**MEJO 550-001: Business and the Media**

Class time: Tues-Thurs, 12:30

Instructor: Dane Huffman

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About Dane: Dane Huffman has been the managing editor for the Triangle Business Journal in Raleigh for five years. In that time, the TBJ has doubled circulation and won 26 awards, including General Excellence in a key business journalism competition in 2021. Dane graduated from Carolina in 1983 with a degree in journalism and got a master’s in liberal studies at Duke in 2011. He was a sports writer and assistant sport editor at The News & Observer for 24 years before running sports for WRAL, creating the WRALSportsFan and HighSchoolOT websites. Dane spent five years at WNCN, managing the news website, before joining the Triangle Business Journal.

Dane is married to the former Caroline Morton, who has a master’s in English from Carolina. They have a son, Cameron, and a daughter, Anne Houston, who is a sophomore at UNC. They spend their free time chasing their two active corgis.

**Overview**

For journalists and their audiences, it’s impossible to understand the world without an understanding of business and economics. Governments make tough choices dictated by money — choices that affect students, workers, homeowners, commuters. Even in sports, many of the biggest stories involve dollars and cents.

And journalists who know how to make business understandable and accessible to those audiences will be in demand in the future.

This course is intended to help train those journalists. But the goal is also to show how the skills and insights of business journalism can be applied to non-business topics.

Required texts:

* “Profits and Losses: Business Journalism and its Role in Society.” By Chris Roush. Marion Street Press: 2011. 3rd edition.
* “The SABEW Stylebook,” 2nd edition. Chris Roush and Bill Cloud.
* “Muckrakers: How Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and Lincoln Steffens Helped Expose Scandal, Inspire Reform, and Invent Investigative Journalism.” By Ann Bausum. World History Biographies: 2007
* “The Big Short,” by Michael Lewis.

**Late assignments.**In newsrooms — whether print or television — you can’t miss deadlines. The goal in this class is to simulate a professional environment. So late papers, if I accept them, will receive a reduced grade unless we agree before the assignment is due that a delay is justified.

**Grading:**

* **20 percent:**Book report off of “The Big Short” – What key questions does the book raise? What are some important lessons from what happened? How does the author decide to tell this story and what makes his approach effective — or not effective?
* **50 percent:** Regular assignments
* **10 percent:**Midterm exam
* **10 percent:** Final exam
* **10 percent:**Participation

**Grading scale:**

A = 93-100 A- = 90-92 B+ = 87-89 B = 83-86 B- = 80-82 C+ = 77-79 C = 73-76 C- = 70-82 D+ = 67-69 D = 60-66 F = 0-59

Mistakes that will hurt your grade:

* Misspelled name
* Missing first reference
* Factual error
* Misspelled word
* AP/SABEW style error
* Wordiness, redundancy
* Grammar error
* Punctuation error

**DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Tuesday, Jan. 11:** Introductions and class overview

* Homework for Jan. 13: Read the introduction, “Profits and Losses” and
* <https://niemanreports.org/articles/the-watchdog-role-business-reporters-need-to-play/>

**Thursday, Jan. 13:** How business journalists have served as — and remain — the conscience of corporate America

* Assignment, due Jan. 20: In 600 words or more, analyze and report on the coffee industry. What headwinds and opportunities does Starbucks face? Who are the challengers? How did Starbucks rise — as in, what is it’s value proposition? And what is its future? Can be written in a journalistic style or as a paper, but cite sources within the body of the work.
* Reading for Jan. 18 class: Chapters 1-2, “Profits and Loss”

**Tuesday, Jan. 18:** The rise of business journalism can be traced to industrialization and the rise of big business

* Reading for Jan. 20: “Muckrackers” … Also, Chapter 3, “Profits and Losses.”

**Thursday, Jan. 20:** Who were the muckrakers? What was their agenda? And how did this influence the rise of business journalism?

* Reading for Jan. 25: Modern muckrackers. Assigned by professor.

**Tuesday, Jan. 25:** Continued discussion on the rise of the muckrackers

* Assignment due Jan. 30, 5 p.m.: Look at Walmart or Amazon through the eyes of Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair or Lincoln Steffens. What are the concerns they would see? What are the positives? And do you see evidence of progress since their era, or a lack progress? Is there anything they are missing that you see as a positive?

**Thursday, Jan. 27:** No class

* Assignment for Feb. 1: Read Chapter 6, “Profits and Losses”

**Tuesday, Feb. 1:** The rise of the business magazine. What drove their rise? What particular niche do they serve now? And what’s the future for business magazines in this digital age?

* Assignment for Feb. 3: Read Chapter 7, “Profits and Losses”

**Thursday, Feb. 3:** The rise of the Wall Street Journal — and how did UNC graduate (and Raleigh native) Vermont Royster play a role in the rise of the paper?

* Assignment due Feb. 10, Analyze coverage of a single event from the Wall Street Journal and compare it to other publications. How did the Journal’s coverage reflect it’s specific audience? How was its coverage different than others?
* Reading for Feb. 8: Chapter 9, “Profits and Losses”

**Tuesday, Feb. 8:** Business journalism begins to prosper

* Assignment for Feb. 10: Chapter 10, “Profits and Losses”

**Thursday, Feb. 10:** Business journalism begins to expand

* Assignment for Feb. 15: Read three stories on business (which I will supply) to prepare for class discussion

**Tuesday, Feb. 15:** How the media impacts society’s view of business

* Assignment for Feb. 17: Chapter 15, “Profits and Losses”

**Thursday, Feb. 17:**What business thinks of the media

Assignment for Feb. 22: Read Chapter 5, “Profits and Losses”

**Tuesday, Feb. 22:** How PR has changed business journalism - the rise of public relations and advertising and its influence on business media.

* Assignment for Feb. 24: Read Chapter 14, “Profits and Losses”

**Thursday, Feb. 24:** Wall Street and the media - is the media too cosy with corporate America? What mistakes has the media made in its coverage of business and industry? Who’s using whom?

* Assignment for March 1: Sign up for TBJ emails, scan over stories

**Tuesday, March 1:** The rise of American City Business Journals. Beth Hunt, national recruiter for ACBJ, speaks to class.

* Reading for March 3: Chapter 12, “Profits and Losses”

**Thursday, March 3:** The internet and business journalism. What sources can reporters trust?

* Read class articles uploaded to Sakai
* Paper due March 3: Analyze a major news event. In at least 800 words, take a look at how the company pitched it and how the media covered it. How effective was the organization in pitching its message? What did it conceal, or downplay, that the media caught and put into its coverage? (Professor will supply).

**Tuesday, March 8:** How business journals cover scandals

* Assignment for March 10: Read Chapter 13, “Profits and Losses”

**Thursday, March 10:**Midterm exam

**Tuesday, March 15:** No class - spring break

**Thursday, March 17:**No class - spring break

**Tuesday, March 22:**Book review - discuss “The Big Short” so far. What themes have emerged? What ethical issues are to be considered? Why weren’t others aware of the magnitude of the problem?

* Read for March 24: Chapter 143, “Profits and Losses”

**Thursday, March 24:** The scandals business journalists missed.

* Read for March 29: Professor will provide.

**Tuesday, March 29:** Business coverage and the pandemic. What is business coverage focused on? What is it missing? What is resonating? What important information is out there that business journalists need? (Probably will include data from Paycheck Protection Plan programs)

* Assignment for March 31: Read over documents the professor will provide on how to navigate the SEC website.

**Thursday, March 31:**Review of the Securities and Exchange Commission. What is its purpose? And how do you navigate the website for vital information? What key information is available? And what is missing?

* Read for April 5: “Profits and Losses,” Chapter 8.

**Tuesday, April 5:**Business journalism on radio and television - how is the news of dollars and sense conveyed on the airways? And how does the broadcast format change the way this information is received?

* Assignment for April 7: Professor will provide local content.
* \*\*Book report due\*\*

**Thursday, April 7:**Local business coverage. How does the local news cover business? How effective is that and what gaps are missing?

* Read for April 12: Chapter 4, “Profits and Losses”

**Tuesday, April 12:** The Great Depression - what did business journalism miss? How did this impact the industry?

**Thursday, April 14:** “The Big Short” fallout. So let’s review what we learned. What are the lessons?

* Assignment for April 19: Read Chapter 15,:”Profits and Losses”
* Paper due April 19: From what you’ve learned, how effective is business journalism at covering what is really going on in the world of business? What could be improved? What is misunderstood? Give your own analysis — where should this be headed.This should be a thoughtful analysis of at least 800 words.

**Tuesday, April 19:**The future of business journalism.

**Thursday, April 21:**Exam review

**Tuesday, April 26:** No class

**Thursday, April 28:** No class

**May 3:** Final exam