**JOMC 426 - Producing Radio News**

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**Course goal:** Working as a team, we strive to produce a radio news program that’s accurate, well-written, well-produced, memorable, and innovative. Each story should be up to the standards of major-market radio broadcasters and should be something you’d be proud to include in your resume. As in a professional newsroom, you’ll be expected to collaborate closely with your fellow students and your instructor to achieve the best possible final product.

**Course policies:** In JOMC 426, there are no exams, no quizzes, and no textbook. Your grade is based solely on the quality and quantity of work you do for “Carolina Connection.” You should aim to make meaningful contributions to each of our weekly shows – by producing a story, helping another reporter with a story, contributing a live report or Q&A, serving as anchor or producer, or performing other duties as assigned by a producer.

**Deadlines and workflow:** As in a professional newsroom, meeting deadlines is essential. If you’re producing a story for Saturday’s show, I need to see a draft script by **Wednesday at 6:00 pm**. (The only exception would be if you’re covering an event that takes place Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday.) *I must give the script final approval before you can produce the story*. Share it with me on Google Drive, and I’ll respond either with my approval or suggested changes. The finished, produced story must be done by **Friday at 3:00** unless you’re covering late-breaking news. Missed deadlines will affect your course grade.

We meet as a class once a week to discuss story ideas for upcoming shows. You are expected to attend these meetings, bring well-thought-out story ideas, and be prepared to discuss your own and your classmates’ ideas. You’ll also be expected to volunteer to cover breaking news stories. Missing meetings – or arriving to meetings without story ideas --will affect your course grade.

**Course expectations:** Here’s what I’ll be listening for in each story you produce:

* Audio quality: There’s nothing worse than bad audio on the radio. If your listeners can’t understand what’s coming out of their radio, they’ll likely turn it off. Clean, understandable audio is a minimum requirement for all stories. Every time you go out on a story, test your equipment before you use it. Wear headphones ALL THE TIME while recording to monitor sound quality, and check your recording before leaving each location to make sure the quality is acceptable. **Set aside enough time to mix your stories!** It can take several hours to properly edit and mix a radio story. All sound should mesh together seamlessly, and all edits should be undetectable to the ear. If you have questions about field recording techniques or need help mixing your story, contact one of the producers, the production director, Dylan Field, Gary Kirk, or me.
* Accuracy: Our standard is 100% accuracy. You must fact-check every sentence in your story, whether you say it or somebody else does. (For example, if you interview a protester who’s complaining about the Chancellor’s “million dollar salary,” you need to make sure the Chancellor really earns a million dollars before you use that quote.) Major factual errors can affect your final grade, as can multiple smaller ones. And all errors – big and small – must be corrected on the air as soon as they come to our attention.
* Clarity: In addition to being accurate, our stories must be comprehensible. You’ll be expected to write in clear, conversational, grammatically correct English. Your delivery should be polished and understandable.
* Transparency: Good journalism gives the listener all the information he or she needs to assess the credibility of a story. That means we **fully identify all voices**, attribute our facts to reputable sources, and disclose any potential conflicts of interest (for instance, if the athlete you profile is your sorority sister, or the political science professor you interview is a consultant for a political party). We don’t use anonymous sources except in extremely rare cases where there’s absolutely no other way to tell the story and where disclosing the source’s name could endanger his or her life or livelihood. (I must approve the use of any unnamed source.)

Needless to say, we never fabricate any aspect of our stories, plagiarize other people’s work, or use audio that’s not our own without proper permission and credit. To do so is an honor code violation.

* Innovation: Rather than mimicking what you already see and hear on mainstream TV and radio, think about innovative ways to present quality journalism. Can you come up with a better structure for your story than the standard “acts and tracks” piece? (That’s what we call the typical radio story, where ACTualities of interviews alternate with the reporter’s voice TRACKS.) Can you do the story as a compelling personal profile? A vibrant audio portrait that lets listeners hear the sounds of an interesting place? Is there a role for reporter involvement? An online component that invites listener participation?
* Importance: As one of the most visible news productions on campus, “Carolina Connection” strives to tell *important* stories about news events, issues, and lifestyle trends. Our audience includes not only students, but also the Triangle community (or the North Carolina community) as a whole. Though it’s okay to do some lighter feature stories from time to time, you should also strive to tell stories about vital issues.
* Participation: As in a professional newsroom, every student in JOMC 426 is expected to be an active participant in the news team. That means pitching solid story ideas every week , making yourself available to cover spot news, helping with the Carolina Connection website, and contributing to Carolina Week. Unexcused absences will affect your course grade.

1. **SO IF THERE ARE NO EXAMS IN JOMC 426, HOW IS MY GRADE DETERMINED?**
2. **THE QUANTITY OF YOUR WORK, THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK, AND YOUR ABILITY TO MEET DEADLINES.**

**QUALITY:** “A” students produce stories that are excellent in every detail. They’re well researched and contain audio from multiple interviews. They use sound and scene creatively and effectively. We hear ACTION in them. The natural sound furthers the narrative of the story and isn’t used just as “audio decoration.” The writing is clear and accurate. The editing and production are flawless. Finally, they’re creative and use innovative story-telling techniques. They stand out (in a good way) from everything else on the radio.

“A” students also are willing to take on challenging stories. “Carolina Connection” always needs strong, hard-news stories to lead the show. These may be late-breaking stories about campus events, in-depth analyses about local issues, or enterprise stories about issues important to your generation. While the show also welcomes lighter features, I expect students to challenge themselves several times this semester to tell big, important lead stories.

**QUANTITY:** I’ll assign a point value to each story you submit based on its content. You are expected to earn a minimum of **165** points for the semester. **(Important:** Earning 165 points does NOT guarantee an “A” grade; 165 points is the minimum requirement to pass the class!)

* 30 points: These are stories that are exemplary in every way. They involve significant research and original, time-consuming reporting. They include multiple interviews, use natural sound and scenes in sophisticated ways, and require extensive editing and mixing effort. These are stories that we would be proud to broadcast statewide and submit as award entries.
* 20 points: These stories explore an interesting subject in a complete and creative way. They’re thoroughly researched, include compelling natural sound and compelling characters, are written and mixed well, and typically include multiple interviews recorded in multiple places. Interviews are conducted where the interviewee is carrying on activities relevant to the story.
* 10 points: These reports would typically include interviews conducted mostly in one place, such as a news conference or a public event such as a speech. They require minimal research and little effort to arrange the interviews. They involve minimal use of sound other than interviews. Most sports game coverage fits into this category, as do “Look Around the Hill” segments and stories about performances.
* 5 points: Writing readers, providing raw tape or bites for somebody else’s story.
* Other ways to earn points:
  + Anchoring/producing: 20 points per show
  + Board op/MediaTouch for Saturday show: 10 points per show
  + Webmaster for the Carolina Connection web site: 10 points per show
  + Contributing to Carolina Week, as per the CW point scale:

Basic crew positions: 5

Graphics, audio, TD, anchoring, VOs: 7.5

VO/SOTs: 10

Packages: 20, with bonus points for in-depth pieces

**DEADLINES:** Nothing causes more problems for our production team than missed deadlines. If even a single script or story comes in late, the entire production process can grind to a halt, inconveniencing me and several of your fellow students. If your script comes in late, we can’t give it the attention it may need during the editing process. If you’re frantically trying to produce a story on deadline, the quality almost certainly will suffer … and there will be fewer ways to get help if you need it. I log when each script and story is submitted, and I deduct points for missed deadlines.

**JOMC 426 CLASS SCHEDULE – SPRING 2014**

Wednesday, Jan. 8 Course introduction

Friday, Jan. 10 Mandatory tech training session, 1:00 – 3:00, Carroll 132

Wednesday, Jan. 15 First story meeting for Jan. 25 show, Carroll 253

For the remainder of the semester, we’ll hold story meetings each Wednesday from 12:30 – 1:45 in Carroll 253. Fridays are open newsroom time for completing your weekly stories and producing Saturday’s programs.

**“CAROLINA CONNECTION” BROADCST SCHEDULE – SPRING 2014**

January 25

February 1, 8, 15, 22

March 1, 8, 22, 29 (No show March 15.)

April 5, 12, 19, 26