

MEJO 153: Writing and Reporting

Fall 2024

Mondays and Wednesdays 12:20 – 1:35 p.m., CA 142

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Office hours: <https://calendly.com/rtburg/office-hours-sp24>

Course Overview

MEJO 153: Writing and Reporting is a laboratory course that teaches journalistic skills essential to writing across platforms. Students practice 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

- [Hemingway Editor](#) (free)
- www.m-w.com – This is the dictionary used by the Associated Press and the one that I will use for grading
- The Associated Press Stylebook, 57th Edition. I recommend a one-year, \$29 [subscription to the online version](#) because it is easily searchable. The School's Park Library has a license for [10 students at a time to use the online version for free](#), but you won't be able to use any customization features unless you get your own subscription.
- [School of Journalism and Media stylebook](#)—This covers topics unique to our campus and overrides rules in the AP Stylebook.
- [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](#). 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](#).

University Attendance Policy

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).

Late Work Policy:

- Class 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 the end of our final period 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. Late final exams will have an automatic 20% deduction.
- 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 945.

Attendance	130 points
Weekly News Summaries (15)	150
News Literacy Assignments	120
Grammar Exercises	120
In-Class Writing	160
Outside Candidate Assignments	115
Outside Volleyball Assignments (Final)	150

Grading Scale

I will convert percentages 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%	
D+	67 to < 70%	Grades below 73% will not count for the minimum number of journalism and media credits required for graduation; the course must be retaken if required for the major.
D	64 to < 67%	
D-	61 to < 64%	
F	0 to < 61%	
		Failing: Deficient

Honor Code

- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Conduct Procedures](#)

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

Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to change 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

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 majors and minors. 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 (as long as the student is located in North Carolina at the time of services).

Same-day, walk-in services are available at CAPS (3rd floor, Campus Health) Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

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

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 (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 and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals’ abilities and qualifications. Consistent with these principles and applicable laws, it is therefore the University’s policy not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status as consistent with the [University’s Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct](#). No person, on the basis of protected status, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation under any University program or activity, including with respect to employment terms and conditions. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.”

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 has 11 professional values and competencies you should be aware of and demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: <http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/principles/>

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.