

JOMC 463.1 News Lab

Mondays and Wednesdays: 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

11 Carroll Hall (Reese News Lab)

Spring 2014

<http://reesenewslab.org/jomc463>

Feasibility / Viability / Desirability

Can it be done? Can it be sustained? Does anyone want/need it?

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Description

This is not a typical journalism school class. It is structured like an early (or even pre-) start-up where the focus is on exploring and developing a sustainable product or service.

This course is designed to help students develop an idea for a news product and explore its feasibility, viability and desirability. It combines elements of journalism, technology, marketing and business to form a framework for developing a sustainable news product or service.

Students should be prepared to:

- Face uncertainty
- Make quick decisions with limited information
- Work on competing priorities
- Receive direct (painful and pleasant) feedback
- Have all actions and decisions challenged and questioned

- Find answers to their own questions with the assistance of the instructors

Successful students will be naturally curious and will not expect to be told exactly how something must be done.

This document sets the schedule, but we recognize that this industry changes rapidly – particularly in a startup setting. We will respond to changes as necessary, and ***we reserve the right to amend this document and assignments as needed.*** Any such changes will be made with advance notice to you.

Everything you do may be published. However, you have the option of not making your work publicly available IF you communicate that in writing to the instructor.

Have fun, work hard, be creative, take risks, challenge the status quo - our future depends on it.

Enjoy the ride.

Objectives

- Develop and publish a well-researched and tested proposal for a feasible, viable and desirable media product.
- Publically pitch and answer questions about the proposed media product
- Exhibit a working knowledge of:
 - o User-testing
 - o Market research
 - o Basic business modeling
 - o Prototyping
 - o Public presentations
 - o Working in a highly-effective team
 - o Basic journalistic practices

Structure

It takes more effort than most people realize to develop a concept into a desirable, feasible and viable media product idea. News Lab is divided into separate three-week units. While the units build on one another, they are not chronological and will overlap.

Units

- Ideation:
 - **What** is your media product and what makes it a good idea?
- Desirability:
 - **Who** wants your product and **where** are they? **What** is the specific problem that your product solves for a specific group of people?
- Viability
 - **When** and **how** will your product be self-sustaining?
- Feasibility
 - **How** does your product work?
- Overall
 - **How** do all the pieces fit together?
- Presentation
 - **Why** should this product be developed?
- Reflection
 - **How** did the process work? **What** should be done differently?

Teams

You will work in teams of 3 to 4 people all semester. *The team will not succeed without you and you will not succeed without your team.* TRUST US when we say the key to having a positive and successful team experience is to physically work together. Some tasks can be completed individually on your own time, but you will develop a better product and proposal and receive a higher grade if you work together.

News Lab Access

The News Lab (Carroll 11) is available to you 24/7 via OneCard access at the outer door in order to facilitate your working together.

Attendance

You should approach this class as you would a job at a startup. Only a death in your immediate family (or your own demise, obviously) or a physician-noted illness will be accepted as a reason for missing class. One (1) unexcused absence is allowed. For each unexcused absence after the first one, you will lose one-third of a letter grade from your final grade (an "A" will become an "A-," an "A-" will become a "B+," and so on).

Late Assignments

Late assignments may be accepted the discretion of the instructor, but **you will be given a F for any late assignment.** Deadlines will be enforced.

Honor Code:

It is expected that you will conduct yourself within the guidelines of the University honor system

(<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructors' responsibility as faculty members under the Honor Code, please see the course instructors or Senior Associate Dean Chris Roush.

Seeking Help:

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with an instructor during office hours or to set up an appointment for another time. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability or an illness.

Diversity:

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression or disabilities.

Special Accommodations:

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructors know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Department of Disability Services website at <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/> or call (919) 962-8300.

Guest speakers

The Reese News Lab will be hosting guest speakers periodically on six Fridays during the semester. You are required to attend at least two of the talks. If your schedule does not permit you to attend a Friday speaker, see the instructors for an alternate assignment.

Not all of the speakers have not been scheduled yet, but we already know we'll have speakers on campus on January 24 (how to sell), February 14 (venture capital), April 4 (anonymity tools for journalists).

Schedule

January 8

- Introduction to News Lab

- ASSIGNED: Reading & Pitching

January 13

- Brainstorming Product Ideas
- ASSIGNED: Talking to People
- DUE: Reading & Pitching

January 15

- Introduction to Pitching
- ASSIGNED: Pitch Your Idea
- ASSIGNED: Expert Interview
- DUE: Talking to People

January 20

- HOLIDAY

January 22

- Pitch Your Idea
- ASSIGNED: Idea Memo
- ASSIGNED Team Bios
- DUE: Pitch Your Idea
- DUE: Talking to People

January 27

- Introduction to Desirability
- ASSIGNED: Marketing Plan Critique
- DUE: Team Biographies
- DUE: Idea Memo

January 29

- Personas
- ASSIGNED: Personas
- DUE: Marketing Plan Critique

February 3

- Marketing Brainstorm
- ASSIGNED: Persona Interview
- DUE: Personas

February 5

- Marketing Brainstorm 2
- ASSIGNED: Revised Marketing Plan
- DUE: Persona Interview

February 10

- Market Pitch
- ASSIGNED: Desirability Memo
- DUE: Revised Marketing Plan

February 12

- Basic Business
- ASSIGNED: Basic Business
- DUE: Desirability Memo

February 17

- Spreadsheets
- ASSIGNED: Spreadsheets
- DUE: Basic Business

February 19

- Revised Business Plans
- ASSIGNED: Revised Business Plans
- DUE: Spreadsheets

February 24

- Prototypes
- ASSIGNED: Prototypes

February 26

- Pitch Your Business
- ASSIGNED: Pitch Your Business
- DUE: Revised Business Plans

March 3

- Testing Prototypes
- ASSIGNED: Testing Prototypes
- DUE: Prototypes
- DUE: Pitch Your Business

March 5

- User Testing
- ASSIGNED: User Testing
- DUE: Testing Prototypes

March 9 - 15

- SPRING BREAK

March 17

- Gut Check
- ASSIGNED: Gut Check

March 19

- Proving Feasibility
- ASSIGNED: Proving Feasibility
- DUE: User Testing
- DUE: Gut Check

March 24

- Extras
- ASSIGNED: Extras

March 26

- Open Class

March 31

- How to Pitch
- ASSIGNED: Pitch Your Business
- DUE: Extras

April 2

- Pitching with Q&A
- ASSIGNED: Revised Pitches
- DUE: Pitch Your Business

April 7

- Pitching with Q&A
- ASSIGNED: Revised Pitches

- DUE: Revised Pitches

April 9

- Final Preparations
- ASSIGNED: Final Preparations
- DUE: Revised Pitches

April 11

- PITCH DAY

April 14

- Reflection
- ASSIGNED: Final Documentation

April 16

- Review Outline with Feedback
- DUE: Outline of Documentation

April 21

- OPEN CLASS

April 23

- Evaluations
- ASSIGNED: Final Evaluations
- DUE: Final Documentation

May 5

- EXAM PERIOD - 8 - 11 a.m.
- DUE: Evaluations @ 11 a.m.

Team Deliverables:

Ideation - 5%

- A 300-word memo to your angel investor (us) that succinctly explains the idea you are pursuing, why you are pursuing it and how you came up with that idea (including a list of the ideas you chose not to pursue).

Desirability - 5%

- A summary that outlines your consumer market and problem you are solving. It must clearly identify your target market, how big that target is, why you are targeting this market and all pertinent characteristics of the market. You should also include any secondary targets as well.

Viability - 5%

- A 200-word memo to your angel investor (us) that succinctly summarizes why and how your product will generate revenue. You must also include a basic spreadsheet that shows appropriate calculations over time to support your memo.

Feasibility - 5%

- A working prototype that demonstrates your product and how consumers would interact with it. You must also provide a summary (in outline form) that succinctly summarizes the costs of running your product and a basic spreadsheet that shows appropriate calculations over time to support your costs.

Overall - 20%

- Your final report about your media product idea. It must include final versions of all previous reports that have been changed over the course of the semester. It should also include ALL NOTES that you've kept about your product.

Presentation - 10%

- The public presentation (and Q&A) of findings and recommendations for your media product. It must be well prepared and rehearsed, and you must answer be able to answer all questions appropriately and sincerely.

Individual Deliverables

Peer Evaluations – 5%

- Students will grade the members of their team at the end of the semester based on the News Lab Evaluation Criteria listed below. They must also turn in the team effectiveness evaluation.

Instructor Evaluation – 40%

- Students will be evaluated by the instructors at the end of the semester based on the News Lab Evaluation Criteria listed below.

Self Review / Reflection – 5%

- Students will evaluate themselves at the end of the semester based on the News Lab Evaluation Criteria listed below.

Evaluation Criteria

- *Resourcefulness*: Ability to generate new and improved ideas, concepts, methods, techniques, processes and practices. Ability to deal with new situations effectively. Extent of efforts at creative problem-solving.
- *Quality and Quantity of Work*: Accuracy, thoroughness and effectiveness in performance of duties. Volume and quality of work regularly produced. Speed, accuracy and consistency in completion of work.
- *Initiative*: Degree to which student is a self-starter. Seeks solutions to resolve unexpected problems that arise. Anticipates needs, plans ahead and effectively organizes work.
- *Dependability*: Reliability in carrying out instructions, participating and meeting deadlines.
- *Collaboration*: Effectiveness in working with others to generate ideas, seek mutual purpose/understanding, be receptive to differing ideas and opinions while continuing forward progress.
- *Overall*: How this student performed overall in every aspect of the class.

Evaluation Scale

(Each grade can have a “-“ or “+” to allow for more granular evaluation).

- A: Outstanding. Exceptional student. A model for all others.
- B: Exceeds Expectations. Solid effort.
- C: Meets Expectations. Completed the basic assignments.
- D: Needs Improvement. Significant issues with assignments and team.
- F: Below Expectations. Needs to consider a different class/field.