

ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

[UNC School of Media and Journalism](#)

MEJO 562, Fall 2018
(cross listed with HPM 552 & HBEH 562)

Thursday, 3:30 p.m. - 6:15 p.m., Carroll Hall 340A

<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-minute television report on an environmental or science topic for broadcast on public television. Each television report will air on " on statewide public television (UNC-TV).

As a participant in this course, you'll learn the following:

- How to research an environmental and science television report.
- How to field produce an environmental and science television report.
- How to script an environmental and science television report.

[MEJO 252](#) ("Audio Journalism"), [MEJO 560](#) ("Environmental and Science Journalism") and [MEJO 561](#) ("Environmental 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 and will result in a grade reduction.

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 broadcast 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](#), Peng Rand, Reprint edition, 1994, 288 pp., \$17.00. ISBN: 9780452272958.

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)

Assignments

The keys to successful environmental and science broadcast journalism are extensive research, accurate, fact-checked reporting and good broadcast writing. To succeed as a broadcast writer, you need to thoroughly understand your subject matter, maintain a tight focus on your story line and communicate your ideas simply and clearly.

I expect that you'll meet all deadlines for researching your stories, setting up field shoots, turning in shoot schedules and preparing scripts. I also expect that you'll attend **all** field shoots involving your respective team.

The major focus of the course is production of a six-minute television report telling a science- or environmental-based story about an environmental challenge facing a North Carolina state park.

Each production team will be comprised of a segment producer, one or two associate producers 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 in consultation with Frank Graff,

managing producer and anchor of UNC-TV's "SciTech Now North Carolina" program.

Final Exam

During the final exam period, we will have a class critique of your finished projects.

Grading

Your grade will depend upon your classroom participation (10%), field shoot participation (10%), contributions to your production team (40%), and the quality of your completed video report (40%).

Classroom and field participation will be determined by the following:

- 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.
- 4) Have you prepared for the field shoot by completing your assigned tasks? Are you on time for **all** scheduled interviews and appointments? Did you go the extra mile in assisting your team in non-assigned tasks?

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. Please **total** the number of hours spent on these out-of-class activities in your work log. You **cannot** pass the course unless you turn in your work log on time.
- b) How have you collaborated with your team members? Keep in mind that succeeding in broadcast and documentary work requires teamwork.
- c) What's the quality of your individual contribution whether as producer, associate producer or scriptwriter?
- d) Have you completed your team responsibilities in a timely manner? Remember that I expect professional broadcast standards of promptness and preparation 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 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) Did you thoroughly search for appropriate archival materials (e.g., photos, videos, recordings, art) that can lend perspective and context to your story? Have you received written permission for use of any copyrighted material? Please note that you **cannot** lift any video from the web without having first obtained **written** permission from the owner of that material. That caveat applies to videos or photographs from public agencies as well.
- f) Was the story fact checked? A major factual error will result in a significant deduction in your final grade.
- 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.

Additional Assignments for Graduate Students

Graduate students in the class will work on a team or teams separate from the undergraduate students. The graduate students will have additional assignments not required for the undergraduate students in the class. Those additional assignments may include working on a smaller team and assuming more job responsibilities on the team. Also, the graduate students may be asked to review the scripts of the undergraduate students to offer critiques of those scripts in class.

Grading Scale (for undergraduates)

94 - 100 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+
61 - 67 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 additional absence will result in a drop of one letter grade in the course. This is an upper division/graduate-level seminar, and your presence and contribution are essential. You **cannot** pass this course with more than three 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 deadlines.
- 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 scouts field locations and provides 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 logging 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 that 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. 23: 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 Friday, August 24, 6 p.m., your rankings for job assignments (producer, associate producer, and scriptwriter) and also note whether you'd be *unable* to attend any one of the three field shoot dates of Oct. 4-5, Oct. 11-12, or Oct. 25-26. Please note that some or all of the field shoots will involve overnight travel which may necessitate teams leaving late Wednesday afternoon before the start of the respective Thursday/Friday shoot dates. If you have not handed in your Student Data Sheet at the first class, please attach that document along with your preferences for job assignments. (You'll find the template for the Student Data Sheet in the Resources folder of [Sakai](#)).

After I receive your job preferences, I'll email class members your team assignments (including your individual job assignment) and your story focus.

After you receive your team assignment, please meet (preferably, in person) with your team members on Monday, August 27, or Tuesday, August 28, to talk about your story. By 6 p.m., Wednesday, August 29, the scriptwriter for each team -- in consultation with your team members -- should email Prof. Linden your story pitch. That pitch should run no more than 150 words. Below the pitch summary, list at least five possible on-camera sources. For each source include job title, telephone number, and email address. Also, suggest B-roll (no more than five shots) that you anticipate could visually tell your story.

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:

Also, watch the first three student-produced episodes of the North Carolina State Parks series at <http://scimedjournalism.web.unc.edu/stories/state-park-series/student-work/>.

WEEK 2 - AUG. 30: VISIT WITH N.C. STATE PARKS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.); PRIMER ON SCRIPTWRITING

Guest speakers: [Don Reuter](#), assistant director, North Carolina State Parks and Recreation, and [Katie Hall](#), public information officer, N.C. State Parks public information officer.

- * Overview of N.C. State Parks.
- * Opportunity for background on N.C. State Parks environmental reports.
- * Review basics of scriptwriting as outlined in Linden chapter.
- * Review chapters 2, 4 and 5 from Wenger & Potter text.

Assignment for next class:

Each team should work on its 100-150 word pitch to be presented in class Thursday, Sept. 13, to Galen Black, UNC-TV executive producer of internal productions; Frank Graff, managing producer and anchor/reporter for "SciTech Now;" and Rossie Izlar, UNC-TV Science Team, associate producer. Please include six suggested sources (including their titles, affiliations and contact info), suggested B-roll and other desired visuals (e.g., animation or graphics).

I'd also like to meet with each team for 30 minutes on Wednesday, Sept. 12. Tentative times: "A" Team, 10:00 a.m., "B" Team, 10:30 a.m., and "C" Team, 11:00 a.m.

Lastly, I'd like to receive via email by 8 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 9, your pitch sheet that we'll discuss at our team meetings on Wednesday, Sept. 12. Please remember to bring 12 copies with you to class (enough for all class members, me, and our two guests from UNC-TV).

Reading for next class:

Franklin: Writing for Story Preface (pp. xv - xix), Chapters I through VII (pp. 21-166), Appendix A (pp.

216-235).

Viewing for next class:

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

WEEK 3 - SEPT. 6: No Class

Assignment for next class:

Please review assignments listed above for the Aug. 30 class, including individual team meetings and due dates for pitch sheets.

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 13: NARRATIVE JOURNALISM / REVIEW OF SCRIPTWRITING/ STORY PITCH DISCUSSION

* Guest speakers: Galen Black, UNC-TV executive producer of internal productions; [Frank Graff](#), UNC-TV SciTech Now producer, reporter and anchor; [Rossie Izlar](#), UNC-TV Science Team, associate producer.

* Present story pitches to UNC-TV producers.

* Discuss Franklin narrative journalism formula as explained 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 story line incorporating the latest information obtained from your phone interviews and additional research.

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 20: SETTING UP THE FIELD SHOOTS

* 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 (that includes 20-second anchor intro and the first 40 seconds of your story). **All scriptwriters** should bring 12 hard copies of your script to the next class. If you haven't done so already, please plan for your scouting trip, as soon as possible for A, B and C teams. Complete pre-interviews of all sources whom you're planning to interview during your field shoots. All producers should bring their shoot schedules to the next class to discuss with Bob Gunter, our UNC-TV videographer.

WEEK 6 - SEPT. 27: DISCUSSION OF FIELD SHOOTS, STORY LINES AND SHOOT SCHEDULES

Guest speaker: Bob Gunter, UNC-TV videographer/editor (unconfirmed)

* Tips from Bob Gunter on scouting your field locations.

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

* Confirm interviews with experts and other interview subjects.

* Nail down ideas for B-roll.

Assignment for next class:

A Team - "**A**" **team scriptwriter** should email first 60 seconds of working script to team members and to Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 1, 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. 1, at 12 noon. Be sure to let Dr. Linden know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) at the time you send your final shoot schedule so he can notify our UNC-TV videographer. Also be sure to append at the end of the shoot schedule your checklist of b-roll and nat sound that you want to capture during your shoot. Please itemize EVERY shot you think would be absolutely necessary to *visually* tell your story.

WEEK 7 - NO CLASS - A Team Field Shoot - OCT. 4 (Thursday) & OCT. 5 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Log all B-roll and interviews from field shoot after video with burned-in time code is uploaded by Bob Gunter to YouTube. Please finish transcribed log by Thursday, Oct. 11, and email MS Word copy of the log to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by 6

p.m., Saturday, Oct. 27, and email script in MS Word to Dr. Linden.

B Team - Finish pre-interviews and finalize shoot schedule. **"B" team scriptwriter** should email first 60 seconds of working script to team members and to Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 8, at 12 noon. **"B" team producer** should email **final** shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden, and UNC-TV videographer Bob Gunter by Monday, Oct. 8, at 12 noon. Be sure to let Dr. Linden know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) at the time you send your final shoot schedule so he can notify our UNC-TV videographer. Also be sure to append at the end of the shoot schedule your checklist of b-roll and nat sound that you want to capture during your shoot. Please itemize EVERY shot you think would be absolutely necessary to *visually* tell your story.

WEEK 8 - NO CLASS - B Team Field Shoot - OCT. 11 (Thursday) & OCT. 12 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

B Team - Log all B-roll and interviews from field shoot after video with burned-in time code is uploaded by Bob Gunter to YouTube. Please finish transcribed log by Wednesday, Oct. 17 and email MS Word copy of compiled log to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by 6 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 20 and email script in MS Word to Dr. Linden.

C Team - Finish pre-interviews of subjects. **"C" team scriptwriter** should email first 60 seconds of working script to team members and to Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 22, at 12 noon. **"C" team producer** should email **final** shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden, and UNC-TV videographer Bob Gunter by Monday, Oct. 22, at 12 noon. Be sure to let Dr. Linden know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) at the time you send your final shoot schedule so he can notify our UNC-TV videographer. Also be sure to append at the end of the shoot schedule your checklist of b-roll and nat sound that you want to capture during your shoot. Please itemize EVERY shot you think would be absolutely necessary to *visually* tell your story.

WEEK 9 - FALL SEMESTER BREAK, NO CLASS OCT. 18

WEEK 10 - NO CLASS - C Team Field Shoot - OCT. 25 (Thursday) & OCT. 26 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Second draft of script and completed tape log due Saturday, Nov. 3 by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Monday, Nov. 5 by 9 p.m.

B Team - Second draft of script and complete tape log due Saturday, Nov. 3 by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Monday, Nov. 5 by 10 p.m.

C Team - Complete tape log due 48 hours after you receive via YouTube the burned-in, time-coded field video from Bob Gunter. At that time please email tape log to Dr. Linden. One week after you receive the time-coded tape log (but no later than 6 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 10), scriptwriter should email Dr. Linden a copy of the C Team script.

WEEK 11 - NOV. 8: FIRST SCRIPT CONFERENCE (Frank Graff, guest critiquer, unconfirmed)

Assignment for next class:

"A" and "B" Teams - Please email revised drafts of your scripts to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 11. Dr. Linden will email scriptwriters his revisions by 8 p.m., Wed., Nov. 14. Scriptwriters will then bring revised copies of scripts (based on Linden corrections) to second and final script conference in class on Nov. 15. Also, please remember to continue compiling your weekly work log due by email Thursday, Dec. 6. **Failure to turn in a daily work log for the semester will result in an incomplete grade in the course.** On the work log, please total the number of hours worked out-of-class for the entire semester. See the "Grading" section earlier in the syllabus for details.

"C" Team - Please email revised draft of your script to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 10. Dr. Linden will return his edits to you by 6 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 13. Please revise that edited script and email revised script to Dr. Linden by Wednesday, Nov. 14, at 6 p.m. Please bring enough 12 copies of script to second and final script conference next week.

WEEK 12 - NOV. 15: SECOND SCRIPT CONFERENCE (Helen Chickering, guest critiquer, unconfirmed)

Assignment for next class:

ALL Teams - Please email revised drafts of scripts (based on comments and revisions in second script conference) to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 25. Be sure you **DOUBLE CHECK** all time codes for every piece of audio and video before you email Dr. Linden your final scripts. Also, each team should email to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 25, a schedule detailing which team members will be at UNC-TV for which hours on your respective edit dates (see below).

WEEK 13 - NOV. 22: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY), BUT ALL-DAY EDITING SESSIONS at UNC-TV AS FOLLOWS:

A Team edit - Thursday, Nov. 29, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

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

C Team edit - Thursday, Dec. 6, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

Assignment: IMPORTANT! Please email to Dr. Linden by Thursday, Dec. 6, your work log detailing the number of project hours worked out of class per week throughout the semester and the jobs that you performed during those hours. If you do not fulfill this final assignment, you will receive an **incomplete** grade in the course. Please see the "Grading" section earlier in the syllabus for details.

WEEK 14 - NO CLASS ALL-DAY EDITING SESSIONS at UNC-TV AS FOLLOWS:

A Team edit - Thursday, Nov. 29, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

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

C Team edit - Thursday, Dec. 6, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

FINAL EXAM - Thursday, Dec. 13, 4 p.m. - 6:30 p.m., Carroll 340A.

The Honor Code

I expect that each student will conduct herself or himself 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. Please note the Honor Code is in effect during all off-campus, class-based activities like the field shoots and the edit sessions at UNC-TV.

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 School of Media and Journalism adopted Diversity and Inclusion Mission and Vision statements in spring 2016 with accompanying goals - <http://www.mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion>.

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 based on 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 August 6, 2018