

## **MEJO 463 News Lab – Fall 2018**

T-TH 9:30 a.m.-10:45 | Carroll 11 (Reese News Lab)

Instructor: Kate Sheppard

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 11 a.m.-1 p.m., or by appointment

### **Description**

The goal of this class is to get you thinking creatively about how we develop the media products and services of the future. This is not a typical journalism class. It is structured more like a startup, with a focus on developing sustainable media products and services.

This course is designed to help students develop ideas and explore their potential. It combines elements of journalism, technology, marketing, public speaking and business. We'll be assessing the desirability, feasibility, and viability of our ideas -- does anyone want or need this product? Can we create it? Can it be sustained?

Students should be prepared to:

- Face extreme uncertainty
- Fail early and often, and learn from those failures
- Work effectively and respectfully in teams
- Make quick decisions with limited information
- Balance competing priorities
- Receive direct (painful and pleasant) feedback
- Have your actions and decisions challenged and questioned
- Find answers to their own questions with the assistance of the instructor

Successful students will be naturally curious and will not expect to be told exactly how something must be done. This is a course where we will have fun, work hard, be creative, take risks and challenge the status quo.

### **Framework and Objectives**

This syllabus sets the basic schedule for the semester, but I will be amending and updating the syllabus and assignments throughout the semester. I will always alert you to changes and additions at least a week in advance.

Our objectives for the semester:

- Develop and publish a well-researched and tested proposal for a desirable, feasible, and viable media product
- Learn how to build a highly effective team
- Pitch and answer questions about the proposed media product
- Learn and follow a process for developing new products

You are not evaluated on the product your team produces. You are evaluated on the process you went through and your demonstrated ability to learn from that process. You will be expected to show what you have learned about:

- Listening to customers
- Conducting market research
- Basic business modeling
- Prototyping
- Public presentations
- Basic journalistic practices

## **Readings**

### *Required*

Lencioni, Patrick, *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*

Osterwalder, Alexander and Yves Pigneur, *Business Model Generation*

Reis, Eric, *The Lean Startup*

### *Suggested*

Kelley, Tom and David Kelley, *Creative Confidence*

I'll also be distributing shorter readings and listening/viewing assignments throughout the semester.

## **Evaluation**

You are **not** being evaluated on the product or service idea you create. You are being evaluated on the process you follow to test for desirability, feasibility and viability. If your process is solid, you may find that your idea is terrible. That's not failure. That's structured, entrepreneurial-based learning. I want to know what you learned, how you learned it, and what you plan to do with that information.

## **Teams**

You will work in teams of 3 to 5 people for the better part of the semester. The team will not succeed without you and you will not succeed without your team. The key to having a positive and successful team experience is to physically work together. Some tasks can be completed individually on your own time. However, you will develop a better product, strengthen your understanding of the process and receive a higher grade if you trust one another, respect each other and work together.

## **Reese News Lab Access**

The Reese News Lab (Carroll 11) is available to you 24/7 via OneCard access at the outer door in order to facilitate your working together.

## **Attendance**

You should approach this class as you would a job at a startup. Only a death in your immediate family (or your own demise, obviously) or an illness that requires seeing a doctor will be accepted as an excused absence. Two (2) unexcused absences are permitted. For each unexcused absence after the first two, you will lose points from your final grade. Being late is the same thing as being absent. Because this class is

largely based on teamwork, you will be letting your team members down if you aren't in class and on time.

### Late Assignments

Deadlines in the class are hard and fast. If you think you are going to miss a deadline, please see me at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline so we can discuss how to address it.

### Week-by-Week Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings/Deliverables
Aug. 21	What is desirability, feasibility, and viability?	
Aug. 23	Intro to design thinking	Design thinking readings (will be distributed)
Aug. 28	Desirability	51 "bad" ideas due
Aug. 30	Brainstorming workshop	
Sept. 4	Feasibility - Marshmallow challenge	Ideation/sketches due
Sept. 6	Viability - Lemonade stand	10 "good enough" ideas due; Business Model Generation, 1-74
Sept. 11	Introduction to business plans	<b>Initial user survey due;</b> Business Model Generation, 75-119
Sept. 13	Identifying newsroom problems	<b>Initial user interviews due;</b> Research on guest speakers/newsrooms
Sept. 18	Pitches for newsroom problems	<b>In-class pitches due</b>
Sept. 20	Discussion of newsroom ideas/regrouping	
Sept. 25	What is a team/team-building exercises	5 Dysfunctions of a Team, pages 1-114
Sept. 27	What is scrum/group meetings	5 Dysfunctions of a Team, pages 117-227
Oct. 2	Market research workshop	<b>Reflection memo on teams due</b>
Oct. 4	90-minute MVPs	Lean Startup Chapter 7
Oct. 9	What makes a good pitch?	Videos/readings (will be distributed)
Oct. 11	Team pitches	<b>In-class pitches due</b>
Oct. 16	Pivot or persevere?	Lean Startup Chapter 8
<i>Fall break</i>	--	--

Oct. 23	Proof of desirability	Market evaluation due
Oct. 25	Feedback on desirability	
Oct. 30	Proof of feasibility	Prototype/storyboard due
Nov. 1	Feedback on feasibility	
Nov. 6	Proof of viability	Business plan due
Nov. 8	Feedback on viability	
Nov. 13	Branding workshop	
Nov. 15	Lighting rounds with local entrepreneurs	New logos due
Nov. 20	Pitch scripts due	Pitch scripts due (Tues)
Nov. 27	Pitch practice	Pitch handouts due
Nov. 29	Pitch practice	
Nov. 30	Pitch Day	Final pitches due
Dec. 4	Applying design thinking to your future career	Final product report due
<b>Final</b>	Tuesday, Dec. 11, 8 a.m.	Team and individual reflections due

### **Team Deliverables**

#### *Final Pitch and Q&A 25%*

Nov. 30, 3:30-5 p.m., Reese News Lab

The presentation of findings and recommendations for your media product. It must be well prepared, rehearsed, and presented. You must be able to answer all questions appropriately, honestly, and sincerely using any and all data and feedback you've collected over the course of the semester. The pitch and Q&A session will be evaluated based on how well you articulate your basic value proposition, how you plan to deliver that value to your customers, and how you will financially sustain it. It will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Hook - Good, convincing, and quick
- Problem - Clearly defined problem with clearly defined customers
- Solution - Clear explanation of your solution to the problem
- Data - Clear, data-driven connections for the solution to your problem
- Revenue and Costs - Concise and simple revenue and cost structures
- Not to exceed 5 minutes

#### *Final Product Report - 25%*

Due in class Dec. 4

A written/visual presentation that shows more of the work that went into your pitch. The report will be evaluated based on how well you prove the desirability, feasibility and viability of your business. The report should include a description of the product, evidence of desirability/feasibility/viability, team

descriptions, timelines, and other supporting evidence. I'll be distributing a more thorough description of what this needs to include later in the semester.

### **Individual Deliverables**

#### *Pre-break deliverables - 15%*

Grades for early pitches, memos, sketches, etc. Will be evaluated based on effort, demonstration of learning objectives, understanding of new concepts, and insights into process.

#### *Instructor Evaluation – 10%*

The instructor will evaluate each student at the end of the semester based on the News Lab Evaluation Criteria listed below.

- Resourcefulness and Initiative: 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, anticipating needs and planning accordingly.
- Collaboration & Attitude: Effectiveness in working with others to generate ideas, seek mutual purpose/understanding, be receptive to differing ideas and opinions while continuing forward progress.
- Responsibility: Attendance in class, preparation for class, participation in discussions.
- Overall: How this student performed overall in every aspect of the project.

#### *Self Reflection – 10%*

Due Dec. 11, 8 a.m.

Students will demonstrate understanding of media innovation and entrepreneurship by reflecting on the process. They should explain in detail the three most important takeaways from their work and how they might apply it in the future (~1,300 - 1,500 words).

#### *Team Evaluation – 15%*

Due Dec. 11, 8 a.m.

Students must honestly evaluate their teammates and how they contributed to the success of their company over the course of the semester. (~600-800 words)

### **Grade Scale**

*Each grade can have a minus or plus to allow for more granular evaluation*

- A+ (97 and above): Exceptional -- a model and example for others to follow.
- A (93-96)
- A- (90-92)
- B+ (87-89): Exceeds Expectations. Solid effort with some room for improvement.
- B (83-86)
- B- (80-82)
- C+ (77-79): Meets Expectations. Completed the basic assignments and requirements.
- C (73-76)
- C- (70-72)

- D (60-69): Below Expectations. Significant issues with work or attitude.
- F (below 60): Failure. Does not even attempt to meet expectations.

### **Honor Code:**

I expect students to conduct themselves 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 20152016 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/>

### **ACEJMC Core Values and Competencies**

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 from our program.

[Learn more about them here.](#)

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies. Specifically, this course is designed to help you:

- Think critically, creatively and independently
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work