UNC | HUSSMAN SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA

MEJO 553 ADVANCED REPORTING

Fall 2021 | Professor Erin Siegal McIntyre

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Instructor: Erin Siegal McIntyre (Professor McIntyre, she/her/hers)
Contact: 646-239-7307 Email: esm@unc.edu Twitter: @ESMcIntyre Pronouns: she/her/hers
Location: Room CA-142, Carroll Hall & online via Zoom
Zoom link: https://unc.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcvc-GsqTovH90HDiNItyCcqX4ZSi6lrMBd
Zoom password: hello
Time: Tue & Thu, 12:30-1:45 p.m.
Office Hours: By appointment: https://calendly.com/e_s_m
MEJO 553 Advanced Reporting Slack workroom: https://mejo553.slack.com
Sakai: https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/mejo553fall2021
Please bookmark and check in frequently for course updates.

Course description

This course will give you skills needed to produce the kind of groundbreaking journalism that matters. Serving the public good is an essential tenet of our industry. By focusing on accountability reporting and building an investigative skillset, MEJO 553 provides a foundation for young reporters to develop story ideas, find and cultivate sources, adopt a document mindset, and execute stories that illuminate a little-known or underreported topic in a clear and compelling way while adhering to the highest standards of accuracy and fairness.

Objectives

Upon leaving MEJO 553, students will be well-equipped to identify and execute in-depth enterprise stories and organize investigative projects. 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 weekly reporting memos, reflection memos, and complete assigned skill-building reporting exercises on deadline.

This semester, students will gain:

- A deep understanding of investigative reporting and its role in society
- The ability to organize and execute journalism that holds those in power accountable
- Skills for cultivating, nurturing, and protecting sensitive sources and/or whistleblowers
- Sharper instincts for digging deep enough into an issue or topic to generate leads that expose wrongdoing, problems, or negligence
- Knowledge how to develop and pitch enterprise accountability stories related to specific beats
- Skills for identifying and evaluating potential human sources, open access document

sets, and "closed" information
- ● A robust reportorial toolbox including reporting guides and tip-sheets that can be used professionally for years to come
- ● The critical thinking capacity to envision how best to tell stories across multiple platforms for maximum impact
- ● Experience engaging in peer review and participating in a collaborative team environment

Required reading / Course materials

1. Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Student Membership (you can apply for Curtis Fund backing to cover your $25 student membership fee): http://www.ire.org
2. "Story-Based Inquiry: A Manual for Investigative Journalists," by Mark Lee Hunter with Nils Hanson, Rana Sabbagh, Luuk Sengers, Drew Sullivan, Fleming Tait Smith and Pia Thordson, 2011 (no cost)
3. *The Associated Press Stylebook Online* and *The UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media Style Guide* (no cost)
4. The Diversity Style Guide by Rachele Kanigel, 2019 (no cost; use website)
5. Weekly readings posted to Sakai each week

Course Format and Assignment Expectations

We will typically meet as a class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with flexibility as our reporting project develops. The first two weeks of class will be held Zoom; this is subject to change so please check your email daily. Attendance is mandatory. You are required to check our Sakai site and weekly lesson updates to stay informed about changes, deadlines, and assignments. Throughout the semester, we will be engaged in an experiential reporting project that examines local connections to the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.

The Investigative Project

For Fall 2021, our collaborative project will be reported throughout the semester using skills gained both inside and outside of class. All story pitches will be submitted and approved in advance. In some cases, you are required to submit revisions of your work that incorporate editorial feedback. We will work in teams and also individually.

Assignments

All assignments are due by deadline via Sakai submission, including original stories, exercises, and reporting and reflection memos. Late work is not accepted without pre-approval. When reporting or reflection memos are assigned, they should include the following. Length should be no longer than two pages maximum.

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.

Filename conventions

All assignments must adhere to the following filename conventions: LASTNAME_FIRSTNAME_DAY-MONTH-YEAR and must be placed in the correct assignment folder corresponding to the course's weekly schedule in Google Drive.

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

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

Please approach this class as you would a job. Regular class attendance is mandatory; two unexcused absences are permitted. Any and all 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 and advise both myself and your group as soon as possible to coordinate make-up work.

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.

Contact Tracing

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.

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/.

Pandemic Wellness

These are stressful and unprecedented times, and paying attention to and understanding your own personal wellbeing is key to your academic and professional success. Everyone responds to stress differently. Some people find utilizing mediation and mindfulness apps like Headspace or Calm helpful. Others, like your professor, prefer consuming Ben & Jerry's New York Superfudge Chunk ice cream and lying on the floor staring at the ceiling. Some like to run. Bless their hearts.

The university has a number of counseling services available to students. These include UNC Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) https://caps.unc.edu. 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. CAPS can be reached via email at caps@unc.edu or call 919-966-3658. CAPS is available at all hours 24/7 for urgent concerns. The CAPS address is James A. Taylor Building, 3rd Floor, 320 Emergency Room Drive, CB# 7470, Chapel Hill, NC 27599.

The UNC Student Affairs website also lists resources on their Student Wellness page: https://studentwellness.unc.edu/resources/mental-wellbeing-resources. To reach the Student Wellness team, please email studentwellness@unc.edu or call (919) 962-WELL (9355)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website also hosts a resource page on managing pandemic-related stress:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html

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
- Take care of yourself
- Leave with more questions than answers
- Have fun!
- 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 over the course of this class to decrease stress, by all means—tell us!

Grading

Participation & Reflection: 25%
Assignments: 50%
Quizzes: 25%

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 punishable
- D (60-69) - Not publishable -- poorly conceived, written, or sourced
- F (below 60): Did not complete, or completed with major factual or ethical problem

Grades will be entered in Sakai throughout the course; you will be able to see where you stand as we proceed through the semester.

Grading rubric

Final project grading will be based on assessments by both the instructor and your fellow peers in the following categories.

Evaluation Grid for Investigative Projects & Stories

1. Use of documents and sources
2. Story organization; grammar, spelling and punctuation
3. Reveals new facts, new information
4. Enterprise reporting – creativity, persistence and critical thinking
5. Writing quality and improvement through revision processes
6. Multimedia components
7. Accurate and fair
8. Necessary number of sources & source contact information

9. Theme, premise, and news value are clear and readily identified
10. The work has intimate details and a larger "sweep," context or perspective

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 Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism and fabricating sources, information, or quotes results in automatic failure.

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).

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. I am available from 9-5 M-F; don't hesitate to call or email. We will make it work.

Diversity and Anti-Racism

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/.

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. Advanced Reporting 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

The Hussman school says that it strives to make classrooms inclusive spaces for all students and 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 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.

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.

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Resources & Services site at https://ars.unc.edu/.

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.

Syllabus Changes

All Hussman professors reserve the right to make changes to syllabi, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

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:

- o Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientations and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- o Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- o Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- o Think critically, creatively and independently;
- o Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- o Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- o Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- o Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions.