

# BACKPACK JOURNALISM

## Blessed to be a Witness

### Creighton's Backpack Journalism Project

empowers undergraduate students to use new media tools and relatively inexpensive video equipment to produce documentaries about people and the church in developing countries and marginalized societies. The project is a collaboration of the Departments of Theology and Journalism, Media & Computing.

Led by theologian-documentary filmmaker John O'Keefe, visual artist-filmmaker Tim Guthrie and journalist Carol Zuegner, the professors work with a group of students in a five-week summer immersion course to produce mini-documentaries as well as blogs and other multimedia content. The teams have filmed stories in Uganda and the Dominican Republic. The 2014

project is set in rural Alaska.

Students in the course earn six credit hours in theology and journalism while experiencing for a short time life in the challenging part of the world. The course includes a filmmaking bootcamp, two weeks immersed in the country and two weeks to produce a rough cut of the film.

The documentary films — *Esperanza*, *Mato Oput* and *Wer Uganda* — have won awards or have been screened at national film festivals, including the Omaha Film Festival.

Bearing witness is what journalism does at its best, telling the stories of people who are often marginalized or ignored. And bearing witness also gets to the heart of the Jesuit call in our time to “go to the margins” of society through service and action.

“For me, Creighton's Backpack Journalism was the perfect opportunity to use my journalism skills in a way that would carry out the Ignatian values. We were able to tell the stories of people whose stories don't get told often enough. After returning home from the experience, I've continued to tell people's stories through video as much as I can. Backpack Journalism showed me how powerful storytelling can be, and that unheard stories in small corners of the world deserve to be heard.”

— Bridget McQuillan, BA 2013

