Flying Robotic Journalism

April 8th, 2017 10:00 - 2:30pm
April 22nd, 2017 10:00 - 2:30pm

NYU Interactive Telecommunications Program
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It used to be that only the wealthy and powerful could put eyes in the sky. Dramatic aerial images of riots and other uprisings—captured by guerrilla drone journalists, activists and protestors—suggest a politically transformative leveling of the playing field. Yet even the cheapest quadcopter can threaten evisceration or fatality, and unmanned flight is a legal minefield. With all this uncertainty, what are the prospects for drone journalism in the US and globally? In this seminar, you’ll get a quick overview of the law, technology, and practice of drone journalism. You’ll also conceive & participate in the production a modest drone journalism feature.

This is an accelerated (non) crash-course in aerial storytelling. We'll collectively plan a drone journalism feature using prosumer-grade flying cameras. Class communication will take in our Slack channel.

Before class begins

You will propose an idea for a drone journalism feature, based on a location within a 90 minute drive New York City, and fill out a brief questionnaire describing skills that you can contribute to the class project.

You will watch a pre-recorded tour of drone journalism, exploring how different types of unmanned aircraft can serve as citizen “eyes in sky” and contributing to a more informed public.

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We will meet at a hobbyist airfield in the greater NYC area, where we’ll begin to build a mental model of small unmanned systems. We’ll do some supervised free flight, so you can get comfortable with flight control, the capabilities of our drone, and the idea of tag-teaming with an AI. Note: date subject to change if weather is uncooperative.

Then we will share our ideas for a drone journalism feature and decide on the top two ideas.

After the first meeting

We will assign to each other the tasks of researching and planning our drone journalism feature, then share our work. Before the next meeting, we will pick which of the ideas shows the most promise.

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We will shoot “on location,” getting all of the principal photography necessary to produce our feature. Note: date subject to change if weather is uncooperative.

After the second meeting

We will assign to each other the tasks of editing video, interviews, post-production and designing a home on the web in order to publish our drone journalism feature. We will showcase the final product in the ITP Spring Show.