



HUSSMAN SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA

MEJO 153 Writing and Reporting, Spring 2024

Professor Daniel Johnson

Teaching Instructor: Daniel Johnson, dani.john@email.unc.edu (Professor Johnson/Daniel, he/his/him) **Time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30- 4:45 P.M.
Location: Room 141, Carroll Hall / Zoom when applicable
Sections: Section One:
Course website on Canvas: <https://uncch.instructure.com/courses/52548>
Office Hours: Tuesdays: 1:00-3:15 (Carroll Hall Room 368) Thursdays 10:00-12:15 . Or by appointment. [Book time with Johnson, Daniel: Office hours](#)
Course Slack Link: : https://join.slack.com/t/slack-8r1895l/shared_invite/zt-29wtm21jb-283wm1FFMPTDUuK1K~bHSg

General Requirements, Testing and Grading

I. INTRODUCTION

This handout explains expectations of you as a student in MEJO 153, “Writing and Reporting.” The handout also describes the general types of assignments and tests in the course and the criteria instructors will use to evaluate and grade your work.

MEJO 153 concentrates on teaching students how to gather and organize information and how to write news articles, press releases, broadcast scripts and digital stories on deadline according to acceptable professional standards. The course emphasizes respect for and correct use of the language, with particular stress on spelling and grammar, style consistency, accuracy and clear writing. Attention is also paid to bias, libel and ethical considerations. Students will use research and interviewing in their work.

The faculty of the Hussman School of Journalism and Media at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill believes that anyone interested in a career in any communications field must be able to write clear, tight copy with care and precision. The key words for any writing are full, fair and accurate. MEJO 153 is required of all journalism majors, regardless of whether their intended careers are in newspapers, advertising, public relations, electronic communication, strategic communication, visual design, multimedia, social media or other

communications fields. Communicators in all fields report or gather and assess information; consider audiences and language; write copy; and deliver the story or message.

II. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

MEJO 153 abides by standards followed by communications professionals. All graduates of the Hussman School of Journalism and Media are expected to be able to adhere to these standards.

Writing ability — Grammar and spelling; ability to tell a good story well; appropriate use of quotes, anecdotes and descriptive detail; use of active voice and strong verbs; ability to write leads that invite and get to the point; ability to write tightly and organize information in logical, compelling sequences.

Reporting ability — Pursuit, digging, enterprise, diligence; ability and eagerness to see and pursue promising angles; ability to seek and obtain anecdotes, details and quotes that provide documentation and add liveliness to copy; ability to see the need for and to get all sides of the story; ability to cultivate good sources.

Speed, productivity and efficiency— Speed on deadline; speed and efficiency in completing non-deadline assignments; ability and willingness to manage more than one assignment at a time; ability and willingness to make frequent, substantive contributions to the organization.

Accuracy — Skill with basic factual information such as names, addresses, dates and figures; ability to identify and make use of the best sources, whether they are documents, references or people.

Work habits — Punctuality, reliability, readiness to go beyond the minimum requirements of the job; interest in assuming and ability to assume more than minimum responsibility; ability and willingness to anticipate and fulfill the demands of an assignment without prompting; ability to deal even-handedly with peers and supervisors, to accept constructive criticism and to offer constructive suggestions; interest in all areas of the operation; knowledge of community, regional, national and international events; regular and thorough reading of the news.

Judgment — Commitment to fairness and balance; ability to recognize and assess possible adverse consequences of actions; knowledge of, respect for and observance of the organization's policies.

The work accomplished in this writing and reporting course serves as a foundation for students in all subsequent Hussman School classes. At the end of the course, students should be better writers who are able to effectively gather, evaluate, organize, and clearly present information in writing.

NOTE: Although we adhere to professional standards in this course, the stories and releases you write in class should not be posted on the Internet or given to a potential employer as examples of your writing/reporting ability. The exercises are for class use only. In addition, you are expressly forbidden from presenting material that has been substantially edited by a professor as your own work, because that can constitute plagiarism.

Communication— Please put your name and the class you’ re a part of in the subject lines of all emails you send me with questions about the course. This makes it much easier for me to find and respond to your queries. The wait time for a response to your email can be up to (but no longer than) two business days, and I will only check my email on work days during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.)

III. GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Course Materials

1. Required Texts:

- Yopp and McAdams, *Reaching Audiences: A Guide to Media Writing*, Sixth Edition
- *Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, 56 Ed, published in 2022 and available online at <https://www.apstylebook.com>
- *The Hussman School of Media and Journalism Stylebook*, available online at <http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu>
- *Webster's New World Dictionary*

Books are sold in the textbook division of Student Stores, and all reserve reading materials can be accessed online through the course’ s Canvas website.

2.Recommended for Further Readings:

- Kovach, Bill and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*
- Strunk, William Jr. and E.B. White, *Elements of Style*
- Nelson, Dean, *Talk to Me: How to Ask Better Questions, Get Better Answers, and Interview Anyone Like a Pro*

3.Reference Materials

All students have access to online reference materials, such as dictionaries and stylebooks. Use these materials before, after, and during class to double-check accuracy. Many references can also be accessed online. If you are having problems understanding or using reference materials, please contact the Director of the Park Library, librarian Stephanie Willen Brown (swbrown@unc.edu).

4.Computers

Please attend class on a computer or tablet with a keyboard, so that you can type and do assignments during class time. Calling in to Zoom via cell is likely to result in technical difficulties. Please do not do this.

5.Course website on Canvas

This semester, we are piloting Canvas, the backend content management system that will be replacing Sakai at UNC in the coming months. We are piloting together, and will proceed with grace as we all learn how to use the platform. Do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns. The UNC Canvas help webpage is our key resource:

<https://canvas.unc.edu/training/>

B. Course Requirements

1. News Reading. As a journalism student, you are expected to be a regular and critical consumer of news. All Hussman students have access to the Washington Post and the New York Times through the School. Please stay on top of national news. We will discuss news in class and there may be several topical news quizzes sprinkled throughout the semester.

Americans consume news from a variety of sources, including Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, news websites, the radio, and maybe even an old-fashioned television set. In this class, you are expected to be a critical consumer. If you read news critically, you may be circling words, writing notes, highlighting passages, or analyzing how any particular story could be done more effectively.

For commentary on current issues in U.S. journalism, it is useful to read trade periodicals such as the *Columbia Journalism Review* or *Editor & Publisher*. There are also trade publications on public relations, advertising and other communications professions: *Advertising Age*, *Adweek*, *Broadcasting & Cable*, *News Photographer*, *O'Dwyer's PR Report*, and *PRWeek*. Access can be obtained through UNC libraries and the Hussman School's Park Library.

2. Attendance. Attendance will be recorded and is required. Punctuality is essential. In some classes, work in MEJO 153 will be done during class while working individually or in small groups. Make-up work will be accepted only for pre-excused absences at the discretion of the instructor. It is your responsibility to notify your instructor in advance of any intended absence. Should an emergency occur, advise your instructor as soon as possible. All students are required to "sign in" for every single class session. Failing to sign in results in an attendance grade of zero for the day in question.

That said, there is an exception: everyone in this class gets one free pass for a mental health day or other type of unexcused absence. However, any work you miss that day will not be excused for grading purposes.

Zoom Room Policy:

This course is an in-person course, and the Zoom room is open at the courtesy of the instructor. I will not have it open for class sessions unless I am notified. If I do not receive a notification from students by 8 p.m. the night before a class period (and unless it is an absolute medical or family emergency) the **Zoom room will not be open for class periods**. You will be marked absent--the method of instruction

for this class is in person and not hybrid. Zoom room information for class will only be given to those who contact me.

This also goes for exams: if do you reach out to me beforehand at least by 8 p.m. the night before (and not the morning of) with a University Approved reason to be absent or attend on Zoom, you must be present in person. If you are not present (and haven't made arrangements with me previously) you will receive a 0 on that exam grade.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions.

3. Assignments and Deadlines. Weekly assignments will be turned in through the course Canvas site, unless otherwise noted by the instructor in class. All writing assignments must be single-spaced in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font, copyedited and turned in by deadline. Every effort is made to simulate realistic professional conditions in class. Assignments must be submitted in their corresponding assignment field via Canvas. Late work is not accepted. The ability to work to deadline is crucial for journalists. If you fail to submit work by deadline, you will receive an F. Students are responsible for making sure their work is uploaded correctly and completely to Canvas by the deadline. Incomplete and/or blank documents will be treated as late, until the issue is corrected, and will be penalized accordingly. Students are responsible for checking the integrity of their files when uploading them.

Reading assignments should be completed before the appropriate class sessions for which they are assigned. There will be regular quizzes. Failure to take a quiz or hit "submit" on your quiz will result in a grade of 0.

If an exception is made for a late submission, such work will receive a 20% reduced grade. Even if an assignment is excused as late, **no assignment will be accepted later than one week after its deadline.** An assignment that is submitted to Canvas more than 24 hours after its due date will be given a 0 if you do not contact me about needing an extension.

4. Outside Assignments. During the course, you may be expected to gather information and write stories about events outside of regularly scheduled class sessions. I will give you specific guidelines for each of those assignments.

5. Research. Stories, whether news articles or persuasive opinion pieces, are based on facts. You will be required to do research. You can learn what's available to help you in your research by accessing the MEJO 153 resources guide provided by Librarian Stephanie Brown at <https://guides.lib.unc.edu/reporting-news>. To improve your research skills beyond the information in the textbook, Google has two self-paced online courses (Power Searching and Advanced Power Searching) at <http://www.powersearchingwithgoogle.com/>.

Attribution is required for all information acquired and used, whether your source is a human, a guinea pig, or a document. Just kidding, please don't quote any rodents. I'm just checking if you're still reading. Remember what I said about pop quizzes?

6. Honor Code. The University's Honor Code is in effect in MEJO 153 as in all other courses. Information about the Honor Code and System are available here: <https://studentconduct.unc.edu/honor-system/>. 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.

The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://instrument.unc.edu/basicframe.html>. Please review it. You must cite your sources appropriately and according to the assignment. The Code of Student Conduct states that expulsion or suspension can result from “(a)cademic cheating, including (but not limited to) unauthorized copying, collaboration or use of notes or books on examinations, and plagiarism (defined as the intentional representation of another person's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own).” If you have questions about citations or usage in your work, ask.

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 Julie Dixon-Green, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

7. Recordings. At times, this class may be recorded for educational purposes only, and the recordings may only be made available to students enrolled in this class. Any use of a recording of this class by a student shall be for educational purposes only. These recordings will be shared only with students enrolled in the course for purposes of academic instruction only. Your instructor will communicate to you how you may access any available recordings.

Unauthorized student recording of classes on personal devices or on any other format is prohibited. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact Accessibility Resources & Service. Any violation of these prohibitions or restriction on the making, use, copying, or distribution of recording of classes shall constitute an honor code violation.

8. Class format If I need to change the format of the course temporarily due to outbreaks of illness, I will announce this via email and the course Canvas site.

9.Success

Remember these wise words from Al Stewart, a.k.a The Arkansas Kid, a member of The Federation

of Black Cowboys in NYC (you read that right) until his homegoing in 2010.



A proud Army vet and former drill sergeant, one of his favorite sayings was: “Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance.” Don’ t forget the five P’ s!

C. Editing, Format and Style of Writing Assignments

1. Copy Preparation. Please copyedit all stories before turning them in. Copy is evaluated based on whether it would be ready for professional publication according to the grading rubric defined in this syllabus.

2. Copyediting and Style. Editing is part of the writing process. All writers must review their work carefully to check for style, spelling, grammar, punctuation and accuracy. Latest editions of *The UNC-CH Stylebook* and *The Associated Press Stylebook* are the final authorities on style in MEJO 153. *Webster’ s New World Dictionary* is the dictionary on which AP bases its stylebook and should be your reference when either stylebook fails to cover a point in question. If any of the stylebooks are in conflict on a point, use the *UNC-CH Stylebook* first, then the AP, then finally the dictionary. Or, just invent your own language. Just kidding, fake languages are fake news.

You will need to become familiar with both stylebooks. Allow time to make sure your assignments conform to style requirements. This is important: you will lose points on your work if there are deviations from the stylebooks. Think of them as The Rules Of Journalistic Writing. There will be AP style quizzes throughout the semester.

You may find it useful to use Twitter to ask questions about AP style. You can

either tag your post with the #apstyle (See examples here: <http://twitter.com/#search?q=%23apstyle>) and/or send your question to @APStylebook (<http://twitter.com/APStylebook>).

If you are caught copying or plagiarizing, you will automatically fail not one assignment, but the entire course. Please don't do it.

The UNC-CH Stylebook contains a guide to punctuation rules. The Online Writing Lab at Purdue University (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>) and Newsroom 101 (<http://newsroom101.com/>) offer additional grammar help.

IV. TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS — THE COMPONENTS OF GRADES

A. Common Competency Exams

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media administers three exams common to all students in all sections of MEJO 153 to test the students' level of competency at certain points in the course. The week-to-week reading list for the course incorporates the material you will need to have read and the skills you should have acquired by each competency test. Dates for these exams are included on the week-by-week schedule.

The first will test your ability to exercise sound news judgment and to write accurately. You will be asked to write a simple news story from a set of facts. You should apply news values in determining which facts and quotes to use and follow the inverted pyramid style of writing for organization. At that point in the course, you should also be familiar with AP and UNC-CH style. You will also be graded on spelling, punctuation, word usage and grammar.

The second will test your mastery of points and principles covered in assigned readings in *Reaching Audiences*, class lectures and any other material from the instructor. The exam will be another simple news assignment and additional short-answer questions, where you will be expected to be able to discuss correctly identify information discussing libel, ethics in journalism, research strategies and evaluation, interviewing techniques, reporting with numbers, the need for editing standards, broadcast, public relations and digital writing, and the basic principles of good writing.

The third— the final exam — tests your ability to write a news story from your own notes taken from an event or other assignment. You are expected to produce a well-written and well-copied story, applying in practice all the skills and principles you have learned throughout the semester. The date is in the week-by-week schedule.

If you have to miss an exam, it is your responsibility to schedule a make-up exam. You will receive a grade of zero on the exam if you miss it without an excused absence/ advance

notice.

B. Quizzes: Current Events, Language Use, Style

It is essential for communications professionals to be aware of what is happening locally, nationally and abroad. There will be quizzes on current events. Questions are designed to test your broad knowledge of people and events; reading a daily newspaper online or in print will prepare you sufficiently for the quizzes. Remember the five P' s.

Quizzes on subjects such as language use, style, spelling and grammar will be given throughout the course. They will cover certain sections of the *Associated Press Stylebook* or *UNC-CH Stylebook*. All style quizzes are open-book.

C. Written Assignments

MEJ0153 is a laboratory class. You should expect to complete at least one writing assignment in nearly every class session. In some cases, you will have a handout with information from which to write an assignment, or a set of facts will be read to the class. Many of the early assignments in the course will be based on previous Competency One exams to give you practice for the first exam. For almost all assignments, you will have a set amount of time to write and edit your work.

In addition to the in-class writing assignments, you may have out-of-class assignments during the course. Typical assignments would be a person-on-the-street interview based on a current event topic, an interview with a campus newsmaker, an event or a speech. Safety comes first and no one is obligated to do anything face-to-face. Interviews can be conducted via Zoom or phone.

When you are asked to peer edit, you are expected to do so. Your peers are relying on your feedback to help their copy. If you skip peer review, you -- NOT the peer you were supposed to edit/grade-- will get a zero for the assignment.

All written assignments should be properly edited and should follow the guidelines in this syllabus.

D. Usage and Grammar Test

The instructor will schedule the Usage and Grammar Test to be administered in the class. You are required to take the Usage and Grammar Test during the semester in which you are enrolled in 153. Passage of the test with a 70 or higher is required for graduation from the school. Study guides are available at <http://hussman.unc.edu/ugtest>.

Hussman professor Andy Bechtel' s insightful blog commentary on the evolution of this

test can be read here: <https://editdesk.wordpress.com/2012/02/22/spelling-grammar-test/>

Remember the five P' s.

E. Grade Percentages

The aim of the course is to make students competent in the basic writing skills needed for a successful communications career and for further studies in communications. Competency will be tested in the manner described in Part A of this section. Your overall course grade will be based on all class work, including participation; on quizzes; on your scores on the first two competency exams; your score on the final exam; and your participation in weekly discussions.

This is how grades are computed:

30 percent: All in-class work, including but not limited to writing exercises; quizzes, news names and events, language use and other subjects at the instructor's discretion; written stories; participation

5 percent: Attendance.

10 percent: Quizzes, including those on copy editing, AP and UNC-CH style

10 percent:

- **Current Events presentations and Quizzes:** For the identified class sessions, 2 students will present notable news from the at least the past 7 days. The stories must be linked to the Notable News Page on the course Canvas Site by 4 PM the day before class. You must also email the link for that day' s stories to me. You must be prepared to briefly summarize the article aloud in class and discuss what you thought made it notable. Why did you choose this article? What lingering questions did this article raise for you? Were there any sources left out of the article you feel should have been included? Sources that should not have been included?
- Each presenter will have to submit three potential quiz questions based on the article they presented *by 5 p.m the day before their presentation.*
- Only people who are scheduled to present have to create quiz questions. *Everyone* must take the three current event quizzes based off these quiz questions. These quizzes will be due Feb 17, March 22, and April 26.

10 percent: First competency exam on Mar 15. You will be asked to write a simple news story from a set of facts.

10 percent: Second competency exam. On April 11 this exam will be another simple news assignment and additional short-answer questions, where you will be expected to be able to discuss correctly identify information discussing libel, ethics in journalism, research strategies and evaluation, interviewing techniques, reporting with numbers, the need for editing standards, broadcast, public relations and digital writing, and the basic principles of good writing.

10 Percent: Advanced Stories: In March and April, you will report and write two basic news stories outside of class. The first Advanced New Story will be due on March 22nd, and the second one will be due April 12.

15 percent: Third competency exam. By the end of the semester, you will come up with your own story idea, report it and write it on deadline. You will complete a story pitch, a story draft and a final version. The final version will be due date TBD. For your final exam, you will be required to do a 5 minute presentation on your story and turn in the final draft of your assignment. This is the final exam.

V. GRADING

A. Grading Policy

Instructors in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media are known for their high standards and their fair but rigorous grading. The following statement sets forth the School's grading standards, which are followed in evaluating work in all of its writing and reporting courses. Instructors consider each assignment as a professional editor would, applying the same professional guidelines and standards that any good editor would in accepting or rejecting stories from reporters. The grading system here is the basis for other writing courses such as MEJO 253, "Intro to Public Affairs Reporting," and MEJO 332, "Public Relations Writing."

News and other professionals must be able to report and write and produce newsworthy, accurate, fair, complete, interesting, readable and mechanically clean stories. Thus, grades reflect a student's performance as a reporter, as a writer and as one who uses the language correctly. In evaluating the writing, the instructor considers the quality of the lead, use of language, economy of expression, readability, organization of material and transition, among other factors. In evaluating the mechanical dimension, the instructor considers spelling, grammar, punctuation, conformity to AP and UNC-CH style, proper copyediting symbols and similar factors. In evaluating the reporting, the instructor considers news

judgment in gathering, evaluating and selecting information used in the story, accuracy, approach to the story, choice and use of appropriate sources, thoroughness, use of appropriate information-gathering methodologies and related factors.

B. Grading Scale

Grading throughout the semester in MEJO 153 and in other writing and reporting courses in the School is conducted on a numerical scale. Each student begins each assignment with a raw score of 100. Points are added or subtracted from that according to the standards listed below. You may determine your approximate grade standing in the course by converting your numerical grades to letter grades on your assignments according to this scale:

93 and above	= A
90-92.99	= A —
87-89.9	= B+
83-86.9	= B
80 —82.9	= B-
77-79.9	= C+
73-76.9	= C
70 —72.9	= C-
67-69.9	= D+
63-66.9	= D
60 —62.9	= D-
below 60	= F

MEJO majors must receive a C- or better in this course in order to meet the graduation requirement.

If the instructor chooses, grades may be assigned plusses and minuses, using this scale: A numerical grade of 80-82.9 is a B-; 83-86.9 is a B; and 87-89.9 is a B+. The same applies to all letter grades except there is no A+ or D-.

If the instructor chooses, grades may be assigned plusses and minuses, using this scale: A numerical grade of 80-82.9 is a B-; 83-86.9 is a B; and 87-89.9 is a B+. The same applies to all letter grades except there is no A+ or D-.

Under the definitions established by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, students who receive the following letter grades are considered to have reached the level of attainment defining that letter. Thus, letter grades received for reporting and writing courses may be interpreted this way:

A = highest level of attainment / suitable for publication in a professional news

source with minor edits

B = high level of attainment / acceptable work from an undergraduate intern at a professional news organization

C = adequate level of attainment / but not yet appropriate for submission to a professional news source

D = minimal level of attainment

F = failed; unacceptable performance

You are expected to produce acceptable work — at a C level at least. Failure to make a C- means the course must be repeated if it is a requirement for graduation.

The faculty of the Hussman School of Journalism and Media believes strongly that it is absolutely essential for anyone planning a career in mass communication to demonstrate at least minimum competency in MEJO 153. Undergraduate journalism majors must pass the course with a C- to receive credit. Graduate students must earn at least a B-.

C. Evaluation of Writing Assignments

153 instructors devote a great deal of time and effort to evaluating your work. In courses in which students write frequently, instructors try to return graded papers as soon as possible, often before assigning a new writing exercise. Review your papers immediately and thoroughly. It's an important part of your learning. Your instructor turns papers around rapidly in the expectation that you will learn from your errors and avoid repeating them.

Grades are determined by points on each assignment. Points will be deducted for each error and from work that falls below the minimum level of acceptability. It is not uncommon to receive negative number scores on preliminary assignments (-23, -40, etc).

Below is a grading guide to three main areas your instructor will consider in deducting or adding points to your stories. Please note that each error and its category will be noted in the grading of your work with the points deducted. For example: “-2. AP style error. AP style capitalizes references to regions lying on U.S. coastlines.”

1. Writing

In evaluating writing, the instructor considers the quality of the lead, use of language, conciseness, completeness, readability, organization of material and transition, among other factors.

-2 for ineffective or missing treatment of transition or introduction of material

-2 to -10 for ineffective organization or treatment of material, including but not limited to, wordiness; use of jargon or clichés; inclusion of unnecessary, non-newsworthy or obvious

information; repetition; redundancy; inappropriate choice or use of quoted material;
incorrect word choice

-5 to -10 for an ineffective lead that needs work or story that lacks supporting material for a lead

-5 for improper or missing attribution of quotes

-5 for formatting errors such as using double or 1.5 spacing (single-spacing only)

-15 for using the first-person perspective

-15 to -20 for missing the lead entirely or burying it

2.Mechanics

Some otherwise good writers fail to communicate clearly because they are weak in grammar, punctuation or spelling skills. That is unacceptable in any communications profession. Points are deducted for style, spelling, grammar and punctuation errors according to this scale:

-2 for a form error, such as failure to mark a paragraph for indenting or failing to show an end mark at the end of a story

-2 for each error or inconsistency in AP style

-2 for excessively long or complicated sentences or paragraphs

-5 for quotation errors (failing to start a new paragraph with each new speakers, improper quotation marks, etc.)

-5 for each spelling error (note: a typographical mistake/typo is considered a spelling error)

-5 for each punctuation error, such as incorrect use of a comma, semicolon, colon or dash. *This includes misuse of the oxford comma.*

-5 for each grammatical error, such as tense errors, improper subject-verb agreement or noun-pronoun agreement, or misplaced modifier

-10 for a minor factual error, such as an inaccurate street address or the time element if the effect on the story is relatively insignificant

-10 for presenting opinion as fact

-10 for the omission of your byline, a headline, or if you fail to include the word count at the top of your piece

-25 for missing the assigned word count by more than 25 words (over or under)

-50 for a misspelled name of a person, business, agency or institution on first reference, a misquote or other major factual error. Writing the School of Medias and Journalism would be a —50 because there is no “s” on the end of Medias. (Besides, it’s the School of Journalism and Media.) Until the first competency exam in MEJO 153, each major factual error will result in a deduction of 25 points, not 50, from a paper’s total grade. This grace period will allow you to become familiar with standards of verification and accuracy expected of communications professionals. After the first competency exam, such errors will receive the 50- point deduction. This deduction is not an arbitrary punishment. Such errors go to the heart of credibility for you and your organization. Errors can also have serious legal ramifications, such as libel suits.

-15 for misspelling a person's name on second or later references (e.g., Brown on first reference, Brwon on second reference) or for lacking attribution

-100 for failing to participate in assigned peer review, which causes your classmates to miss out on important feedback/edits

3.Reporting

These reporting criteria apply to stories for which you gather the information:

-5 to 10 for source selection — quality and number of sources used; appropriateness of individual sources for the topic, including the level of expertise or authority involved (students could lose points here for relying too heavily on online sources, not having a variety of sources or not including a human source)

-5 to 25 factual errors— misstating of where the event occurred, alleged versus confirmed actions, or misstating of relationships (i.e. stating a person owned a weapon used in a murder when it has not been confirmed that they did)

-5 to 20 for thoroughness of story — existence of loose ends, holes or unanswered questions; development of significant angles; inclusion of needed detail; information to make story fair and complete

-5 to 15 for story backgrounding — research necessary to make the story complete or to provide needed explanations; preparation for interviews or meetings; shows understanding of

the general topic

-20 for legal errors, such as libel, violation of legal right of privacy, copyright violation and others

PLEASE NOTE: Many points may be deducted from the same story for recurring errors.

D. Key to Writing Assignment Comments

As your instructor grades papers, he or she indicates specific observations and problems on the paper. Here are some of the abbreviations commonly used in grading MEJO 153 papers:

ag	= agreement error	AP or UNC	= style error
awk	= awkward phrasing	ce	= copyediting error
gr	= grammatical error	pct	= punctuation error
red	= redundancy	rep	= repetition
sp	= spelling error	tense	= incorrect verb tense
tr	= transition problem		
wc	= incorrect or inappropriate word choice		
wordy	= excessive language that could be tighter		

E. Reviewing and Regrading Assignments

All inquiries into discussing, reviewing, or appealing already graded coursework must be submitted in writing within 7 days of the student's grade being posted. After 7 days, I will not entertain any requests to go over, review, or revise work that has already been graded.

You are responsible for reading my feedback on graded assignments as soon as I return them. If you have questions or concerns about a graded assignment, you are welcome to attend office hours or set up an appointment within 7 days of my returning the assignment.

F. Extra Credit

Extra credit opportunities are given at the discretion of the instructor. When an extra credit assignment is provided, it will be noted as such in the course Canvas page. Extra credit opportunities are one-for-one swaps for assignments in its category. A student who completes a extra credit written assignment will have the score from it replace the *lowest* grade they received in a mandatory written assignment. Extra credit quiz scores will replace the scores in mandatory quiz assignments, and so on.

A student's score will only be replaced if the extra credit score is higher. For mandatory assignments where a student received a 0 (i.e. by not turning them in), ***extra credit***

assignments will only be able to provide at most 60 points, with each point taken off reducing from the 70 starting point. For example, a 90 on an extra credit assignment that replaces the score on an assignment that was originally scored 0 will only give the student a new score of 50 out of 100.

ATTENDANCE:

University Policy on Absences

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).

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!

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!

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem — whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

Diversity and Anti-Racism

The University's "Policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination" is outlined on the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office's webpage (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm/>). 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 Hussman School has adopted diversity and inclusion [mission and vision statements](#) with accompanying goals. These complement the University policy on [prohibiting harassment and discrimination](#).

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. MEJO 153 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

Special Accommodations:

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 the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Department of Disability Services website at 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.

V. WELLNESS

Wellbeing

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.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

The university has a number of counseling services available to students. These include UNC Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) <https://caps.unc.edu>. To reach CAPS, please email caps@unc.edu or call [919- 966-3658](tel:919-966-3658). CAPS is available at all hours 24/7 for urgent concerns. The CAPS office is located in the James A. Taylor Building, 3rd Floor, 320 Emergency Room Drive, CB# 7470, Chapel Hill, NC 27599.

To initiate services with the Hussman Embedded Counselor, Carolyn Ebeling, email them at cebeling@email.unc.edu to schedule. Carolyn meets with students by appointment only and works exclusively with Hussman students. Available services include an initial assessment of needs, individualized planning for reported concerns, initiating engagement in brief therapy,

connection to group therapy services, medication management, and referral coordination. Services are offered both in-person and by telehealth. Same-day, walk-in services are available at CAPS (3rd floor, Campus Health) Monday-Friday, 8AM-5PM.

For crisis or 24/7 support, call CAPS at 919-966-3658 or call/text 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

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>

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.

UNC 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/>.

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:

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

Below is the Week-by-Week guide. Please see the course website in Canvas for additional details.

MEJO 153 Week-by-Week Guide for Fall Semester 2023

I. Weeks 1-8: Competencies

At the end of nine weeks of classes, students should be able to demonstrate the following competencies when writing a news story based on a set of facts:

1. Select appropriate information from a set of facts to write a solid, concise summary lead;
2. Organize the story properly, accurately and completely;
3. Copyedit the story according to AP and UNC-CH style;
4. Intro to writing online;
5. Use proper spelling and grammar;
6. Develop interviewing techniques;
7. Use quotes and attribution appropriately; and
8. Develop basic research skills using the Internet and other resources

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings & Assignments
1	Jan. 11	Introduction; Copyediting; nature of news	Refer to course site in Canvas Course syllabus
2	Jan. 16 Jan. 18	AP Style Leads and story organization First Student Notable News Presentation	Refer to course site in Canvas
3	Jan. 23 Jan 25	Nut Grafts Nut Grafts, Leads, and Story Organization Part 2	Refer to course site in Canvas
4	Jan. 30 Feb. 1	Story Structure Different Story Formats	Refer to course site in Canvas
5	Feb. 6 Feb. 8	Quotes Interviewing	Refer to course site in Canvas
6	Feb. 13 Feb. 15	<i>No class, Well-being Day</i> Objectivity and impartiality Current Event Quiz 1	Refer to course site in Canvas
7	Feb. 20 Feb. 22	Types of libel and how they're defined Libel in the news	Refer to course site in Canvas
8	Feb. 27 Feb. 29	PR Writing, Comp 1 Exam, U&G Prep	Refer to course site in Canvas
9	Mar. 5.	<i>Administer Comp 1 Exam</i>	
9	Mar 7	<i>Usage and Grammar Test</i>	
	<i>Mar. 11-15</i>	<i>No class, Spring Break</i>	

II. Weeks 10-16: Competencies Verification & Fact-checking

At the end of 16 weeks of classes, students should be able to demonstrate the following competencies while conceptualizing, reporting and writing an event-based news story:

1. How to research, organize and write a variety of types and formats of news stories;

2. Techniques of good writing and editing;
3. Intro to public relations writing;
4. Intro to broadcast writing;
5. Ethics;
6. Familiarity with public records and documents.

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings & Assignments
10	Mar. 19 Mar. 21 Mar. 22	Panels & Covering events. Breaking News. First Basic News Story Due. Current Event Quiz 2.	Refer to course site in Canvas
11	Mar. 26 Mar. 28	Establishing Scenes, basic research No class, Well-Being Day	Refer to course site in Canvas
12	Apr. 2 Apr. 4	Verification & Fact-checking Verification & Fact-checking part 2	Refer to course site in Canvas
13	Apr. 9 Apr. 11	Comp 2 review <i>Administer Comp 2 Exam</i> , Second News Story Due.	Refer to course site in Canvas
14	Apr. 16 Apr. 18	Research and Reporting review. Broadcast & radio	Refer to course site in Canvas
15	Apr. 23 Apr. 25	Ethics in Journalism Ethics in Journalism part 2. Final Exam source list and outline due Apr. 26 Current event Quiz 3.	Refer to course site in Canvas
16	Apr. 30	Final exam prep	Refer to course site in Canvas
Final	May 9, 4:00 p.m.	(Competency Exam 3) given in class	