



# HPSC0161

## Podcasting as Science Communication

### Syllabus

v1

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Session      | 2024-25  |
| Information  | <a href="http://profjoecain.net/0161">profjoecain.net/0161</a>             |
| Reading List | <a href="http://profjoecain.net/0161read">profjoecain.net/0161read</a>     |
| Moodle site  | <a href="http://profjoecain.net/0161moodle">profjoecain.net/0161moodle</a> |
| Timetable    | <a href="http://profjoecain.net/0161time">profjoecain.net/0161time</a>     |

### Description

Podcasting is a digital media format rapidly growing as a channel for science communication. Audiences are growing in size and reach every year. As a format, podcasting offers many ways to innovate. It also makes use of familiar conventions from traditional radio and story-telling. This module is a practice-based module to develop skills for creating individual podcasts and series. It also develops perspectives for thinking about podcasts within the wider contexts of science communication, science and technology studies, and entrepreneurial development. What can podcasts do? What can you do with podcasts?

Themes in this module range from format variety, audience, and purpose; inclusion, editorial, and ethics; markets, development, and innovation. Students will create podcast material suitable for publishing. They will assess current practices and trends in the industry. The module will develop skills in critical reflection and application of theory in communication sciences such as through debates around representation, voice, performance, authorship, narrative, post-truth, and topics of current interest. The module will have a distinct careers focus.

## Key Information

| Weight | Type                | Detail                 | Due date         |
|--------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| 25%    | project 1: analysis | 1000 words             | 21 October 2024  |
| 0%     | formative: WIP      | 5min presentation      | 15 November 2024 |
| 75%    | project 2: episode  | >20min audio recording | 17 December 2024 |

All due dates are 17:00 London time.

## Module Tutor

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Module tutor    | Professor Joe Cain  |
| Contact         | J.Cain@ucl.ac.uk   t: 020 7679 3041   |
| Web             | <a href="http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/cain">www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/cain</a>  |
| Office location | 22 Gordon Square, room 4.3  |
| Office hours:   | Fridays 16:15-17:00 in-person drop-in sessions near class<br>Thursday afternoons online; book: < <a href="http://profjoecain.net/meet">profjoecain.net/meet</a> > |

## Aims and Objectives

### Aims

Aims for the module include:

- Develop knowledge and critical thinking about podcasting as a medium for communication and engagement about science and technology, including STS
- Develop skills and techniques required to create podcasts, such as interview techniques, basic story-telling and narration, and core production techniques, such as appear on the [podcast series, WeAreSTS](#).
- Integrate communication theory with practical projects, such as through projects that engage with critical debates around representation, voice, performance, authorship, narrative, post-truth, and topics of current interest
- Develop skills to evaluate degrees of accessibility, inclusion, and accuracy as well as production quality and suitability for broadcast
- Identify and interpret industry trends
- Identify paths for promoting social and commercial entrepreneurship ([UCL has considerable support for student entrepreneurship](#))
- Identify career paths related to podcasting and other audio-dominant formats

### Objectives

Objectives for the module focus on outcomes. By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Create podcast content to a high professional standard and suitable for publication
- Demonstrate creativity and craftsmanship in science communication
- Demonstrate skills and techniques required to create podcast elements
- Relate theory of science communication to practical projects, and vice versa
- Relate podcasting projects to themes in the industry, such as format, audience, voice, representation, structure, effectiveness, and social or commercial entrepreneurship

- Demonstrate constructive peer dialogue and peer evaluation
- Demonstrate time-management skills
- Demonstrate self-reflection and self-improvement skills

## Module Plan

This module is offered for advanced undergraduates (i.e., Year 3 undergraduates, equivalent to UCL level 6). It is available to students on all UCL undergraduate degree programmes. No prerequisites required. Please discuss this option with your academic tutor.

Delivery will be in lectures and seminars. Seminars include practical work, such as interviewing, editing, and production. Independent project work will be key to the module, and students will be expected to work with others either in-person or remotely.

Prior to the start of the module, students should learn how to use an audio-editing software package. Audacity is recommended because it is freeware and because it is powerful. Tutorials for Audacity are provided via LinkedIn Learning, to which UCL subscribes as an additional learning resource for our community. Garrick Chow's course, "Learning Audacity", is highly recommended. If you learn the fundamentals of one software package in this area, you pretty much learn the fundamentals for all of them.

For a glimpse into the podcasting industry, skim The Podcast Show, an annual convention in London organised to promote the industry, sell services, and create a gathering point. The next in-person event will be 21-22 May 2025.

Student responsibilities in this module will centre on four components: in-person sessions, an stand-alone project, independent skill development, and independent reading and study. We also will use some GenAI for project work.

### In-person sessions

We meet in person for two hours per week. Sessions are organised around particular themes, and they will survey key content and theory relevant to the chosen themes. Preparatory tasks are set for each session via Moodle. Students are encouraged to come to each session having skimmed and reflected on readings set for that day, OR having practiced the relevant skills identified.

Sessions typically have handouts associated with in-class work. These will be posted on Moodle shortly before the session. A limited number of paper copies will be available in the room.

### Coursework

Students are expected to undertake independent work to produce coursework, for formative and summative. The formative coursework is assigned to practice skills and to draft material submitted later for summative assessment. Feedback will be provided with constructive assistance in mind. Formative assessment is optional, and deadlines must be respected. The module tutor reserves the right to decline giving feedback for formative assessment submitted late or in poor condition.

Considerable guidance will be available for coursework. Students also was strongly encouraged to discuss their ideas with peers and to use other support services in the university, such as the Academic Communication Centre.

Concerns about academic integrity are high at UCL. Students are strongly encouraged to keep records of their work as it develops, such as through a research notebook or a file of accumulated materials. Treat assignments as project work under supervision. In the world a work, your boss will expect to see evidence and documentation. Work in modules is no different.

## Independent skill development

The 1x2hr block system can be exhausting. I find it impossible to cover all content over that period of time in a way that makes for quality learning: students find it hard to keep focus; I find it hard to keep focus, too. As a solution, I “flip” some of my material by giving pre-recorded materials that can be studied asynchronously. Alternatively, I supplement in-person activities with online materials, such as tutorials, samples, and editorial material. This allows me to open up time in our face-to-face sessions for discussion and analysis. It allows students to manage their own learning in ways that suit whatever timetable they choose outside our assigned block.

UCL offers considerable support [student entrepreneurship](#), and students are strongly encouraged to explore its workshops and schemes for mentoring.

## Independent reading and study

Students frequently ignore the programme’s expectation of independent learning associated with every module. This is a substantial part of our expectation for your knowledge building and skills development. Lecture time is not the only learning time you have in the university as part of your tuition.

For this module, a superabundance of external material exists, and there is seemingly no end of topics that can be pursued through independent study. This includes making use of London’s extensive cultural assets, such as museums, and its businesses. To this, add a considerable range of online resources, from scholarly projects to streamed media to podcasts to library recourses.

It’s a mistake to think your tutors only want to engage with you during class sessions. Let me strongly encourage you to make use of drop-in times and on-line availability to talk about your independent learning and skill development. Let me also strongly encourage you to self-organise reading and discussion groups associated with your studies. You learn more when you learn together.

## Engaging with AI

UCL provides guidance for “[Engaging with AI in Your Education and Assessment](#)”. This module has a **Category 2 and Category 3** rating regarding use of GenAI tools. ([About ratings](#))

- ANALYSIS is category 2 for idea generation, transcription, and comparison
- WIP is category 2 for idea generation, organisation, and practice
- EPISODE is category 3. In preparation, GenAI **can** be used for editing of text and production of draft scripts. In the substance of an episode, GenAI **cannot** be used to create human-like voices more than 1-second in duration without written permission from the module tutor. In mixing, GenAI **can** be used to create other audio elements, such as background music and sound effects. In post-production, GenAI **can** be used to polish a completed episode, such as through audio refinements, to produce transcripts, and to produce metadata. Overall, GenAI **cannot** be used to compose an episode in whole or in substantial parts.

A transparency statement is required for all submissions: how has GenAI been used? what were its strengths and weaknesses? This should be added as an appendix to the programme notes.

Students are expected to keep accurate records.

## UCL Categories for Using Generative AI

### Category 1. AI tools cannot be used

The purpose and format of these assessments makes it inappropriate or impractical for AI tools to be used

### Category 2: AI tools can be used in an assistive role

Students are permitted to use AI tools for specific defined processes within the assessment.

AI tools can be utilised to support the development of specific skills as required by the assessment. Students can leverage AI for tasks such as data analysis, pattern recognition, or generating insights. There will be some aspects of the assessment where the use of AI is inappropriate.

Examples of where AI might be used in an assistive category include:

- drafting and structure content
- supporting the writing process in a limited manner
- as a support tutor
- supporting a particular process such as testing code or translating content
- giving feedback on content, or proofreading content.

### Category 3. AI has an integral role

AI can be used as a primary tool throughout the assessment process.

## Schedule

| Week | UCL | Date   | Topic                | Essential Work       |
|------|-----|--------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 0    | 5   | Before | Survey the Landscape | see Moodle           |
| 1    | 6   | 4Oct   | Listening            | see Moodle           |
| 2    | 7   | 11Oct  | Producing 1          | see Moodle           |
| 3    | 8   | 18Oct  | Producing 2          | see Moodle           |
| 4    |     | 21Oct  | DUE: Analysis        | Summative assessment |
| 4    | 9   | 25Oct  | On Mic 1             | see Moodle           |
| 5    | 10  | 1Nov   | On Mic 2             | see Moodle           |
|      | 11  |        | <b>Reading Week</b>  |                      |
|      |     | 15Nov  | DUE: WIP (5m)        | Formative assessment |
| 7    | 12  | 15Nov  | In Studio 1          | see Moodle           |
| 8    | 13  | 22Nov  | In Studio 2          | see Moodle           |
| 9    | 14  | 29Nov  | Beyond the *.mp3     | see Moodle           |
| 10   | 15  | 06Dec  | Marketing/Engagement | see Moodle           |
| 11   | 16  | 13Dec  | Marketing Engagement | see Moodle           |
|      |     | 17Dec  | DUE: Episode         | Summative assessment |

## Assessment

### Three stages

Students deliver three pieces of work for the module; two practical pieces count towards the final mark; one formative piece is a WIP intended to improve the practical project.

### Project 1. Analysis (25%)

ANALYSIS asks students to dissect a typical podcast episode from the perspective of a production manager: what was required to create that one episode? They also will compare the podcast against general principles in science communication, industry standards, and social ambition. It will offer an opportunity to relate a product to principles in the field. This is a 1,000-word written essay contributing 25% to the module mark.

### Formative Opportunity: WIP (0%)

Work-in-progress (WIP) asks students to plan one podcast episode, providing a rationale, suggesting supporting research, and identifying audience, market, aims, and episode structure. This is formative, designed to help guide and improve the final project. This will be an in-class presentation.

### Project 2. Episode (75%)

EPISODE asks students to create a podcast episode suitable for publishing in the [WeAreSTS](#) podcast series. It will be a substantial (>20 minute) standalone audio project. Students also will submit supplemental metadata supporting their episode. Guidance will be provided in the module. This project contributes 75% to the module mark.

#### Opportunity

Every episode receiving a mark 75 or above will be considered for publication via WeAreSTS. Final production might require a bit more work before it's used, but this will be conversation after marking is complete. Any agreement to use is entirely optional and has no impact on the module mark.

### Additional information

I encourage you to discuss your projects with me well in advance of the due date.

I provide a style guide [profjoecain.net/style-guide](http://profjoecain.net/style-guide), and I prefer the Harvard system for citations. (Details: [library-guides.ucl.ac.uk/Harvard](http://library-guides.ucl.ac.uk/Harvard).)

## Important Policy Information

Refer to the [STS Student Handbook](#). We follow the rules of that handbook.

### Extensions and Mitigations

This is a long-term project, and time management is a learning objective. Information about extensions and mitigations is provided in the [STS Student Handbook](#). Individual tutors cannot grant extensions on their own initiative, so please do not ask. STS respects all SORAs and ECs approved elsewhere in the university; normally, these are communicated to STS automatically.

## Project Feedback

Your feedback and first marks on coursework will be accessible via Moodle, normally four weeks (20 working days) after the submission date. We aim to give formative feedback sooner, normally two weeks. Please note that first marks are provisional and might change after second marking and moderation by external examiners. Marks are confirmed and fixed in summer at the STS Board of Examiners.

Please focus on the feedback provided by the first marker. This is provided to help you improve in future work. You should discuss all your feedback with your personal tutor with the aim of identifying weaknesses and possible routes for improvement.

## Course Communications

Communications from the module tutor will use several paths:

- Moodle Announcements: the principal means for communications in this module.
- Hint: You can set Moodle to “digest” communications (collecting all notices sent in one day into a single email sent once per day). I find “digest” helps keep me organize and avoids disruption hour-to-hour in my day.
- If I have a matter for you specifically, I will communicate via your UCL email address. I don’t use other email address. I’ll put “0161” in the subject line to help you filter.
- Hint: If you want help managing email using filters, see UCL IS’s “how-to” guides: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/how-to-guides>

If you need to communicate with the module tutor, use email in the first instance. See contact details at the front of the syllabus.

## Reading List

There is no ideal textbook on podcasting. On ReadingList@UCL, I’ve listed a wide range of resources available through UCL Library. As the module develops, I’ll highlight essential material via Moodle.