

SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

[School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#)

JOMC 562 (cross listed as HPM 552), Fall 2013

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](#) ("Medical Journalism") and [JOMC 561](#) ("Medical Reporting for the Electronic Media") 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 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.

Recommended Texts

Suggested readings for the course include a primer written by a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist on how to craft a narrative and a textbook on the basics of preparing a television news report. The recommended texts are 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.

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

The Wenger & Potter book is especially recommended for students with no experience in broadcast journalism. The first edition of that book is an acceptable substitute for the second edition.

Assignments

The 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 your 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 this semester 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 entirely depend 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 ability to work with other team members will also be evaluated. Keep in mind that succeeding in the television field 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 can affect 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, talk with the instructor at any point during the semester. Dr. Linden will provide feedback of your performance upon request.

How To Succeed in This Course

- Attend all classes *on time*. Remember late arrival to class (even by a few minutes) is counted 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 ultimately 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, together with the associate producer and scriptwriter, also needs 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 those responsibilities are completed in a timely manner. Remember that 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.

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. 22: INTRODUCTION TO SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

- * Turn in Student Data Sheet that was emailed to you.
- * 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 Friday, Aug. 23, 6 p.m., your job preference -- first and second choices (either producer, associate producer, or scriptwriter). If you have not handed in your student data sheet at the first class, please also attach that document as well. (You'll find the template in the Resources folder of [Sakai](#)).

By Sunday evening, Aug. 25, 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 28, 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. 29: VISIT WITH THE STATE PARKS DIRECTOR; PRIMER ON SCRIPTWRITING

Guest speaker: [Lewis Ledford](#), director of North Carolina State Parks

* Review basics of scriptwriting as outlined in Linden chapter.

* Review chapters 2, 4 and 5 from Wenger & Potter text.

Assignment for next class:

Please 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 to Mitch Lewis, managing editor and anchor for "North Carolina Now," in class Thursday, Sept. 5. Please include suggested sources (including their titles, affiliations and contact info), and 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. 4. I will be available anytime after 1:30 p.m. and until 5 p.m. So, please get back to me with your preferred time to meet.

Lastly, I'd like to receive via email by 8 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 4, your pitch sheet that you'll bring to class on Thursday. Please remember to bring 11 copies with you to class (enough for the 9 class members, Jonathan Howes and me).

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).

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

WEEK 3 - SEPT. 5: NARRATIVE JOURNALISM / REVIEW OF SCRIPTWRITING/ STORY SEGMENT TOPIC DISCUSSION

* 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. For next Thursday, bring 13 copies of your pitch to share with the class and with Mitch Lewis, executive producer and anchor of "North Carolina Now" and Frank Graff, UNC-TV's science reporter and producer. Also, view "North Carolina Now" either on the air (M->F at 7:30 p.m. on UNC-TV) or [online](#) in preparation for your discussion with Mr. Lewis and Mr. Graff.

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 12: SETTING UP THE FIELD SHOOTS

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

- * 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. **Producer** should bring shooting schedule to class with copies for all team members and Dr. Linden.

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 19: DISCUSSION OF FIELD SHOTS

Guest speaker: Mike Oniffrey, UNC-TV videographer/editor (unconfirmed)

- * 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/APs** should bring enough copies of your shoot schedule to the next class so that all class members can have a copy.

WEEK 6 - SEPT. 26: PLAN FOR FIELD SHOTS

- * Review shoot schedules for all teams in class.

Assignment for next class:

Finish pre-interviews of subjects. Finish scouting field locations. **"A" team scriptwriter** should email working script to team members and to Dr. Linden by Monday, Sept. 30, at 12 noon. **"B" Team producer** should email shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden and UNC-TV videographer by Monday, Sept. 30, 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 7 - NO CLASS - A Team Field Shoot - OCT. 3 (Thursday) & OCT. 4 (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. 7, at 12 noon. **"B" team producer** should email shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden and UNC-TV videographer by Monday, Oct. 7, 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 8 - NO CLASS - B Team Field Shoot - OCT. 10 (Thursday) & OCT. 11 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

C Team - finish pre-interviews of subjects and finish scouting field locations. "**C**" **team scriptwriter** should email working script to team members and Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 21 at 12 noon. "**C**" **team producer** should email shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden and UNC-TV videographer by Monday, Oct. 21, 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 9 - (FALL SEMESTER BREAK, NO CLASS OCT. 17)

Assignment for next class:

A & B Teams - log tapes, revise scripts.

WEEK 10 - NO CLASS - C Team Field Shoot - OCT. 24 (Thursday) & OCT. 25 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - First draft of script due Wednesday, Oct. 30, by 5 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriters, please bring enough copies of script so all class members have a copy.

WEEK 11 - OCT 31: FIRST SCRIPT CONFERENCE

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Second draft of script due Sunday, Nov. 3, by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Tuesday, Nov. 5 by 5 p.m.

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

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

WEEK 12 - NOV. 7: SECOND SCRIPT CONFERENCE

Assignment for next class:

ALL Teams -- Please email revised drafts of scripts to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 10. Dr. Linden will email scriptwriters his revisions by 5 p.m., Wed., Nov. 13. Scriptwriters will then bring revised copies of scripts (based on Linden corrections) to final script conference on Nov. 14. Please bring enough copies of script so all class members have copies.

WEEK 13 - NOV. 14: FINAL SCRIPT CONFERENCE

Assignment for next class:

ALL Teams -- Please email revised drafts of scripts to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 17. Also, each team should email to Dr. Linden by Sunday, Nov. 24, a schedule of which team members will be at UNC-TV for which hours on your respective edit dates (see below).

WEEK 14 - NOV. 21: NO CLASS, BUT ALL-DAY EDITING SESSIONS TUESDAY, THURSDAY and FRIDAY at UNC-TV AS FOLLOWS:

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

B Team edit - Friday, Nov. 22, start time: 9 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

C Team edit - Tuesday, Dec. 3, start time: 9 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

Assignment: **IMPORTANT!** Please email to Dr. Linden by Wednesday, Dec. 4, your work log detailing the number of project hours worked per week throughout the semester and the jobs that you performed during those hours.

FINAL WEEK - Saturday, Dec. 7, 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 August 18, 2013