

Telling the Clean Tech Story in Germany and Spain

HNRS 350.2 | Summer 2015 | Instructor: Sara Peach | Email: peach@unc.edu

Welcome to Europe!

This six-week course in Germany and Spain will offer you the chance to study and document European communities that are participating in an emerging renewable-energy revolution. You will see firsthand how businesses, policymakers and ordinary citizens in the two focus countries are navigating a rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

The Navarre region in Spain, for example, generates 80 percent of its electricity from renewable sources, while the German village of Wildpoldsried is able to produce five times the amount of energy it needs from wind, solar, and other renewable sources.

Yet the path to renewables is not always smooth. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011, the German government began aggressively shutting down its nuclear reactors, which caused its reliance on coal to spike. Meanwhile, a trade dispute between the European Union and China threatens to drive up the cost of solar panels, putting the still-fragile German solar installation market at risk. In Spain, an economic crisis – which has seen unemployment rates above 25 percent – has created a perfect storm: declining demand for electricity and dwindling political support for low-carbon policies.

Throughout the course, you will learn in a variety of settings: guest lectures, tours and one-on-one interviews. In each of these settings, you will hear firsthand from Germans and Spaniards about their countries' experiences with renewable energy and what the rest of the world can learn from them.

The course is a companion to HNRS 350.1, "Renewable Energy and Sustainable Community Design: Moving Toward a Lower Carbon Future," taught by Dr. David Salvesen.

Course objectives

In this course, you will learn how European communities are approaching renewable energy and other sustainability issues and consider which lessons, stories, and ideas would resonate with a large audience. You will learn how to write news-style articles and gather photographs for a class news site that will report and reflect on the issues you uncover in these countries. The course is intended to equip you with communication skills that you can rely upon throughout your academic and professional careers.

In this course, you will:

- deepen your understanding of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of renewable energy
- dream up and execute Web-friendly stories related to renewable energy in Europe
- choose credible sources who can speak fairly and accurately about highly controversial issues
- improve your skill at conducting interviews
- locate and evaluate data related to renewable energy issues
- structure your storytelling for maximum impact and audience engagement
- improve your storytelling by using strategies such as revising and seeking peer feedback
- improve your public presentation skills
- prepare yourself for communicating about environmental topics during your career

AEJMC core values and competencies

This course covers the following core values and competencies as outlined by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications:

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Course policies

Simply put, attendance is required, participation is expected and deadlines are just that - deadlines. Assignment grades will be docked by a letter grade per day if they are late.

You are expected to attend all class lectures and field trips.

Honor Code

You are expected to conduct yourself within the guidelines of the UNC honor code. All academic work should be completed with the high level of honesty and integrity this university demands.

Visit honor.unc.edu for more information.

Disability Services

If you are registered with the UNC Department of Disability Services and would benefit from accommodations in order to achieve course goals and assignments, please notify me within the first week of the course. I am happy to work with you to meet your needs.

Online work

Your final projects will be published online at the class website. However, if you do not feel comfortable making your work publicly available, notify the instructor in writing.

Grades

The final grade will be determined as follows:

5%=Participation. Ask lots of questions in our meetings with local people! And don't show up hungover.

10%=Exercises (Note: the exercises are graded pass/fail.)

15%=Story 1

15%=Story 2

15%=Story 3

30%=Final story package

10%=Presentation skills

How I will assign grades for your stories:

A= Story could be published in a reputable print or online news outlet or an environmental magazine. Written and structured to effectively engage the public.

This means the story contains:

- A brief, factual, enticing headline
- An enticing introduction that includes an answer to the question "so what?" and lets the reader know what the story is about
- One main idea; the story does not jump around to multiple different issues
- Few (if any) spelling or grammar errors
- No editorializing
- Quotes and facts attributed to sources
- Sentences and paragraphs that make sense; that is, the reader can comprehend what the writer is trying to get across. No jargon is present, organizations and sources are briefly identified, and facts/ideas are given enough context that the reader can understand them.

A-/B+ = Achieves the guidelines described above, with small room for improvement, such as minor edits to the introduction. Or perhaps one or two ideas need a little more explanation.

B=Minor editing needed, but is publishable.

This means the story achieves most of the guidelines described above, but it may have issues with one or two elements. For example, a few facts may not be attributed to a source, or the story may contain minor editorializing. Or perhaps the introduction needs to be shortened. Or the story contains two main ideas and ought to be split into two articles. Or there may be a passage that is confusing.

B-/C+ = This is a story that falls somewhere in between the “B” and “C” guidelines.

C=Needs extensive editing and rethinking. Structure or conclusions may be flawed. Story may be boring or contain lots of jargon.

This means the story has problems with many of the elements above.

It may contain editorializing throughout the piece. A serious case of editorializing alone is enough to merit a “C.”

The story may contain several different instances of passages that simply don’t make sense.

Or it may jump around to many different topics rather than focusing on one main idea.

D=Story needs to be rewritten and re-reported all the way through. May contain multiple spelling or grammar errors. Story may be inaccessible or uninteresting to a general audience or may contain more than one instance of jargon.

F=Story has a serious fact error. It’s technical, abstract, or altogether lacking in human interest. Seriously flawed in writing and conclusions.