



MEJO 252.2 Audio Journalism

Lee Meredith

WELCOME:

Welcome to MEJO 252. This course presents the basics of writing, reporting, audio editing, voicing and production skills to work within the fields of broadcast news and journalism podcasting.

This class will operate like a newsroom, so don't expect a regular college class. Effective newsrooms establish a climate where there is a healthy collision of ideas -- where story assignments, approaches, writing, production, etc., are discussed openly and honestly. This class will offer students a space where their curiosity will be engaged and challenged.

If a news story is going to be broadcast over a radio station, television station or digital medium, the reporter of the story must be prepared to justify and defend that story and the facts it contains at every level. It is difficult to be a broadcast journalist if one is thin-skinned. It is about the work, not the person. A news story is a news story. It is NOT the extension of an individual.

Audio journalism combines the skills of news writing, audio production, audio editing, voicing and reporting. I'll work to help you achieve competence in all these areas.

Spring 2023

Monday/Wednesday, 8:00-9:15 a.m.

Carroll Hall 11

Canvas site: <https://uncch.instructure.com/courses/19600>

Zoom site: <https://unc.zoom.us/j/93646147042?pwd=S24vMU9mN2VkcjVsZkNuNmhiUTZWQT09>

(Meeting ID: 936 4614 7042, Passcode: 451322, **UNC Zoom SSO must use login with UNC email address that ends with @email.unc.edu**)

ABOUT ME:

Lee's contact information

225-400-7711

Imeredith@unc.edu

Personal Zoom meeting room (<https://unc.zoom.us/my/leemeredith>)



Student appointments

[Book time with Lee](#)

Tuesday and Thursday, 2:30-4:00 p.m. (or contact me by email if you need a different time)



I was fortunate to have a rich and varied career, working in several different media businesses. I retired from my job as a television station general manager in 2018 and began teaching here that same year. I started working in television news when I was a senior in college.

My TV reporting career got off to a bumpy start and my voice was to blame. A few weeks after beginning my job as a weekend reporter, I proudly narrated my first story that aired on a Saturday night. Monday morning, I got a call from the news director. The good news was that I still had a job. The bad news was he said my voice was not air-worthy and that I could not narrate any more stories for the newscasts.

Fortunately for me, I was already enrolled in a voice and diction class, and my teacher was wonderful. I hope I can provide as much guidance for you as she did for me. Within a few weeks, I was able to come up with a plan using my skills as a writer and producer to get back on the air. My voice continued to improve over time.

I was born in Houston and was lucky to be able to work as a reporter there at a television station that I grew up watching. I earned a few awards as a reporter and producer and then was able to move into a managerial role running a news operation as a news director. I did that for about a dozen years before I was able to secure a position as the general manager of a TV station for Raycom Media (now Gray TV). I worked for Raycom for 20 years as a VP/GM. During that time, I was named "GM of the Year" by Broadcasting & Cable, selected as "Broadcaster of the Year" by the Louisiana Association of Broadcasters and inducted into the Silver Circle by the Nashville/Midsouth chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.

PRE-REQUISITES:

MEJO 252 is a Level 1 concentration course for journalism majors interested in pursuing careers in broadcast, video and audio journalism. MEJO 121 (Intro to Digital Storytelling) and MEJO 153 (Writing and Reporting) are strongly recommended as courses to take either before or concurrently with MEJO 252.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

You'll learn how to conceive, research, report, and produce audio stories for broadcast on radio or podcasts and streaming on the Internet.

OBJECTIVES:

- To learn and demonstrate basic audio news writing and reporting skills.
- To integrate your news writing skills with basic reporting practices into the production of professional, broadcast-quality audio news and feature packages.
- To introduce the foundations of creating a podcast.
- To produce electronic/broadcast news stories acceptable under the standards generally established by reputable, professional news organizations.
- Throughout the learning process, we will keep ethical considerations front and center so that you will have a better framework for dealing with these issues as a journalist.

ORAL COMMUNICATION COMPONENT:

Unlike other courses in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media, this course includes an oral communication component. If you have any doubts about your ability to achieve competency in this area before starting the course, **check now with the instructor**. You will not be graded on your voice quality per se, but your diction must not preclude the comprehension of your journalism.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

University Policy:

Here's the relevant excerpt from the [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).

Class Policy:

Classroom experiences are a vital part of the educational process for this class. Therefore, regular class attendance is essential. If you cannot attend a class due to illness, notify me by phone or email **prior** to class. Otherwise, your absence will be unexcused. If you believe you will need to miss a class for a reason that falls within the policy above on University Approved Absences, please communicate with me in writing as soon as practical. More than three unexcused absences will affect your participation grade for this course. Regular tardiness (more than 10 minutes late on three occasions) will also be treated as an absence.

The instruction mode for this course is **in-person**. Zoom livestreams and recordings will be made available, but they will **not** count toward your attendance unless your absence is excused. To be clear, **if you are experiencing symptoms of an illness that could be COVID-19, you should not attend class and your absence will be excused if you communicate with me prior to start of class.**

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Kern, Jonathan, *Sound Reporting: The NPR Guide to Audio Journalism and Production*, University of Chicago Press, 2008.

It is expected that you complete required readings before coming to class. Class time will be devoted to application of knowledge, not a review of your readings.

Other readings:

Students are responsible for staying informed about local, national and international news events. You can succeed in the news profession only if you have a broad scope of issues and events happening in the world around you.

EQUIPMENT:

You are required to purchase the following equipment for this class. Financial aid funds can be used for these items. If you believe you will have a challenge with these purchases, please speak with your

professor and contact Stephanie Willen Brown (swbrown@unc.edu), the director of the Hussman School's Park Library.

Smartphone with a voice recording app: You will need a smart phone with a good voice recording app. (You can also use Zoom or [Zencastr](#).) If you are interested in purchasing a voice recorder, there will be a presentation on recommended recorders.

Headphones: Your headphones that came with your smartphone will work. If you want more professional headphones there will be recommendations presented.

Adobe Audition: You can get this program through the Adobe Creative Cloud. It is free for all UNC students. You can access the link to create your account here:

<https://software.sites.unc.edu/software/adobe-creative-cloud/>

Also recommended:

Lavalier microphones may be useful for getting better audio quality if you are doing an in-person interview. Other types of microphones will be better suited to interviews in the field. Gary Kirk, Hussman Broadcast & New Media Manager, will discuss recording options when he talks with our class on Wednesday, January 11.

IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION:

One of the primary forms of participation in this class will be discussion, even debate. We will talk as a class and in groups, thinking through issues together and critiquing our own work and the work of others. To create a climate conducive for participation by everyone, please follow these discussion guidelines:

- Be ready to share and explain your opinions. Feel free to disagree with others, but be specific in your assertions and back them up with evidence.
- Do not hesitate to ask for clarification of any point or term you do not understand.
- Be honest but sensitive in critiquing the work of others, whether you know the people involved or not. Keep the focus on the work, not the individual, and critique the work product as you would hope to see someone else critique your own work.
- Be specific in your critique, don't just say "I like how they used the actuality in their story". Provide support for your statement. "I like how they used the actuality in their story. It supported their track and helped to move the story along. It added an emotional element to the story and that was needed to make it a success."
- When critiquing your own work, try to separate yourself from your emotional connection to it -- your prejudices and opinions. Be as objective as possible.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

All work must be original and solely for this class. No assignment which was prepared for credit as part of any other class may be submitted for credit in MEJO 252. Violation of this policy will result in a grade of zero for the assigned project. The student also may be subject to an honor code violation.

In the news business accuracy is vital. In the work you submit, misspelling of any word will result in point deductions from your grade. Each style error will result in point deductions. Misspelling of a proper name, or a factual error, may result in a failing grade on that assignment. Credibility is the foundation of any news organization. Errors – especially errors of fact – erode credibility and are unacceptable.

Finally, under no circumstances should any student fabricate a source, a quote, a sound bite, or a story. If you engage in such a fabrication, you risk failing the course; being referred for an honor code violation; and/or being removed from the university. Fabrication of a story or of sources is considered on the same level as plagiarism.

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES:

Assignments are due on the due date, unless otherwise noted. You will not receive a passing grade in this course unless all assignments are completed. Submit projects in Sakai as an audio MP3 files along with Microsoft Word documents for the scripts.

Late Assignments:

A 10-point deduction will be applied to each assignment turned in after the time it is due. An additional deduction will be applied for each subsequent 24 hours that pass after the due date/time (i.e., 10 points are taken off for each day).

If you miss a quiz because of an unexcused absence, it can only be made up within a week for partial credit.

SOURCES:

Every source you contact must be told at the outset of your conversation that they are being interviewed for a story that may be used on the air. You must have the source's permission to be recorded in an interview. It's the law, along with being an Honor Code violation if you do not follow this procedure.

Also, on the bottom of your script, students are required to write the name and phone number of each source interviewed for that story or project. Failure to include sources names and phone numbers will result in a 5-point deduction for that assignment.

GRADING:

You must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in the course. A numerical grade scale will be used on the exams and a letter grade on the paper. Here are the letter equivalents that will be used:

- A = 95-100
- A- = 90-94
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 83-86
- B- = 80-82
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 73-76
- C- = 70-72
- D = 65-69
- F = below 65

Grading breakdown

Class participation/attendance/etc.	10%
Writing quizzes	10%
Project #1	5%
Project #2	10%
Project #3	15%
Project #4	15%
Project #5	20%
Podcast (team)	15%

HONOR CODE:

I expect that all students will conduct themselves 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.

ACCESSIBILITY:

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including academic adjustments, 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 for students are determined through Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.

Please refer to the [ARS Website](#) for contact information 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 – 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:

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 harassment 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.

WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE:

*Please see [UNC academic calendar](#) for the current schedule.

Class No.	Date	Topics Covered	Readings/Assignments (Readings should be complete prior to class on the days listed below)
1	Jan. 9	Course introduction; review objectives and syllabus; course expectations: Adobe Audition	
2	Jan. 11	Guest speaker: Gary Kirk, UNC broadcast engineer, equipment, audio journalism best practices, Adobe Audition important settings	
3	Jan. 18	Discussion: review media ethics; review audio terminology and recorders, how to identify a story, assign Project 1	Kern, Chapter 1 Sound and Stories and Chapter 2 Fairness
4	Jan. 23	Project 1 pitches, Writing for broadcast overview; Review scripts, logs and file management	Kern, Chapter 3 Writing for Broadcast
5	Jan. 25	Reporting	Kern, Chapter 4 Reporting
6	Jan. 30	Field producing	Kern, Chapter 5 Field Producing
7	Feb. 1	Critique Project #1	Project #1 due prior to start of class.
8	Feb. 6	Quiz 1 Story pitches for Project #2 Story editing	Quiz 1 covering Kern chapters 1-5 Kern, Chapter 6 Story Editing
9	Feb. 8	Reporter-host two-way	Kern, Chapter 7 The Reporter-Host Two-Way
10	Feb. 15	Reading on the air	Kern, Chapter 8 Reading on the Air
11	Feb. 20	Critique Project #2	Project #2 due prior to start of class.
12	Feb. 22	Quiz 2 Story pitches for Project #3 Writing the story	Quiz 2 covering Kern chapters 6-8 Wenger, Writing the Story
13	Feb. 27	Storytelling	Wenger, Storytelling Broadcast
14	Mar. 1	Hosting and newscasting	Kern, Chapter 9 Hosting and Chapter 10 Newscasting
15	Mar. 6	Critique Project #3	Project #3 due prior to start of class.
16	Mar. 8	Quiz 3 Story pitches for Project #4 Booking	Quiz 3 covering Wenger and Kern chapters 9-10 Kern, Chapter 11 Booking
17	Mar. 20	Podcast groups assigned Podcast roles, formats and elements	
18	Mar. 22	Producing	Kern, Chapter 12 Producing
19	Mar. 27	Critique Project #4	Project #4 due prior to start of class.
20	Mar. 29	Quiz 4 story pitches for Project #5	Quiz 4 covering Kern chapters 11-12

21	Apr. 3	Production Ethics Designing your podcast	Kern, Chapter 13 Production Ethics
22	Apr. 5	Program producing NPR Project Blueprint	Kern, Chapter 14 Program Producing
23	Apr. 10	Critique Project # 5	Project #5 due prior to start of class.
24	Apr. 12	Quiz 5 Podcasting opportunities	Quiz 5 covering Kern chapters 13-14 Kern, Chapter 18 Beyond Radio
25	Apr. 17	Podcast workshop	
26	Apr. 19	Podcast workshop	
27	Apr. 24	Podcast workshop	
28	Apr. 26	Final thoughts on audio journalism, podcast presentations	Group podcast due prior to start of class
Final exam period	Tuesday, May 2, 8:00 a.m.	Podcast presentations and discussions – attendance required.	

FINAL EXAM:

Tuesday, May 2, 8:00 a.m., Podcast presentations and discussions – attendance required.

SYLLABUS CHANGES:

The instructor 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.