

# TV News Reporting & Producing (MEJO 421)

UNC School of Media and Journalism  
Monday & Wednesday, 3:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.  
Carroll Hall 132  
Fall 2019

Professor Tom Linden  
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Office Hours: 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. Wednesday  
or whenever office door is open

Welcome to MEJO 421, one of the foundation courses in the broadcast and electronic journalism sequence of the School of Media and Journalism. The course teaches those interested in pursuing careers in broadcasting/electronic journalism the writing, reporting, packaging and producing skills required for what we broadly call *television news*. In addition, the course will reinforce the foundation of solid writing, reporting and field production taught in MEJO 252 and MEJO 121.

**Both MEJO 121 and MEJO 252 are prerequisites for MEJO 421. If you have not completed these prerequisites, you will not be allowed to take this course.**

**Objectives:** The student is expected to be able (1) to plan and execute video productions from concept to finished product; (2) to shoot clean and steady video with emphasis on composition, lighting and technique; (3) to understand the principles and practices of editing and other post-production skills; (4) to understand elements of producing both for the studio and the field; (5) to improve basic production skills necessary to achieve the above goals; (6) to employ proper grammar and writing skills with strict attention to accuracy, detail and industry standards; (7) to improve story development techniques and overall reporting skills.

**Required Text:** Wenger, Debora and Deborah Potter, *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*, CQ College Press, Fourth Edition, 2011, ISBN: 978-1544-332451.

**Attendance Policy:** Classroom experiences are a vital part of the educational process, especially in a skills course such as MEJO 421. As in the real world of broadcast journalism, it is expected that the student journalist will report to work (i.e., the classroom) and be on time, just as one would expect in a professional newsroom.

The following policy governs absences and their impact upon your grade: One absence – no penalty. Each absence in excess of one will result in one grade reduction on the final grade. In other words, if the student had an A- but had missed two classes, the final grade would be dropped to B+. And so on with each additional missed class. In other words, if you have to go to the clinic and it's simply impossible to schedule an appointment for any time other than class time, that will be your single "free pass." If you believe you will miss a class for a reason that falls within the policy of University approved absences, please communicate with the instructor in writing as soon as practical.

<http://www.catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/>

If you cannot attend a class, please notify Prof. Linden by phone or email prior to class. Tardiness (late on three occasions) will be counted as one absence.

**Participation:** You are required to actively participate in class. Effective news organizations establish a climate where there is a healthy collision of ideas – where story assignments, approaches, writing, etc., are discussed openly and honestly. Tension and conflict can and should be present to some degree, but temper that tension and conflict with respect for your fellow students and colleagues.

Traditionally, broadcast journalists delivered the news to a mass audience. Online and social media have created additional channels for the delivery of news. No matter what the media platform (television, online or social media), the reporter/producer of any story must be prepared to justify and defend that story at every level. Thin-skinned journalists don't last long in the profession. If you're serious about a career in journalism, remember that your job is about the work, not the person. A news story is a news story, not an extension of the individual reporter. So, accept criticism accordingly.

One of the major learning tools of MEJO 421 is the review of stories produced by students. One of the primary forms of participation in this class will be the discussion, even debate, surrounding your work. We will talk as a class and in groups, thinking through issues together and critiquing our own work and the work of others. If you are uncomfortable having your work reviewed in such a public fashion, the broadcast/electronic news business probably is not for you. Again, this process will be civil, constructive and courteous.

**Late Work:** Assignments are due prior to class on the dates noted in the course schedule. Work submitted after the due date will be accepted, but will be docked one letter grade for each 24-hour period that it is late.

**Grading:** There are a number of components considered in the final grade for MEJO 421. As mentioned earlier, class participation is important. In addition, there will be five projects including the final project, and three quizzes primarily on the textbook,

*Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World.* Please note that there are no makeup quizzes for missed exams.

You will be assigned to work in two-person teams, but you will receive an individual grad. The makeup of the teams could change as we move forward during the term. The first project will be a voice over (VO); the second will be a voice over to sound on tape (VO/SOT); and the final three projects will be full, reporter packages (PKGs), the last considered as the Final Project.

Each project will be judged on the following criteria:

1. Reporting, enterprise, depth and news value.
2. Diction, enunciation and other elements of delivery (packages only).
3. Steadiness, composition, aesthetic quality of video and use of natural sound.
4. Editing proficiency.
5. Quality of writing.

Projects 1 should be 30 seconds; Project 2 should be 45 to 50 seconds in length, and Projects 3 through 5 should run between 1:30 and 2:00 in length, excluding the lead and/or tag. Projects 3 to 5 require editor scripts. All assignments will be submitted via Sakai by the assigned time and date. This will be discussed in class.

**Standards:** Under no circumstances should any student fabricate a source, a quote, a sound bite or a story. If you engage in such fabrication you risk failing the course, being referred for an Honor Code violation; and/or being suspended or removed from the University. Fabrication of a story or of sources is considered as serious an ethical violation as plagiarism.

### Course elements and percentage of final grade:

Class participation	15%
Project 1	5%
Project 2	5%
Project 3	15%
Project 4	15%
Project 5 (Final Project)	30%
Quizzes (5% each)	15%

Your final grade will have a letter grade. Here are the numerical equivalents:

### Final grades

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

You will not receive a passing grade in this course unless all assignments are completed, even if you received a grade of zero (0) because of a very late submission. In addition, during the course of the semester students will check out University-owned equipment for use in this class. That equipment includes cameras, recorders, tripods, etc. No grade will be issued until this equipment is returned in proper condition and so noted by the school equipment manager. Students should return equipment no later than Wednesday, December 4 (last day of class).

**Care of Equipment:** Students may be required to sign a usage contract to checkout equipment. Students are expected to use equipment responsibly and report any issues that they have immediately to the equipment manager. Students must return equipment on time. Checkout times will be discussed in class and monitored by the equipment manager. Failure to return equipment on time may result in suspension of lending privileges. Failure to use equipment responsibly may result in lending privileges being revoked. Failure to return equipment in proper order will result in an “incomplete” grade for the class. The School may take whatever actions it deems necessary for the return of equipment and payment for any damages or loss.

When you check out or reserve gear, take a moment to look it over to see if anything is wrong and report it immediately. If anything happens to the equipment while it's checked out in your name, **YOU** will be responsible for the cost of repairs. Be aware these cameras cost thousands of dollars. Return every piece of equipment in the same condition it was in when you took it out. Be careful. Never walk more than two feet away from a camera even if it's on tripod.

**\*\*NEVER LEAVE EQUIPMENT UNATTENDED!\*\* BE AS PARANOID AS YOU HAVE TO BE. IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY! DO NOT LEAVE EQUIPMENT IN YOUR CAR. IT SHOULD BE IN YOUR CAR ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO GET TO AND FROM WHERE YOU'RE GOING FOR THAT STORY/ASSIGNMENT.**

Students will be required to purchase SD cards class 6 or 10, and they must be 128

MB or larger.

**Syllabus:** The syllabus will change. Just as events alter the day's activities in a newsroom, events will change our plans. If schedules and/or assignments change, the instructor will make every effort to contact students via e-mail. (To be a student in this class you must have a UNC email address.) Every effort will be made to revise the syllabus posted on Sakai. You are encouraged to check the online syllabus frequently and to review the assignment section, as well. In addition, changes to the syllabus and changes in due dates for projects, exams, quizzes, etc., may be announced in class.

## Tentative Schedule

**August 21:** Review syllabus. Discuss course objectives. Discuss story forms. Assign Project 1. For next class, read Chapters 1 and 2, *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*.

**August 26:** Review assigned reading. Assign teams and discuss field equipment. Write practice VOs. For next class, read Chapter 3 in text.

**August 28:** Shooting and editing refresher with Gary Kirk. Review assigned reading and practice VOs. Discuss broadcast story forms. For next class, read Chapter 6.

## Sept. 2: Labor Day Holiday

**Sept. 4:** Review Chapter 6. Discuss framing, sequencing and production aspects of television news. **Project 1 (VO) due at beginning of next class.**

**Sept. 9: Project 1 due at the beginning of class.** Discuss Project 1. Assign Project 2. Review voice and diction. For next class, read Chapter 8 and read "Reinventing Local TV News" – Nieman Reports (in Sakai-> Resources).

**Sept. 11:** Review/critique Project 1. Review Chapter 8. For next class, and "Reinventing Local TV News by Beaudet and Wihbey (in Sakai-> Resources).

**Sept. 16:** Review readings. Review material for quiz on Sept. 18 based on *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World* and other assigned reading.

**Sept. 18: Quiz 1 on *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*.** Critique local newscasts. **Project 2 due at beginning of next class.**

**Sept. 23: Project 2 (VO/SOT) due at the beginning of class.** Discuss Project 2. Assign Project 3. Review quiz. Discuss examples of diamond structure in television news packages. For next class, read Chapter 10.

**Sept. 25:** Review/critique of Project 2. Review reading. Review student package examples for Project 3. Brainstorm story ideas and narrative development for Project 3. For next class, read Chapter 12.

**Sept. 30:** Review reading. Critique local newscasts. For next class, read Chapter 13.

**Oct. 2:** Review reading. Interview techniques. Reading TBA.

**Oct. 7:** Review reading. View and discuss examples of ethical issues in broadcast stories. **Project 3 due at beginning of next class.**

**Oct. 9: Project 3 (PKG) due at the beginning of class.** Discuss Project 3. Assign Project 4.

**Oct. 14:** Review/critique Project 3. Brainstorm story ideas for Project 4. Quiz on *Advancing the Story* next class.

**Oct. 16: Quiz 2 on *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*.** Reading to prompter (1st group).

**Oct. 17 - 20: Fall Break**

**Oct. 21:** Review Quiz 2. View Project 4 examples. Reading to prompter (2nd group). Work on Project 4.

**Oct. 23:** Review prompter tapes. Work on **Project 4 due next class.**

**Oct. 28: Project 4 (PKG) due at beginning of class.** Discuss Project 4. Assign Project 5 (Final Project). For next class, read Chapter 9 (Storytelling: Digital).

**Oct. 30:** Review reading. For next class, read Chapter 11 (Producing Digital).

**Nov. 4:** Continue review of digital media. For next class, read Glossary of Multimedia Journalism Terms in *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*, pp. 340 – 346.

**Nov. 6:** Review reading. Discuss lower third and full-screen graphics. Do's and Don'ts. Work on Project 5 (Final Project).

**Nov. 11:** Story development and production brainstorming session for Final Project. Work on Project 5 (Final Project).

**Nov. 13:** Review reading. Quiz on *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World* next class.

**Nov. 18: Quiz 3 on *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*.** Live shot drill (1st group). Your chance to go on camera to see how you do.

**Nov. 20:** Review quiz 3. Live shot drill continued (2nd group). Review progress on final project. **Project 5 (Final Project) due at beginning of next class.**

**Nov. 25: Final Project due at the beginning of class.**

**Nov. 27: Thanksgiving Break (no class)**

**Dec. 2:** Review final projects.

**Dec. 4:** Review final projects.

**Saturday, Dec. 7, 4 p.m. (final exam day):** Review/critique Final Projects

## 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 - <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 that 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.