

WRITING FOR THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

JOMC-121.1, Spring 2014

Monday, Wednesday 11:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m., Carroll Hall 132

Professor: Tom Linden, M.D. 328 Carroll Hall 919-962-4078 e-mail: linden at unc dot edu	Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., or by appointment or when office door is open
TA: Dan Lane e-mail: delane at live dot unc dot edu	Office Hours: TBA, common area outside Dr. Linden's office, 3rd floor, Carroll Hall

JOMC-121 cannot be taken concurrently with any course in which the lab or group meeting conflicts with JOMC-121 time periods.

National Standards:

The standard expected of every student enrolled in the School's JOMC-121 sections is at the level of national excellence. By the time you complete JOMC-121 you will be a competent broadcast news writer.

The Discipline and The Course:

The study of broadcast journalism combines the skills of news writing, radio production, voicing and reporting, along with a firm grasp of current events. To succeed in the course, you'll need to achieve competence in all these areas. JOMC-121 is the first course in the broadcast journalism specialization that consists of JOMC-121, JOMC-221, JOMC-421 and JOMC-422. All four courses are required to complete the Electronic Communication specialization in the School. If you're specializing in electronic communication, you should take JOMC-121 concurrently with JOMC-221.

Oral Communication Component:

No prerequisite exists for oral communication skills. Unlike many courses in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, this course includes an oral communication component. You cannot receive a passing grade in this course if your oral communication skills are deficient. If you have any doubts about your ability to achieve competency in this area before completing the course, check now with the instructor. Students with an interest in a broadcast career are encouraged to take Prof. David Cupp's voice and diction class (JOMC-425). Please see Prof. Cupp <dcupp at email dot unc dot edu> for details.

Basic Objectives:

Basic objectives of JOMC-121 include the following:

- To improve your broadcast news writing and reporting skills.
- To integrate your news writing skills with basic reporting practices into the production of professional, broadcast-quality

audio news reports.

- To learn how to evaluate newsworthy material so you can learn how to stack a news program.

Equipment:

Voice Recorder:

You will need to purchase a digital voice recorder. A list of recommended recorders will be posted on Sakai. Please consult the list *before* purchasing your recorder. You will be able to check out a broadcast-quality microphone and cable to connect to your digital recorder. It's your responsibility to keep the microphone and cable in good working order. If you believe that you are not getting good quality audio from your recorder/microphone unit, please let Dr. Linden know right away so we can troubleshoot the problem. You must return the microphone and cable to the equipment room in Carroll 63 (basement level) by the last day of class. **Failure to return the equipment on time will result in an incomplete grade.**

CDs:

You will need a supply of CDs for submission of your audio stories.

Attendance/Punctuality:

As in the broadcast industry, punctuality and meeting deadlines are not just important, they are essential. For our purposes, being late is the same as being absent. If you are late for class, please do **not** come. You can count that as one of your two absences. **Three** unexcused absences will result in your not receiving a passing grade in the course. If you accumulate three unexcused absences, you can be dropped from the course at the instructor's discretion. I do understand that there are real emergencies (like the death of a family member or hospitalization). However, if you won't be in class, please notify me in **advance** of class by telephone or e-mail. I also expect that you'll stay for the entire class period. If you need to leave early, please let me know in advance. (A reminder: This class is designed to give you the fundamental skills that you'll need for a job in broadcasting. One of those skills is the ability to hit a deadline. Consider the start of this class as your first deadline.)

Inclement Weather:

In the event of inclement weather, please check your e-mail and/or the [UNC Web site](#) to see if class has been canceled.

Stories and Assignments:

Stories and assignments are due at the start of class. Late assignments will result in a 10-point drop in grade per day.

Submitted Assignments:

All assignments must be word-processed. No assignment will be accepted in longhand. Please be sure to **double space** your script which should be written in a sans serif font, either Arial or Geneva. On the back of each assignment, please write (longhand permissible) the name and phone number of each source whom you interview for your story. Failure to list your sources and their phone numbers on the back of your assignment will result in a 20-point deduction.

Your E-mail Address:

Every enrolled student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication is required to have a *UNC* e-mail address. Always check your e-mail within 24 hours before class for any late changes to assignments.

Syllabus:

Please check your syllabus *before* each class. The schedule and/or assignments may change without your being notified by e-mail. All changes will be reflected in the online syllabus accessible via Sakai at:

<https://www.unc.edu/sakai/> and also at:

<http://www.unc.edu/~trl/syllabi/121.html>

In-class Computer and Electronic Device Use:

In class, computers and all electronic devices (including phones) are to remain off at all times unless you are asked by the instructor to turn them on.

Readings:

Students are responsible for being informed at all times about national and international news events. Be prepared for a current events quiz at any time.

You can succeed in the news profession only if you have an insatiable appetite for information and are informed about major current events.

Many classroom sessions will start with a story conference gleaned from your reading of that day's or the previous day's *New York Times* and other news media.

Daily Newspaper Subscription:

The New York Times (Monday through Friday) is required reading. You can either subscribe to the print edition of the *New York Times* or read the newspaper online at www.nytimes.com. However, be advised that questions on quizzes will be taken from news stories on the front page of the print edition and from inside stories listed in the national and international news summaries on the front page of the print edition. To subscribe at a reduced rate of \$3.00/week, please go to:

<http://www.nytimes.com/student>

You can request either home or lock box delivery of the paper at one of several locations on campus, including outside Carroll Hall on the entrance facing Memorial Hall. If you want to get the paper delivered M-F in a lock box, enter the zip code of 27599 and be sure to choose the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as your university. When the site asks for course number, put in the course number 121 and my name as professor. The site will request a credit card number if you want delivery either off-campus or on-campus at a lock box. If you have problems with ordering the *NYT*, you can call 1-888-NYT-COLL (1-888-698-2655).

Be advised that current events quizzes may start as early as the third class session so it would be wise to subscribe immediately.

Please keep your daily issue of the *NYT* for one week as questions for pop quizzes will come from recent issues as far back as three days before the class session. There will be no questions from the *NYT* published on the day that the quiz is given.

Texts (all available on reserve in the Park Library):

Bliss Jr., Edward and James L. Hoyt, *Writing News for Broadcast*, Third Edition, Columbia University Press, New York, ©1994, ISBN #0-231-07973.

Wenger, Debora Halpern and Deborah Potter, *Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World*, Second Edition, CQ Press, 2011, ISBN #9781608717149. (First edition, ©2003, ISBN #978-0-87289-463-1, also acceptable)

Supplementary Readings:

In addition to the assigned readings, supplementary reading materials may be distributed in class.

Radio Newscasts:

Award-winning local and national radio newscasts are heard on [WUNC](#) (91.5 FM). The quality of your work in JOMC-121 is expected to be at the level of National Public Radio. You're also encouraged to listen to [This American Life](#), an award-winning radio documentary series that airs Saturday afternoons at 1:00 p.m. and is repeated the following Friday evening at 7:00 p.m. on WUNC-FM.

Also, you should listen to the School's award-winning student radio newscast, [Carolina Connection](#), broadcast Saturday mornings at 8:30 a.m. on WCHL 97.9 FM and streamed at [carolinaconnection.org](#). In 2009, 2010 and 2012, [Carolina Connection](#) was named the nation's most outstanding student newscast by the Society of Professional Journalists. Throughout the semester you'll be able to pitch some of your best work to the Carolina Connection producers. Don't miss this opportunity.

Missed Quizzes & Exams:

If you miss a current events quiz, the quiz portion of your final grade will be the average of all the other quizzes that you took. There are no makeup quizzes. Also, there will be no makeup textbook exam. If you miss the textbook exam, then the average of your current events quizzes will count for 40% (rather than 20%) of your final grade.

Grading Breakdown:

To receive a passing grade in the course, you must receive a passing grade in all of the following graded components:

1. Textbook exam.
2. Writing/reporting assignments.
3. Pop quizzes/current events discussions.
4. Oral communication competency (P/F).

You cannot receive a passing grade in the course unless all assignments in the course are completed.

A test on the two text books and other assigned reading will count for 20% of your final grade. A major feature assignment at the end of the course will count for 30% of your final grade. Current events quizzes from the *New York Times* will count for 20% of your final grade. Reporting assignments will count for 20% of your final grade. Classroom participation (including your preparation for assignment meetings on current events) will count for 10% of

your final grade.

A numerical grade scale will be used on all papers and tests. Here are the letter equivalents:

FINAL GRADES

98 - 100 A+

94 - 97 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+

64 - 67 D

61 - 63 D-

60 and below F

Late Assignments:

Late assignments (defined as assignments not turned in at the beginning of class on the date due) will be assessed a penalty of 10 points per day until the assignment is turned in. An assignment that's not turned in within a week of its deadline will result in a zero grade for that assignment.

Notifying Sources:

Every source whom you contact must be told at the outset of your conversation that she/he is being interviewed for a story that may be used on the air. You must have the source's permission to be quoted and/or recorded in an interview. It's the law, along with being an Honor Code violation, if you do not follow this procedure. Also, as noted above, on the back page of each assignment, please write the name and phone number of each source whom you interview for any assignment. Failure to include source names and phone numbers will result in a 20-point deduction for that particular assignment.

Additional Considerations:

Stories receiving the highest grades are ones displaying intellectual depth, originality, creativity, news value, and flawless writing and production.

All work must be original and solely for this class. No assignment may be submitted for credit that was prepared as part of another class assignment.

Broadcasting is different from print. A misspelled word among millions of words in a daily newspaper may not be too serious. But in television broadcasting, a misspelled, character-generated, on-screen word identifying a

newsmaker or location, or a misspelled word on a teleprompter script is far more significant. Remember, when you start working in television news, you are often writing for three people -- yourself, the anchor, and an individual in the listening or viewing audience. A misspelling of a word will result in a two-point deduction. Misspelling of a proper name or a factual error will result in a 10-point deduction. Each style error (defined by the texts and by the instructor) will result in a two-point deduction.

Under no circumstances can a journalist fabricate a source, quote or sound bite. Do not ask a source to stage a sound bite or have that source read a bite from prepared text. A trained broadcast journalist will be able to spot a canned sound bite. Be aware that staging is a form of fabrication which is an Honor Code Violation. The other major journalistic ethical violation is plagiarism, the act of passing off another's words or ideas as your own. If you fabricate a quote or source, stage a sound bite or plagiarize another writer or source, you will fail the course and will be referred for an Honor Code violation. For journalists, engaging in plagiarism or fabrication is a career-ending move.

Story Assignments:

(Assignments and CDs not retrieved by the last day of class may be discarded.)

The instructor in the course serves as a news director/executive producer with final determination over the acceptability and quality of any story.

Weekly Schedule:

The following schedule will change during the semester. Please check the online syllabus **before** each class as changes in the syllabus won't be accompanied by e-mail notification.

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Week #1 – Course expectations & ethics of broadcast journalism

Jan. 8: Introduction to the course

Assignment for next class:

Listen to NPR WUNC 91.5.

Subscribe to the *New York Times* at <http://www.nytimes.com/student>.

Read the syllabus.

Read the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics: http://www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp.

Read Ch. 1 (Libel), pp. 3-10 from "The First Amendment Handbook" available at <http://www.rcfp.org/first-amendment-handbook>. Click "View the PDF" button to download the entire handbook for free.

Week #2 – Ethics of broadcast journalism (cont.)

Jan. 13: Tips on Buying Your Voice Recorder (Guest speaker: Dylan Field, UNC School of JOMC A-V Specialist) & Ethics of Broadcast Journalism

* Review ethics readings and critique radio case studies from RTNDF, time permitting.

Assignment for next class:

Read from "The First Amendment Handbook" Ch. 2 (Invasion of Privacy), pp. 11-18; Ch. 3 (Surreptitious Recording), pp. 19-22; Ch. 4 (Confidential Sources and Information), pp. 23-34; and Ch. 5 (Prior Restraints), pp. 35-46. "The First Amendment Handbook" is available at <http://www.rcfp.org/first-amendment-handbook>. Click "View the PDF" button to download the entire handbook for free.

Jan. 15: Ethics of Broadcast Journalism (cont.)

* Review assigned articles.

Assignment for Jan. 22 class:

"When Democracy Died in Wilmington, N.C." By BRENT STAPLES, published January 8, 2006 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/08/opinion/08sun3.html>>.

Final report on the [1898 Wilmington Race Riot](#) (not required reading).

Read [biography](#) of Josephus Daniels, owner of the News & Observer during the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot.

Week #3 – Writing for broadcast news

Jan. 20: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (no class)

Assignment for Jan. 22 class:

Read Bliss & Hoyt, pp. 1 - 97.

Jan. 22: Writing for Broadcast News

* Listen to Edward R. Murrow's CBS News radio report, "Visit to West Somerset" in "A Reporter Remembers the War Years" (VHS-bio, .M87, 1990, Vol. 1).

* Review Bliss & Hoyt reading, pp. 1 - 97.

Assignment for next class:

Read Bliss & Hoyt, pp. 98 - 153.

Read "[Liberation of Buchenwald](#)" by Harry J. Herder Jr

Week #4 – Writing for Broadcast News (cont.)

Jan. 27: Writing for Broadcast News (cont.)

* Edward R. Murrow reports from Buchenwald <http://www.otr.com/murrow_buchenwald.shtml>.

* Review Bliss & Hoyt reading, pp. 98 - 153.

Assignment for next class:

Read *Advancing the Story*, Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Jan. 29: Writing for Broadcast News (cont.)

* Review *Advancing the Story*, Preface, Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Assignment for next class:

Read *Advancing the Story*, Chapters 4, 5.

Read "[Loosening Lips](#)" by Eric Nalder.

Read "[How to Interview Almost Anyone](#)" by Deborah Potter.

Week #5 - Capturing and Editing Sound

Feb. 3: How to Get Great Sound (Guest speaker: Dylan Field, UNC School of JOMC A-V Specialist)

* Learn how to operate your digital recorder and microphone.

* Review reading on interviewing and *Advancing the Story*, Chapters 4, 5.

Assignment for next class:

Review Dylan Field's Adobe Audition Cheat Sheet in Resources folder of Sakai.

Feb. 5: Tour of Audition & Audacity (Guest speaker: Dylan Field, UNC School of JOMC A-V Specialist)

* Continue discussion of interviewing techniques.

Assignment for next class:

Review Bliss & Hoyt and Wenger & Potter.

Radio field assignment #1 due Monday, Feb. 18. Assignment in Assignments folder in Sakai.

Week #6 - How to write a radio script

Feb. 10: Voicing Tips (Guest lecturer: Prof. Dave Cupp)

Assignment for next class:

Work on field assignment #1.

Feb. 12: How to write a radio script (use of natural sound & sound bites)

* [Life's a Bike: Tour de Bronx](#).

* [All-American Streetcar Booms Fuels Urban Future](#).

Assignment:

Complete assignment #1 due Monday, Feb. 17.

Week #7 - Trauma in journalism

Feb. 17: Viewing of "Dying to Tell The Story." Documentary film produced by Kathy Eldon that focuses on the 1993 murder in Somalia of her son, [Dan Eldon](#).

*** Radio field assignment #1 due today.**

Assignment for next class:

Download and read the [pdf file](#) of "Tragedies & Journalists."

Feb. 19: Conclude viewing of "Dying to Tell The Story."

* Discuss "Tragedies & Journalists" and dealing with covering traumatic events.

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #2 due Wed., March 5.

Week #8 – Reporting

Feb. 24: Class critique of Assignment #1

Assignment for next class:

Work on field assignment #2 due Wed., March 5.

Read Jad Melki, "[Why Journalists Need to Learn About Trauma](#)," Nieman Reports, Winter 2009 online.

Feb. 26: Final review of Bliss & Hoyt and Wenger & Potter

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #2 due Wed., March 5.

Study for exam.

Week #9 – Reporting (cont.)

March 3: Test over Bliss & Hoyt text, Wenger & Potter text (Chapters 1 through 5), Web readings and current events from the *New York Times*.

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #2 due Wed., March 5.

March 5: Class critique of Assignment #2

*** Radio field assignment #2 due today.**

Assignment for next class:

Enjoy spring break.

SPRING BREAK (March 8 – 16)

Week #10 – Reporting (cont.)

March 17: Basics of feature stories

*Listen to NPR report about "[On the School Bus with Miss Fannion](#)" by Noah Adams, NPR.

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #3 due Wednesday, March 26.

March 19: Basics of feature stories (cont.)

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #3 due Wednesday, March 26.

Three proposals for final project due Monday, March 31.

Week #11 – Feature stories

March 24: Feature reporting/Profiles

*Watch "On The Road with Charles Kuralt" reports: Gandy Dancers (1973), Black Diamond Railcar (1983), Bicycle Man (1983).

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #3 due Wednesday, March 26.

March 26: Class critique of assignment #3

***Radio field assignment #3 due today.**

Assignment for next class:

Proposals for final project due Monday, March 31.

Radio field assignment #4 due Wednesday, April 2.

Week #12 – Feature stories (cont.)

March 31: Basics of feature stories (cont.)

***Three proposals for final project due today.**

*Listen to NPR report about [Nudging killer asteroids off course](#), [Algae Bloom Kills Record Number of Florida Manatees](#), [Mastodons in Manhattan](#).

Assignment for next class:

Radio field assignment #4 due Wednesday, April 2.

April 2: Class critique of assignment #4

*** Radio field assignment #4 due today.**

Assignment for next class:

First 60 seconds of final project script (no CD) due Monday, April 7.

Week #13 – Introduction to television reporting

April 7: Essentials of radio documentary

*Listen to NPR reports: [Witness to an Execution](#) and [My Lobotomy](#).

*First 60 seconds of final project script (no CD) due today.

Assignment for next class:

Read Wenger & Potter, Chapter 6.

Final class project due Monday, April 14.

April 9: How to put together a television script

*Review Wenger & Potter, Chapter 6.'

*Providing context - a case study from [NewsLab](#).

Assignment for next class:

Work on final project due Monday, April 14.

Week #14 – Final project presentations

April 14: Presentation of final class projects

*Final class project due at beginning of class.

April 16: Presentation of final class projects (cont.)

Week #15 – Final project presentations (cont.)

April 21: Presentation of final class projects (cont.)

April 23: Class wrap-up

Submitting Stories

Remember the following points when preparing stories:

* The lead is critical.

* Make sure the anchor intro contains sufficient content and is flawlessly written.

* Writing: Correct spelling, grammar, structure, leads, etc.

* Writing flow: Mastering the art of a good sounding story. Does the story flow well? Does it read well? Read your story aloud as you write your copy and certainly before you submit it to the instructor. By hearing your story, you'll catch mistakes and improve the flow.

* Audio quality: Are the cuts clear and of professional quality?

- * Production: Does the natural sound fit well into the story?
- * Delivery: Is your voice quality professional-sounding?
- * News Value: Is the story significant?
- * On-air quality: Is the story ready for airing?

All copy must be double-spaced.

Longhand marks of any kind cannot appear on the copy of a story. (Your name and sources can be in longhand on the back of the story.)

The CD with your assignment should be labeled with the name of the reporter/student and the title of the story written *both* on the CD and the CD box.

Helpful Hints

Take advantage of every scholarship and award opportunity afforded to you in the School (and announced weekly in the School's [online newsletter](#)). It takes initiative, but without initiative you won't succeed. Winning any award/scholarship will enhance your credentials.

Regardless of your proficiency in oral communication skills, you are urged to take a course in voice and diction (please see Prof. Cupp). Good oral communication skills and good writing skills are the *sine qua non* of the industry. You can rarely get past an interview, no matter what job you are applying for, unless you possess strong oral and written communication skills. Unlike print journalism, where writing alone can sometimes support your credentials, broadcast journalism demands extremely strong oral communication skills.

News is global. While not a requirement for this course, proficiency in a foreign language is an enhancement to your credentials when competing with other graduates for jobs in the industry (in many sections of the country, a knowledge of Spanish is very important). Outside course concentrations and proficiency in a foreign language are recommended for any student seriously interested in a long-term career in broadcast journalism.

The Honor Code

The Honor Code is in effect in this class and all others at the University. I am committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms set out at <http://instrument.unc.edu>. If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask me about the Code's application. All exams, written work and other projects must be submitted with a statement that you have complied with the requirements of the Honor Code in all aspects of the submitted work.

(As stated earlier in this syllabus, fabricating a source, fabricating purported statements of fact and/or plagiarism will result in a reportable Honor Code violation.)

--syllabus revised Jan. 2, 2014