**MEJO 252 Audio Journalism**

Summer II, 2020

Hussman School of Journalism and Media

ONLINE synchronous/asynchronous

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| Professor:  Dr. C. A. Tuggle  123 Carroll Hall  Phone: 919-962-5694 | Email: catuggle@email.unc.edu |

**Information about the course**

At the core of news reporting -- no matter the medium -- is writing. MEJO 252 is designed to provide students with the necessary writing, reporting and production skills to work within the electronic/broadcast news industry and other industries utilizing audio storytelling techniques. Proficiency in electronic/broadcast news writing, reporting and production will benefit those interested in print journalism, public relations, advertising and many other disciplines.

**Participation:**

Working in the news business should be fun, and this class ought to be fun as well. The class will operate like a newsroom. Don’t expect a regular college class. Effective newsrooms establish a climate that includes a healthy collision of ideas -- story assignments, approaches, writing, production, etc., are discussed openly and honestly. Tension and conflict can and should be present to some degree. That tension and conflict should be tempered, however, with respect.

Broadcast writing and audio journalism are designed for a mass audience. If a story is going to be broadcast via a radio station, television station or other news medium the reporter/producer of the story must be prepared to justify and defend that story at every level. It is difficult to be a broadcast journalist if one is thin-skinned. It is about the work; not the person. A news story is a news story. It is NOT the extension of an individual.

One of the primary forms of participation in this class will be discussion, even debate. We will talk as a class and in groups, thinking through issues together and critiquing our own work and the work of others. To create a climate conducive for participation by everyone, please follow these discussion guidelines:

* Be ready to share and explain your opinions. Feel free to disagree with others, but be specific in your own assertions and back them up with evidence.
* Listen carefully and respond to other members of the group. Be willing to change your mind when someone demonstrates an error in your logic or use of facts.
* Don’t hesitate to ask for clarification of any point or term you don’t understand.
* Make your point succinctly, avoid repetition, and stick to the subject.
* Be honest but sensitive in critiquing the work of others, whether you know the people involved or not. Keep the focus on the work, not the individual, and critique the work product as carefully as you would hope to see someone else critique your own.
* When critiquing your own work, try to divorce yourself from your emotional connection to it -- your prejudices and opinions. Be as objective as possible.

To get the most out of our discussions, students must be prepared. That means the student is responsible for having read that session’s material, and for having thought through any questions that reading might have produced. Participation, undoubtedly, will reflect preparation – positively and negatively. The participation portion of the students’ grade will be judged accordingly.

# Undivided Attention:

If you become a broadcast journalist you will utilize electronic devices daily, but all reporters must learn to listen well and take good notes without the aid of a computer. Before class begins please turn off all your electronic devices – laptops, smart phones, etc. Other than the one you’re using to participate in class, of course!

**Additional Considerations:**

All work must be original and solely for this class. No assignment which was prepared for credit as part of any other class may be submitted for credit in MEJO 252. Violation of this policy will result in a grade of zero for the assigned project. The student might also be subject to an honor code violation.

In the news business accuracy is vital. In the work, you submit, misspelling of any word will result in point deductions from your grade. Credibility is the foundation of any news organization. Errors – especially errors of fact – erode credibility and are unacceptable.

Finally, under no circumstances should any student fabricate a source, a quote, a sound bite, or a story. If you engage in such a fabrication you risk failing the course; being referred for an honor code violation; and/or being removed from the university. Fabrication of a story or of sources is considered on the same level as plagiarism.

**Oral Communication Component:**

No prerequisite exists for oral communication skills. Unlike other courses in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media, this class includes an oral communication component.  Broadcast journalists must be able to speak clearly and confidently into microphones, and those working in television must be able to do so in front of cameras. If you have any doubts about your ability to achieve competency in this area before completing the course, check with the professor. You will not be graded on your voice quality, per se, but performance improvement will be considered. If you plan to pursue a career on air, you should plan to take our program’s voice and diction class.

**What students will learn**

**Basic Objectives:**

Basic objectives of MEJO 252 include the following:

* To attain competence in the conventions associated with electronic/broadcast news writing and reporting.
* To integrate your broadcast/electronic news writing skills with basic reporting practices into the production of professional, broadcast-quality audio news packages.
* To produce electronic/broadcast news stories acceptable under the standards generally established by reputable, professional news organizations.

**ACEJMC Core values and Competencies**

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies. The values and competencies associated with this course include being able to:

* Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
* 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 tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions

Learn more about them here: <http://hussman.unc.edu/accreditation>

**Honor Code:**

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system ([http://honor.unc.edu](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IIreRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fhonor.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, which includes outside writing assignments. Use of former students’ writing assignments constitutes a breach of the honor code. 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 Dr. 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 during office hours or to set up an appointment for another time. 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 on the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office’s webpage (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>). 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 Resources & Services site at <https://ars.unc.edu/>.

**Materials, equipment and books**

**Required texts:**

Tuggle, C. A., Carr, F., & Huffman, S. (2013). *Broadcast News Handbook: Writing, Reporting, and Producing in the Age of Social Media.* New York: McGraw-Hill. Required chapters to be provided as a course pack, free of charge.

**Audio Recorder:**

To record material for your stories you will need to purchase a digital voice recorder or a mini-disc recorder with an external mic jack. You will also need to purchase an external mic and cable.

**Please purchase your recorder as soon as possible. The first assignment is due very soon in the semester.**

**Readings:**

Just as if the student were a professional broadcast journalist, the student is expected to have a daily, working knowledge of major news developments as reported by reputable news organizations. The scope of the students’ acquaintance with issues needs to be broad, encompassing not only national and international events but also state, local and on-campus developments. In other words, you must know the news. There will be regular news quizzes.

**Your Email Address:**

I will use your UNC email address for all communications regarding this class. Check your UNC email often, and always within 24 hours before class.

**Attendance:**

As in the broadcast industry, punctuality is essential and deadlines must be met. Classroom experiences are a vital part of the educational process, even in a virtual setting. Therefore, regular class “attendance” is essential. The following policy governs absences and the potential impact on the final grade:

* You are expected to arrive on time, and to stay for the entire class period with your device’s camera on. Do not schedule activities related to other classes or to stories that will conflict with your ability to attend these class sessions. Even when we meet asynchronously, I expect to see/hear from you.
* One (1) absence – no penalty.
* Each additional, unexcused absence will result in the deduction of two points from your final grade.
* Medical absences are not considered separately. Hardship medical cases and other personal emergencies will be considered when the situation arises. If you find yourself dealing with a contagious illness or an emergency notify me **in** **advance** of class by phone or e-mail to avoid grading penalties.

**Grading Breakdown**

| **Course Elements** | % of Grade |
| --- | --- |
| Participation in Discussion | 10% |
| Grammar, word precision, and news quizzes | 15% |
| 1st Five Projects | 50% |
| Final Project | 25% |

# All projects will be submitted electronically via email in an audio file. Please submit your projects as MP3 files. Specific deadlines are listed in the syllabus. All projects are due at the beginning of class on the assigned dates. Missed deadlines will not be tolerated. Each project will be judged on the following criteria:

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| --- |
| News Value |
| Choice of Interviewee(s) |
| Writing |
| Field Audio Quality |
| Editing |
| Use of Natural Sound |
| Broadcast Writing Style |

**Project Specifics:**

* Project 1:
  + 1:15 feature. Use narration, bites, and nats. Two sources minimum.
* Project 2:
  + 1:15 hard news. Use narration, bites, and nats. Two sources minimum.
* Project 3:
  + 1:30-1:45 feature. Use narration, bites, and nats. Three sources minimum.
* Project 4:
  + 1:30-1:45 hard news. Use narration, bites, and nats. Three sources minimum.
* Project 5:
  + 2:00 nats package. No narration. Use bites, nats, and music. Four sources minimum.
* Project 6:
  + 3:00 hard news package. No music. Use narration, nats, and bites. Four sources minimum.

NEVER use sound effects!

You will not receive a passing grade in this course unless all assignments are completed. The assignment must be turned in even when it may receive a grade of zero due to missing deadlines. A numerical or letter grade will be applied by the instructor on quizzes, participation and projects.  Here are the letter/qualitative/point equivalents:

**FINAL GRADES**

When we sit down to calculate grades, we'll be looking to see which of the following categories best describes you and your efforts:

**Grading scale**

A: 92-100

A-: 90-92

B+: 88-90

B: 82-88

B-: 80-82

C+: 78-80

C: 72-78

C-: 70-72

D: 60-69

F: below 60

A: nearly perfect in execution... quality and quantity of work is exceptional

A-: stands out from crowd (in a good way!) ... good attitude… work is impressive in terms of quantity and quality... very few problems all term... works like career depends on it

B+: very good performance... would get an unqualified job recommendation... consistently does more than required... a self-starter

B: solid effort... would have no problem recommending this person

B-: with a bit more polish, this person should make it in the business... good team player

C+: good in one phase of job, but consistent problems in another phase or contributed in only one phase

C: acceptable work... follows instructions... understands basics…. but didn’t perform/contribute across the board…punches the clock.

C-: has glimpses of potential in a limited range of jobs

D: needs to consider a different field

F: wouldn't have gotten this far

**Late Assignments:**

Likely at some point in this class the student will encounter real-world, last-minute problems over which he/she will have little or no control – problems that will compromise one’s ability to get an assignment turned in on time. Stories shift. Plans fall through. Interviewees cancel appointments. Equipment malfunctions. Illness strikes. Know this and build a time cushion for yourself. In other words, don’t wait until the last minute.

**Sources:**

The student is required to submit the name and phone number of each source interviewed for that project. Failure to include source names and phone numbers will result in a failing grade.

**Schedule:** The professor reserves to right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible so students can adjust their schedules.

June 22--- Review syllabus. Review course objectives. Discuss text, equipment and recorders. Read Broadcast News Handbook (BNH) Chapters 1 and 2 for next meeting. Take-home writing drill.

June 23--- Audio recorder/editing seminar. Review take-home writing drill. Review chapters 1 and 2, Read BNH Chapters 3 and 4 for next meeting. Project 1 pitches.

June 24---. Review chapters 3 and 4, Read BNH Chapters 5 and 6 for next meeting.

June 25--- Review BNH Chapters 5 and 6. 3UGN quiz 1. Diamond structure.

June 26 --- Project 1 due. Asynchronous meeting.

June 29--- Review project 1. UNG quiz 2. Project 2 pitches.

June 30--- Review UGN quiz 2.

July 1--- UGN quiz 3.

July 2--- Project 2 due. Review UNG quiz 3.

July 3--- NO CLASS. HOLIDAYWEEKEND.

July 6--- Review project 2. UGN quiz 4.

July 7--- Project 3 pitches.

July 8--- work session. Asynchronous meeting.

July 9--- UNG quiz 5. Work session.

July 10--- Project 3 due. Project 4 pitches.

July 13--- Review project 3. UGN quiz 6.

July 14--- work session. Asynchronous meeting.

July 15--- Project 4 due. Project 5 pitches.

July 16--- Review project 4. UGN quiz 7.

July 17--- work session. Asynchronous meeting.

July 20--- Project 5 due. Project 6 pitches.

July 21--- Review project 5. UGN quiz 8.

July 22—work session. Asynchronous meeting.

July 23 – work session. Asynchronous meeting.

**July 27th Project 6 due in lieu of final exam. Project presentations.**