

MEJO 523 – News and Production Management

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MEJO 523 CLASS SCHEDULE – FALL 2023

(Wed. sessions at 11:00 in Carroll 041. Friday sessions at 11:00 in Curtis 303.)

Wed, Aug. 23, 11:00–12:15	Course introduction
Fri., Aug. 25, 11:00 – 12:30	Tech talk
Wednesdays, starting Aug. 30, 11:00-12:15	Story meetings
Fri., Sep. 1, 11:00 – 12:30	Discussion: writing for the ear, using sound
Friday, Sep. 8, 11:00 – 12:30	Discussion: voicing, mixing
Fridays, beginning Sep. 15, 11:00 until your story is done	Production session

MEJO 426 is a collaborative class, so in-person attendance is expected. In cases of sickness or emergencies, you may join by Zoom. Please let me know in advance if you need to join remotely.

ZOOM INFO:

<https://unc.zoom.us/j/99185376590?pwd=aC8zRUpGTWpiMDIjd0Vqb3o5L2c2Zz09>

Meeting ID: 991 8537 6590

Passcode: 979979

To join by phone: 16469313860,,99185376590#

“CAROLINA CONNECTION” BROADCAST SCHEDULE

- September 16, 23, 30
- October 7, 14, 28 (No show Oct. 21 – Fall break)
- November 4, 11, 18 (No show Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving)
- December 2

Course goal: MEJO 523 is an advanced radio journalism class for students who have completed MEJO 426. While MEJO 426 students are expected to contribute to the School’s radio newscast, “Carolina Connection,” and to our audio journalism podcasts. MEJO 523 students also are expected to be leaders, managers, and mentors. Our goal is to produce audio journalism content that’s accurate, well-written, well-produced, memorable, and innovative.

Course policies: In MEJO 523, there are no exams, no quizzes, and no textbook. Your grade is based solely on the quality and quantity of work you do for “Carolina Connection” and our podcasts. You should make meaningful contributions each week. Typically, MEJO 523

students serve as producers, anchors, or technical directors for “Carolina Connection” as well as doing some high-level reporting. They may also help create and produce podcasts.

Each new group of MEJO 523 students is empowered to bring their own vision to “Carolina Connection” and our other productions, suggesting changes in format, editorial content, workflow, distribution, or overall sound. As with any journalistic product, “Carolina Connection” must continually evolve to remain relevant, and our student producers are in the best position to lead that evolution.

Deadlines and workflow: As in a professional newsroom, meeting deadlines is essential. Traditionally, our weekly script deadline is Wednesday at 6:00 pm. (The only exception would be if you’re covering an event that takes place Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday.) Late scripts and missed deadlines will affect your course grade.

I must give the script final approval before you can produce the story.

Producers are responsible for compiling a list of stories each week that must be covered even if nobody pitches them – typically spot news or late-developing news and sports. Producers should come to each story meeting with several story ideas to present – or assign – to the group. Producers should be aware of upcoming campus events and ongoing issues, and they should create coverage plans. They should assure through their planning and story assignments that each show they produce has an appropriate mix of news and features.

Producers are expected to produce and record anchor interviews as needed and are also expected to bring their own “voice” to each show they anchor. Anchors are expected to do more than just read story intros; they should serve as the conduit to the audience, leading listeners through the program’s content in a understandable, accessible manner.

Course expectations: Here’s what I’ll be listening for in everything you produce:

- Audio quality: There’s nothing worse than bad audio on the radio or on a podcast. If your listeners can’t understand what they’re hearing, they’ll likely turn it off. Clean, understandable audio is a minimum requirement for all stories. Get to know your equipment, test it before you use it, and promptly report any problems. Wear headphones ALL THE TIME while recording to monitor your sound quality, and check your recording before leaving each location to make sure the quality is acceptable.

Conduct your interviews face-to-face and gather sound and scene for every story.

An important part of journalism is getting out into the community, meeting a diverse group of people, and seeing how they live, work, and play. You’re expected to meet your guests in person for all Interviews on campus and the surrounding area.

Remote interviews (using Zoom, Report-It, the telephone, or other tools) are acceptable only for guests who are outside the immediate campus area.

Set aside enough time to mix your stories! It can take several hours to properly mix a radio story or podcast. All sound should mesh seamlessly, and all edits should be undetectable to the ear.

There's a lot of important information about production matters under the RESOURCES tab on Canvas. You're responsible for reading it (or at least knowing to look there when you need it) and following it.

- **Accuracy:** Our expectation is 100% factual accuracy. You must fact-check every sentence in your story, whether you say it or somebody else does. Factual errors can affect your final grade, and all errors – big and small – must be corrected on the air and on the web as soon as they come to our attention.
- **Clarity:** In addition to being accurate, our stories must be comprehensible. You'll be expected to write in clear, conversational, grammatically correct English. Your delivery should be polished and understandable.
- **Transparency:** Good journalism gives listeners all the information they need to assess the credibility of a story. That means we **fully identify all voices**, attribute our facts to reputable sources, and disclose any potential conflicts of interest (for instance, if the athlete you profile is your sorority sister, or the political science professor you interview is a consultant for a political party). We don't repeat rumors, we confirm information we see on social media or in other media sources, and we don't use anonymous sources except in extremely rare cases. **I must approve the use of any unnamed source.**
- **Diversity:** Your stories should include multiple diverse voices who represent a range of stakeholders in the story. Good journalists make a special effort to include voices from underrepresented parts of society. In addition to holding powerful people accountable, we also give voice to those who have less power and are less frequently heard.
- **Innovation:** Rather than mimicking what you already see and hear on mainstream TV and radio, think about innovative ways to present quality journalism. Can you come up with a better structure for your story than the standard piece? Can you do a story or a podcast as a compelling personal profile? A vibrant audio portrait that lets listeners hear the sounds of an interesting place? Is there a role for reporter involvement? An online component that invites listener participation?
- **Importance:** Carolina Connection strives to tell *important* stories about news events, issues, and lifestyle trends. Our audience includes not only students, but also the North Carolina community as a whole. You should strive to tell stories about vital issues, and identify and analyze trends. One factor in your course grade is whether you take on **challenging, important** stories. Every student is expected to do several stories that involve sources who are not necessarily eager to talk to the media.

- **Participation:** As in a professional newsroom, every student is expected to be an active participant in the news team. That means pitching solid story ideas every week, making yourself available to cover spot news, helping with the Carolina Connection website, and providing content to our broadcast partners if they request it. Unexcused absences – or attending on Zoom without notice or explanation - will affect your course grade.

Honor Code: All students must conduct themselves within the guidelines of the UNC honor system (honor.unc.edu). While this class is more collaborative than some others, you may not represent anybody else's work as your own. **You must never fabricate any aspect of your stories, plagiarize other people's work, or use audio that's not our own (from YouTube or other sources) without proper permission and credit. To do so is an honor code violation.** Always consult with your instructor or a producer before using any audio you did not record yourself!

Diversity and accommodations: UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment and does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please inform me as soon as possible. For more information, visit accessibility.unc.edu.

Accreditation: The School of Media and Journalism'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: www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps. This class teaches students:

- *To write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.*
- *To critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.*
- *To demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;*
- *To think critically, creatively and independently.*
- *To understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press.*
- *To demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.*

Equipment will be issued by the Park Library, beginning approximately January 12. You can make arrangements to pick it up at <https://equipmentroom.mj.unc.edu/>. Instruction manuals are at: <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/equipment-room/instruction-manuals>.

Use of AI tools: You may use AI tools in this class to assist you in making your writing more concise, more clear, and grammatically correct. (Example prompt: “Rewrite this paragraph in active voice with short, clear sentences.”) However, you are personally responsible for all content you turn in. The burden remains on you to assure that AI doesn’t introduce content into your story that’s inaccurate, plagiarized, fabricated, or otherwise violates class or UNC policies.

AI tools should not be used as for primary research and should not be trusted for fact-checking.

AI may NEVER be used to alter audio, photographs or video.