

## ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

### [UNC School of Media and Journalism](#)

MEJO 562, Fall 2019  
(cross listed with HPM 552 & HBEH 562)

Thursday, 4:00 p.m. - 6:45 p.m., Carroll Hall 11

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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 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"), MEJO 561 ("Environmental and Science Video Storytelling") and MEJO 565 ("Environmental 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, Fourth Edition, 2011, ISBN:

978-1544332451. (Second and Third Editions are acceptable, but chapter orders are different from the Fourth Edition).

## Assignments

The keys to successful environmental and science broadcast journalism are extensive research, accurate and fact-checked reporting and good broadcast writing. To succeed as a broadcast documentary 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 five- to six-minute television report telling a science-based story about an environmental challenge facing a North Carolina state park.

Each production team will be comprised of a segment producer, two or three 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 "SciNC" 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 (50%), and the quality of your completed video report (30%).

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 as a deadline you have to meet. A reporter who misses a deadline is usually a reporter who loses a job.
- d) 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 (50% of your final grade) will be determined as follows: (50 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. Team members who don't carry their fair share of the team's load will be graded accordingly.

The quality of your completed video report will be based on the following (30 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 lend perspective and context to your story? Have you received written permission for use of any copyrighted material? Please note that you **cannot** lift 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 have additional assignments not required for undergraduate students in the class. Also, graduate students may be asked to review the scripts of the undergraduate students and 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)**

Honors

Pass

Low Pass  
Fail

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 two unexcused absences. Remember that we meet just once a week so your attendance is essential for EVERY class meeting.

### **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, 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 to your team members 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 sources 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:** If the report features enough sources, then each team member will pre-interview at least one person featured on camera and/or conduct the 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 will take place in Carroll Hall. See the "Course Schedule" below for the video editing dates for the respective reports.

**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. 22: 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://scimedjournalism.web.unc.edu/tag/nc-state-parks/>
- \* Review fundamentals of writing news for broadcast television.

### Assignment for next class:

Email to Dr. Linden by Friday, August 23, 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. 3-4, Oct. 10-11, or Oct. 24-25. Please note that some or all of the field shoots will involve overnight travel which probably will necessitate teams leaving late Wednesday afternoon or early Friday evening before the start of their 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 26, or Tuesday, August 27, to confer with your team members about your story. By 6 p.m., Wednesday, August 28, 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 will help to 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 6 from Wenger & Potter (**Fourth** Edition) or chapters 2, 3, and 5 (Wenger & Potter, **Third** Edition).

### 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/tag/nc-state-parks/>.

**WEEK 2 - AUG. 29: FINDING THE STORY/NEWS GATHERING/SCRIPTWRITING**

- \* Review basics of scriptwriting as outlined in Linden chapter.
- \* Review chapters 2, 4 and 6 from Wenger & Potter (Fourth Edition) or chapters 2, 3, and 5 (Wenger & Potter, Third Edition).

Assignment for next class:

Each team should work on its 100-150 word pitch to be presented at group meetings with me before the next class session. 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 want to meet with each team for 30 minutes on Wednesday, August 28. Tentative times: "A" Team, 10:00 a.m., "B" Team, 10:30 a.m., and "C" Team, 11:00 a.m.

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 North Carolina State Parks site at <https://www.ncparks.gov/>.  
View past episodes of SciNC at <http://science.unctv.org/content/ncsciencenow/stories>.

**WEEK 3 - SEPT. 5: NARRATIVE JOURNALISM, STORY PITCH DISCUSSION** with guest speaker: [Katie Hall](#), public information officer, N.C. State Parks public information officer

- \* Overview of N.C. State Parks.
- \* Opportunity for background from Ms. Hall on your N.C. State Parks environmental stories.

Assignment for next class:

Each team should refine their story pitches for presentation next Thursday to the producer and anchor of SciNC, Frank Graff. Before the next class you should make initial contact with all your proposed sources to clarify the focus of the story. Occasionally, you'll find that your proposed story doesn't have legs. If that's the case, notify Prof. Linden who will work with you to find an alternate story.

Lastly, from each team I'd like to receive via email by 8 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 10, your pitch sheet that you'll present to Frank Graff next Thursday, Sept. 12. Please remember to bring 16 copies with you to class (enough for all class members, me, and Frank Graff). Please limit your pitch sheet to no more than two pages. Pitch sheet should include a 100-word story summary, list of contacts with their titles, email and phone #s, and suggested b-roll.

**WEEK 4 - SEPT. 12: STORY PITCHES TO UNC-TV producer and UNC-TV videographer**

- \* Guest speakers: [Frank Graff](#), UNC-TV SciNC producer, reporter and anchor &

Bob Gunter, UNC-TV videographer

- \* Present story pitches to UNC-TV producer Frank Graff.
- \* Tips from videographer Bob Gunter on scouting your field locations.
- \* Watch previous class documentary pieces on UNC-TV at <http://scimedjournalism.web.unc.edu/tag/nc-state-parks/>.

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.

Read "Writing or Story" by Jon Franklin. Figure out his narrative formula and be prepared to discuss it in class next Thursday, Sept. 19.

**WEEK 5 - SEPT. 19: SETTING UP THE FIELD SHOTS**

- \* Discuss Franklin's narrative journalism formula as explained in his assigned book.
- \* 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:

All **scriptwriters** should 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 15 hard copies of your script to the next class. If you haven't done so already, please plan for your scouting trip. Complete pre-interviews of all sources whom you're planning to interview during your field shoots.

All **producers** should upload their shoot schedules to the Forums section of Sakai for viewing at the next class.

**WEEK 6 - SEPT. 26: DISCUSSION OF FIELD SHOTS, STORY LINES AND SHOOT SCHEDULES**

- \* 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, Sept. 30, at 12 noon. "**A**" **team producer** should email **FINAL** shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden, and UNC-TV videographer Bob Gunter by Monday, Sept. 30, 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. 3 (Thursday) & OCT. 4 (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 to you on YouTube. Please finish transcribed log by Thursday, Oct. 10, and email MS Word copy of the log to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by 6 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 26, 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. 7, 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. 7, 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. 10 (Thursday) & OCT. 11 (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 to YouTube. Please finish transcribed log by Wednesday, Oct. 16, and email MS Word copy of compiled log to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by 6 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 19 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. 21, 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. 21, 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. 17**

**WEEK 10 - NO CLASS - C Team Field Shoot - OCT. 24 (Thursday) & OCT. 25 (Friday)**

Assignment for next class:

**A Team** - Second draft of script and completed tape log due Saturday, Nov. 2 by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Monday, Nov. 4 by 9 p.m.

**B Team** - Second draft of script and complete tape log due Saturday, Nov. 2 by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Monday, Nov. 4 by 10 p.m.

**C Team** - Complete tape log due 48 hours after you receive via YouTube the

burned-in, time-coded field video. 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. 9), scriptwriter should email Dr. Linden a copy of the C Team script.

**WEEK 11 - NOV. 7: 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. 10. Dr. Linden will email scriptwriters his revisions by 8 p.m., Wed., Nov. 13. Scriptwriters will then bring revised copies of scripts (based on Linden corrections) to second and final script conference in class on Nov. 14. 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. 12. Please revise that edited script and email revised script to Dr. Linden by Wednesday, Nov. 13, at 6 p.m. Please bring enough copies of your script to second and final script conference next week so all class members and our guest critiquer have copies.

**WEEK 12 - NOV. 14: 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. 17. 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. 17, a schedule detailing which team members will be in the Carroll Hall editing bay for which hours on your respective edit dates (see below).

**WEEK 13 - NOV. 21: NO CLASS, BUT ALL-DAY EDITING SESSION AS FOLLOWS (tentative dates, to be confirmed)**

A Team edit - Thursday, Nov. 21, start time: 9:30 a.m.

B Team edit - Friday, Nov. 22, start time: 9:30 a.m.

C Team edit - Thursday, Dec. 5, start time: 9:30 a.m.

Assignment: IMPORTANT! Please email to Dr. Linden by Thursday, Dec. 5, 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 - NOV. 28: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY)**

**FINAL EXAM** – Tuesday, Dec. 10, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., Carroll 11.

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**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 8, 2019**