

COURSE: JOMC 157 (News Editing)
TERM: Fall 2015
PLACE: Room 58
INSTRUCTOR: Denny McAuliffe
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OFFICE HOURS, 261 CARROLL: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.,
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ABOUT THE COURSE

OVERVIEW: In JOMC 157, 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 home page of a Web site or the front page of a newspaper and what photos to use as centerpieces of both. You will learn how to edit news stories and how to write photo captions, tweets (for work, not for fun) and headlines, headlines and more 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 – and perhaps even a copy editor!

REQUIRED TEXTS: Working With Words, Eighth Edition. The Associated Press Stylebook, 2015 edition. Stylebook of the School of Media and Journalism (available at <http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu/>).

RECOMMENDED READING: Editors know what's in the news. Read The Washington Post, since your instructor works there (free digital access with an .edu email address). To round out your news consumption, be sure to read locally grown print or digital editions of The News & Observer and 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 cellphones at the start of class. Please refrain from texting, tweeting, Facebooking, shopping or emailing on your cellphones, tablets or computers 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 in a newsroom: editing stories, writing headlines, (work-related) tweeting, etc. You will also take 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 20 points (one for each question). The final exam will be worth 100 points. In keeping with the instructor's philosophy that we should be smarter today than we were yesterday, grades in the second half of the course are worth double those of the first half – that's not the same as saying that first-half grades don't count. This will also soften the shock and awe of what may be low grades in the first half, as you wrestle with grammar, adapt to the preciseness required of a copy editor and start getting the hang of headline writing. In the end, I will divide the number of points you earned by the total possible points 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 on a news Web site or in a print publication (only publications produced by pros, not by students) and explaining how to fix it. Examples of errors: a misspelled headline, a mistake-filled blurb, a math error, awful copy editing. You may get extra credit for up to five such mistakes. Each one is worth two points.

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND: I've been an editor at The Washington Post for more than 20 years, mostly as night editor for the Foreign and Financial desks. I now work remotely on the news and Editorial copy desks. I taught for 11 years at the University of Montana School of Journalism, where I created and directed a training and mentoring Web site called reznit for Native American college students around the country, many attending tribal and other colleges that lacked journalism courses or even school papers.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY: My goal is to get you to do my job! I also hope to give you writing and editing skills that will benefit you personally and professionally. I want to help you succeed in whatever area of journalism interests you, and I will be relentless in encouraging you to pursue internships and other journalism opportunities as soon as you can. To that end, a course requirement is periodic, mandatory one-on-one meetings with me before or after class.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

[Note: The course schedule follows that of JOMC 157 sections taught by Prof. Andy Bechtel. I have adopted his syllabus with his permission.]

Tuesday, Aug. 18

Topic: Introductions.

Thursday, Aug. 20

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

Reading: Working With Words, Chapters 1, 2, 9. Punctuation guide, AP Stylebook.

Assignment: Punctuation exercise.

Tuesday, Aug. 25

Topics: Eliminating redundancy, misspellings and other miscues.

Readings: Working With Words, Chapters 8, 10 and 12. AP Stylebook, A-D.

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

Thursday, Aug. 27

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

Readings: Working With Words, Chapters 3-7. AP Stylebook, E-H.

Assignment: AP style quiz, A-H.

Tuesday, Sept. 1

Topic: Story editing.

Readings: Working With Words, Chapters 11, 14, 16. AP Stylebook, I-O.

Assignment: Editing a news story. AP style quiz, I-O.

Thursday, Sept. 3

Topics: Watching out for bias and avoiding stereotypes.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapter 13. AP Stylebook, P-W.

Assignments: AP style quiz, P-W; settling a style question.

Tuesday, Sept. 8

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

Reading: AP Stylebook, V-Z.

Assignments: Fact-check exercise; editing news graphics. AP style quiz, V-Z.

Thursday, Sept. 10

Topic: The law and editing.

Reading: Media law guide in AP Stylebook.

Assignments: Libel exercise.

Tuesday, Sept. 15

Topic: Editing with InDesign/InCopy.

Assignment: Editing a story in InCopy.

Thursday, Sept. 17

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

Readings: Local stylebook. <http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu/>

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

Tuesday, Sept. 22

Topic: Editing and Twitter.

Assignment: Writing tweets.

Thursday, Sept. 24

Topic: Headline writing.

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

Assignment: Headline/editing exercise.

Tuesday, Sept. 29 (First Amendment Day)

Topic: More headlines.

Assignment: Headline/editing exercise.

Thursday, Oct. 1

Topic: Curating and editing with Storify.

Assignment: Building a Storify page about First Amendment Day.

Tuesday, Oct. 6

Topic: Social headlines and Hipchat.

Assignment: Headline/Hipchat exercise.

Thursday, Oct. 8

Topic: Adding dropheads and writing multiple-line headlines.

Assignments: Headline/editing exercise.

Tuesday, Oct. 13

Topic: Digital editing.

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

Thursday, Oct. 15

No class; Fall Break.

Tuesday, Oct. 20

Topic: Headlines for digital media.

Assignment: Writing digital headlines.

Thursday, Oct. 22

Topic: Trimming stories for length.

Assignment: Compiling a news digest from wires.

Tuesday, Oct. 27

Topic: Exploring alternative story forms.
Assignment: Editing exercise.

Thursday, Oct. 29

Topic: Photos and captions.
Reading: <http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/1753/hot-tips-for-writing-photo-captions/>
Assignment: Caption-writing exercise.

Tuesday, Nov. 3

Topic: Layering information in print —headline, image and words.
Assignment: Story package in InDesign/InCopy.

Thursday, Nov. 5

Topic: Layering information online —headline, image and words.
Assignment: Story package in WordPress.

Tuesday, Nov. 10

Topic: Editing and design.
Assignment: News critique.

Thursday, Nov. 12

Topic: More on print layout.
Assignment: Putting together a page.

Tuesday, Nov. 17

Topic: Working on news critiques.
Assignment: Open lab.

Thursday, Nov. 19

Topic: Slideshows/photo galleries.
Assignment: Putting together a slideshow.

Tuesday, Nov. 24

Topics: Presentation of news critiques; review for exam.
Assignment: News critiques due.
Deadline for extra credit.

Thursday, Nov. 26

No class; Thanksgiving.

Tuesday, Dec. 1

Assignment: Final exam.

Guidelines for grading your story editing

Misspelled proper name: -50	Garble: -5
Missing first reference: -15	Punctuation error: -3 to -5
Other fact error: -25	Grammar error: -5
Misspelled word: -10	Redundancy: -5
Style error: -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.

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. Using a set-up sound bite is a violation of the honor code. 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 University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. 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.

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/>

Core values and competencies

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

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- 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;
- 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.