

RECOVERY-ORIENTED EDUCATIONAL CASES OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN THE TRAINING OF MEDIA PROFESSIONALS AND JOURNALISTS

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At the core of the educational and professional programs in journalism and media communications at the School of Journalism and Communication of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) lies the concept of practice-oriented journalism and media communications education. Service-learning within both programs is organically integrated into this concept: on the one hand, it enables students to combine professional training with the study of socially significant issues, and on the other hand, it allows them to actively participate in addressing issues important to the community through media publication (this, for instance, is the foundation of solutions journalism).

The School offers master's students several courses that embody the objectives of service-learning, including *Creative Writing*, *Cultural Journalism*, and *Video Formats*. The first two focus on the creation of textual content (students work on publications for media outlets). Here, interaction with lived experience and work with memory, trauma, and recovery occur primarily through texts. In contrast, the course *Video Formats* is oriented toward the creation of visual content, where authentic stories preserve the authenticity of visual documentary testimony and the truthfulness of recorded facts.

In the *Creative Writing* course, students write memorial feature stories about those killed on the front line and in captivity, and create stories about veterans' recovery, particularly through the lens of post-traumatic growth. In these texts (features, essays, sketches), not only factual accuracy, the documentation of

testimonies, and a trauma-informed approach are important, but also ethical responsibility – the ability to give voice to those whose experiences are often reduced to statistics. Collaboration with stakeholders – editors, journalists, human rights advocates, psychologists, and the protagonists themselves – provides professional feedback and depth in addressing the assigned tasks. Human rights advocate Max Butkevych emphasizes the importance of restoring the human dimension of war in students’ reports about those who died in captivity, where each story of imprisonment or death constitutes an entire world that cannot be reduced to generalization. Editor-in-chief of *The Ukrainian Week* Marharyta Dykaliuk notes that students’ texts about veterans combine personal stories with broader issues of rehabilitation, inclusion, and socialization, thereby creating long-term value as testimonies of their time. Psychologist Khrystyna Topolnytska from *Superhumans* highlights the importance of these stories as spaces for reflecting on post-traumatic growth.

Interaction with media outlets ensures publicity and real impact: students’ texts are published and distributed by media such as *The Ukrainian Week*, *Novynarnia*, *LB.ua*, *Sensor*, and *Zaborona*, as well as on the platforms *Memorial* and *RECviem*. The publications resonate on social media, receive audience feedback, and become part of a broader public dialogue.

Within the *Cultural Journalism* course, master’s students, in partnership with the local online media outlet Lvivska Poshta, work on creating a series of multi-genre materials united by the theme “Culture for Veterans: From Recovery to Self-Expression”. Their focus includes various local events and experiences, such as the Festival of First-Year Playwrights and initiatives of the *Theater of the Unbroken* (part of the “Art Therapy” project within the UNBROKEN ecosystem).

Students also write reviews of performances staged based on plays by veterans and with veterans’ participation, such as *One-on-One* by Mykhailo Fateiev (directed by Oleh Oneshchak), *Balance* by Alina Sarnatska at the Les Kurbas Lviv Academic Theatre, and *The Elevator Director* (directed by Svitlana Fedeshova) by the “Theater of the Unbroken” at the First Theatre. They conduct interviews and tell stories, making them visible to the community while simultaneously gaining valuable experience in empathy and

acceptance. They also communicate with actors serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (for example, Volodymyr Kravchuk, known from the film *You Are Space*, or Volodymyr Rashchuk, the “face” of the recruitment campaign for the “Svoboda” battalion).

Students cover relevant initiatives of the Lviv Regional Philharmonic, the Lviv Organ Hall, the music and arts space Homin Center, the publishing house *Mriieslovy* founded by veteran Andrii Kaspshyshak, the All-Ukrainian Forum of Military Writers, and more. They also publicize initiatives of the Department of Culture within the project “Culture as a Rehabilitation Tool”. All of this contributes to awareness of the city’s cultural space and integration into community life.

The collaboration with media partners *The Ukrainian Week* and the *Public Broadcaster* within the *Video Formats* course is centered on shared professional values, where trust is built through open dialogue, transparency, and mutual respect. Within the framework of service-learning, this is already the third joint year of projects combining education with content production while offering audiences new materials about the people of Lviv and the region. In the special project with *The Ukrainian Week*, together with Olha Vorozhbyt, deputy editor-in-chief of *Tyzhden*, students communicate with representatives of civic organizations, tell stories about the fascinating work of scholars, and seek to answer the question: what does it mean to be Ukrainian today?

At *Suspilne* studio, students master live television production while working on video stories about unusual professions and hobbies. Cultural heritage became the theme of the travel show and video stories. Students act as editors and producers, working on finding protagonists, filming, and editing. They master the roles of commissioning and second editors, as well as line producers, and learn how the team of a national television project at *Suspilne* operates. Students studied in teams together with staff members at *Suspilne Studio*, participating in mentoring sessions with Maksym Voloshyn, production producer of the western hub at *Suspilne* and at *Suspilne: Lviv*, as well as with leading correspondent of *Suspilne: Lviv*, Ivanka Dusko.

Despite differences in methodological tools, all the described cases share many common features. Such projects acquire particular value for the protagonists of textual and audiovisual media content

themselves (veterans, families of the deceased, civic activists working in various spheres of recovery, and other community representatives), as publications become a form of recognition, a means of preserving memory, and a way of restoring dignity through the public articulation of their stories. Media content here fulfills not only an informational function, but also therapeutic and memorial functions.

The described cases are equally important for the master's students themselves: they enable them to recognize their responsibility for change within the community. The results of their work do not remain mere academic exercises but begin to "live" within the media space – highlighting and restoring names and experiences, provoking reactions, fostering empathy, and becoming focal points for discussion. Thus, their activity evolves from being community-oriented to becoming socially significant.

The initiated projects do not end within the framework of the course: they often develop into practical and research-based master's theses. For some students, they become the foundation of a professional trajectory – determining the topics they continue to work on and shaping them as authors within public discourse. In this way, the described projects of the School of Journalism and Communication contribute to "shaping our educational spaces to provide connection, engagement, knowledge, and care, enabling students and community members to come together to support each other" (Kenworthy et al. 2025). Through them, education is transformed into an important instrument of recovery, and students become active and motivated actors in this process.

References

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