

ENVIRONMENTAL & SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

School of Media and Journalism

MEJO 562, Fall 2017
(cross listed with HPM 552 & HBEH 562)

Thursday, 11:00 a.m. - 1:45 p.m., Carroll Hall 21

<http://www.unc.edu/~trl/syllabi/562.html>

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Course Description and Goals

The purpose of this course is to teach the skills needed to produce a six- to seven-minute television report on an environmental or science topic for broadcast on public television. Each television report will air on "[SciTech Now North Carolina](#)" on statewide public television (UNC-TV).

As a participant in this course, you'll learn the following:

- How to research an environmental and science television report.
- How to field produce an environmental and science television report.
- How to script an environmental and science television report.

[MEJO 252](#) ("Audio Journalism"), [MEJO 560](#) ("Environmental and Science Journalism") and [MEJO 561](#) ("Environmental and Science Video Storytelling") are recommended preparatory courses, but not prerequisites.

Because the course combines broadcast reporting and technical familiarity with scientific and environmental concepts, the learning curve is steep. It's expected that students will spend many hours working on their projects outside class. Since each of you will work on a team, active participation in all aspects of the course is essential. A team member who fails to do his or her job can cause the entire team's project to fail to reach air.

Required Texts

Readings for the course include a primer written by a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist on how to craft a narrative and a textbook on the basics of preparing a television news report. The required texts are the following:

Franklin, Jon. [Writing for Story: Craft Secrets of Dramatic Nonfiction by a Two-Time Pulitzer Prize Winner](#), Plume Books, Reprint edition, ©1988, 288 pp., \$14.00. ISBN: 0-452-272955.

Wenger, Debora and Deborah Potter, [Advancing the Story: Broadcast Journalism in a Multimedia World](#), CQ College Press, Second Edition, 2011, ISBN:

978-1608717149. (Third Edition is also acceptable)

The Wenger & Potter book is especially recommended for students with no experience in broadcast journalism.

Assignments

The keys to a successful environmental and science television news report are solid research and good writing. Good writing requires an understanding of the material and the ability to communicate your ideas simply and clearly.

I expect that you'll meet all deadlines for setting up field shoots, turning in shoot schedules and preparing segment scripts. I also expect that you'll attend all field shoots involving your respective team.

The major focus of the course is production of a six- to seven-minute television report telling a science- or environmental-based story about one or another North Carolina state park.

Each production team will be comprised of a segment producer, one or two associate producers/researchers and a scriptwriter. Dr. Linden will serve as executive producer for all reports. Final script approval of the student-produced segments will rest with Professor Linden in consultation with Frank Graff, managing producer and anchor of UNC-TV's "SciTech Now North Carolina" program.

Exam

There will be no midterm or final exam.

Grading

Your grade will depend upon your classroom participation (20%), contributions to your video team (40%), and the quality of your completed video report (40%).

Classroom participation will be determined by the following (20 points maximum):

- a) Have you done the reading and can clearly communicate lessons learned from the reading?
- b) Have you contributed to class discussions?
- c) Have you attended class regularly and on time? Late arrival to class (even by a few minutes) will be counted as an absence. Consider arriving in class on time a deadline you have to meet. A reporter who misses a deadline is usually a reporter who loses a job.

Contributions to your video team will be determined as follows: (40 points maximum):

- a) Have you kept a **contemporaneous work log** of time spent in all out-of-class, project-related activities? **The log should note the amount of time (by date and in hours) spent each week during the preparation of your video report.** For each entry note the job you performed (e.g., research, telephone pre-interview, scouting trip, etc.) The instructor will ask for the log (no more than one page) to be handed in at the last class session. Please total the number of hours spent on these out-of-class activities on your work log. You **cannot** pass the course unless you turn in your work log in a timely manner.

- b) How have you collaborated with your team members? Keep in mind that

succeeding in the television and documentary work requires teamwork.

c) What's the quality of your individual contribution whether as producer, associate producer or scriptwriter?

d) Have you completed your team responsibilities in a timely manner? Remember that I expect professional broadcast standards of promptness and preparation during every phase of the project. In broadcast journalism, one team member failing to deliver at any point in the production process can affect many people, including your team, other teams and sources who are taking time away from busy schedules to accommodate you.

The quality of your completed video report will be based on the following (40 points maximum):

a) Does the story have a strong focus?

b) Is the story compelling?

c) Are the environmental science lessons accurate and explained in a way that a non-scientist can easily understand?

d) Are there a variety of knowledgeable sources?

e) Are appropriate archival materials included (e.g., photos, videos, recordings, art)? Have you received written permission for use of any copyrighted material?

f) Was the story adequately fact checked?

g) Is there a human interest angle?

If you're concerned about your performance or your grade in the course, talk with the instructor at any point during the semester. Dr. Linden will provide feedback upon request.

Grading Scale (for undergraduates)

98 - 100 A+

94 - 97 A

91 - 93 A-

88 - 90 B+

84 - 87 B

81 - 83 B-

78 - 80 C+

74 - 77 C

71 - 73 C-

68 - 70 D+

64 - 67 D

61 - 63 D-

60 and below F

Grading Scale (for graduate students)

93 - 100 Honors

74 - 92 Pass

61 - 73 Low Pass

60 and below F

After one unexcused absence, each absence will result in a drop of one letter grade in the course. This is an upper division/graduate-level seminar, and your presence and contribution are essential. You **cannot** pass this course with more than two unexcused absences.

How To Succeed in This Course

- Attend all classes *on time*. Remember late arrival to class (even by a few

minutes) is counted as an absence.

- Complete readings *before* the appropriate classroom discussions.
- *Participate* actively in class.
- *Complete* all work responsibilities by your deadline(s).
- Work *cooperatively* with your team members.
- Make sure all facts in your stories are accurate and sourced.
- *Ask* Dr. Linden *questions* either during class or during office hours if you're unclear about any aspect of this course or your job responsibilities.

Student Job Descriptions

Producer: The producer is the person ultimately responsible for coordinating all research related to the report and lining up all people and locales featured in the report. In consultation with his/her team and with Dr. Linden, the producer determines the focus of the report. The producer, together with the associate producers and scriptwriter, also scouts field locations and provides preliminary and final shoot schedules to Dr. Linden by the required deadlines. As producer, you'll succeed by delegating responsibilities and making sure that all responsibilities are completed in a timely manner. Remember that throughout the entire project, up to and including the shoot, the "buck" stops with the producer.

Associate Producer/Researcher: The associate producer/researchers are responsible for carrying out all jobs assigned by the producer. Those jobs include (but are not limited to) performing research, scouting field locations, and pre-interviewing people featured in the report. When the producer is unable to fulfill his/her responsibilities, the associate producers may be asked by Dr. Linden to fill in as required.

Scriptwriter: The scriptwriter's main responsibility prior to the shoot is to provide the team with working scripts by the required deadlines. After the field shoots are completed, primary responsibility on the team shifts from the producer/associate producers to the scriptwriter. As scriptwriter, you'll complete several drafts of the script that you'll vet first with members of your team and then with Dr. Linden. In team disputes about the content and/or style of the script, the scriptwriter has the final say. If a team member believes that there is a factual or content error that can't be reconciled by the scriptwriter, that team member should contact Prof. Linden.

All team members: Each team member will pre-interview at least one person featured on camera and will conduct the actual field interview of that person. If you're unsure how to find and contact sources, please talk with Dr. Linden who will help you. Team members will **share** in tape logging, a laborious process but critical to the shaping of the script and the eventual video editing of the report. (Logging must be completed by the designated deadlines as late logging will delay the scriptwriter in meeting his/her deadlines.) All team members will participate in the script review process and in the final video editing sessions that take place at UNC-TV in Research Triangle Park.

Selection of job responsibilities: Dr. Linden will determine your particular team role (producer, associate producer, or scriptwriter). He'll solicit your preference prior to making his assignments.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1 - AUG. 24: INTRODUCTION TO SCIENCE DOCUMENTARY TELEVISION

- * Turn in Student Data Sheet that was emailed to you.
- * Get acquainted with the class project.
- * View previous episodes on North Carolina State Parks produced by last year's teams. Most of the pieces are available for viewing at:
<http://mj.unc.edu/academics/special-programs/medical-science-journalism-program/medical-and-science-journalism-tv>
- * Review fundamentals of writing news for broadcast television.

Assignment for next class:

Email to Dr. Linden by Thursday, August 24, 6 p.m., your rankings for job assignments (producer, associate producer, and scriptwriter) and also note whether you'd be *unable* to attend any one of the three field shoot dates of Oct. 5-6, Oct. 12-13, or Nov. 2-3. Please note that two or all three of the field shoots will involve overnight travel. If you have not handed in your Student Data Sheet at the first class, please attach that document along with your preferences for job assignments. (You'll find the template for the Student Data Sheet in the Resources folder of [Sakai](#)).

After I receive your job preferences, either on Thursday evening, August 24, or Friday, August 25, I'll email class members your team assignments (including your individual job assignment) and your story focus.

After you receive your team assignment, please meet (preferably, in person) with your team members to talk about your story. By 6 p.m., Wednesday, August 30, the scriptwriter for each team -- in consultation with your team members -- should email Prof. Linden your story pitch. That pitch should run no more than 150 words. Below the pitch summary, list at least three and no more than five possible on-camera sources. For each source include job title, telephone number, and email address. Also, suggest B-roll (no more than five shots) that you anticipate could visually tell your story.

Reading for next class:

Linden, Tom. "Medical Reporting for the Electronic Media," in Barbara Gastel's Health Writer's Handbook (Second Edition), Ch. 9, pp. 161 - 183. (Reading available in Resources folder of [Sakai](#)).

Wenger & Potter, Chapters 2, 4 and 5.

Viewing for next class:

Watch "SciTech Now" on UNC-TV. Program airs Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. Consult your local television guide for the cable channel. Over-the-air digital broadcast channel is 4.1. Multiple past episodes reside at <http://video.unctv.org/show/scitech-now-north-carolina/>

WEEK 2 - AUG. 31: VISIT WITH N.C. STATE PARKS DIRECTOR AND PROGRAM MANAGER (11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.); PRIMER ON SCRIPTWRITING

Guest speakers: [Mike Murphy](#), director, North Carolina State Parks and Recreation, and Jon Blanchard, program manager, [N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation](#)

- * Review basics of scriptwriting as outlined in Linden chapter.

* Review chapters 2, 4 and 5 from Wenger & Potter text.

Assignment for next class:

View past episodes of SciTech Now at <http://video.unctv.org/show/scitech-now-north-carolina/>

Each team should work on its 100-150 word pitch to be presented in class Thursday, Sept. 7, to Rachel Raney, UNC-TV's director of original content, and Frank Graff, managing producer and anchor/reporter for "SciTech Now." Please include suggested sources (including their titles, affiliations and contact info), and suggested B-roll and other desired visuals (e.g., animation or graphics). Please note that the latter items were not requested on the first pitch that you delivered last week.

I'd also like to meet with each team for 30 minutes on Tuesday, Sept. 5. "A" Team, 11:30 a.m., "B" Team, 12 noon, and "C" Team, 12:30 p.m.

Lastly, I'd like to receive via email by 8 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 6, your pitch sheet that you'll bring to class on Thursday. Please remember to bring 12 copies with you to class (enough for all class members, me, and our two guests from UNC-TV).

Reading/Viewing for next class:

Franklin: Writing for Story Preface (pp. xv - xix), Chapters I through VII (pp. 21-166), Appendix A (pp. 216-235).

WEEK 3 - SEPT. 7: NARRATIVE JOURNALISM / REVIEW OF SCRIPTWRITING/ STORY SEGMENT TOPIC DISCUSSION

* Guest speakers: Rachel Raney, UNC-TV director of original content, and [Frank Graff](#), UNC-TV SciTech Now producer, reporter and anchor

* Discuss Franklin narrative journalism formula as explain in his assigned book.

* Watch previous science documentary television pieces on UNC-TV.

Assignment for next class:

Contact all possible sources by phone to gather information and to determine your final list of on-air interviewees. Start planning for your scouting trip. Refine your pitch and storyline incorporating the latest information obtained from your phone interviews. Watch **SEVERAL** episodes of [SciTech Now](#) on the UNC-TV website.

WEEK 4 - SEPT. 14: SETTING UP THE FIELD SHOTS

* Tips on how to set up field shoots.

* Tips on how to select appropriate B-roll.

* Learn what's required for logging your tapes.

Assignment for next class:

Prepare **first 60 seconds** of your working script (that includes 20-second anchor intro and the first 40 seconds of your story). **Scriptwriters** should bring 11 hard copies of your script to the next class. **Producers** should upload your shoot schedule to Sakai->Forums->Shoot Schedules by Wednesday, Sept. 20, at 8 p.m. During class next week we'll go over the hard copies of the script with Bob Gunter, our UNC-TV videographer. We'll then review your

shoot schedules with Bob as well. Lastly, if you haven't done so already, please plan for your scouting trip, as soon as possible for A and B teams. C team has a little extra time to scout their field locations.

WEEK 5 - SEPT. 21: DISCUSSION OF FIELD SHOOTS

Guest speaker: Bob Gunter, UNC-TV videographer/editor

- * Refine field shoots.
- * Confirm interviews with experts and other interview subjects.
- * Nail down ideas for B-roll.
- * Tips from Bob Gunter on what to look for when you scout your field locations.

Assignment for next class:

Pre-interviews of subjects should be completed before your next class. All teams should have finished scouting their field locations. **Scriptwriters** should bring 10 copies of your working script to the next class. **Producers** should upload your final shoot schedule to Sakai->Forums->Shoot Schedules by 6 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 27. **THIS IS A HARD DEADLINE.**

WEEK 6 - SEPT. 28: FINALIZE SHOOTING SCHEDULES

- * Review shoot schedules and working scripts for all teams in class.

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Finish pre-interviews of subjects. **"A" team scriptwriter** should email first 60 seconds of working script to team members and to Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 2, at 12 noon. **"A" team producer** should email **final** shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden, and UNC-TV videographer Bob Gunter by Monday, Oct. 2, at 12 noon. Be sure to let Dr. Linden know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) at the time you send your final shoot schedule so he can notify our UNC-TV videographer. Also be sure to append at the end of the shoot schedule your checklist of b-roll and nat sound that you want to capture during your shoot. Please itemize EVERY shot you think would be absolutely necessary to *visually* tell your story.

WEEK 7 - NO CLASS - A Team Field Shoot - OCT. 5 (Thursday) & OCT. 6 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Log all B-roll and interviews from field shoot after video with burned-in time code is uploaded by Bob Gunter to YouTube. Please finish transcribed log by Thursday, Oct. 12 and email MS Word copy of the log to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by 6 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 28 and email script in MS Word to Dr. Linden.

B Team - Finish pre-interviews of subjects. **"B" team scriptwriter** should email first 60 seconds of working script to team members and to Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 9, at 12 noon. **"B" team producer** should email **final** shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden, and UNC-TV videographer Bob Gunter by Monday, Oct. 9, at 12 noon. Be sure to let Dr. Linden know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) at the time you send your final shoot schedule so he can notify our UNC-TV videographer. Also be sure to append at the end of the shoot schedule your checklist of b-roll and nat sound that you want to capture during your shoot. Please itemize EVERY shot

you think would be absolutely necessary to *visually* tell your story.

WEEK 8 - NO CLASS - B Team Field Shoot - OCT. 12 (Thursday) & OCT. 13 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

B Team - Log all B-roll and interviews from field shoot after video with burned-in time code is uploaded by Bob Gunter to YouTube. Please finish transcribed log by Thursday, Oct. 19 and email MS Word copy of compiled log to Dr. Linden. Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by 6 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 28 and email script in MS Word to Dr. Linden.

C Team - Finish pre-interviews of subjects. "**C**" **team scriptwriter** should email first 60 seconds of working script to team members and to Dr. Linden by Monday, Oct. 30, at 12 noon. "**C**" **team producer** should email **final** shoot schedule to team members, Dr. Linden, and UNC-TV videographer Bob Gunter by Monday, Oct. 30, at 12 noon. Be sure to let Dr. Linden know of any special videography needs (special lighting, audio, etc.) at the time you send your final shoot schedule so he can notify our UNC-TV videographer. Also be sure to append at the end of the shoot schedule your checklist of b-roll and nat sound that you want to capture during your shoot. Please itemize EVERY shot you think would be absolutely necessary to *visually* tell your story.

WEEK 9 - FALL SEMESTER BREAK, NO CLASS OCT. 19

WEEK 10 - NO CLASS OCT. 26 (Prof. Linden at World Conference of Science Journalists)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by Saturday, Oct. 28 and email script in MS Word to Dr. Linden.

B Team - Scriptwriter, please complete first post-shoot script by Saturday, Oct. 28 and email script in MS Word to Dr. Linden.

WEEK 11 - NO CLASS - C Team Field Shoot - NOV. 2 (Thursday) & NOV. 3 (Friday)

Assignment for next class:

A Team - Second draft of script and completed tape log due Saturday, Nov. 4 by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Monday, Nov. 6 by 9 p.m.

B Team - Second draft of script and complete tape log due Saturday, Nov. 4 by 6 p.m., via email to Dr. Linden who will return corrections of script to scriptwriter by Monday, Nov. 6 by 10 p.m.

C Team - Complete tape log due 48 hours after you receive via YouTube the burned-in, time-coded field video from Bob Gunter. At that time please email tape log to Dr. Linden. One week after you receive the time-coded tape log (but no later than 6 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 11, scriptwriter should email Dr. Linden a copy of the C Team script.

WEEK 12 - NOV. 9: FIRST SCRIPT CONFERENCE (Frank Graff, guest critiquer, unconfirmed)

Assignment for next class:

"A" and "B" Teams - Please email revised drafts of your scripts to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 12. Dr. Linden will email scriptwriters his revisions by 8 p.m., Wed., Nov. 15. Scriptwriters will then bring revised copies of scripts (based on Linden corrections) to second and final script conference in class on Nov. 16. Please bring enough 11 copies of script to second and final script conference next week. Also, please remember to continue compiling your weekly work log due in class on December 6. Failure to turn in a daily work log for the semester will result in an *incomplete* grade in the course. On the work log, please total the number of hours worked out-of-class for the entire semester. See the "Grading" section earlier in the syllabus for details.

"C" Team - Please email revised draft of your script to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 11. Dr. Linden will return his edits to you by 6 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 14. Please revise that edited script and email revised script to Dr. Linden by Wednesday, Nov. 15, at 6 p.m. Please bring enough 11 copies of script to second and final script conference next week.

WEEK 13 - NOV. 16: SECOND SCRIPT CONFERENCE (Helen Chickering, guest critiquer, unconfirmed)

Assignment for next class:

ALL Teams - Please email revised drafts of scripts (based on comments and revisions in second script conference) to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 26. Be sure you DOUBLE CHECK all time codes for every piece of audio and video before you email Dr. Linden your final scripts. Also, include the two factoid items that Frank Graff requested to run at the end of your pieces. Please cite the source for each of those items in your final script. Also, each team should email to Dr. Linden by 6 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 26, a schedule detailing which team members will be at UNC-TV for which hours on your respective edit dates (see below).

WEEK 14 - NOV. 23: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY), BUT ALL-DAY EDITING SESSIONS at UNC-TV AS FOLLOWS:

A Team edit - Thursday, Nov. 30, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

B Team edit - Friday, Dec. 1, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

C Team edit - Thursday, Dec. 7, start time: 9:30 a.m., UNC-TV. Click [here](#) for directions.

Assignment: IMPORTANT! Please email to Dr. Linden by Wednesday, Dec. 6, your work log detailing the number of project hours worked out of class per week throughout the semester and the jobs that you performed during those hours. If you do not fulfill this final assignment, you will receive an *incomplete* grade in the course. Please see the "Grading" section earlier in the syllabus for details.

FINAL WEEK - Saturday, Dec. 9, catered dinner viewing party at 6:30 p.m. at Dr. Linden's house. Please RSVP via email by Friday, Dec. 1.

The 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 Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

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

The School of Media and Journalism adopted Diversity and Inclusion Mission and Vision statements in spring 2016 with accompanying goals - <http://www.mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion>.

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 based on age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Special Accommodations

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 Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

Professional Values and Competencies

Among the many skills students will learn in this course, it's expected they will be able to fulfill the following values and competencies as enumerated by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication:

- 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 basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

-- syllabus revised August 18, 2017