MEJO 463 News Lab – Fall 2019
T-TH 9:30 a.m.-10:45 | Carroll 11 (Reese News Lab)
Instructor: Kate Sheppard
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Office hours: Tuesday 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 curious, self-starters and will not expect to be told exactly how to do something. 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 alert you to changes and additions at least a week in advance. Class documents will be posted in Google Drive and linked to within the syllabus.

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

Books

Lencioni, Patrick, *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*
Osterwalder, Alexander and Yves Pigneur, *Business Model Generation*
Reis, Eric, *The Lean Startup*

I'll also be distributing shorter readings, videos, and podcasts 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. You must apply here to get access!

Attendance

You should approach this class as you would a job at a startup. Only a death in your immediate family 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 teammates 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
August 20	Introduction to course		
August 22	Introduction to design thinking -- What is desirability, feasibility, and viability?	Design thinking readings here and here; review Reese Lab site	24-hour app/tech diet assignment; sign up for lab access
August 27	Desirability - Idea discussion and sorting		Problem statements and HMWs
August 29	Brainstorming workshop	Developing The Entrepreneurial Mindset and Ideation	51 "bad" ideas
Sept. 3	Feasibility - Marshmallow challenge	TED Radio Hour on design	10 "good enough" ideas
Sept. 5	Initial pitches	Business Model Generation, 1-55	Pitches
Sept. 10	Viability - Lemonade stand / Brainstorming	Business Model Generation, 56-119	Sketches
Sept. 12	Business plans lecture	Business Model Generation, 125-189	Initial pitch memo
Sept. 17	Business model canvas and empathy maps / team planning	How I Built This: Bumble; HIBT: Kickstarter	
Sept. 19	Identifying and solving newsroom problems		Research on guest speakers
Sept. 24	Newsroom pitches	5 Dysfunctions of a Team, pages 1-114	
Sept. 26	What makes a good pitch? / SWOT analysis	5 Dysfunctions of a Team, pages 117-227	Initial user survey due; Short pre-workshop research assignment
Oct. 1	Pitches		Pitches
Oct. 3	Market research workshop with Stephanie Willen Brown	How To Deliver The Perfect Pitch; How To Pitch	Reflection memo on teams
Oct. 8	60-minute MVPs	Lean Startup Chapter 7	
Oct. 10	Failure	HIBT: Slack, Spectacular Failures:	User feedback due

		[Kodak](#)	
Oct. 15	Pivot or persevere?	Lean Startup Chapter 8	Midterm exam
Fall break	--	--	
Oct. 22	Proof of desirability		[User feedback due](#)
Oct. 24	Presentations and feedback on desirability		[Market evaluation due](#)
Oct. 29	Proof of feasibility and feedback		Prototype/storyboards due
Oct. 31	Writing a business plan		Business plan part 1 due - Expenses
Nov. 5	Branding workshop with [Gary Kayye](#)	[Branding Must-Haves](#); [The Basics of Branding](#)	Business plan part 2 due - revenue model/projections
Nov. 7	Proof of viability		Business plan part 3 due - competition
Nov. 12	Lighting round feedback with local entrepreneurs		SWOT analysis due
Nov. 14	*No class - please send logos though*		New logos due
Nov. 19	Pitch practice		
Nov. 21	Pitch practice		
Nov. 22	Pitch Day - 3-5 p.m.		Final pitches due
Nov. 26	Audience engagement, analytics and metrics	[Project Management for Journalists](#); [Marketing Your Venture](#); [Beyond Pageviews](#); [How to Build a Metric-Savvy Newsroom](#); [You May Hate Metrics](#)	
Dec. 3	Entrepreneurship and your future		[Final product report due](#)
Final	Tuesday, Dec. 10, 8 a.m..		[Team and individual reflections due](#)

Team Deliverables
Final Pitch and Q&A 25%
Friday, Nov. 22, 3-5 p.m., Freedom Forum
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. 3
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-spring break deliverables - 10%
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.

Mid-term exam - 10%

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 during final exam period
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 – 10%

Due during final exam period
Students must honestly evaluate their teammates and how they contributed to the success of their company over the course of the semester. [Evaluation form is here](), to be completed for each team member.

Grade Scale
Each grade can have a minus or plus to allow for more granular evaluation
- A (93 and above)
- 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