



## MEJO 459 COMMUNITY JOURNALISM

Fall 2020 | Professor Erin Siegal McIntyre

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**Instructor:** Erin Siegal McIntyre

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**Location:** Online

**Time:** Monday; Wednesday – 9:45-11:00 a.m.

**Office Hours:** Required and by appointment. Please book here: [https://calendly.com/e\\_s\\_m](https://calendly.com/e_s_m)

**\*\*Living syllabus:** A hyperlink will be emailed directly to each participant on first day of class; the schedule will be subject to change. Please check this document frequently. This is your detailed guide to coursework.

### Course description:

A comprehensive study of the American community/local press, including an experiential multimedia reporting project that examines the criminal justice system, access to healthcare, and the impact of Covid-19 in collaboration with the local nonprofit news outlet [North Carolina Health News](#). MEJO 459 satisfies an EE/ General Ed requirement.

### Objectives:

MEJO 459 participants will have an understanding of the past, present, and possible future(s) of “community” or local journalism initiatives and will have conceptualized and executed an in-depth collaborative reporting project focused on one specific community in North Carolina. This semester, participants will:

- Deepen their understanding of local news ecosystems
- Think critically about the definition of “community media”
- Gain a historical understanding how news covered and covers traditionally disenfranchised populations
- Develop and pitch enterprise stories related to specific populations, communities, and/or demographics
- Identify and evaluate potential sources
- Improve and strengthen the reportorial skillset and investigative toolbox
- Attend the virtual 2020 IRE (Investigative Reporters and Editors) conference
- Think about how best to tell stories across multiple platforms for maximum impact
- Engage in peer revision and participate in a collaborative team reporting environment

### Required reading / course materials:

- [Cultural Competence Handbook](#), August 2020, National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)
- “13<sup>th</sup>” a film by Ava DuVernay (available at no cost in its entirety)
- [“Digital First Responders: How Innovative News Outlets are Meeting the Needs of Immigrant Communities,”](#) by Daniela Gerson and the Center for Community Media

- [Trans Journalists Style Guide](#) by Cassius Adair, Sasha Alexander, Gillian Branstetter, Kam Burns, Ashley Dejean, Al Donato, Abigail Hadfield, Da'Shaun L. Harrison, Alex Kapitan, Kae Petrin, Scout Schiro, Olympia Sudan, Ana Valens, Emily VanDerWerff, Tuck Woodstock, and Lara Witt
- [The Associated Press Stylebook Online](#)
- The COVID Tracking Project <https://covidtracking.com/data>
- Various other films, documentary broadcast clips, audio stories, and clips

### Course Format and Assignment Expectations:

We will meet Mondays and Wednesdays at the regularly scheduled class time via Zoom. Check the living syllabus weekly to stay informed of all changes. Wednesdays will be dedicated to regular editorial meetings dedicated to reporting updates on our class project; Mondays will primarily focus on the study and analysis of community media.

### The Collaborative Project

For MEJO 459, your capstone project will be a deeply reported collaborative project produced throughout the semester using the skills you gain both inside and outside of class. All reporting assignments, data acquisition, multimedia production, and analysis will be carried out by the entire class; labor will be divided. When copy is submitted, you will submit both a first draft and a subsequent revision that will likely require additional reporting. Our final work product will ultimately be considered for publication by the community news outlet North Carolina Health News (NCHN). NCHN reporter Hannah Critchfield will regularly participate in class as co-story coach on the project; she is our NCHC liaison.

### Assignments

All assignments are due on time, including your weekly reporting memos, and should be turned in via Google Docs. Please share them with both my UNC and Gmail email (see top of syllabus) and ensure that I am granted editing privileges in your settings. Late work is not accepted without pre-approval. Weekly reporting memos are due at 5:00 p.m. every Friday. They are to include the following three subheadings:

1. **SUMMARY:** A concise summary of the week's reporting, including detailed lists of all human sources interviewed, documents reviewed, databases used, and websites visited, and how your reporting advanced. Include names, titles, and phone numbers of sources.
2. **CHALLENGES:** Detail and reporting challenges encountered, including any questions you might have about tackling them.
3. **REPORTING GOALS:** In this section, please detail your plan for the following week, what you hope to accomplish, and how. Include names, titles, and phone numbers of sources.

Assigned reflection memos (250-500 words) are for you to creatively interpret at will- reflect on whatever you want, but please do so in a thoughtful manner.

Instructions and due dates for all other exercises and skills labs are contained online on the MEJO 459 living syllabus. You are expected to complete every assignment and to complete all scheduled reading, viewing, and listening assignments before coming to class. There is no way to succeed without planning and preparation; you cannot leave reporting or project work to the last minute. Please manage your time accordingly. We will discuss time and project management at length to help ensure you succeed, but at the end of the day, the responsibility for execution is yours and yours alone.

### Final exam

On the last day of class during the scheduled exam period, a 1500-word critical analysis essay is due. This essay is your final exam and you are required to share a copy with your classmates. See weekly breakdown for full details.

### Filename conventions

All assignments must adhere to the following filename conventions: LASTNAME\_FIRSTNAME\_MONTH\_DAY\_YEAR and must be placed in the correct assignment folder corresponding to the course's weekly schedule in Google Drive. If you do not follow these directions, your assignment will be reduced by a full letter grade.

### **Communication:**

This class will use Google Groups, and I will use the preferred email address you previously provided. All class documents, readings, tip-sheets, etc. will be housed in a Google Drive folder for this class. Please feel free to email me with any question or concern related to the class, including iterative feedback. You are required to book at least one 15-minute session of office hours each month; use the following link for scheduling: [https://calendly.com/e\\_s\\_m](https://calendly.com/e_s_m)

### **Attendance policy:**

Regular class attendance is an obligation. Students are responsible for all of their work, including assessments, exercises, skills labs, and assignments. As your instructor, I will work with you to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), we will collaboratively determine an approach to missed classes and make-up assessments and assignments. Students are encouraged to communicate early about potential absences and are reminded that they are bound by the [Honor Code](#) when making a request for a University approved absence. For more information on University attendance policies, [please see here](#).

### **COVID-19**

If you are feeling unwell, do not attend class. You are required to rest and focus on regaining your health.

### **Community Agreements for Remote Learning:<sup>1</sup>**

- One mic, one diva
- Respect for all
- Challenge the idea, not the person
- Commit to being comfortably uncomfortable
- Be OK with silence
- Be as present as possible with audio, video, and chat
- Take care of yourself

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<sup>1</sup> Courtesy Raja Bhattar, <https://www.rajabhatar.com>



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- Leave with more questions than answers
- Have fun!

## **Grading:**

### Grading scale

A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 73-76%, C- = 70-72%, D+ = 67-69% D = 60-66%, F = 59% or below. \*The University does not recognize an A+ or D-

### Grading rubric

Participation: 20% Assignments: 50% Final Project: 20% In-Class Exercises: 10%. Grading rubric will be distributed.

## **Honor code:**

The Honor Code (<https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/honor-code/>) forms a bond of trust among students, faculty, and administrators. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill operates under a system of self-governance, as students are responsible for governing themselves. As such, our University is transformed into a powerful community of inquiry and learning. The Honor Code embodies the ideals of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship, and governs the performance of all academic work a student conducts at the University. Acceptance of an offer of admission to Carolina presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in our century-old tradition of honor and integrity.

## **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism and fabricating sources/information/quotes results in automatic failure.

## **Seeking help:**

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with me. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, seek help as soon as possible— whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness. I am available to you from 9-5 Monday through Friday, never hesitate to call or email. We will make it work.

## **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/>.

**Accreditation:**

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media'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://hussman.unc.edu/accreditation>. 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. The values and competencies associated with this course include being able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientations 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.

**Weekly class schedule:**

Please refer to the \*detailed\* class guide that will be posted online and emailed to you directly for all readings, class assignments, deliverables, instructions, etc. Bookmark it. That living syllabus will evolve alongside our class progress; the schedule is subject to change. The below outline is the general course framework.

- Week 1:**        **August 10:** Introduction, course overview and expectations; what is community journalism.  
**August 12:** Introduction to North Carolina Health News (NCHC) and Report for America reporter [Hannah Critchfield](#); reporting project outline and expectations.
- Week 2:**        **August 17:** Ethics, intersectionality, implicit bias, trauma-informed reporting, cross-cultural journalism, and best practices for reporting on and with traditionally marginalized communities. Guests Ebony Underwood, founder of [We Got Us Now](#), and Ashley Jackson, We Got Us Now Actionist (Raleigh), family members of incarcerated people.  
**August 19:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 3:**        **August 24:** Source-building, whistleblowers, acquiring/using data, the document mindset  
**August 26:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 4:**        **August 31:** News deserts  
**September 2:** [Stephanie Willen Brown](#) on research methodology, tips, and tricks. Editorial budget meeting; reporting time in class.

- Week 5:**        **September 7:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.  
**September 9:** Local news business models and strategies for engagement and sustainability; guest speaker [Anika Anand](#) of LION Publishers
- Week 6:**        **September 14:** IRE prep, advanced reporting technique and toolbox.  
**September 16:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 7:**        **September 21:** Attend selected panels and prepare in-class individual presentations based on 2020 Investigative Reporters & Editors Conference (held virtually; attendance mandatory).  
**September 23:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 8:**        **September 28:** Alternative media v. mainstream media  
**September 30:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 9:**        **October 5:** Presentations / discussion on alt media  
**October 7:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 10:**      **October 12:** North Carolina’s community and local news ecosystem  
**October 14:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 11:**      **October 19:** Presentations/discussions on N.C. local/community outlets  
**October 21:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 12:**      **October 26:** Ethnic media  
**October 28:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 13:**      **November 2:** Presentations/discussions ethnic media  
**November 4:** Editorial meeting with NCHC.
- Week 14:**      **November 9:** Special guest Jay Eubanks from Career Services will be with us on 11/9 via Zoom. Local news organization analysis paper due 11/11.  
**November 11:** Editorial meeting with NCHC. Prep for project launch.
- Week 15:**      **November 16:** Culminating project meeting with NCHC. 1500-word critical analysis essay is due. This essay is the final exam. You are required to share a copy with your classmates.  
**November 19:** 8:00 a.m. final exam period; peer review and discussion of analyses.