MEJO 463 News Lab – Fall 2021
T-TH 9:30 a.m.-10:45 | Carroll 11
Instructor: Kate Sheppard
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Office hours: Tuesday-Thursday 11 p.m.-1 p.m., or by appointment

Description
The goal of this class is to get you thinking creatively about how we develop the news products and services of the future. This is not a typical journalism class. It is structured more like a startup, with a focus on developing sustainable media products and services.

This course combines elements of journalism, technology, marketing, public speaking and business. We'll be identifying problems and developing ideas about how to solve them, and then assessing the desirability, feasibility and viability of those ideas. Does anyone want or need this? Can we create it? Can it be sustained? We will do this both through our own ideas and observations, and by working with partners at professional news organizations to solve their challenges.

Students should be prepared to:
- Face extreme uncertainty
- Fail early and often, and learn from those failures
- Work effectively and respectfully in teams
- Make decisions with limited information
- Balance competing priorities
- Receive direct (painful and pleasant) feedback
- Have your actions and decisions challenged
- Find answers to the big questions (with my help)

Successful students will be curious, self-starters and will not expect to be told exactly how to do something. We will have fun, work hard, be creative, take risks and challenge the status quo.

Framework and Objectives
This syllabus sets the basic schedule for the semester, but I will be amending and updating throughout the term based on our needs. I will alert you to changes and additions at least a week in advance. Class documents will be posted in Google Drive and linked to within the syllabus.

Our objectives for the semester:
- Understand and apply the concepts of desirability, feasibility and viability
- Develop a well-researched and tested proposal
- Build a highly effective team
- Construct and deliver a high-quality pitch

You will be evaluated on the process you follow to test for desirability, feasibility and viability. If your process is solid, you may find that your idea is terrible. That's not failure. That's structured, entrepreneurial-based learning. I want to know what you learned, how you learned it, and what you plan to do with that information. That includes:

- Listening to customers
- Conducting market research
- Producing a basic business plan
- Prototyping
- Public presentations

Books
Please buy or rent:
- Lupton, Ellen, *Design Is Storytelling*
- Lencioni, Patrick, *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*

I will distribute key chapters from these, but you may want to buy or rent:
- Osterwalder, Alexander and Yves Pigneur, *Business Model Generation*
- Reis, Eric, *The Lean Startup*

And we will use other resources including:
- Ferrier, Michelle and Elizabeth Mays, *Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship*
- Readings, videos, and podcasts throughout the semester

Teams
You will work in teams of 3 to 5 people for the better part of the semester, and each team will be assigned to work with one of our professional partners. The team will not succeed without you and you will not succeed without your team. The key to having a positive and successful experience is teamwork and communication. Some tasks can be completed individually on your own time. However, you will develop a better product, strengthen your understanding of the process and receive a higher grade if you trust one another, respect each other and work together.

Assignments
All assignments should be turned in via Google Docs at the date and time specified. Please share them with both my Gmail and my UNC email (at the top of this page), and make sure you have set the permissions so I can edit and comment.

Deadlines in the class are hard and fast. If you think you are going to miss a deadline, please talk to me at least 24 hours in advance so we can discuss how to address it.

Grade Scale
Each grade can have a minus or plus to allow for more granular evaluation
- A (93 and above)
- A- (90-92)

- **B+ (87-89):** Exceeds Expectations. Solid effort with some room for improvement.
- **B (83-86)**
- **B- (80-82)**
- **C+ (77-79):** Meets Expectations. Completed the basic assignments and requirements.
- **C (73-76)**
- **C- (70-72)**
- **D (60-69):** Below Expectations. Significant issues with work or attitude.
- **F (below 60):** Failure. Does not even attempt to meet expectations.

Communication and Seeking Help

We don't really know what spring 2021 has in store for us, so we will all need to be flexible, compassionate and communicative. If you are having a hard time with something, tell me! If you need something from your teammates, talk to them! The time to ask for help is before you are in crisis mode or have missed a deadline. I am pathologically responsive on email and easy to meet for a phone or Zoom call. Just speak up!

I will create a Google Group for this class, which will be the primary means of sending any class updates or information. Please make sure to check the email account you give me for this class. All of the class documents and resources will also be stored in a Google Drive folder for this class.

Diversity and Anti-Racism

The official school note is below, but I feel it is important to set out my expectations for class conduct and discussion -- both my own and yours. I do so 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.

In my class, I expect students 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;

- And consider the often invisible systems of power at play in a given situation and the perspective of those who do not have that power.

Week-by-Week Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Deliverables
August 19	Introduction to course		
August 24	Introduction to design thinking -- What is desirability, feasibility, and viability? Problem statements	Design thinking readings here and here	
August 26	Desirability -- "How Might We" statements	Developing The Entrepreneurial Mindset	24-hour app/tech diet memo
August 31	Brainstorming workshop	Ideation	
Sept. 2	Feasibility - Design challenges	TED Radio Hour on design; Design is Storytelling, 1-49	51 "bad" ideas
Sept. 7	Pitches	Design is Storytelling, 50-99	Initial pitches
Sept. 9	Viability - Business models		Memo on news technologies due
Sept.14	Viability in news/media	What Happens When The News Is Gone?; Google and local news; HIBT: Kickstarter	
Sept. 16	Meet the partners	Beyond Pageviews; How to Build a Metric-Savvy Newsroom; You May Hate Metrics	Memo on a newsroom startup due
Sept. 21	Audience engagement and metrics; Team formation		
Sept. 23	Working in teams	5 Dysfunctions of a Team, pages 1-114	
Sept. 28	Business model canvas and SWOT analysis	Project Management for Journalists; 5 Dysfunctions of a	

		Team, pages 117-227	
Sept. 30	What makes a good pitch?	*Business Model Generation* (Part 1) (see course reserves in Sakai)	
Oct. 5	Stakeholder mapping	[How To Deliver The Perfect Pitch](); [How To Pitch]()	
Oct. 7	Work plan pitches	*Business Model Generation (Part 4)*	[Work plan outline]() and pitch
Oct. 12	*University Day - no class*		
Oct. 14	Market research workshop with [Stephanie Willen Brown]()	Short pre-workshop [research assignment]()	
Oct. 19	Empathy maps and personas		[Midterm assignment due]() *(will post by Oct. 12)*
Oct. 21	*Fall break - no class*		
Oct. 26	Empathy map presentations	[HIBT: Slack](), [Spectacular Failures: Kodak]()	Empathy map/personas due end of class
Oct. 28	Market evaluation presentation		[Market evaluation due]()
Nov. 2	Work on prototypes and storyboards	[What is Storyboarding?]()	
Nov. 4	Presentation of prototype or storyboard		Storyboard due
Nov. 9	Business plan work	[How to write a one-page business plan](); [How to write a business plan]()	[Competitor evaluation due]()
Nov. 11	Business plan review / meetings	[How to write a one-page business plan](); [How to write a business plan]()	[Simple business plan due]()
Nov. 16	[Practice pitches]()		
Nov. 18	Pitch Day		

Nov. 23	Pitch feedback and recap		
Nov. 30	Entrepreneurship and your future		Final product report due
Dec. 7 8 a.m	Final		Team and individual reflections due

Team Deliverables
Final Pitch and Q&A -- 20%
Due in class Nov. 18
The presentation of findings and recommendations for your media product. It must be well prepared, rehearsed, and presented. You must be able to answer all questions appropriately, honestly, and sincerely using any and all data and feedback you've collected over the course of the semester. The pitch and Q&A session will be evaluated based on how well you articulate your basic value proposition, how you plan to deliver that value to your customers, and how you will financially sustain it. It will be evaluated on a rubric of criteria.

Final Product Report - 20%
Due in class Nov. 30
A written/visual presentation that shows more of the work that went into your pitch. The report will be evaluated based on how well you prove the desirability, feasibility and viability of your business. The report should include a description of the product, evidence of desirability/feasibility/viability, team descriptions, timelines, and other supporting evidence. I'll be distributing a more thorough description of what this needs to include later in the semester.

Team Evaluation – 10%
Due during final exam period
Everyone will evaluate their teammates' contributions over the course of the semester. Your grade on this portion will reflect both your teammates' evaluation of your work and the detail/thoughtfulness you put into evaluating your teammates. Form is here.

Individual Deliverables - 50% final grade
Memos - 15%
Mid-term - 15%
Self reflection – 15%
Instructor evaluation – 5%

Instructor evaluation
The instructor will evaluate each student at the end of the semester based on:

- Resourcefulness and initiative: Ability to generate new and improved ideas, concepts, methods, techniques, processes and practices. Ability to deal with new situations effectively. Extent of efforts at creative problem solving, anticipating needs and planning accordingly.
- Collaboration and attitude: Effectiveness in working with others to generate ideas, seek mutual purpose/understanding, be receptive to differing ideas and opinions while continuing forward progress.
- Responsibility: Attendance. punctuality, preparation for class, and participation in discussions.

Self Reflection – *15%*
Due during final exam period - Dec. 7, 8 a.m.
Students will demonstrate understanding of media innovation and entrepreneurship by reflecting on the process they went through this semester. This essay should explain in detail the most important takeaways from their team's work and how they might apply it in future endeavors. (~800 words).

Attendance
University Policy: 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).

Class Policy: You should approach this class as you would a job at a startup. I allow two unexcused absences, but anything beyond that will negatively impact your final grade. Because this class is largely based on teamwork, you will be letting your teammates down if you aren't present and on time. Please communicate with me early about potential absences. Please be aware that you are bound by the Honor Code when making a request for a University approved absence. More info here.

Honor Code
I expect 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.

Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (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. More info here.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
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

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on prohibiting harrassment and discrimination. In summary, 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. 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 our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community -- your classmates and me – as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report 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/.

ACEJMC Core Values and Competencies
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.

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. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies. Specifically, this course is designed to help you:
- Think critically, creatively and independently

- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work