MEJO 153 Writing and Reporting

Spring 2024

TR 9:30 – 10:45 p.m., CA 142

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Office hours: https://calendly.com/rtburg/office-hours

Course Overview

MEJO 153 Writing and Reporting is 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

- The Associated Press Stylebook, 56th Edition. I strongly recommend a one-year, $29 subscription to the online version because it is easily searchable.
- Grammarly for Students (free)
- The school stylebook is freely accessible at http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu
- Axios Raleigh email newsletter
- AP State News on WRAL.com
- AP "The Morning Wire" email newsletter
- 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.

Recommended Resources

- You should sign up for free student accounts with The Washington Post and The New York Times.

Late Work: Why I don't accept it:

I accepted late work with a 10% penalty in previous semesters. However, I found that I no longer have time to promptly grade all the late work. Students asked me to grade and give credit for work they submitted far after I submitted the final grades. Therefore:

- Assignments that students submit 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 work or request any course grade changes after the last day of final exams for the next semester.

Determination of Grade

Assignments will each have a point value. The total points for the semester will be about 1,000.

Attendance	100 points
Weekly News Summaries (15)	150
Warmup Assignments (~ 20)	300 (approx.)
Graded Writing (3)	150
Final Project	300

Grading Scale

Percentages will be converted to letter grades according to the following scale. I do not round final grades.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Meaning
A	94 to 100%	Excellent: Far exceeds standard
A-	90 to < 94%	
B+	87 to < 90%	Good: Exceeds standard
B	84 to < 87%	
B-	80 to < 84%	
C+	77 to < 80%	Fair: Meets standard
C	74 to < 77%	
C-	70 to < 74%	Grades below a 73% will not count for the minimum number of media and journalism credits required for graduation; the course must be retaken if it is required for the major.
D+	67 to < 70%	Poor: Shows growth but falls below standard
D	64 to < 67%	
D-	61 to < 64%	
F	0 to < 61%	Failing: Deficient

HONOR CODE:

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please consult honor.unc.edu.

Use of generative AI tools is permitted in this course. You are responsible for accepting any AI generated suggestions that appears in your final work. Be prepared to explain the choices you've made in your writing.

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.

ARS

Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS – ars@unc.edu) receives requests for accommodations, and through the Student and Applicant Accommodations Policy determines eligibility and identifies reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or chronic medical conditions to mitigate or remove the barriers experienced in accessing University courses, programs and activities.

ARS also offers its Testing Center resources to students and instructors to facilitate the implementation of testing accommodations.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

TITLE IX AND RELATED RESOURCES

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/ or by contacting the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, titleixcoordinator@unc.edu) or the Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu). Confidential resources include Counseling and Psychological Services and the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu). 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, 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 (email reportandresponse@unc.edu or see additional contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office 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.

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.

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.