**MEJO 625 MEDIA HUB**

**Fall 2020**

MW 1:15-2:30, CA 11, Reese News Lab

Instructor: John Robinson

Instructional style: Face-to-face/hybrid

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**FOREWARD:**

This syllabus is a plan based on hope and ambition. My hope is that the semester will begin and end with an open campus; my ambition is that this course can proceed with the rigor and enthusiasm I’m used to. Despite all the obstacles in our way, my goal remains unchanged: that you succeed, become better storytellers, and have your work published. As the semester rolls on and as circumstances change, we’ll figure out together how to achieve that goal. If you encounter issues or fears or concerns that are in the way of your growth – be it COVID or homelife or internet or stress – please let me know and I will try to support, accommodate and help.

**PRE-REQUISITES:** Enrollment in this course is by invitation only.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This is a serious course for serious students. This course is entirely hands-on. Under the direction of the instructor, students from the School’s various specialty areas work together to find, produce and market stories that would attract the attention of professional media partners throughout the state and region, and at times, the nation. We produce multiple versions of each story and expect each to be at a level of quality to warrant publication. We expect you to be an expert on your particular platform, and conversant enough with the other platforms to earn the title of APJ. (all-platform journalist) We look for stories with broad appeal. We concentrate on trends and developments that many news organizations don’t have the manpower to cover. The course will involve and require substantial field work from all students enrolled.

The majority of the work in this class will be fieldwork — from chasing down leads to investigating tips, securing sources, performing print, audio or video interviews, capturing video and audio, pitching stories to news directors, promoting the students’ work regionally, etc. Each week, every student on every team will spend a majority of his or her time working outside the classroom to capture and gather the raw materials necessary to turn these packages into professional-quality work. The stories will involve local, regional and national issues, and the teams will pitch all the completed packages to professional news outlets across the state, region and country.

The best stories are filled with detail, anecdote and description. Seeing people, places and events with your own eyes, hearing sounds and voices, feeling the atmosphere all contribute to excellent stories. The easiest way to get those details is to be where they are happening. If you are uncomfortable going out and interviewing in person, you will need to get this in-depth information another way – and expect this “another way” to be much more difficult.

The marketing team coordinates with the content teams so that we might keep our professional partners apprised as we move through the newsgathering, production, and delivery phases of the work. As a team, the marketing group produces contact lists for media outlets across the state, building on the strong relationships established in earlier semesters. The marketing team also continues to brand the Media Hub initiative, chart pickups by professional outlets, develop best practices, and contribute to the degree possible to content creation.

**COURSE WORK:**

This is not your typical college course, so don't treat it like one. This mimics the professional journalist's work environment more than any other class in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media. Because teamwork is expected in the professional work, it is expected here, too. Students will be assigned to cross-functional teams. Each content creator is expected to produce four projects. At least two students must collaborate on each project. For instance, a writer and photographer work together on a story or a graphic artist and a broadcaster work together on a story. (Because we have a multitude of print reporters, I will say we will not produce double byline stories.)

**STORIES:**

Before you pitch a story ask yourself three questions:

\* Can I bring a unique angle to it?

\* How many people does it affect?

\* Can I get it?

Print pieces 1 and 2 will average 1,500 words each; pieces 3 and 4 will average 2,000 words each. Broadcast and multimedia pieces will require effort that mirrors this – generally 2 minutes, 30 seconds to 3 minutes. Print projects 1 and 2 must include four human sources each. Print projects 3 and 4 must include **six** human sources each. Video stories may include GoPro videos and relevant natural sound pops at least every 45 seconds on average. All print pieces will go through a copy editor.

Each team's project will have a leader, and everyone, except the PR team member, will lead one project. That team leader is expected to update the instructor via email **each Sunday** on the team's progress on the project.

The best writing comes with rewriting. Scripts/drafts/outlines are due for review a few days before the finished draft is due. (Schedule below.) Assume your work will be sent back to you with edits, likely more than once. Re-reporting and re-shooting may also be required. Each content team member is responsible for each other team member's work. That is, before anything is considered ready for publication, each team member will have read and OK'd the work.

Students will also follow the class Twitter page and like the class Facebook page. Branding and networking are goals of media professionals in the real world. You're expected to RT and share your classmates' posts on social media as well as your own.

Course goals, in this order, are:

1 – do your best work

2 – across media platforms

3 – serve the state’s media outlets

4 – garner recognition for your work

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Approach this class as you would a job in the media business. Being in class counts. Being on time counts. We can’t tolerate your being late or absent.  Each unexcused absence will result in a deduction of one grade mark. For example, if you do B work but miss a class, you’ll get a B- for the course. Being late will also negatively affect your grade. You must adhere to the university's guidelines regarding face covering, social distancing and other measures to combat the spread of the virus.

**LATE WORK:**

Making deadline counts. Missing deadline hurts. Pay close attention to deadlines and details. Justified extensions will be granted by the instructor grudgingly, **but all students will be expected to submit their work progress on deadline.**

**Required Material**:

There is no text for this class. We expect you to be well informed about what’s happening in the world so that we can localize national stories and nationalize local stories. Therefore, you must be a regular consumer of news and information across all platforms.

**DETERMINATION OF GRADE:**

Projects one and two will each count 20 percent of your grade. Project three will count 25 percent, and project four will count 35 percent.

Your grade will be based on objective and subjective criteria, as will whether you’re hired and subsequently retained by a news or sports operation or marketing firm after you graduate. I will assess both the quality and quantity of your work. You will be evaluated on these measures:

 \* The quality of your pitch/idea (the more interesting and enterprising, the better);

 \* The quality of your work, from first submitted piece to publication ready. Take note: If your first draft requires significant rewriting, that will be reflected in the overall grade of the piece.

 \* Your deadline performance, both on the initial submission and rewrites;

 \* The amount you've stretched yourself;

 \* Your classroom performance (attendance, arriving on time, productivity, using social media, giving the expected information to the Marketing team).

Before final grades are calculated, you will be asked to evaluate your performance. Failure to complete that evaluation will impact your final grade. Grading throughout the semester is conducted on a numerical scale. Each student begins each assignment with a raw score of 100. Points are added or subtracted from that according to the standards listed below. You may determine your approximate grade standing in the course by converting your numerical grades to letter grades on your assignments according to this scale:

90 and above = A

80 - 89 = B

70 - 79 = C

60 - 69 = D

below 60 = F

Grades may be assigned plusses and minuses; using this scale: A numerical grade of 80-81.9 is a B-; 82-87.9 is a B; and 88-89.9 is a B+. The same applies to all letter grade except there is no A+ or D-.

The points system of 153 Reporting and Writing is in play. Errors in spelling are minus 10 points. Errors of grammar 5 points. Factual errors are an F.

Under the definitions established by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, students who receive the following letter grades are considered to have reached the level of attainment defining that letter. Thus, letter grades received for reporting and writing courses may be interpreted this way:

 We'll be looking to see which of the following categories best describes you and your efforts:

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

In addition, graduate students will produce a fifth project, with the same or greater rigor.

**CARE OF EQUIPMENT:**

It’s your responsibility to be very cautious regarding the field gear and editing equipment.  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’ll be responsible for the cost of repairs.  So, return every piece in the same condition it was in when you took it out.

**\*\*NEVER LEAVE EQUIPMENT UNATTENDED!!!\*\*  BE AS PARANOID AS YOU HAVE TO BE, IT’S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!!!!!  DO NOT LEAVE EQUIPMENT IN YOUR CAR.**

**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. Using a set-up sound bite is a violation 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 C. A. 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 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin [*http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/*](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IIreRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.unc.edu%2fugradbulletin%2f)*.* 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 Department of Disability Services website at [*http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/*](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IIreRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fdisabilityservices.unc.edu%2f)

**ACCREDITATION:**

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication’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:

[http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=XciXt6cD-UGWmSsiOI50ZzqEMU9vI9AI9RIjk3k3N01dLuvhbfv_0PYGw11_4sIpiXYZSqGOi3A.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww2.ku.edu%2f%7eacejmc%2fPROGRAM%2fPRINCIPLES.SHTML%23vals%26comps)

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, with special emphasis on the last six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

**NOTE:**Always be professional in your dealings with your fellow workers and the people you meet as you gather news.  News directors and editors say they want people with good attitudes as well as solid journalism skills

**WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE:**

Aug. 10  Course overview. Formation of teams.

Aug. 12 Idea generation; create a list of 8 doable ideas

Aug. 17 First project pitch due. Each team presents semester coverage plan

Aug. 19 Research, gather, write

Aug. 24 Second project pitch due

Aug. 31 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Sept. 2  First project script/outline/draft due

Sept. 4 First project due

Sept. 7 No class, Labor Day, third project pitch due

Sept. 9  Rework first project

Sept. 14 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Sept. 16 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Sept. 21 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Sept. 23 Second project script/outline/draft due

Sept. 28 Second project due

Sept. 30 Rework second project

Oct. 5 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Oct. 7 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Oct. 12 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Oct. 14 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Oct. 19 Third project script/outline/draft due

Oct. 21 Third project due

Oct. 26 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Oct. 28 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Nov. 2 Research, gather, write, edit, update partners

Nov. 9 Fourth project script/outline/draft due

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Nov. 11 Fourth project due

Nov. 16 LDOC

Nov. 20 Final at noon

**Quick Guide to the**

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

**FERPA: WHAT IT MEANS, HOW IT WORKS**

* **FERPA** = Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
* FERPA protects student **“education records”** from unauthorized disclosure.
* Student (or parent of a minor) must authorize disclosure of education records.
* However, not everything is an education record.
* So what is an “education record”:
	+ must be a record, file, document, or other materials
	+ must be maintained by an educational agency or institution such as a college or university
	+ must “directly relate” to a student
* A student’s official record maintained by the school, transcripts, tests, and assignments are education records.
* AREA OF TENSION: To be an education record, a record must do more than merely mention the name of a student, tangentially relate to the student, or discuss the non-educational activities of a student.
* For example, non-educational activities include police or campus security records relating to law enforcement.

**REDACTED RECORDS AND FERPA**

* **COURTS**
	+ **Redaction** = The censoring or obscuring of fact of a document for legal reasons.
	+ The courts have been clear that, once the identifying information is removed from a document (“redacted”), it ceases to be a FERPA “education record.”
	+ Therefore, a redacted document is otherwise subject to the state’s open-records law, and it must be turned over.
* **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**
	+ The Department of Education, however, has given unclear guidance on this subject.
	+ The department revised its FERPA rules in January 2009 to broaden the definition of “education records.” Under the Department’s revised definition, schools are allowed to deny requests for records – even with all identifying information removed – if information in the records could be linked to a particular student by someone in the school community with inside knowledge (even if the general public would have no idea of the student’s identity).
	+ The Department’s interpretation stands on shaky legal footing and may be vulnerable to challenge as an unreasonable expansion of the law.

**WHAT IS *NOT* COVERED BY FERPA?**

 *“FERPA does not provide a student with an invisible cloak so that the student can remain hidden from public view . . . .”*

It is common for schools to abuse FERPA by claiming that it covers more than it does and using it as a shield against public records requests. Here are some commonly requested records that are NOT protected by FERPA:

* **Information gathered from a source other than a school record.**  FERPA applies to “records,” not information. For example, information gathered during an interview that pertains to a student’s academic record is not covered by FERPA.
* **Parking tickets issued to students.**
* **The minutes and recordings of public meetings.**
* **Records created and kept by student organizations, including student government.** These records are not maintained by the educational institution.
* **Video footage shot inside or outside of a school bus.**
* **Crime reports.**
* **Employment records.** FERPA does not cover the employment records of students employed by academic institutions, although it may apply to the employment-related records of work-study students.
* **Findings that a student committed a crime of violence or a sex crime.**
* **Settlements and litigation documents.** A lawsuit or settlement agreement cannot be withheld solely because a student is involved in the case, although student identifying information can sometimes be redacted.
* **Reports of employee misconduct.** An investigation of employee misconduct does not “directly” relate to any particular student, and even the student names in such records can be disclosed.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

“FERPA and Access to Public Records,” The Student Press Law Center (November 2014), *available at* <http://www.splc.org/article/2005/05/ferpa-and-access-to-public-records>.

“The Family Educations Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA),” Reporters Committee For Freedom of the Press (2010), *available at* <http://www.rcfp.org/ferpa-hipaa-and-dppa/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa>.

University of North Carolina’s Policies and Procedures Under FERPA (2010), *available at* <http://policy.sites.unc.edu/files/2013/05/FERPA.pdf>.

Hughes, Thomasin. *Releasing Student Information: What’s Public and What’s Not* (2010), *available at* <http://sogpubs.unc.edu/electronicversions/slb/slbwin01/article2.pdf>