

COURSE: JOMC 157 (News Editing)
TERM: Fall 2015
PLACE: Room 58
TIME: 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Monday-Wednesday

INSTRUCTOR: Andy Bechtel
EMAIL: abechtel@email.unc.edu
OFFICE HOURS, 213 CARROLL: Tuesday/Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon
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ABOUT THE COURSE

OVERVIEW: Welcome to JOMC 157. In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of editing for print and digital media. We'll talk about the little stuff such as commas and the big stuff such as what goes on the front page of a newspaper and what photo to run as our website's centerpiece. You will learn how to edit news stories and how to write photo captions, tweets and headlines. We'll do a bit of print design, too. You'll become an expert in AP style and gain an appreciation for accuracy of information and fairness in language for print and digital media. The goal is to help you become a better communicator, for your career and for your life.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Working With Words, Eighth Edition. The Associated Press Stylebook, 2014 edition. Stylebook of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (available online at jomc.unc.edu/stylebook).

RECOMMENDED TEXTS: Editors know what's in the news. You should read a daily newspaper (either in print or online) such as The News & Observer, The New York Times or the Herald-Sun as well as The Daily Tar Heel.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: You must adhere to the University's honor code. Some assignments will be collaborative, but in general, there should be no sharing of information while you are working on assignments.

ATTENDANCE: It's crucial. So is punctuality. If you miss an assignment because you are late, you may not make it up. If you miss class, you may make up assignments only if you provide documentation of illness or other cause for your absence. If you cannot attend class because of a University-related trip, please let me know ahead of time so we can make arrangements.

ETIQUETTE: Be ready to participate in class discussions and class exercises. Please turn off ringers on cell phones at the start of class. Please refrain from texting, tweeting and checking email and Facebook during class. You may leave the room to take a break at any time; as a class, we'll also take a few minutes off midway through many class meetings.

ASSIGNMENTS: Most of the work in this class will be what you would do at a news organization: editing stories, writing headlines, etc. You will also take a series of quizzes on AP style, current events and names in the news. The one out-of-class assignment will be a design critique of a daily newspaper.

GRADING: Your assignments will be graded on a point system. The more important the assignment, the more it's worth. For example, an AP style quiz is worth 50 points. The final exam will be worth 200 points. In the end, I will divide the number of points you earned by the total possible points (typically about 1,600) and use the following scale to calculate your grade:

90-100: A
80-89: B
70-79: C
60-69: D
59 or less: F

BONUS ROUND: You can get extra credit by bringing in an error in a print publication and explaining how you would repair it. To cash in on this offer, turn in the error with a brief written explanation. Describe the mistake and how you would fix it. Examples of errors: a misspelled headline, a math error, a misplaced comma or bad word choice.

You may get extra credit for up to four such mistakes. Each one is worth five points. I may ask you to share some of your more interesting finds with the rest of the class. Professionally produced print publications such as daily newspapers, magazines, menus, textbooks are fair game. So is this syllabus. Student publications, fliers stuck on telephone poles and online media are not. I am the final arbiter of what counts and what doesn't.

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND: I am a journalist with more than 10 years of newspaper experience. My first job was as a copy editor and page designer at the News & Record in Greensboro. The bulk of my experience is at The News & Observer, where I worked in sports, at the newspaper's Chapel Hill bureau and as the lead editor on the Nation & World desk. I was an "intern" in the summer of 2008, working as an editor at the website of the Los Angeles Times.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: My goal is to give you skills that will benefit you personally and professionally. I want to help you succeed in whatever area of journalism interests you, and I am happy to help you with career advice, internships, etc.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, Jan. 7

Topic: Introductions.

Monday, Jan. 12

Topics: What editors do in print and online; getting down to basics.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 1, 2 and 9.

Assignment: Punctuation exercise.

Wednesday, Jan. 14

Topics: Eliminating redundancy, misspellings and other miscues.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 8, 10 and 12. AP Stylebook A-E.

Assignments: AP style quiz, A-E; conciseness/editing exercise.

Monday, Jan. 19

No class; MLK Day.

Wednesday, Jan 21

Topics: Editing for sense and impact; dealing with names, titles and quotes.

Readings: AP Stylebook, F-M. Working with Words, Chapters 3-7.

Assignments: AP style quiz, F-M; editing exercise.

Monday, Jan. 26

Topic: Story editing and adding hyperlinks.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 11, 14, 16.

Assignment: Editing a news story.

Wednesday, Jan. 28

Topics: Watching out for bias and avoiding stereotypes.

Readings: AP stylebook, N-R. Working with Words, Chapter 13.

Assignments: Style quiz, N-R; settling a style question.

Monday, Feb. 2

Topics: Editing for accuracy and credibility; checking facts, maps and charts.

Assignments: Fact-check exercise; editing news graphics.

Wednesday, Feb. 4

Topic: The law and editing.

Reading: Briefing on media law in AP Stylebook. AP Stylebook, S-Z.

Assignments: Libel exercise; style quiz, S-Z.

Monday, Feb. 9

Topic: Editing with InDesign/InCopy.

Readings: Blue Pages guide in Sakai.

Assignment: Editing a story in InCopy.

Wednesday, Feb. 11

Topics: Bringing it all together: style, accuracy and fairness.

Readings: Local stylebook, pages 2-18.

Assignments: Quiz on local stylebook; story-editing exercise.

Monday, Feb. 16

Topic: Exploring alternative story forms.

Assignment: Editing exercise.

Wednesday, Feb. 18

Topic: Editing online.

Assignment: Editing a news story and adding links in WordPress.

Monday, Feb. 23

Topic: Headline writing.

Reading: <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/140675/10-questions-to-help-you-write-better-headlines/>

Assignment: Headline exercise.

Wednesday, Feb. 25

Topic: More headlines.

Assignment: Headline/editing exercise.

Monday, March 2

Topic: Adding dropheads and writing multiple-line headlines.

Assignments: Headline/editing exercise.

Wednesday, March 4

Topic: More headlines.

Assignment: Headline blitz!

Monday, March 16

Topic: Headlines for digital media.

Assignment: Writing headlines for digital media.

Wednesday, March 18

Assignment: Headline writing/story editing in WordPress.

Monday, March 23

Topic: Editing and Twitter.

Assignment: Writing tweets.

Wednesday, March 25

Topic: Photos and captions.

Reading: <http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/1753/hot-tips-for-writing-photo-captions/>

Assignment: Caption-writing exercise.

Monday, March 30

Topic: Layering information in print — headline, image and words.

Assignment: Story package in InDesign/InCopy.

Wednesday, April 1

Topic: Layering information online — headline, image and words.

Assignment: Story package in WordPress.

Monday, April 6

Topic: Editing and print design.

Assignment: Newspaper critique.

Wednesday, April 8

Topic: More on layout.

Assignment: Putting together a page.

Monday, April 13

Topic: Slideshows/photo galleries.

Assignment: Putting together a slideshow using Soundslides.

Wednesday, April 15

Topic: Working on newspaper critiques.

Assignment: Open lab.

Monday, April 20

Topics: Presentation of critiques; review for exam.

Assignment: Layout critique due.

Wednesday, April 22

Assignment: Final exam.

Guidelines for grading your story editing

Misspelled proper name: -50

Missing first reference: -15

Other fact error: -25

Misspelled word: -10

Style error: -5

Garble: -5

Punctuation error: -3 to -5

Grammar error: -5

Redundancy: -5

Other offense: -3 to -25

Point bonuses

On some assignments, you can get points by performing heroic acts of editing. These may include breaking a long sentence into two sentences, tightening wordy copy and improving the structure of a story.

Guidelines for grading your headlines and captions

Headlines and captions are worth 25 points each. Here's how the grading works:

25: Shows unusual flair and cleverness. Represents the story or photo clearly and forcefully. A caption or headline that's truly exemplary.

23: Solid and publishable. Reflects the story or photo and attracts reader interest.

21: Usable but lacks precision and action.

18: Vague or difficult to understand, or has structural problems that hinder comprehension.

15: Contains a major flaw. Fails to use key words that reflect the news or misses the major angle of the story. Contains a punctuation error, such as use of a semicolon where a comma is needed. Has unintended double meanings.

0: Contains an obvious grammar error, such as subject-verb disagreement. Has a misspelled name, fact error or libelous content.

Core values and competencies

This course covers the following competencies required by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- 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;
- 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.