

SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

[School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#)

JOMC 562 (cross listed as HPM 552 & HBEH 562), Fall 2014

Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m., Carroll Hall 340

<http://www.unc.edu/~trl/syllabi/562.html>

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Course Description and Goals

The purpose of this course is to teach the skills needed to produce a six- to seven-minute television report on a science or environmental topic for broadcast on public television. Each television report will air on "[North Carolina Now](#)," the news and information program on statewide public television (UNC-TV). (Broadcast of the piece is subject to the approval of Dr. Linden and the managing editor of "North Carolina Now.")

As a participant in this course, you'll learn the following:

- How to research a science television report.
- How to field produce a science television report.
- How to script a science television report.

[JOMC 121](#) ("Writing for the Electronic Media"), [JOMC 560](#) ("Science and Medical Journalism") and [JOMC 561](#) ("Science and Medical Video Storytelling") are recommended preparatory courses, but not prerequisites.

Because the course combines reporting and technical familiarity with scientific concepts, the learning curve is steep. It's expected that students will spend many hours working on their video projects outside class. Since each of you will work on a team, active participation in all aspects of the course is essential. A team member who fails to do his or her job can cause the entire team's project to fail to reach air.

Texts

The required book for the course for those without a video or television news background is the following:

Wenger, Debora and Deborah Potter, [Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World](#), CQ College Press, Second Edition, 2011, ISBN: 978-1608717149.

(The first edition of the Wenger and Potter book is an acceptable substitute for the second edition.)

The recommended text is the following:

Franklin, Jon. [Writing for Story: Craft Secrets of Dramatic Nonfiction by a Two-Time Pulitzer Prize Winner](#), Plume Books, Reprint edition, ©1988, 288 pp., \$14.00. ISBN: 0-452-272955.

Assignments

Keys to a successful science television news report are solid research and good writing. Good writing requires an understanding of the material and the ability to communicate ideas simply and clearly.

I expect that you'll meet all deadlines for setting up field shoots, turning in shoot schedules and preparing segment scripts. I also expect that you'll attend all field shoots involving your respective team.

The major focus of the course is production of a six- to seven-minute television report telling a science- or environmental-based story about one or another North Carolina state park.

Each production team will be comprised of a segment producer, one or two associate producers/researchers and a scriptwriter. Dr. Linden will serve as executive producer for all reports. Final script approval of the student-produced segments will rest with Professor Linden.

Exam

There will be no midterm or final exam.

Grades

Your grade will depend entirely upon the quality of your completed television report. Dr. Linden will determine your grade on your documentary segment based upon your contributions to the production team and upon the quality of your individual work (as producer, associate producer or scriptwriter). **During the semester please keep a log of your documentary-related activities noting the amount of time (by date and in hours) spent during the preparation of your video report.** The instructor will ask for the log (no more than one page) to be handed in at the last class session.

Your instructor will also evaluate your ability to work with other team members. Keep in mind that a successful documentary requires teamwork. Each unexcused absence from a class meeting or field shoot will result in the lowering of your grade by one letter grade. Three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade in the course. Late arrival to class or to a field shoot will count as an absence. Remember that broadcast professional standards of promptness and preparation are expected during every phase of the project. In broadcast journalism, one team member failing to deliver at any point in the production process affects many people, including your team, other teams and sources who are taking time away from busy schedules to accommodate you.

If you are concerned about your performance in the course or desire feedback, talk with the instructor at any point during the semester.

How To Succeed in This Course

- Attend all classes *on time*. Remember late arrival to class (even by a few minutes) counts as an absence.
- Complete readings *before* the appropriate classroom discussions.
- *Participate* actively in class.
- *Complete* all work responsibilities by your deadline(s).
- Work *cooperatively* with your team members.
- Make sure all facts in your stories are accurate and sourced.
- Ask Dr. Linden *questions* either during class or during office hours if you're unclear about any aspect of this course.

Student Job Descriptions

Producer: The producer is the person responsible for coordinating all research related to the report and lining up all people and locales featured in the report. In consultation with his/her team and Dr. Linden, the producer determines the focus of the report. The producer, associate producer and scriptwriter need to scout field locations and provide preliminary and final shoot schedules to Dr. Linden by the required deadlines. As producer, you'll succeed by delegating responsibilities and making sure that your team completes those tasks in a timely manner. Throughout the entire project, up to and including the shoot, the "buck" stops with the producer.

Associate Producer/Researcher: The associate producer/researcher is responsible for carrying out all jobs assigned by the producer. Those jobs include (but are not limited to) performing research, scouting field locations, and pre-interviewing people featured in the report. When the producer is unable to fulfill his/her responsibilities, the associate producer may be asked by Dr. Linden to fill in as required.

Scriptwriter: The scriptwriter's main responsibility prior to the shoot is to provide the team with working scripts by the required deadlines. After the field shoots are completed, primary responsibility on the team shifts from the producer/associate producer to the scriptwriter. As scriptwriter, you'll complete several drafts of the script that you'll vet first with members of your team and then with Dr. Linden. In team disputes about the content and/or style of the script, the scriptwriter has the final say. If a team member believes that there is a factual or content error that can't be reconciled by the scriptwriter, that team member should contact Prof. Linden.

All team members: Each team member will pre-interview at least one person featured on camera and will conduct the actual field interview of that person. If you are unsure how to find and contact sources, please talk with Dr. Linden who will help you. Team members will **share** in tape logging, a laborious process but critical to the shaping of the script and the eventual video editing of the report. (Logging must be completed by the designated deadlines as late logs will delay the scriptwriter in meeting his/her deadlines.) All team members will participate in the script review process and in the final video editing sessions to take place at UNC-TV in Research Triangle Park in late November.

Selection of job responsibilities: Dr. Linden will determine your particular team role (producer, associate producer, or scriptwriter). He'll solicit your preference prior to making his assignments.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1 - AUG. 21: INTRODUCTION TO SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

* Turn in Student Data Sheet available in Resources folder of Sakai.

- * Get acquainted with the class project.
- * View previous three episodes on North Carolina State Parks produced by last year's teams.
- * Review fundamentals of writing news for broadcast television.

Assignment for next class:

Email to Dr. Linden by Thursday, August 21, 6 p.m., your prioritized rankings for job assignments (producer, associate producer, and scriptwriter). If you have not handed in your student data sheet at the first class, please also attach that document as well.

By Friday morning, August 22, I will email to class members your team assignments (including your individual job assignment).

After you receive your team assignment, please meet (preferably, in person) with your team members to talk about possible story topics. By Wednesday, August 27, 6 p.m, each team should email to Dr. Linden two story topics, describing each topic in a 150-word (maximum)"pitch." At the bottom of each pitch, please compile a list of four individuals who could be sources for your respective stories. For each source, give the individual's title and contact information (including BOTH telephone number and email address). For the next class session please bring enough copies of your pitches and source lists so that each class member has a copy. Each team should be prepared to give a five-minute pitch for each of their two story topics.

Reading for next class:

Linden, Tom. "Medical Reporting for the Electronic Media," in Barbara Gastel's Health Writer's Handbook (Second Edition), Ch. 9, pp. 161 - 183. (Reading available in Resources folder of [Sakai](#)).

Wenger & Potter, read Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

Viewing for next class:

Watch "North Carolina Now" on UNC-TV. Program airs M-F at 7:30 p.m. Consult your local television guide for the cable channel. Over-the-air digital broadcast channel is 4.1.

WEEK 2 - AUG. 28: PRIMER ON SCRIPTWRITING & VISIT WITH THE STATE PARKS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

- * Review basics of scriptwriting as outlined in Linden chapter.
- * Review chapters 2, 4 and 5 from Wenger & Potter text.
- * Guest speaker (10:30 a.m.) -- **Donald G. Reuter**, assistant director of North Carolina State Parks

Assignment for next class:

Watch "North Carolina Now" either on television at its broadcast time of 7:30 p.m. M-F on UNC-TV or at its website, <http://www.unctv.org/ncnow/>.

Each team should work on its 100-150 word pitch to be presented in class Thursday, Sept. 4. Please include suggested sources (including their titles, affiliations and contact info), suggested B-roll and other desired visuals (e.g., animation or graphics). Please note that the latter items were not requested on the first pitch that you delivered last week.

I'd also like to meet with each team for 30 minutes Wednesday, Sept. 3. I will be available anytime after 1:30 p.m. and until 5 p.m. So, please let me know your preferred time to meet.

For next Thursday, Sept. 4, bring 10 copies of your pitch to share with the entire class and with Mitch Lewis, managing editor and anchor of "North Carolina Now," and Frank Graff, UNC-TV's science reporter and producer.

Reading/Viewing for next class:

Franklin: Writing for Story Preface (pp. xv - xix), Chapters I through VII (pp. 21-166), Appendix A (pp. 216-235).

WEEK 3 - SEPT. 4: NARRATIVE JOURNALISM / REVIEW OF SCRIPTWRITING/ STORY SEGMENT TOPIC DISCUSSION

Guest speakers: "[North Carolina Now's](#)" Managing Editor, [Mitch Lewis](#); UNC-TV science reporter and producer, [Frank Graff](#)

- * Discuss Franklin narrative journalism formula.
- * Watch previous science documentary television pieces on UNC-TV.

Assignment for next class:

Contact all possible sources by phone to gather information and to determine your final list of on-air

interviewees. Start planning for your scouting trip. Refine your pitch and storyline incorporating the latest information obtained from your phone interviews.

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 11: SETTING UP THE FIELD SHOOTS

- * Tips on how to set up field shoots.
- * Tips on how to select appropriate B-roll.
- * Learn what's required for logging your tapes.

Assignment for next class:

Prepare first 60 seconds of your working script. Scout field locations. **Producers/APs** should bring two hard copies of your shoot schedule to the next class, one copy to be projected on the screen and the other to be given to videographer Mike Oniffrey. Also, please email copies of your shoot schedule to Dr. Linden and Mr. Howes.

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 18: DISCUSSION OF FIELD SHOOTS

Guest speaker: **Mike Oniffrey**, UNC-TV videographer/editor

- * Refine field shoots.
- * Confirm interviews with experts and other interview subjects.
- * Nail down ideas for B-roll.

Assignment for next class:

Continue pre-interviews of subjects. Continue scouting field locations. **Scriptwriters** should bring enough copies of your working script to the next class so that all class members can have a copy. **Producers** should email revised shoot schedules to Dr. Linden and Mr. Howe by Wednesday, Sept. 24, at 6 p.m. All teams - please bring copies of shoot schedules to class so we can project them on the screen and review them in class.

WEEK 6 - SEPT. 25: REVIEW SHOOT SCHEDULES AND WORKING SCRIPTS

- * Review shoot schedules and working scripts for all teams in class.

WEEK 7 - OCT. 2: REVIEW SHOOT SCHEDULES AND WORKING SCRIPTS

Assignment for next class:

Scout field location if you have yet to do that.

WEEK 8 - OCT. 9: FINALIZE SHOOT SCHEDULES AND WORKING SCRIPTS

Assignment for next class:

A Team - finish pre-interviews of subjects and finish scouting field locations. **"A" team scriptwriter** should email working script to team members and Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 20, at 12 noon. **"A" team producer** should email shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden and UNC-TV videographer by Monday, Oct. 20, at 12 noon. Be sure to let your videographer know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) a couple days *before* you get to your first shoot.

B Team - continue pre-interviews of subjects and scouting field locations. See Assignment for Week 10 below.

WEEK 9 - (FALL SEMESTER BREAK, NO CLASS OCT. 16)

WEEK 10 - NO CLASS - A Team Field Shoot - OCT. 23 (Thursday) & OCT. 24 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

B Team - finish pre-interviews of subjects and finish scouting field locations. **"B" team scriptwriter** should email working script to team members and Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 27 at 12 noon. **"B" team producer** should email shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden and UNC-TV videographer by Monday, Oct. 27, at 12 noon. Be sure to let your videographer know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) a couple days *before* you get to your first shoot.

WEEK 11 - NO CLASS - B Team Field Shoot - OCT. 30 (Thursday) & OCT. 31 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - First draft of script and complete tape log due Sunday, Nov. 2, by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Wednesday, Nov. 5 by 5 p.m. Scriptwriter, please bring enough copies of revised script so all class members have a copy.

B Team - First draft of script and complete tape log due Wednesday, Nov. 5, by 6 p.m. via email to Dr. Linden.

WEEK 12 - NOV. 6: FIRST SCRIPT CONFERENCE

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Next draft of script due Tuesday, Nov. 11, by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please bring enough copies of script so all class members have a copy.

B Team - Next draft of script due Wednesday, Nov. 12, by 6 p.m. via email to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please bring enough copies of script so all class members have a copy.

WEEK 13 - NOV. 13: FINAL SCRIPT CONFERENCE (Helen Chickering, guest critiquer)

Assignment for next class:

BOTH Teams -- Please email revised drafts of scripts to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 16. Also, each team should email to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 16, a schedule of which team members will be at UNC-TV for which hours on your respective edit dates (see below).

WEEK 14 - No class but editing sessions at UNC-TV as follows:

A Team edit - Thursday, Nov. 20, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

B Team edit - Friday, Nov. 21, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

WEEK 15 - NOV. 27: THANKSGIVING (no class)

Assignment: IMPORTANT! Please email to Dr. Linden by Wednesday, Dec. 3, your work log detailing the number of project hours worked per week throughout the semester and the jobs that you performed during those hours. Your grade in the course will not be posted until after the work log is received.

FINALS WEEK - Saturday, Dec. 6, potluck viewing party at 6:30 p.m. at Dr. Linden's house. Please RSVP via email.

The Honor Code

The Honor Code is in effect in this class and all others at the University. I am committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms set out at <http://instrument.unc.edu>. If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask me about the Code's application. All exams, written work and other projects must be submitted with a statement that you have complied with the requirements of the Honor Code in all aspects of the submitted work.

Professional Values and Competencies

Among the many skills students will learn in this course, it's expected they will be able to fulfill the following values and competencies as enumerated by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication:

- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- 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 basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

-- syllabus revised Sept. 3, 2014