



MEJO 459 Community Journalism

Fall 2021 | Professor Erin Siegal McIntyre

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Time: Monday; Wednesday, 9:30-10:45 a.m. In-person, remote, and creative to-be-determined locations.

Location: Blend of in-person small groups, online/Zoom, asynchronous recorded lecture, live lecture. Assigned classroom is CA-58 in the basement of Carroll Hall. There are no windows in our classroom.

Zoom: <https://unc.zoom.us/j/91317834005?pwd=OTRIUjF3cXZmNEJZUFUyQnVTcHIUZz09>

Zoom password: hello

Office Hours: By appointment: https://calendly.com/e_s_m

Slack workroom: <https://mejo459.slack.com> (you will be directly invited)

Sakai: We will (sorry/ not sorry) use Sakai for assignment submission, attendance, and all tests/quizzes. Weekly lessons and lectures will also be posted to Sakai.

Course description

MEJO 459 is an advanced reporting and writing class, and satisfies an EE/ General Ed requirement. In this class, you will work carefully to question outwardly – the entrenched biases in policymaking and power structures – as well as inwardly – your own positionality as a racial, social, political, cultural, economic being who comes to the job with a lot of identities that will affect your journalism. MEJO 459 aims to sharpen your reporting skills, to improve your writing skills, and to hone production practices in an ethical manner that utilizes key engagement strategies as well as community conversation facilitation skills.

Serving the public good is an essential tenet of our industry, and this course will give you skills needed to produce journalism that matters. This semester, we will be engaged in an experiential multimedia reporting in collaboration with the local nonprofit news outlets [Enlace Latino N.C.](#) and [Southerly](#). You expected to execute professional work. Publication is not required, but strongly encouraged. We will enable you to be as wildly ambitious or laid-back and slow as you'd like to be this semester. It is, after all, pandemic-times.

In MEJO 459, we will be analyzing and practicing solutions-based journalism and using a “journalism as process” approach that involves sources/community members at various levels, using a model developed and being beta-tested by the public conversation tool [Local Voices Network](#), a project of [the MIT Media Lab](#) and the community nonprofit [Cortico](#). Both are involved in innovative, experimental work around trust building in communities. Three reporting classes at the University of Southern California, the University of Houston, and the University of Oregon will also participate independently. We will be testing techniques designed to

enable citizens to “name” the big problems facing their communities as well as offering a “frame” for possible solutions.

Please note: If you have not yet taken 200 and 300-level classes at the journalism school, consider dropping and re-enrolling in a future semester. This course is not appropriate as a next step following MEJO 153 Reporting and Writing.

Fall 2021 Publication Partners

Southerly

“Southerly started as a weekly email newsletter in Dec. 2016 to highlight overlooked news about the complicated relationship Southerners have with their natural environment. That, combined with our storytelling, won trust, credibility, and an audience of subscribers who know the nuances of this region, but are often ignored by national media: longtime activists, students getting involved in political and social movements, and more conservative folks. In 2018, we launched this independent publication because people were hungry for stronger and fuller storytelling — stories beyond the Trump rally full of unemployed coal miners and the irony of communities who vote Republican despite losing land to sea-level rise.

Historically, journalism has been exploitative and extractive, and it has harmed people by oversimplifying stories, leaving out context, and relying on stereotypes. And those telling the stories have been overwhelmingly white, male, and affluent. We know y’all appreciate good storytelling. Loving stories is an inherent human trait. Everyone deserves accurate information and beautiful pieces they can see themselves in.

At Southerly, we’re focused on both. By partnering with local news outlets and community organizations, we ensure that not only do we hire people who reflect this region and its diversity, but that the journalism we produce reaches the people it’s about. We work with folks in places without consistent, accurate news to get information they haven’t been able to get: *What do I need to do for the next hurricane season? How do I contact FEMA? How do I test my water?*

We share information and resources through community centers like libraries and churches, in ways that make sense for the audiences we’re reaching — for one, it may be a story; for another, a printed newsletter; and another, a radio program. And because we know environmental issues well, we help turn those questions into impactful and lasting journalism that folks can use to make informed decisions.”

Enlace Latino NC:

“Enlace Latino NC is an independent nonprofit news organization. We are the first digital media in Spanish that covers politics, government, immigration, and community affairs in North Carolina. We are creating the first space committed to our readers to encourage them to be more involved in the social and economic changes that benefit their community.

After more than 15 years of covering the state legislature, and other stories in Hispanic media in North Carolina we know the political leaders, the non-profit organizations that serve the community, and the complex diversity of the almost one million Latinos that reside in the state. We strongly believe that if Latino / Hispanic immigrants in North Carolina want to make changes they need to be informed about the policies that affect them.

We are dedicated to produce journalism of public service, in Spanish, independent, truthful and non-partisan, on immigration issues, state policy, government and community, and state affairs of North Carolina.

Furthermore, to divulge information that empowers and encourages the diverse community of Latino / Hispanic immigrants in the state to generate movements, so that they can be more involved in social, political and economic changes that benefit them.

Enlace Latino NC's target audience is North Carolina's fast-growing Latinx immigrant and Spanish-speaking community. We aim particularly to reach first and second-generation immigrants, undocumented folks, and farmworkers for whom the informational void is greater and represents a severe threat to civic participation.”

Objectives

Upon leaving MEJO 459, students will be well-equipped to identify and execute in-depth enterprise stories and work on collaborative multimedia projects in different communities and environments. This semester, students will:

- Develop and pitch enterprise stories related to specific populations, communities, and/or demographics
- Think critically about the definition of “community media” and develop a deeper understanding of local news ecosystems
- Better understand how implicit biases, privileges, and identities influence our reporting and production practices as well as the policies, programs and people we report on and with
- Develop “solutions-based” reporting practices and strengthen the investigative toolbox
- Question systems and structures
- Attend the 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
- Learn about and facilitate how to moderate community conversations

Required reading / Course materials

1. *The Associated Press Stylebook Online* and *The UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media Style Guide* (no cost)
2. *The Diversity Style Guide* by Rachele Kanigel, Wiley-Blackwell, 2019 (no cost)
3. Weekly readings, short films, radio pieces, and multimedia posted to Sakai

Course Format and Assignment Expectations

We may typically meet as a class on Mondays, and in breakout groups on Wednesdays at scheduled class time unless otherwise specified. Everything is subject to change and we will be charting a course together and with flexibility, grace, and compassion. There will be some asynchronous lectures. Disruption due to quarantine is to be expected and we will accommodate everyone's situations. Classes will be recorded and distributed to participants. Due to the iterative nature of project-based learning, you are required to regularly check the weekly lesson page on Sakai to stay informed about our changes, deadlines, and assignments.

We will benefit from the generosity of guest speakers. Students will be expected, at times, to present to the class on assigned readings and will also produce regular reporting memos,

reflection memos, and complete assigned skill-building reporting exercises on deadline.

Do not be afraid of using the telephone. If you are afraid, please tell your professors as soon as possible so that we can overcome this. Phones are essential reporting tools.

Assignments

All assignments are due by deadline, including original stories, exercises, and reporting and reflection memos. Late work is not accepted without pre-approval. Any reporting and/or reflection memos need to include the following, and should not be longer than two pages.

Reporting memos:

1. 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 all sources
2. Detail and reporting challenges encountered, including any questions you might have about tackling them
3. The next steps of your reporting plan: what you hope to accomplish and how

Reflection memos:

1. A written consideration of the week's assigned reading. Creatively interpret the assigned prompt at will
2. Any questions, concerns, or critical feedback in response to the material
3. Reflect on whatever you want, but do so thoughtfully

Instructions and due dates for all other exercises/skills labs are detailed in the weekly schedule in Sakai. 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 your project work to the last minute. Please manage time accordingly.

The Collaborative Project

For MEJO 459, your final project will be a deeply-reported collaborative project produced throughout the semester on your chosen beat 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 your group; labor will be divided. When your copy is submitted, you will submit both a first draft and a subsequent revision that will likely require additional reporting. Final work product will be considered for publication by our community news partners, Southerly and Enlace N.C.

We are extremely fortunate that Durham-based journalist Victoria Bouloubasis will regularly participate in class as co-instructor, editor, and story coach; she is our news partner liaison.

Filename conventions

All assignments must adhere to the following filename conventions:
LASTNAME_FIRSTNAME_DAY-MONTH-YEAR and must be submitted via the Assignments tab in Sakai.

Sample assignment filename submitted by Juan Doe on December 10, 2020:
Doe_Juan_12-20-2020

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 classmates. See weekly breakdown in Sakai for full details.

Communication

This class will use Slack, and I will use whatever preferred email address you provide. All class documents, readings, tip-sheets, etc. will be housed in Sakai. Please feel free to text, call, or email me with any question or concern related to the class, including iterative feedback.

Communication should be limited to working business hours of 8-5, M-F. We will not be checking or responding to class-related communication on the weekend; please plan accordingly.

Attendance policy

Plan to approach this class as you would a job. Regular class attendance is mandatory; two unexcused absences are permitted. Excused absences must be arranged in advance. We are doing a lot of work collaboratively this semester, and you will be letting others down if you aren't present, on time, and engaged. Students 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. Please rest instead. Your grade will be just fine.

Community Agreements

- 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
- Leave with more questions than answers
- Take care of yourself
- Take care of yourself
- Take care of yourself
- Take care of yourself
- Take care of yourself

- Did you get that? Take care of yourself. None of this matters if you're not ok. And we want you to be more than OK; we want you to thrive. Let us know how we can help (seriously). If you're dealing with screen exhaustion, tell us. If you need a break, tell us. If you have an idea about something that can be done differently in order to decrease stress, by all means—tell us!

Grading

Participation & Assignments: 70%
Collaborative Project: 30%

Grade scale

- A (90 and above) - Could be published with little to no major editing
- B (80-89) - Could be published with moderate editing
- C (70-79) - Requires significant editing to be publishable
- D (60-69) - Not publishable -- poorly conceived, written, or sourced
- F (below 60): Did not complete, or completed with major factual or ethical problem

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, or quotes results in automatic failure.

Seeking help

If you need individual assistance, it is your responsibility to meet with me. If you want 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.

Success

Remember these wise words from my old friend Al Stewart, a.k.a The Arkansas Kid, a member of NYC's Federation of Black Cowboys until his homegoing in 2010. A proud Army vet and former drill sergeant, Uncle Al always said: "Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance." Don't forget the five P's.



Diversity and Anti-Racism

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.

Additionally, it is important to understand expectations around class conduct and discussion for all course participants, including instructors, guests, and collaborators. This is in accordance with the main purposes of both academia and journalism: to distinguish between valid and invalid knowledge and judgments, and to broaden our perspective on the world and the experiences of others. Community Journalism students must strive to:

- Refrain from judging individuals according to the collective groups they may belong to (e.g. race, gender, class, sexual orientation, disability status, etc.)
- Assess ideas and arguments according to the evidence and not based on the identities of the individual who created them
- Acknowledge and seek to better understand the historical and contemporary systems of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism that have created real disparities in people's lives, how they see the world, and the opportunities that are available to them

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/>.

COVID-19

UNC has certain protocols in place for those who test positive for Covid. The main source for information from the University are the following websites:

Campus Health: <https://campushealth.unc.edu/services/covid-19-services>

Carolina Together:: <https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/>

If you are a student and you test positive, here's what to do:

Students who test positive must isolate until they meet criteria for ending isolation (i.e., 10 days from onset of symptoms or day of positive test, as well as no fever or symptoms for 24 hours). Campus Health will contact any positive student with isolation instructions. Those who reside on-campus will be instructed on relocation to dedicated isolation space on campus.

Students and post-docs living off or on campus who test positive for COVID-19 somewhere besides Campus Health should message a nurse through the patient portal or call 919-966-2281 as soon as possible after receiving your result.

Campus Health, with guidance from the local Health Department, conducts close contact tracing when students and post-doctoral fellows test positive for COVID-19. Your name and information will not be shared and remains confidential.

Campus Health uses the following definition of a close contact: Any individual within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative time of 15 minutes starting from 2 days before symptom onset for symptomatic individuals and 2 days prior to positive specimen collection for asymptomatic individuals.

This means that individuals who maintain at least 6 feet physical separation in a classroom or congregate setting will typically not be considered a close contact.

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.

THIS LANGUAGE IS MANDATED FOR INCLUSION PER THE HUSSMAN SCHOOL

University Policy on Attendance:

No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

HONOR CODE:

The school expects that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.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. 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.

Syllabus Changes

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

ARS

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

TITLE IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](#) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#), or online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The school says that it strives to make classrooms inclusive spaces for all students. Our school has adopted diversity and inclusion [mission and vision statements](#) with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on [prohibiting harassment and discrimination](#). In summary, UNC says it 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. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

MASK USE

All enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in classrooms. This requirement is to protect our educational community. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, you will be asked to leave immediately, and a report will be submitted to the [Office of Student Conduct](#). At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see <https://carolinatogether.unc.edu/university-guidelines-for-facemasks/>.