

Q & A

by Megan Mirabito

The Digital Media and Journalism department at SUNY New Paltz has undergone several changes over the past few years and Professor Lisa Phillips has been right in the middle of it. Phillips, an assistant professor of journalism, was recently appointed to deputy department chair. Phillips began teaching at New Paltz in 2003 and worked in radio for 12 years prior to that. She also has several published books.

Phillips had just finished teaching a nearly three-hour radio journalism class when we squeezed into her tiny office to discuss her path from radio journalist to deputy department chair, changes in the department and what to expect for the future.



Deputy Department Chair Lisa Phillips has been a professor at SUNY New Paltz for 14 years. Phillips teaches courses such as radio journalism, feature writing and the literature of journalism.

Q Throughout your career you have worked in many different areas of journalism -- radio, print and now you are teaching. What drew you to the journalism field in the first place?

A In college I majored in English and creative writing, and then I ended up working radio as a day job. I did that for 12 years and loved it. I first started writing for *The Des Moines Register* in Iowa and soon began freelance writing. Actually, I was lucky enough to have a connection at *The New York Times* and she was able to get me in there as a freelance writer. Right around that time, in 2003, I began teaching adjunct at SUNY New Paltz and have been here 14 years now.

Q Outside of teaching, your recent work is focused on obsessive relationships and unrequited love. Are you working on any new projects?

A I am, actually! It's in the very beginning stages though and I don't want to divulge too much.

Q Can you give me an idea of what it's about?

A It's about young love, people 18 to 30 years old.

Q What inspired that topic?

A Well, I have a 13-year-old daughter, so I've been thinking about the

world she'll be entering. But also, it's the people I'm surrounded by everyday, college students. You know, there's a stereotype about your generation being too casual in their relationships, the hookup culture and everything. But I thought, "Maybe they're getting a bad rap. There's a lot of brave things happening, braver forms of love." Take, for example, all the progress in the LGBTQ community. So many people of various sexual orientation and gender identity are openly showing their love.

Q I hear you have recently been appointed as deputy department chair. When did that happen?

A I started last semester, spring 2017.

Q As the new deputy department chair, what is your vision for the program?

A Well, as deputy department chair, I deal with the inner workings of the department. I'm not in charge of making the big decisions. So, in my role, I am just hoping to help the department run better, more smoothly. I want to make sure my colleagues are supported.

Q Ok, but are there any specific changes to the department you are hoping to see?

A As a department there are some things we are working towards. Mainly, we want to create more unity among the three majors. We are also looking at adding some minors to the department.

Q Oh really? What kind of minors would be added?

A Nothing specific has been decided yet, but they would tap into existing strengths. Overall that's what we want to do, utilize our strengths. Because of the cuts to the adjunct budget, we are making changes to tap into the strength of the core faculty.

Q So, speaking of changes, could you tell me about the redesign of the journalism major curriculum?

A So we found that students were coming into J1 [Journalism 1] with no idea what journalism is, and that's where Investigating Journalism came from. Hopefully now students coming into J1 will understand what journalism actually is and if that's something they want to do. We also beefed up the capstone course. As the last course in the major it should reflect the entire building process. And to compensate for those added credits, we condensed the two editing courses in the middle of the major into one course, Multimedia Editing and Publishing: The Little Rebellion.

Q When did those changes begin?

A Well they went into effect this semester.

Q But the process, when did that start?

A Oh, that was two or three years ago. As early as 2014 we began discussing making these changes. Once we came up with plans those were reviewed in 2016 to 2017, that's why they are just going into effect now. It's a very long process.

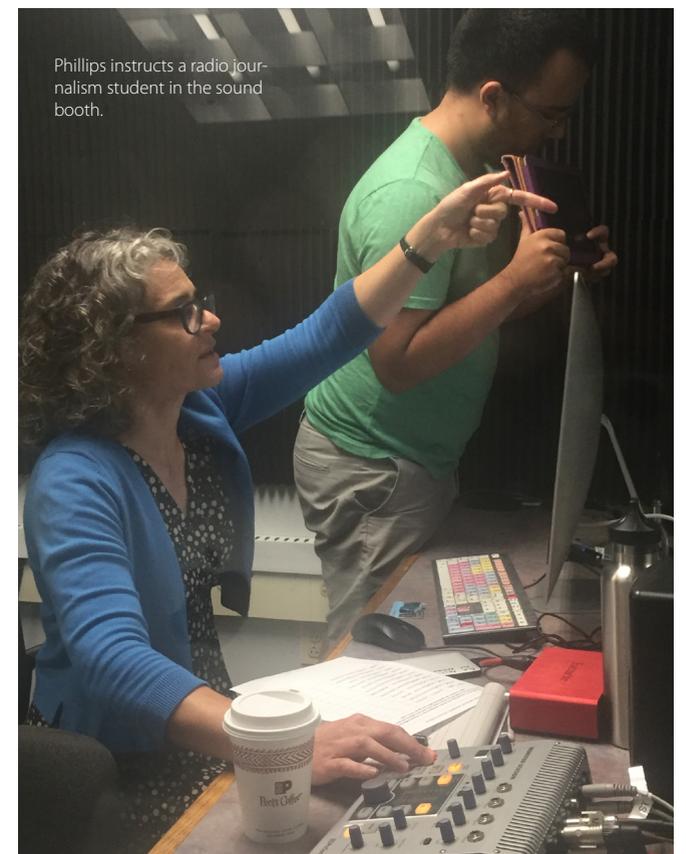
Q Courses throughout the four years worth of curriculum were changed in the redesign. How will this impact students of each grade level?

A Anyone who declared a journalism major prior to this semester is

grandfathered in, the new major requirements will only affect newly declared majors.

Q But courses in the middle of the major were removed, the editing courses, how will that affect students who had already declared?

A Students who hadn't taken the two editing courses will take *The Little Rebellion* and then another journalism course to fulfill the credit requirements; their advisors should be able to help each individual with their unique situation. The important thing is, we would never let this interfere with someone's graduation.



Phillips instructs a radio journalism student in the sound booth.