRUCTOR

I have been with DU since the spring of 2013. I love media, and I have been at each level of the industry, from my time studying journalism as a student (that's a lifelong process, by the way), performing work as a student journalist, teaching student journalists, serving as a magazine journalist, and then advising student journalists. I really (really) loves maps, my wife and three kids, well-crafted story pitches, riding my bike and playing my guitar. I live in Longmont, Colorado, just down the street from Left Hand Creek and the majesty that is Boulder County. If I am not online, you'll find me outside.

CONTACT ANDREW

Personal Website AndrewMatranga.com

Email andrew.matranga@gmail.com

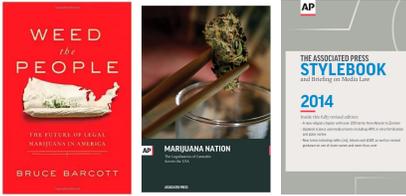
Twitter [@AndrewMatranga](https://twitter.com/AndrewMatranga)

Note: Any emails or docs sent to Andrew *must* have a subject line that looks something like this:

[MFJS] Question about Twitter analytics report

Textbooks

Books available from various online sources (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Associated Press, etc.)



- [Weed the People: The Future of Legal Marijuana in America](#) by Bruce Barcott (WTP)
- [Marijuana Nation: The Legalization of Cannabis Across the USA](#) by Associated Press (MN)
- [Associated Press \(AP\) Stylebook](#) (AP)

Required Tools

- [Google Drive](#) account ([help here](#)).
- [Twitter](#) account and [Twitter Analytics](#) account (**activate analytics now**).
- [Medium](#) account (syncs with Twitter).
- Digital camera - phones are serviceable, but not ideal.
- Digital audio recorder -- phones can work in controlled situations.

Suggested Materials

- Reporters' notebooks - Moleskine or any analog recording method.
- Smartphone apps for digital note taking and voice recording. See [logistics](#) below for suggestions.
- DSLR camera.

Class Websites

We will be using [Canvas](#) (1), [Google Drive](#) (2), [Twitter](#) (3) and [Medium](#) (4).

1. Announcements and assignments are posted in the class Canvas. You submit graded work into the assignments section on Canvas. Attendance is also logged through Canvas, and that factors into final grade automatically. Apps for iOS and Android are available, and you should check them.
2. We will collaborate on Google Drive, sharing docs, slides, images, and other content. We will go over this process in class during each assignment period.
3. Twitter is a public class space to share news articles and create conversations around events and topics relevant to the class. We'll use [#CannabisJournalism](#) as our hashtag, and we will be on a class list. Find me on Twitter, and I'll add you to this list.
4. You will be running your own Medium for this class. It's simple social media publishing tool that syncs with your Twitter account. You will be publishing to Medium post every day as a curation tool for your thoughts using other's readings and writing. You'll be uploading your longer stories to the platform.

More about the class and our approach*

I will also push you to build and hone your critical thinking skills by posing provocative and important questions for your reporting, your writing, your creative and your edits.

Finally, in addition to discussion and short group activities, this class will include Google

Hangouts as well as guest speakers with direct experience in cannabis journalism.

Journalists and...

- **Journalists and history.** Journalists are crucial players in society. As a group, they produce the stories that the rest of us read and watch. They decide how the stories that we read will be told, or not told. In sum, they mediate reality for the rest of us and record history as it will be read decades and centuries from now. Theirs--and yours--is a privileged and important role. It ought to be taken seriously by all journalists, from print and broadcast journalists to public relations professionals.
- **Journalists and context.** One of the tenets of this class is that it is not enough simply to report "the facts" and what "people say." Good news reporting and writing goes beyond simply providing information to synthesizing and contextualizing this information in useful, interesting, accessible and meaningful ways. In 1947, the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press concluded that a free society and a healthy democracy needs journalists that produce "a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning." This advice still rings true today.
- **Journalists and accuracy, fairness, and multiple points of view.** Good journalists must be committed to accuracy, fairness *and* to including multiple points of view in their stories. In this class, you will be encouraged to say goodbye to the adage, "there are always two points of view on an issue." **There are always more than two points of view on an issue even if some of these may not seem obvious or may not be held by large numbers of "the mainstream."**
- **Journalists and "objectivity."** Journalists are often told they must be "objective" and often claim to be "objective." I prefer the term *fair, accurate, multiple-points-of-view* reporting. "Objectivity" is not only impossible--the news reporter cannot step completely outside of human society and *then* write about it--in many cases, it is undesirable. Media scholars have argued that "objectivity" frequently leads to a sort of "he said/she said" journalism that robs news of larger context. Leaning too heavily on "objectivity" can also lead to a societal status quo in which power brokers are able to remake society in their own image without facing hard questions and public accountability.
- **Journalists and Critical Questions.** This class holds that the single most important duty of the efficient, confident, critical and thoughtful news media professional is to **ask informed and critical questions of everyone and everything, including themselves and their own profession.**
- **Journalists and Current Events.** Journalists are expected to keep abreast of current events--local, regional and international. Because we live in age of convergence -- meaning the coming together of various forms of media, print, video, audio, etc., and because more and more of us are getting most, or all, of our news online, we will be

tapping the Internet to keep up-to-date on news.

Each of you will be required to subscribe to Twitter and feeds from a *variety* of news sources which represent a *variety* of news approaches and a *variety* of news genres.

***(Thanks to Dr. Christof Demont-Heinrich for the section above.)**

You are strongly encouraged to submit your work to The Clarion and the companion website duclarion.com. Not because I am the faculty advisor (full disclosure), but because there is no better way to break into the news industry than by getting on-the-job experience and generating formally published articles. Your future should be enough incentive to write for The Clarion. However, in order to motivate you more, I have the following "extra-credit" policy: Each news or live entertainment/sports story you get published in The Clarion will add 2.5 points (.25%) to your total quarter grade. A full-length column/review, etc. will add 5 points to your overall quarter grade, or (0.5%). You may count up to three Clarion stories – but no more – toward extra-credit. If you decide to join The Clarion and work on graphic design, editing or digital production, we can figure out an extra credit scenario to complement your work.

Deadlines Deadlines are a fact of life in *all* media industries. Media professionals cannot file stories late. Period. Barring extreme circumstances, you will be expected to file your stories by deadline, or you will receive a zero (F) on that assignment. WE also feature rolling deadlines, which means that you will be working on one piece, brainstorming and researching another pitch and possibly performing edits to previously turned in pieces. This is de rigeur for media industries, as all content is swirling around us. It's our job to synthesize and organize these disparate pieces to produce compelling projects.

AP Style You will be expected to adhere to AP style in your formal stories. Failure to do so will indicate to me basic carelessness and laziness -- definitely NOT attributes an editor wants in his or her writers and reporters -- and will reflect itself in the individual grade you receive for the story.

Story revision Editors frequently ask reporters to revise their stories. We are going to be editing throughout the week.

Critique We will be critiquing each other's writing in order to learn from each other and to become better reporters and writers.

Participation & Attendance In-class participation and discussion is vital to a healthy and effective learning environment.

Class Twitter feed participation We will hold an ongoing conversation about our observations of cannabis media in contemporary culture in the form of a class Twitter feed. You may either use your current Twitter username or create one specifically for

this course. Tweets should be personal thoughts/insights/questions, responses to readings or lectures, and/or links to relevant material on the web, and should include the course hashtag (#CannabisJournalism). You must post 10 course-relevant tweets per day.

Grading Breakdown

(Total points = 1,000 points)

- **Final Project assignments = 50% (500 points total, weighted)**
 - 1,000-1,500-word piece of your choice posted on Medium
- **Twitter = 30% (300 points total, weighted)**
 - Daily tweets - 5 to 10 ten tweets a day.]
- **In-class participation & attendance = 20% (200 points total, weighted)**

Grading Scale:

- 92%+- A
- 90%-91% A-
- 87%-89% B+
- 83%-86% B
- 80%-82% B-
- 77%-79% C+
- 73-76% C
- 70-72% C-
- 67%-69% D+
- 63%-66% D
- 60%-62% D-
- 59% F

If you attend class, do the required work and have a reasonable grasp of the information, you should have no trouble earning at least a "C," which indicates satisfactory work.

With the exception of documented absences [official doctor's note, etc.] you will NOT be allowed to make up a pop quiz, exam, etc. if you miss class. If you have a legitimate, documented reason for missing an upcoming class [official DU athletic/extracurricular event, etc.], it is your responsibility to inform the instructor beforehand. Some lecture notes will be posted to the class web site. However, not all will be. It is your responsibility to contact other class members for in-class notes, assignment sheets, etc. if you miss class.

Gradebook:

I will be using Canvas. This will allow you to generally keep track of how you're doing. Be aware that a large percentage of your grade will still be in the balance until after the last day of class. In short, just because you're carrying a 90% average into the last day of class doesn't mean that you will end up with a 90% for the quarter. Basically, use Canvas as a rough estimate of how you're doing during the quarter -- and to make sure I am entering the correct grades on your assignments.

1. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic "F" for that assignment. Additionally, university policy permits harsher actions. If you have any questions about what constitutes (or does not constitute) plagiarism, ask me before you turn something in.
2. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please let me know as soon as possible.
3. If you are involved in DU athletics or some other form of extra-curricular activity that will interfere with your attendance, you are required to let me know far ahead of time so that we can make any accommodations that are allowed according to official DU policies.
4. If you have any questions or concerns during the course of the quarter about anything, please feel free to contact me.

Logistics

Suggested Downloads and Reading

If you have a smartphone or tablet, I highly recommend these apps. They range from news to productivity to social media--and some incorporate many categories and uses into one app. All are iOS and Android. I also encourage you to explore the app store and find new apps. As the future of media goes increasingly mobile, we need to be at the bleeding edge of these products and services. Please test out new apps and give feedback on your experiences.

Apps Worth Downloading

- [Twitter](#) (or HootSuite, et al.) | [Google Drive](#) | [Instapaper](#) | [Stitcher](#) | [NPR News app](#) | [Google News app](#)

Newsletters and Websites Worth Reading

- **Quartz** qz.com/register | **Fast Company** fastcompany.com/newsletters | **Nieman Lab** niemanlab.org/subscribe | **Vox** vox.com | **Google News** news.google.com | **Upshot - NYTimes** nytimes.com/upshot

Class Policies

- Don't miss class -- you are fully, 100% responsible for the materials prior to, during the day. We will be moving on each day with skills and the project, and if you miss class--or you just sit on your phone texting during class--you will be left behind and your work will suffer.
- Participate in discussions (in class and on Twitter)
- Be a good collaborator
- Engage in the Open Book Classroom model (see below)

Clean Edit Policy

Students will adhere to a standard of clean editing and clear workflows. Keeping track of files and managing data is essential for success in the world of media production. This means proper consistency of project assets and database structures.

Ethics Policy

It's simple: be honest, cite sources, stay neutral. However, the creative process is not simple, and nor is the world. Not to mention that the internet offers a lot of help and resources--too many, in fact. If you use anything (from music to text to fonts to styles), you must source it and acknowledge inspiration. Students should feel free to use Google/other web resources to solve problems. An effort should be made by the student to break apart, comprehend and test any assistance they find online.

Data

Multiple backups in multiple locations (web server, portable hard drive, cd) of all homework and the final project should be kept. It's a good idea to keep multiple backups of the same work as progress is made. This allows for easy reversion. Loss of data will not be an acceptable excuse for late assignments.

Late Assignments

We will be preparing a print-ready piece on a deadline. We will work together to get it done.

Preparedness

All students should have the required materials present for every class. Assignments due each class session should have been thoroughly completed before the beginning of class. Failure to bring required materials or to have completed the class assignments will result in a loss of all participation points for the day.

Class Time

We will be doing a lot of hands-on work in class with writing and editing. Be prepared to work in groups and independently to reach that day's deliverables.

Accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from the Disability Services Program (DSP) as soon as possible. DSP determines accommodations based on documented disabilities and is located on the 4th floor of Ruffatto Hall, 1999 E. Evans Ave; 303-871-2278; <http://www.du.edu/disability/dsp>.

The Open Book Classroom

- (Borrowed from [Jack Stack's Great Game of Business](#))

1. **Know and Teach the Rules:** Every student should be given the measures of academic success and taught to understand them.
2. **Follow the Action & Keep Score:** Every student should be expected and enabled to use their knowledge to improve performance.
3. **Provide a Stake in the Outcome:** Every student should have a direct stake in the success, or the risk of failure, in the class.
 - What is the Open Book Classroom? Basically it's an accountability system and conversation about our progress, as groups and as individuals. We'll assess ourselves and our work, both in celebration and in critique, with the goal of constantly improving, in our Huddle, which is a weekly status meeting to check in an update progress. The first effort is rarely the best effort, and we'll build on our experiences and assignments. We'll create a self-measuring system built on shared learning outcomes, and we'll build key performance indicators that help us reach those outcomes, individually and collectively. You will base your scoring of yourself, your peers and your instructor on our SLO's below. My learning objectives for students in the class are based on these key student learning outcomes (SLO): engagement, initiative, collaboration, organization and creativity.
 - Basically, these SLO's boil down to these questions and how we answer them over the course of the quarter:
 - How you engage with the software and your peers.
 - How you take initiative in labs and in the group projects.
 - How you collaborate in discussions and in the group project.
 - How you organize your files on your workstation, personal computer and in Google Drive.
 - How you use creativity through the software and your own independent thinking.

CAVEAT: THIS SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT ANY TIME AND PER THE INSTRUCTOR'S DISCRETION. Changes will be noted in the revision history of the document.

Students with Disabilities/Medical Issues

If you qualify for academic accommodations because of a disability or medical issue please submit a Faculty Letter

to me from **Disability Services Program (DSP)** in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. DSP is located on the 4th floor of Ruffatto Hall; 1999 E. Evans Ave. 303.871. / 2372 / 2278/ 7432. Information is also available on line at <http://www.du.edu/disability/dsp>; see the *Handbook for Students with Disabilities*.

Religious Accommodations Policy

University policy grants students excused absences from class or other organized activities or observance of religious holy days, unless the accommodation would create an undue hardship. You must notify me by the end of the first week of classes if you have any conflicts that may require an absence. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with me in advance to make up any missed work or in-class material.

Honor Code/Academic Integrity

(Additional academic integrity statements can be found here)

All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of violating the Academic Misconduct policy, refer to the University of Denver website on the Honor Code (www.du.edu/honorcode). See also <http://www.du.edu/studentconduct> for general information about conduct expectations from the Office of Student Conduct.

Inclusive Learning Environments

(developed by the Faculty Senate)

In this class, we will work together to develop a learning community that is inclusive and respectful. Our diversity may be reflected by differences in race, culture, age, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and myriad other social identities and life experiences. The goal of inclusiveness, in a diverse community, encourages and appreciates expressions of different ideas, opinions, and beliefs, so that conversations and interactions that could potentially be divisive turn instead into opportunities for intellectual and personal enrichment.

A dedication to inclusiveness requires respecting what others say, their right to say it, and the thoughtful consideration of others' communication. Both speaking up and listening are valuable tools for furthering thoughtful, enlightening dialogue. Respecting one another's individual differences is critical in transforming a collection of diverse individuals into an inclusive, collaborative and excellent learning community. Our core commitment shapes our core expectation for behavior inside and outside of the classroom

Title IX

Gender violence can happen to anyone regardless of race, class, age, appearance, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The University of Denver is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex (gender), including sexual misconduct, sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking. [The Center for Advocacy, Prevention and Empowerment \(CAPE\)](#) provides programs and resources to help promote healthy relationships, teach non-violence and equality, and foster a respectful and safe environment for all members of the University of Denver community. All services are confidential and free of charge.

For assistance during business hours, call 303-871-3853 and ask to speak to the Director of CAPE. After hours, please call the Emergency & Crisis Dispatch Line at 303-871-3000 and ask to speak to the CAPE advocate on call.

Student Athletes

If you are a student-athlete, you should inform me of any class days to be missed due to DU sponsored varsity athletic events in which you are participating. Please provide me with an absence policy form by the end of the first week of class. You will need to make up any missed lectures, assignments, and/or exams.

Use of Technology in the Classroom

Access to the Internet can be a valuable aid to the classroom learning environment. You may be encouraged to use a laptop, smartphone, or other device to explore concepts related to course discussions and in-class activity. Keep in mind, however, that these technologies can be distracting – not only for you, but to others in the class. Please avoid the temptation of Facebook, texting, or other off-topic diversions.

Online and Web-supported Classes

It is your responsibility to procure reliable, readily-accessible Internet service in order to fulfill course expectations. I am under no obligation to accept late assignments or waive required tasks (e.g., discussion participation) due to lack of online access or malfunctioning computer hardware. Please consider identifying an alternative Internet source in case of technical problems. [Look here for a list of computer labs on the DU campus.](#) Computer support is available from the [University Technology Support \(UTS\) Help Center.](#)