

JOMC 463.1 News Lab

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 8:00 – 9:20 a.m.
11 Carroll Hall (Reese New Lab)
Fall 2013

Feasibility / Viability / Desirability

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

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 10 – 11:30 a.m. or by appointment

Description

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

News Lab is not a typical 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. Students should not expect to be told exactly how something must be done.

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 instructor

This document sets the schedule, but we recognize that this industry changes rapidly – particularly in a start-up 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.

Objectives

- Learn how to think critically, creatively and independently
- Learn how to work in a well-functioning team
- Learn basic concepts of business and economics as they relate to the media
 - Understand current news models and why they have declined
 - Become familiar with key strategies that are being tested in the media industry
- Develop a business strategy
 - Learn how to evaluate other business plans and opportunities
 - Develop, present, defend and refine a business pitch
- Learn how to create and test a prototype for a news product or service
- Learn a framework for exploring the feasibility, viability and desirability of an idea
- Create and test a prototype for a news product or service
 - Create a tangible product or service from an idea
 - Test the product or service against the business strategy
 - Prove (or disprove) the viability of the product or service and determine next steps
- Deliver a final presentation of the prototype
 - Explain the business strategy
 - Showcase the prototype
 - Pitch the idea
- Reflect

Attendance

The student should approach this class as he or she would a job at a start up. 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. Prior permission from the instructor is considered an excused absence. You are expected to attend class, complete your assignments and actively participate. Two (2) unexcused absences are allowed. Each unexcused absence after the first two will result in a 5-point reduction in your final grade.

Late Assignments and Attendance

Late assignments may be accepted the discretion of the instructor, but **you will be given a 0 for any late assignment.** Deadlines will be enforced.

Grading

Individual

- 10% - Peer Evaluation
- 30% - Team Participation Evaluation

- 10% - Self Evaluation / Reflection

Group

- 5% - Marketing Plan
- 15% - Business Plan
- 25% - Prototypes
- 5% - Final Presentation

Grades are split between the group and the individual. The team can only succeed with you, and you can only succeed with the team.

Grading Scale

- A = 98-100
- A- = 90-97
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 84-86
- B- = 80-83
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 74-76
- C- = 70-73
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 64-66
- D- = 60-63
- F = 0 - 59

Honor Code:

It is expected that each student will conduct himself or herself 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 instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Chris Roush.

Seeking Help:

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with the 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 instructor 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.

Schedule

This is the basic, overall schedule for the team during the semester. Specific deadlines, processes and individual tasks will be set the team during the first week. A team leader(s) will also be identified during the first week of class.

Each week, we will take a limited amount of time to discuss and explain new material related to the start-up in keeping with the schedule below. The team will decide how to spend most of the time during and outside the scheduled class periods in order to meet the team-set deadlines and deliverable dates outlines below.

Week of August 19

- Orientation

Week of August 26

- Technology & Budget Decisions
- Personal SMART Goals Due

Week of September 2 (Labor Day)

- Operational Plan finalized

Week of September 9

- Marketing strategy outline. Who is your target market, how big is that market (Does anyone want/need it?)

Week of September 16

- Prototype Outline released (Can it be done?)

Week of September 23

- Business strategy outline (Can it be sustained?)

Week of September 30

- Public Release Preparation

Week of October 7

- Prototype Version 1 released (Can it be done?)

Week of October 14 (Fall Break)

- Marketing strategy draft (Does anyone want/need it?)

Week of October 21

- Business strategy draft (Can it be sustained?)
- Official report on Prototype Version 1 User Testing

Week of October 28

- Prototype Version 2 released (Can it be done?)

Week of November 4

- Presentation script draft.

Week of November 11

- Final Draft: Marketing strategy (Does anyone need/want it?)
- Official report on Prototype Version 2 User Testing

Week of November 18

- Prototype Final version released (Can it be done?)
- Final Draft: Business strategy (Can it be sustained?)
- Compile final presentation visuals
- Presentation rehearsals.

Week of November 25 (Thanksgiving)

- Dress Rehearsal

Week of December 2

- Final Presentations
- Celebrate/Time for Reflection

Deliverables:**Individual**

Peer Evaluations – 10%

- Students will grade each other at the end of the semester in the following areas: overall ability to work with the team, creativity and contributions to the team.

Team Participation – 30%

- Students will be evaluated by the instructor at the end of the semester in the following areas: in the following areas: overall ability to work with the team, creativity, contributions to the team and contributions to the overall product and strategies.

Self Review / Reflection – 10%

- Students will be evaluated by the instructor at the end of the semester in the following areas: in the following areas: overall ability to work with the team, creativity, contributions to the team and contributions to the overall product and strategies.

Group

Prototype – FEASIBILITY – 25%

- Subjectively graded on the actual product itself, the goals set by the team for the specific product, subsequent improvements to the product and the general idea of FEASIBILITY.
- **Prototype 1: October 11, 2013 @ 9 a.m.**
- **Prototype 2: November 1, 2013 @ 9 a.m.**
- **Prototype 3: November 22, 2013 @ 9 a.m.**

Business Strategy – VIABILITY – 15%

- Subjectively graded on the specificity of the potential revenue model, the ability to prove the revenue model (including revenue and cost) and general idea of VIABILITY.
- **Outline**
 - **DUE: September 26, 2013 @ 12 p.m.**
 - Outlines – at a high level – the basic revenue model
 - How much does this cost?
 - How will you pay it?
 - Sets up the structure for the actual business document to be written later
- **Rough Draft**
 - **DUE: October 24, 2013 @ 12 p.m.**
 - This first official draft of the business strategy.
 - Must address all business questions – in detail – outlined during class.
 - Includes SWOT analysis and rudimentary financial plan
- **Final Draft**

- **DUE: November 21, 2013 @ 12 p.m.**
- Final draft of business strategy free from all typographical, grammatical and style errors.
- Ready to be published/consumed by the general public.
- Includes all data/results from prototype tests (analytics), business discussions and true cost/revenue models.

Marketing Strategy – DESIRABILITY – 5%

- Subjectively graded on specificity of market (users and customers), general idea of *DISERABILITY* and how it will be promoted and/or marketed.
- **Outline**
 - **DUE: September 12, 2013 @ 12 p.m.**
 - Outlines – at a high level – the basic characteristics of your market
 - Who is your target user? (Who users/consumers)
 - Who is your target customer? (Who pays)
 - NOTE: users and customers may be the same.
 - Sets up the structure for the actual marketing plan to be written later
- **Rough Draft**
 - **DUE: October 15, 2013 @ 12 p.m.**
 - This first official draft of the marketing plan.
 - Must address all marketing questions – in detail – outlined during class.
 - Presents outline of promotion/marketing schedule
- **Final Draft**
 - **DUE: November 14, 2013 @ 12 p.m.**
 - Final draft of the marketing plan free from all typographical, grammatical and style errors.
 - Ready to be published/consumed by the general public.
 - Includes data/results from initial marketing attempts.

Final Presentation – 5%

- Introduce and demonstrate the product
 - WHAT is the product?
- Explain why the product was created.
 - WHY was the product created? What problem does it solve or what service does it provide?
 - WHO benefits from this product? Who is in your target audience?
- Outline how you built, tested and gathered data from the product?
 - WHEN did we do what we did?
 - HOW did we gather and analyze our data?
- Explain the business strategy of the product.

- HOW is this product sustainable?
- Make recommendations on what should happen next
 - WHAT should we do next?
 - WHY should we do it?
 - HOW should it be done?

Peer Evaluation – 10%

- At the end of the semester, your peers will rate you on the News Lab Behaviors outlines below.

Instructor Evaluation – 30%

- At the end of the semester, the instructor will rate you on the News Lab Behaviors outlines below and on the goals you outlined for yourself at the beginning of the semester.

Self Evaluation / Reflection – 10%

- At the end of the semester, you will rate yourself on the News Lab Behaviors outlines below AND on the goals you outlined for yourself at the beginning of the semester.
- You will also reflect on and write about your experience during the semester.

News Lab Behaviors

Evaluation Scale

- 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

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.
- *Overall*: How did this student perform overall in every aspect of the class.