

MEJO 153.1
Writing & Reporting
Spring 2020
Tuesday/Thursday 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Carroll 59



Instructor: Dr. Barbara Friedman
Email: via Sakai Office: Carroll 357
Office hours: Wednesdays, 10:30-11:30, and by appt.

About the Course: MEJO 153 concentrates on teaching students how to gather and organize information and how to write material for media on deadline and according to acceptable professional standards. Students practice writing effective leads and various types of stories. The course emphasizes respect for and correct use of the language, with particular stress on spelling and grammar, style consistency, accuracy and clear writing. Attention is also paid to bias, libel and ethical considerations. Students will use research and interviewing to produce stories relevant to campus and community life.

The faculty of the Hussman School of Journalism and Media believes strongly that students interested in a career in *any* communications field must be able to write clearly, with care and precision. The key words for any writing are full, fair and accurate. MEJO 153 is required of all our majors, regardless of whether their intended careers are in news, advertising, public relations, strategic communication, visual design, multimedia, social media or other communications fields. Communicators in all fields report or gather and assess information; consider audiences and language; write copy; and deliver the story or message.

For general requirements, see the MEJO 153 “General Requirements, Testing & Grading” handout on our Sakai site.

MEJO 153.1 Course Policies

Attendance. Under the University’s revised attendance policy, “Regular class attendance is a student obligation. ...No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for University-Approved Absences.” If you miss three or more consecutive class meetings or more than five classes overall, I may report the facts to your

adviser or academic dean. Habitual late arrivals or early departures from class will be converted to absences. Note that if a quiz is given on a day you miss, you will not be allowed to make it up, regardless of reason. If you need to seek an official excuse for absence(s), consult the [University Approved Absence Office \(UAAO\)](#).

Participation. In addition to coming to class on time and prepared, your active, thoughtful participation communicates to me that you are taking responsibility for your intellectual development and for your role in building and sustaining our learning community.

Grading. Item-level rubrics are provided in the General Requirement handout. Be sure to familiarize yourself with them as you work on your assignments and before you come to me with questions about a grade. Seriously, just about any question about grading will be answered there.

Grades are not negotiable, but I will discuss with you any substantive concerns you have about them, and you can check Sakai or ask me any time how you're doing in the class if you're unsure. If you want to discuss an assignment grade, check the syllabus first, and take 24 hours to reflect upon the work before coming to office hours or contacting me for an appointment. You must contact me with your concerns within (1) one week of receiving the grade.

Grade Scale

A = 95.0-100	B+ = 87.0-89.99	C+ = 77.0-79.99	D = 60.0-69.99
A- = 90.0-94.99	B = 83.0-86.99	C = 74.0-76.99	F = 59.99 and below
	B- = 80.0-82.99	C- = 70.0-73.99	

Note: Grades are assigned according to criteria established by a UNC-CH Committee on Grading. For example, an “A” grade indicates superior work, whereas a “C” grade indicates sufficient performance and an “F” indicates an unacceptable performance. For an understanding of what the various grades mean, see the UNC Registrar’s page [here](#).



WEEK-BY-WEEK SCHEDULE

Following is a tentative week-by-week guide of what we'll be covering. Topics and readings may change so that we can respond to current events and to opportunities for appropriate guest speakers. While I will do my best to signal changes well ahead of a session, it is your responsibility to check Sakai regularly for adjustments.

I. Weeks 1-8: Competencies

At the end of eight weeks of classes, students should be able to demonstrate the following competencies when writing a news story based on a set of facts:

1. Select appropriate information from a set of facts to write a solid, concise summary lead;
2. Organize the story properly, accurately and completely;
3. Copyedit the story according to AP and UNC-CH style;
4. Watch for any libelous material;

5. Use proper spelling and grammar;
6. Develop interviewing techniques;
7. Use quotes and attribution appropriately; and
8. Develop basic research skills using the Internet and other resources

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS
1	1/9	Introduction to course	Syllabus/gen'l requirements; Yopp, chap. 1-2; Christensen, Resolutions for Journalism and Social Media (read here)
2	1/14	News elements & leads	Yopp, chaps. 4-5; Appendices A, B
	1/16	Leads & simple organization	Yopp, chap. 6
3	1/21	Editing	Yopp, chap. 3; Hare, "Washington Post's Express Corrects..." (read here); AP Stylebook; UNC Stylebook (here)
	1/23	More editing	MacAdam, "Journalism has an Editing Crisis..." (read here); AP/UNC stylebooks
4	1/28	Quotes and attribution	Yopp, chap. 6; additional reading on Sakai
	1/30	Feature news	Yopp, chaps. 7-8; additional reading on Sakai
5	2/4	Interviewing	Yopp, chap. 8; Burton, "Terry Gross and the Art of Opening Up" (<i>Sakai</i> or read here)
	2/6	Internet research	Yopp, chap. 9; Donald, "Stanford Researchers Find..." (here)
6	2/11	Legal and ethical issues	Yopp, chap. 12; NewsU modules: "How to Avoid Being Sued," and "Freedom of Information" (Note: Each of these takes ~1 hour to complete)
	2/13	Bias and stereotypes	Yopp, chap. 11; Brainard, "The Finkbeiner Test" (here)
7	2/18	Writing for digital delivery	Yopp, chap. 8; additional reading on Sakai
	2/20	Social media	Stroud, "When Journalists Get Their Info..." (here); Reuters, "Reporting from the Internet..." (here)



Monday, Feb. 24

Journalist/Author David Zucchini
Event details TBA – Attendance required

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS
8	2/25	Prep for comp exam 1	Review all assignments; PPTs; AP/UNC stylebooks
	2/27	Competency Exam #1	

II. Weeks 9-16: Competencies

At the end of 16 weeks of classes, students should be able to demonstrate the following competencies while conceptualizing, reporting and writing an event-based news story:

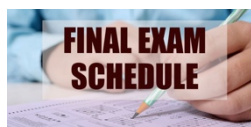
1. How to research, organize and write a variety of types of news stories;
2. Techniques of good writing and editing;
3. Interviewing techniques;
4. Knowledge of libel and its protections;
5. Ethics in newsgathering;
6. How to report poll stories and numbers;
7. How to cite sources and evaluate Internet sites; and
8. Familiarity with public records and documents.

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS
9	3/3	More complex stories	Yopp, chap. 7; chap. 6 "Other Organizational Styles"
	3/5	Feature leads, nut grafs	Read 1 entry under the "feature writing" section of this list of Ellie Award winners, complete the Sakai assignment & be prepared to discuss your article in class

SPRING BREAK

**Begins 5 p.m. Friday, 3/6;
Classes resume 8 a.m. Monday, 3/16**

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	READINGS
10	3/17	Covering Campus Sexual Assault: Essentials	"Statistics on Gender-Based Violence" (here); "Sexual Assault and Rape on College Campuses" (here); "Title IX: The Basics" (here); "Clery Act: The Basics" (here)
	3/19	Ethics and practices	"Writing About Gender-Based Violence and Title IX" (here); Moffeit & Lombardi, "Ethics And Practice: Interviewing Victims" (here); King, "VCU's Tenuous Claim to Title IX Transparency" (here)
11	3/24	Reporting surveys	Yopp, pp. 47-49; AAU Campus Climate Survey On Sexual Assault & Sexual Misconduct (here) and <i>skim first 20 pages</i> of related data tables (here)
	3/26	Covering News Conferences	Yopp, chap. 7 "Speech Stories"
12	3/31	Comp 2 Exam Review	
	4/2	Competency Exam #2	
13	4/7	Journalists' experiences	"Jon Krakauer Tackles Campus Rape" (watch here); Shapiro & Lombardi, "Covering Campus Sexual Assault" (here); Read 1 story in Lombardi's Series (here) and be prepared to discuss in class.
	4/9	Critiques of coverage	Fitzgerald, "Krakauer's Missoula ..." (here); Coronel, Coll & Kravitz, "'A Rape on Campus': What Went Wrong?" (here)
14	4/14	Documents & sources	Readings on Sakai
	4/16	Documents & sources	Readings on Sakai
15	4/21	Final exam practice	Review speech stories
	4/23	Semester wrap-up	



MEJO 153.1 Final Competency Exam:
Monday, April 27, 12-3 p.m. (Carroll 59)