

MEJO 153 Writing and Reporting

Fall 2023

MW 12:30 – 1:45 a.m., CA 142

Instructor: Ryan Thornburg (Office: 215 Carroll Hall)

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Course Overview

A laboratory course that teaches journalistic skills essential to writing across platforms. Practice in using news gathering tools, such as sourcing and interviewing techniques; writing stories, including leads, organization, quotations and data; editing for grammar, punctuation, brevity, style, and accuracy; and critical thinking about news values and audiences.

Required Materials (Updated 8/21)

- The Associated Press Stylebook, 56th Edition. I strongly recommend a one-year, \$29 [subscription to the online version](#) because it is easily searchable.
- The school stylebook is freely accessible at <http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu>
- You will need to read the news daily. You should sign up for free student accounts with [The Washington Post](#) and [The New York Times](#)
- You will need to have an account on [Slack](#) and [AirTable](#) to participate in our daily story sharing assignment.
- We will use a generative AI tool such as [ChatGPT](#) or [Bard](#)
- All undergraduate students, including students enrolled in MJ-school courses, must have a laptop for class use that meets or exceeds Carolina Computing Initiative [minimum specifications](#). Be aware that some computers, such as Chromebooks, do not meet those specs. More information at <https://cci.unc.edu/new-students/mjrecommendation>.

Recommended Resources (Added 8/21)

- [Grammarly for Students](#) (free)
- [AP stylechecking tool, "Lingofy"](#) (Select "I need AP style checking in my web browsers for blog posts, social media updates and more." Cost: \$55.99 per year.)

Late Work: Why I don't accept it

In previous semesters I've accepted late work with a 10% penalty. However, I found that I no longer have time to grade all the late work in a timely fashion and that each semester I have one or more students who asked me to grade and give credit for work they submitted far after final grades had been submitted. Therefore:

- Assignments that are submitted after the deadline but before the final day of classes will be marked as complete and given half credit.
- If you would like substantive feedback from me on a late assignment you hand in during the semester, please make an office hours appointment with me.
- Class assignments not submitted by 11:59 p.m. ET on the day of our final class meeting will receive a 0.
- Final assignments not submitted by the deadline for that assignment may result in [a temporary course grade of "AB"](#).
- I will accept late final assignments until 72 hours before the last day of final exams for the next semester.
- Temporary "AB" grades will convert to permanent "F*" grades on the last day of final exams for the next semester. I will not accept or work or request any course grade changes after the last day of final exams for the next semester.

Determination of Grade

Attendance	10% of the course grade
Daily News Reading (Share a Story)	10%
Warmup Assignments (reading questions, in-class work, practice assignments)	10%
Style presentation	10%
Class Reading Questions	10%
Comprehensive Assignments	50%

Grading Scale

Percentages will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Meaning
A	93–100%	Excellent: Far exceeds standard
A-	90–92%	
B+	87–89%	Good: Exceeds standard
B	83–86%	
B-	80–82%	
C+	77–79%	Fair: Meets standard
C	73–76%	
C-	70–72%	
D+	67–69%	Poor: Shows growth but falls below standard
D	60–66%	
F	0–59%	Failing: Deficient

Grades below a 73% will not be counted in the minimum number of media and journalism credits required for graduation; the course must be retaken if it is required for the major.

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 Associate Julie Dixon-Green, 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.

(source:

<https://ars.unc.edu/faculty-staff/syllabus-statement>)

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

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.

ACCREDITATION:

The 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://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

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, with special emphasis on the last six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

NOTE: Always be professional in your dealings with your fellow workers and the people you meet as you gather news. News directors and editors say they want people with good attitudes as well as solid journalism skills.