

MEJO 426 - Producing Radio News

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Course goal: Working as a team, we strive to produce a radio news program that's accurate, well-written, well-produced, memorable, and innovative. As in a professional newsroom, you'll be expected to collaborate closely with your fellow students and your instructor to achieve the best possible final product. Virtually all of your work in this class will be made available to professional media organizations for widespread broadcast on the radio and online. Each story should be up to the standards of major-market broadcasters.

Course policies: In MEJO 426, there are no exams, no quizzes, and no textbook. Your grade is based solely on the quality and quantity of work you do for "Carolina Connection." You should aim to make meaningful contributions to each of our weekly shows – by producing a story, helping another reporter, contributing a live report or Q&A, serving as anchor or producer, or performing other duties as assigned by a producer.

Deadlines and workflow: As in a professional newsroom, meeting deadlines is essential. If you're producing a story for Saturday's show, I need to see a draft script by **Wednesday at 6:00 pm**. (The only exception would be if you're covering an event that takes place Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday.) *I must give the script final approval before you can produce the story.* Share it with me on Google Drive, and I'll respond either with my approval or suggested changes. The finished, produced story must be done by **Friday at 3:00** unless you're covering late-breaking news. Missed deadlines will affect your course grade.

We meet as a class once a week to discuss story ideas for upcoming shows. You are expected to attend these meetings, bring well-thought-out story ideas, and be prepared to discuss your own and your classmates' ideas. You'll also be expected to volunteer to cover breaking news stories. Missing meetings or arriving to meetings without story ideas will affect your course grade.

Course expectations: Here's what I'll be listening for in each story you produce:

- **Audio quality:** There's nothing worse than bad audio on the radio. If your listeners can't understand what's coming out of their radio, they'll likely turn it off. Clean, understandable audio is a minimum requirement for all stories. Every time you go out on a story, test your equipment before you use it. Wear headphones ALL THE TIME while recording to monitor sound quality, and check your recording before leaving each location to make sure the quality is acceptable. **Set aside enough time to mix your stories!** It can take several hours to properly edit and mix a radio story. All sound should mesh together seamlessly, and all edits should be undetectable to the ear. If you have questions about field recording techniques or need help mixing your story, contact one of the producers, MEJO engineer Gary Kirk, or me.
- **Accuracy:** Our standard is 100% accuracy. You must fact-check every sentence in your story, whether you say it or somebody else does. (For example, if you interview a protester who complains about the Chancellor's "million dollar salary," you need to make sure the Chancellor really earns a million dollars.) Factual errors can affect your final grade, and all errors – big and small – must be corrected on the air and on the web as soon as they come to our attention.
- **Clarity:** In addition to being accurate, our stories must be comprehensible. You'll be expected to write in clear, conversational, grammatically correct English. Your delivery should be polished and understandable.
- **Transparency:** Good journalism gives the listener all the information he or she needs to assess the credibility of a story. That means we **fully identify all voices**, attribute our facts to reputable sources, and disclose any potential conflicts of interest (for instance, if the athlete you profile is your sorority

sister, or the political science professor you interview is a consultant for a political party). We don't use anonymous sources except in extremely rare cases when there's absolutely no other way to tell the story and where disclosing the source's name could endanger his or her life or livelihood. (I must approve the use of any unnamed source.)

- **Innovation:** Rather than mimicking what you already see and hear on mainstream TV and radio, think about innovative ways to present quality journalism. Can you come up with a better structure for your story than the standard "acts and tracks" piece? (That's what we call the typical radio story, where ACTualities of interviews alternate with the reporter's voice TRACKS.) Can you do the story as a compelling personal profile? A vibrant audio portrait that lets listeners hear the sounds of an interesting place? Is there a role for reporter involvement? An online component that invites listener participation?
- **Importance:** As one of the most visible news productions on campus, "Carolina Connection" strives to tell *important* stories about news events, issues, and lifestyle trends. Our audience includes not only students, but also the North Carolina community as a whole. You should strive to tell stories about vital issues, identify and analyze trends ... and also have fun once in a while with lighter stories. Each "Carolina Connection" show should have a mix of breaking news, in-depth analytical stories, and lighter features.
- **Participation:** As in a professional newsroom, every student is expected to be an active participant in the news team. That means pitching solid story ideas every week, making yourself available to cover spot news, helping with the Carolina Connection website, and contributing to Carolina Week and SportsXtra. Unexcused absences will affect your course grade.

Honor Code: All students must conduct themselves within the guidelines of the University honor system (honor.unc.edu). All class work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. While this class is more collaborative than other classes, you may not represent anybody else's work as your own. **You must never fabricate any aspect of your stories, plagiarize other people's work, or use audio that's not our own (from YouTube or other sources) without proper permission and credit. To do so is an honor code violation.** Always consult with your instructor or a producer before using any audio you did not record yourself!

Special Accommodations: If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please inform the instructor as soon as possible. For more information, visit accessibility.unc.edu.

Diversity: UNC's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is at www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment and does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Accreditation: The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate: www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps. This class teaches students:

- *To write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.*
- *To critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.*
- *To demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;*
- *To think critically, creatively and independently.*
- *To understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press.*
- *To demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.*

Q. SO IF THERE ARE NO EXAMS IN MEJO 426, HOW IS MY GRADE DETERMINED?

A. THE QUANTITY OF YOUR WORK, THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK, AND YOUR ABILITY TO MEET DEADLINES.

QUALITY: “A” students produce stories that are excellent in every detail. They’re well researched and contain audio from multiple interviews. They use sound and scene creatively and effectively. We hear ACTION in them. The natural sound furthers the narrative of the story and isn’t used just as “audio decoration.” The writing is clear and accurate. The editing and production are flawless. Finally, they’re creative and use innovative story-telling techniques. They stand out (in a good way) from everything else on the radio.

“A” students also are willing to take on challenging stories. “Carolina Connection” always needs strong, hard-news stories to lead the show. These may be late-breaking stories about campus events, in-depth analyses about local issues, or enterprise stories about issues important to your generation. While the show also needs lighter features, I expect students to challenge themselves several times this semester to tell big, important lead stories.

QUANTITY: I’ll assign a point value to each story you submit based on its content. You are expected to earn a minimum of **165** points for the semester. (**Important:** Earning 165 points does NOT guarantee an “A” grade; 165 points is the minimum requirement to pass the class!) You can keep track of your points on Sakai.

- 30 points: These are stories that are exemplary in every way. They involve significant research and original, time-consuming reporting. They include multiple interviews, use natural sound and scenes in sophisticated ways, and require extensive editing and mixing effort. These are stories that we would be proud to broadcast statewide and submit as award entries.
- 20 points: These stories explore an interesting subject in a complete and creative way. They’re thoroughly researched, include compelling natural sound and compelling characters, are written and mixed well, and typically include multiple interviews recorded in multiple places. Interviews are conducted where the interviewee is carrying on activities relevant to the story.
- 10 points: These reports would typically include interviews conducted mostly in one place, such as a news conference or a public event such as a speech. They require minimal research and little effort to arrange the interviews. They involve minimal use of sound other than interviews. Most sports game coverage fits into this category, as do man-on-the-street segments and stories about performances.
- 5 points: Writing readers, providing raw tape or bites for somebody else’s story. Taking a photo for your story that’s usable on the Carolina Connection website (5 points maximum photo credit per week.)
- Other ways to earn points:
 - Anchoring/producing: 20 points per show
 - Board op/Production Assistant for Saturday show: 10 points per show
 - Webmaster for the Carolina Connection web site: 10 points per show
 - Contributing to Carolina Week or SportsXtra, as per the CW point scale:
 - Basic crew positions: 5
 - Graphics, audio, TD, anchoring, VOs: 7.5
 - VO/SOTs: 10
 - Packages: 20, with bonus points for in-depth pieces

DEADLINES: Nothing causes more problems for our production team than missed deadlines. If even a single script or story comes in late, the entire production process can grind to a halt, inconveniencing me and several of your fellow students. If your script comes in late, we can't give it the attention it may need during the editing process. If you're frantically trying to produce a story on deadline, the quality almost certainly will suffer ... and there will be fewer ways to get help if you need it. I log when each script and story is submitted, and I deduct points for missed deadlines. **If you submit a script or story late, there is no guarantee that it will be broadcast, and no guarantee that you will get points for the story!**

MEJO 426 CLASS SCHEDULE – SPRING 2018

Wednesday, January 11	Course introduction
Friday, January 13	Recording and editing training, Carroll 132, 1:45 pm (mandatory for all newcomers)
Every Wednesday, beginning Jan. 18	Story meeting, Carroll 21, 12:20 – 1:35
Every Friday, beginning Jan. 27	Open production time, Carroll 132

NO CLASS Friday, Jan. 20. But remember that your first scripts are due Jan. 25.

“CAROLINA CONNECTION” BROADCAST SCHEDULE – SPRING 2018

Jan 28

Feb 4, 11, 18, 25

Mar 4, 11, 25 No show Mar. 18 (Spring Break)

Apr 1, 8, 15, 22, 29