

Medical Reporting for the Electronic Media

[School of Journalism and Mass Communication](#)

JOMC 561, Spring 2014

Monday, 2:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m., Carroll Hall 340

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
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Course Description and Goals

The purpose of this course is to teach the skills needed to produce medical, science and environmental television news reports for broadcast on [Carolina Week](#), the School of Journalism and Mass Communication's twice-weekly television newscast. This class is a core course of the [Medical and Science Journalism Program](#). Also, please note that this syllabus is a dynamic document that may change at any time. Please consult this syllabus on a frequent basis for reading and reporting assignments and before you come to class.

As a participant in this course, you'll learn the following:

- How to conceive and research a medical, science and/or environmental news report for television broadcast.
- How to produce a medical, science and/or environmental news report television news report.
- How to write a television script.
- Basic performance skills for both taped reports and in-studio lead-ins and debriefings.
- How to operate a video camera.
- How to digitally edit video.

Reading

Readings for the course include an introduction to writing for broadcast news, a primer for interpreting medical statistics and a broadcast style guide. Individual student readings may vary depending on the topic of your news report, the role that you assume on the production team, the level of your expertise in reporting and video production, and your prior medical, science and/or environmental studies experience.

Required Reading (also available on reserve in the J-School's Park Library):

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

Optional Reading:

Cohn, Victor and Lewis Cope. *News & Numbers: A Guide to Reporting Statistical Claims and Controversies in Health and Other Fields*, Iowa State University Press (paperback), Second Edition, 2001, 211 pp., ISBN: 0813814243. **(recommended for students without a medical or public health background)**

The required reading is available at the student store and is on reserve in the Park Library in Carroll Hall. The Wenger & Potter book is also available in the UNC Student Stores under JOMC 121.1.

Assignments

The key to a successful medical television news report is good writing. Good writing requires an understanding of the material and the ability to communicate your ideas simply and clearly.

All scripts must be in my hands at the start of class on the respective due dates. Even with prior permission, submission of late scripts will result in a 10-point deduction per day. Not turning in a script will result in a zero grade. Misspelling of proper names will result in a 10-point deduction per misspelling. Misspelling of other words will result in a two-point deduction for each word misspelled.

Once you learn the requisite scriptwriting skills, you'll work in production teams to prepare medical reports for [Carolina Week](#). Each reporting team will be composed of two or three students who assume jobs at various times of producer, videographer/editor and reporter/scriptwriter. Students on each team will alternate between various producing, reporting and shooting/editing roles. Since you're supplying medical news reports for broadcast on Carolina Week, it's expected that you'll watch the program regularly. See the [Carolina Week web page](#) for program [show times](#) and cable channels. Also, on the week before your report airs, it's expected that you'll participate in Carolina Week's assignment meeting (check with the CW assignment editor for meeting times). In the week that your report airs, it's expected that you'll be in the newsroom at least 15 minutes before the show airs at Wednesday, 5 p.m., and be in touch with the show's producer to make sure that you've delivered all necessary materials for your report (including video package, video tease and anchor intro and outro).

Exam

There will be no midterm or final exam.

Grades

Your grade will be based upon the following factors:

- Contributions to the production team based on your individual work as producer, videographer/editor and reporter/scriptwriter. (50%)
- Your presence as an integral member of the Carolina Week news team. It's expected that you'll attend the Wednesday live broadcasts of CW and become a familiar face to members of the CW team. (30%)
- Your ability to work with your JOMC 561 team members in a collegial and professional manner. Keep in mind that succeeding in the television field requires a great deal of teamwork. (10%)
- Classroom participation. (10%)

Please note that to receive a passing grade, you can have no more than one unexcused absence. Failure to appear for a scheduled shoot or an in-studio report counts as an unexcused absence. **To help me evaluate your contributions to your team, please keep a log of out-of-class time that you spend on your individual activities on the team (e.g., time spent researching stories, pre-interviewing, interviewing, scripting, shooting, editing, etc.)** At the end of the semester, I'll ask you to hand in a one-page summary of your activities in which you itemize hours spent out in various aspects of the course. **Please total the number of hours spent in out-of-class activities.**

The following will be the grading guidelines I'll use in determining your final course grade:

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 as if your 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... should become a solid pro... would have no problem recommending this person.

B-: with a bit more polish, this person could make it in the journalism/reporting business... has a pretty good handle on television production.

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... good team player... but didn't perform/contribute across the board... potential is there, somewhere, please show it to us.

D: provides substandard work.

F: fails to meet deadlines and/or does not contribute significantly to team projects and/or has more than one unexcused absence from class.

For graduate students, you can translate an A or A- into an H; a B+ through C into a P; and a C- through D into an LP.

How To Succeed in This Course

- Attend classes consistently.
- Complete readings before the appropriate classroom discussions and ask for explanations for any concepts that you don't understand.
- Participate actively in class.
- Complete all production/shooting/editing/writing responsibilities by your deadline(s).
- Work cooperatively with team members.
- Make sure that all facts in your stories are accurate and properly sourced.
- Ask Dr. Linden questions either during class or during office hours if you're unclear about any aspect of this course.

Student Job Descriptions

Producer: The producer is responsible for coordinating all research related to the report and lining up all people featured in the report. In consultation with his/her team and Dr. Linden, the producer determines the focus of the report. The producer also needs to scout field locations and provide preliminary and final shoot schedules to team members. As producer, you'll succeed by completing responsibilities in a timely manner. Remember that throughout the entire field shoot, the "buck" stops with you.

Videographer/editor: The videographer/editor is responsible for shooting video used in the taped report. It's your job to make sure that you have the camera reserved in advance of your shoot date. You also need to make sure the camera is operational and that you have necessary tapes, batteries and lighting equipment. If any of your equipment fails, you should have a back-up plan to deal with that contingency. You're also responsible for editing the completed piece in consultation with the producer and reporter/scriptwriter.

Reporter/scriptwriter: The reporter/scriptwriter's first responsibility prior to the shoot is to provide the team with a working script by the required deadline. After the field shoots are completed, primary responsibility on the team shifts from the producer to the reporter/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 or style of the script, the scriptwriter has the final say. If a team member believes that there is a factual or content error which can't be reconciled by the scriptwriter, then that team member should contact Dr. Linden. The reporter should be in the newsroom on the day that his/her report airs on Carolina Week.

All team members: You should plan on being available to the CW news team the Wednesday afternoon that your

piece airs. Make sure that story is loaded by the deadline, that all graphic requests are turned in to the graphic artist well before the piece is edited and that the script is transferred to the CW web site immediately after the newscast. During the production process, team members will share in logging video, a laborious process but critical to the shaping of the script. (Logging must be completed by the designated deadlines as late logs will delay the scriptwriter in meeting his/her deadlines.) Also, it's expected that all team members will participate in video editing sessions.

Selection of teams: Dr. Linden will determine who will be on each team, but every effort will be made to have separate graduate and undergraduate teams, if possible. Graduate teams will be held to a higher standard than undergraduate teams although all work is expected to conform to professional broadcast standards.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1: JAN. 13 - Introduction to "Medical Reporting for the Electronic Media"

- Learn the basic purpose of the course.
- Get acquainted with Carolina Week's story format.
- Review fundamentals of writing news for broadcast television.
- Learn how to construct a medical/science television news script.

Assignment (for next class on Jan. 27):

Return Student Data Form to Dr. Linden if you haven't done so already.

Read Cohn/Cope book (Chapters 1 through 5) -- for students without a background in public health and/or epidemiology.

Read Wenger & Potter (Chapters 1 through 5 and Chapter 9).

Read Association of Health Care Journalists [Statement of Principles](#).

Read "Medical Reporting for the Electronic Media" (chapter by Dr. Linden) in [Health Writer's Handbook](#) by Barbara Gastel, M.D. (in Resources folder of [Sakai](#)).

Read Linden, "A Delicate Balance: Ethical Standards for Physician-Journalists," in Virtual Mentor at <http://virtualmentor.ama-assn.org/2011/07/pfor1-1107.html>.

Each student should email a 50-word story pitch to Dr. Linden by Sunday, Jan. 19. Include suggested B-roll and contact information about your three sources.

Dr. Linden to email class members the composition of their team assignments by Monday, Jan. 20.

WEEK 2: JAN. 20 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No Class)

Assignment (for next class on Jan. 27):

See previous assignment **PLUS...**

Pay \$50 equipment fee at Dean's Office so you can check out camera equipment, lighting kit and tripod. Order miniDV tapes at taperesources.com or buy tapes at local electronic store (recommend two per person) or UNC Student Stores. Check out camera and tripod and shoot enough b-roll so you can put together a sequence of wide, medium and tight shots as per class discussion. Check out [this page](#) for examples of various types of camera shots.

Each team pitch your story idea via email to Dr. Linden by Friday, Jan. 24, 12 noon. Also bring hard copy of your story pitch to class on Monday, Jan. 27.

WEEK 3: JAN. 27 - Writing for Broadcast Television/Preparing the Television Script/Fundamentals of Setting Up

the TV Shoot

- Review *Advancing the Story* (Wenger & Potter) and *News and Numbers* (Cohn & Cope).
- Learn script format.
- Discuss interview techniques.
- Tips on medical television scripting and field production.
- Tutorial on using video cameras.

Assignment (for next class):

Read tutorial on video techniques from the [Knight Digital Media Center](#).

[Watch video](#) on camera shooting tips.

Browse lynda.com web site and [watch free video tutorials](#) on Adobe Premiere.

ALL teams -- shoot practice video. Interview one another and shoot indoor/outdoor video to get acquainted with your camera, tripod and lighting equipment. Each team should shoot two sequences incorporating wide, medium and tight shots for each sequence. Check your video to make sure it's properly lit and that the audio is clear. If you are comfortable with basic Final Cut Pro editing, please bring your sequences to the next class on either DVD or flash drive in .mov format. If you are not proficient in Final Cut Pro, please bring your video to class

WEEK 4: FEB. 3 - Fundamentals of Adobe Premiere and ENPS (Guest speaker: Dylan Field, School of JOMC A-V specialist)

- Tutorial on using Adobe Premiere and ENPS.
- Tips on putting together a video package.

Assignment: (for next class):

All teams -- attend Carolina Week newscast Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 5 p.m. if your class schedule permits.

Team A attend assignment meeting of Carolina Week on Feb. 5 after newscast to pitch

Team A - email script to Dr. Linden by 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 9. Scriptwriter of next week's story meets with Dr. Linden in his office Monday, Feb. 10 at 10 a.m. to discuss script.

Other teams, please continue pre-interviewing sources for your first package. Also, practice Adobe Premiere editing of the sequences that you shot for the previous week's assignment. Bring those sequences to class on Feb. 10 on flash drive in .mov format.

WEEK 5: FEB. 10 - Fundamentals Of Video Editing

- Continued tutorial on Adobe Premiere & critique of sequences.
- Tips on voicing your track and delivering your standup from Professor Dave Cupp (2 p.m.)

Assignment:

Team A's report airs on Feb. 12 Carolina Week.

Team B attend assignment meeting of Carolina Week on Feb. 12 after newscast to pitch story for Feb. 19 newscast.

Team B - email script to Dr. Linden by 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 16. Scriptwriter of next week's story meets with Dr. Linden in his office Monday, Feb. 17 at 10 a.m. to discuss script.

WEEK 6: FEB. 17

- In-class critique of Team A package from Feb. 12.
- In-class critique of script by Team B.

Assignment:

Team B's report airs on Feb. 19 Carolina Week.

Team A research report for next story.

WEEK 7: FEB. 24

- In-class critique of Team B package from Feb. 19.

Assignment:

Team A attend assignment meeting of Carolina Week this week to pitch story for March 5 newscast.

Team A - email script to Dr. Linden by 5 p.m. Sunday, March 2. Scriptwriter of next week's story meets with Dr. Linden in his office Monday, March 3 at 10 a.m. to discuss script.

WEEK 8: MARCH 3

- In-class critique of script by Team A.
- View "[The Age of Aids](#)," a Frontline special on PBS.

Assignment:

Team A's report airs March 5 on Carolina Week.

Team B attend assignment meeting of Carolina Week this week to pitch story for March 19 newscast.

Team B - email script to Dr. Linden by 5 p.m. Sunday, March 16. Scriptwriter of next week's story meets with Dr. Linden in his office Monday, March 17 at 10 a.m.. to discuss script.

(SPRING BREAK: MARCH 8 - 16)

WEEK 9: MARCH 17 (Guest speaker via Skype: [Dan Childs](#), chief of ABC News Medical Unit in New York City - unconfirmed)

- In-class critique of Team A package from March 5.
- In-class critique of script by Team B.
- View "[The Age of Aids](#)," a Frontline special on PBS.

Assignment:

Team B's report airs on March 19 Carolina Week.

WEEK 10: MARCH 24

- In-class critique of Team B package from March 19.
- View [Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria](#), a Frontline special on PBS.

Assignment:

Team A attend assignment meeting of Carolina Week this week to pitch story for April 2 newscast.

Team A - email script to Dr. Linden by 5 p.m. Sunday, March 30. Scriptwriter of next week's story meets with Dr. Linden in his office Monday, March 31 at 10 a.m. to discuss script.

WEEK 11: MARCH 31

- In-class critique of Team C package from March 26.
- In-class critique of script by Team A.
- View [Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria](#), a Frontline special on PBS.

Assignment:

Team A's report airs on April 2 Carolina Week.

Team B attend assignment meeting of Carolina Week this week to pitch story for April 9 newscast.

Team B - email script to Dr. Linden by 5 p.m. Sunday, April 6. Scriptwriter of next week's story meets with Dr. Linden in his office Monday, April 7 at 10 a.m. to discuss script.

WEEK 12: APRIL 7

- In-class critique of Team A package from April 2.
- In-class critique of script by Team B.
- View [Inside Japan's Nuclear Meltdown](#), a Frontline special on PBS.

Assignment:

Team B's report airs on April 9 Carolina Week.

WEEK 13: APRIL 14

- In-class critique of Team B package from April 9.
- View [Inside Japan's Nuclear Meltdown](#), a Frontline special on PBS.

Assignment:

Prepare log of various writing, shooting and editing tasks during the semester's class. See earlier in syllabus for details about what the log should contain. Bring to final class on April 21.

WEEK 14: APRIL 21

- Wrap-Up & Class Discussion

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.

(Please note that fabricating a source, fabricating purported statements of fact and/or plagiarism will result in a reportable Honor Code violation.)

--syllabus revised Jan. 2, 2014