

SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

School of Media and Journalism

MEJO 562 (cross listed as HBEH 562 & HPM 552), Fall 2016

Thursday, 11:00 a.m. - 1:45 p.m., Carroll Hall 338

<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 "[SciTech Now North Carolina](#)" on statewide public television (UNC-TV). (Broadcast of the piece is subject to the approval of Dr. Linden and the managing editor of "SciTech 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.

[MEJO 252](#) ("Audio Journalism"), [MEJO 560](#) ("Science and Medical Journalism") and [MEJO 561](#) ("Medical and Science Video Storytelling") are recommended preparatory courses, but not prerequisites.

Because the course combines broadcast reporting and technical familiarity with scientific and environmental 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.

Required Texts

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 required 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. (Third Edition is also acceptable)

The Wenger & Potter book is especially recommended for students with no experience in broadcast journalism.

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, 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.

Grading

Your grade will depend upon your classroom participation (20%), contributions you make to your video team (40%), and the quality of your completed video report (40%).

Classroom participation will be determined by the following (20 points maximum):

- a) Have you done the reading and can clearly communicate lessons learned from the reading?
- b) Have you contributed to class discussions?
- c) Have you attended class regularly and on time? Late arrival to class (even by a few minutes) will be counted as an absence. Consider arriving in class on time a deadline you have to meet. A reporter who misses a deadline is usually a reporter who loses a job.

Contributions to your video team will be determined as follows: (40 points maximum):

- a) Have you kept a **contemporaneous** work log of time spent in all out-of-class, project-related activities? **The log should note the amount of time (by date and in hours) spent each week during the preparation of your video report.** For each entry note the job you performed (e.g., research, telephone pre-interview, scouting trip, etc.) The instructor will ask for the log (no more than one page) to be handed in at the last class session. You **cannot** pass the course unless you turn in your work log in a timely manner.
- b) How have you collaborated with your team members? Keep in mind that succeeding in the television and reporting field requires teamwork.
- c) What's the quality of your individual contribution whether as producer, associate producer or scriptwriter?
- d) Have you completed your responsibilities within the team in a timely manner? 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.

The quality of your completed video report will be based on the following (40 points maximum):

- a) Does the story have a strong focus?
- b) Is the story compelling?
- c) Are the environmental science lessons accurate and explained in a way that a non-scientist can easily understand?
- d) Are there a variety of knowledgeable sources?
- e) Are appropriate archival materials included (e.g., photos, videos, recordings, art)?
- f) Was the story adequately fact checked?
- g) Is there a human interest angle?

If you're concerned about your performance or your grade in the course, talk with the instructor at any point during the semester. Dr. Linden will provide feedback upon request.

Grading Scale (for undergraduates)

98 - 100 A+
94 - 97 A
91 - 93 A-
88 - 90 B+
84 - 87 B
81 - 83 B-
78 - 80 C+
74 - 77 C
71 - 73 C-
68 - 70 D+
64 - 67 D
61 - 63 D-
60 and below F

Grading Scale (for graduate students)

93 - 100 Honors
74 - 92 Pass
61 - 73 Low Pass
60 and below F

After one unexcused absence, each absence will result in a drop of one letter grade in the course. This is a upper division/graduate-level seminar, and your presence and contribution are essential. You **cannot** pass the course with more than two unexcused absences.

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 or your job responsibilities.

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 with Dr. Linden, the producer determines the focus of the report. The producer, together with the associate producers 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 all 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/researchers are 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 producers 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 producers 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're 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. 25: INTRODUCTION TO SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

- * Turn in Student Data Sheet that was emailed to you.
- * Get acquainted with the class project.
- * View previous episodes on North Carolina State Parks produced by last year's teams. Most of the pieces are available for viewing at:
<http://mj.unc.edu/academics/special-programs/medical-science-journalism-program/medical-and-science-journalism-tv>
- * Review fundamentals of writing news for broadcast television.

Assignment for next class:

Email to Dr. Linden by Thursday, August 25, 6 p.m., your 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. (You'll find the template for the student data sheet in the Resources folder of [Sakai](#)).

By Friday morning, August 26, 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 31, 6 p.m., each team should email to Dr. Linden two story topics, describing each topic in a 150-word (maximum) story 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, Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

Viewing for next class:

Watch "SciTech Now" on UNC-TV. Program airs Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. Consult your local television guide for the cable channel. Over-the-air digital broadcast channel is 4.1. Multiple past episodes reside at <http://video.unctv.org/show/scitech-now-north-carolina/>

WEEK 2 - SEPT. 1: VISIT WITH STATE PARKS DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS; PRIMER ON SCRIPTWRITING

Guest speaker: [Donald Reuter](#), director, Office of Public Affairs, 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:

View past episodes of SciTech Now at <http://video.unctv.org/show/scitech-now-north-carolina/>

Each team should work on its 100-150 word pitch to be presented to Frank Graff, managing producer and anchor/reporter for "SciTech Now," in class Thursday, Sept. 12. Before you dive too deeply into your story topic, **please make sure that the story was not covered in a previous episode of SciTech Now.** 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 on Tuesday, Sept. 6. I'm available from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and also from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. Team producer, 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. 7, your pitch sheet that you'll bring to class on Thursday. Please remember to bring 15 copies with you to class (enough for all class members 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).

WEEK 3 - SEPT. 8: NARRATIVE JOURNALISM / REVIEW OF SCRIPTWRITING/ STORY SEGMENT TOPIC DISCUSSION

- * Discuss Franklin narrative journalism formula as explain in his assigned book.
- * 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 16 copies of your pitch to share with the class and with Frank Graff, UNC-TV's SciTech reporter and producer. Watch SEVERAL episodes of [SciTech Now](#) on the UNC-TV website.

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 15: SETTING UP THE FIELD SHOOTS

Guest speaker: [Frank Graff](#), UNC-TV's SciTech Now producer, reporter and anchor

- * 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 Bob Gunter. Also, please email copies of your shoot schedule to Dr. Linden.

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 22: DISCUSSION OF FIELD SHOOTS

Guest speaker: Bob Gunter, 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 by Wednesday, Sept. 28, 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. 29: FINALIZE SHOOTING SCHEDULES

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

Assignment for next class:

A Team - finish pre-interviews of subjects. **"A" team scriptwriter** should email working script to team members and Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 3, at 12 noon. **"A" team producer** should email final shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden, and UNC-TV videographer Bob Gunter by Monday, Oct. 3, 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. 6 (Thursday) & OCT. 7 (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. 10, at 12 noon. **"B" team producer** should email shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden and UNC-TV videographer by Monday, Oct. 10, 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. 13 (Thursday) & OCT. 14 (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. 24 at 12 noon. **"C" team producer** should email shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden and UNC-TV videographer by Monday, Oct. 24, 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. 20)

Assignment for next class:

A & B Teams - finish logging tapes.

WEEK 10 - NO CLASS - C Team Field Shoot - OCT. 27 (Thursday) & OCT. 28 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - First draft of script and complete tape log due Saturday, Oct. 29 by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Wednesday, Nov. 3 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 Tuesday, Nov. 1, by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Wednesday, Nov. 2 by 5 p.m. Scriptwriter, please bring enough copies of revised script so all class members have a copy.

C Team - First draft of script and complete tape log due Wednesday, Nov. 9, by 6 p.m. via email to Dr. Linden.

WEEK 11 - NOV. 3: FIRST SCRIPT CONFERENCE

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Next draft of script due Sunday, Nov. 6, by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Tuesday, Nov. 8 by 5 p.m.

B Team - Next draft of script due Wednesday, Nov. 9, 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. 9, 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. 10: SECOND SCRIPT CONFERENCE (Frank Graff, guest critiquer)

Assignment for next class:

ALL Teams -- Please email revised drafts of scripts to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 13. Dr. Linden will email scriptwriters his revisions by 5 p.m., Wed., Nov. 16. Scriptwriters will then bring revised copies of scripts (based on Linden corrections) to final script conference on Nov. 17. Please bring enough copies of script so all class members have copies.

WEEK 13 - NOV. 17: THIRD SCRIPT CONFERENCE (Helen Chickering, guest critiquer)

Assignment for next class:

ALL Teams -- Please email revised drafts of scripts to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 20. Also, each team should email to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 20, a schedule detailing which team members will be at UNC-TV for which hours on your respective edit dates (see below).

WEEK 14 - NOV. 24: NO CLASS, BUT ALL-DAY EDITING SESSIONS at UNC-TV AS FOLLOWS:

A Team edit - Thursday, Dec. 1, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

B Team edit - Friday, Dec. 2, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

C Team edit - Thursday, Dec. 8, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

Assignment: **IMPORTANT!** Please email to Dr. Linden by Wednesday, Dec. 7, 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. 10, potluck viewing party at 6:30 p.m. at Dr. Linden's house. Please RSVP via email.

The Honor Code

I expect 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. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. 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 Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. 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 2015-2016 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. 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.

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 Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

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 Aug. 23, 2016