

COURSE: MEJO 157 (News Editing)  
TERM: Spring 2017  
TIME: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.  
PLACE: Room 58

INSTRUCTOR: Denny McAuliffe  
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OFFICE HOURS, 261 CARROLL: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.,  
by appointment  
CLASS WEBSITE: [mcafulnews.wordpress.com](http://mcafulnews.wordpress.com)

## ABOUT THE COURSE

OVERVIEW: You will learn the fundamentals of editing for print and digital media. You will learn how to edit news stories and how to write photo captions, story-related tweets and headlines, headlines and more headlines. You will publish edited stories, headlines and captions to the class news website. We'll use InDesign to edit stories for print and do some page design – and we'll take a detour to do some personal editing, such as making your resume and cover letter sing – and conform to AP style. You'll improve your grammar skills (whether you like it or not!), become familiar with AP style and gain an appreciation for accuracy and fairness for print and digital media (and spot mistakes in everything you read). The goal is to help you become a better communicator and reporter – and perhaps even a copy editor!

REQUIRED TEXTS: ONLINE VERSIONS ONLY of the AP Stylebook, AP Style Quizzes and Webster's New World Dictionary. Purchase all three together for \$38.95 from [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com). Link [here](#). On the purchase order at the bottom of the page, be sure to add AP Style Quizzes for \$3.95. You can then access the Stylebook and dictionary at [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com) on your laptops, as well as on your smartphone via the web or an iPhone app (sorry, no Android app). This way there's no excuse for not having your Stylebook and not using the approved newsroom dictionary in class. We will be taking graded AP Style Quizzes most classes, so you need to have access to them.

RECOMMENDED READING: Read The Washington Post, since your instructor works there (free digital access with an .edu email address, allegedly). We will begin every class reading newspapers (note the second part of that word, i.e., "paper") – sections of the Sunday New York Times, which your instructor will bring to class on Tuesdays, and The Daily Tar Heel, which you will provide on Thursdays. It is crucial that you gain some familiarity with newspapers – as opposed to news websites (I just looked up in the Stylebook whether "website" is one word, two words, upper-case or lower-case. Welcome to editing!); doing so will help you write print headlines and design newspaper pages, both of which we – sorry, you – will do during this course.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Students will conduct themselves within the guidelines of the [university honor system](#). 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. You will be editing real news and feature stories -- same-day or day-before, and many by Washington Post and New York Times reporters – so you must refrain from peeking at the published versions of those stories to check your editing or get headline hints. 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.

**ATTENDANCE:** Three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade, and three excused absence will put your grade in serious jeopardy. The stories and quizzes you do in each class will be graded, and an unexcused absence will result in a zero (0) for that class. Punctuality is also crucial. If you miss a graded exercise because you are late, I will not let you make it up (another 0). Treat the class as if it were your job. That means, if you foresee an absence or lateness, or if you’re sick, let me know (email or text) ahead of time.

**ETIQUETTE:** We’ll set a cellphone policy in class. It will resemble newsroom practices, but not the outright ban of other classes at the School of Media and Journalism. Please refrain from talking, texting, tweeting, Facebooking, YouTubing, Instagraming, Tumblring, Flickring, LinkIning, shopping or emailing on your cellphones, tablets or computers during class. You may leave the room to take a break at any time.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Most of the work in this class will be what you would do in a newsroom: editing stories, writing headlines, publishing content to the Web. Expect lots of grammar and AP style drills, which you will do in groups of three. There will be one long test that mimics the annual test for a Dow Jones copy-editing internship. (It’s practice for the real thing, which you will be encouraged to take.) The final will consist of editing one last (hence, “final”) story for print and Web, similar to what we’ll be doing in every class. The one out-of-class assignment will be preparing a critique of an assigned weekly or daily state newspaper and website.

**GRADING:** All of your work will be graded on a point system. Stories and AP Style, grammar and current events quizzes are worth 100 points each. 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 first-half grades don’t count. In the second half – and I’ll let you know when that begins -- I will literally count each grade as two A’s, two B’s, etc., and each assignment will be counted double. 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 total number of points you earned by the number of assignments (including the doubling described above) and use the following scale to calculate your grade:

93%-100%:	A
90-92:	A-
87-89:	B+
83-86:	B
80-82:	B-
77-79:	C+
73-76:	C
70-72:	C-
60-69:	D
59 or less:	F

**Guidelines for grading stories and headlines:** Each story assignment will count 100 points, usually combining 75 points for story editing and 25 points for headlines. Anything that would result in a printed correction in a newspaper or atop a web article – a misspelled proper name or other factual error that you should have looked up on the web -- will suffer a deduction of minus 10 points; an AP style or dictionary error (is it advisor or adviser, anti-aircraft or anti-aircraft?) that you should have easily looked up in your web-based AP Stylebook or dictionary but didn't), minus 5; and grammar-punctuation errors, minus 3. While these deductions seem low, especially compared with the minus-50 whoppers you suffer for misspelled names in other courses at the School of Media and Journalism, they do add up!

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

## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

**PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND:** I'm an editor at The Washington Post, where I've worked for more than 20 years, mostly as night editor for the Foreign and Financial desks. I now work remotely on The Post news and Editorial copy desks three nights a week from Raleigh, where I moved in August 2015 from the Washington, D.C., area. I taught News Editing and other classes for 11 years at the University of Montana School of Journalism, where I also directed a Native American journalism program. This is my fourth semester teaching at UNC.

**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 media and 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, there will be at least one mandatory one-on-one meeting with me, and a class assignment will be editing your resume and cover letter (or writing them if you haven't done so already) to make them conform to AP style.

## Class Schedule

### Thursday, Jan. 12

Topic: Introductions (to one another, to the course and to editing).

Assignment: Read copy editor's obituary. And find hidden errors in story.

### Tuesday, Jan. 17

Topic: What editors do in print and online.

Reading: AP punctuation guide.

Assignment: Punctuation drills (AP Style Quiz 18); edit story.

### Thursday, Jan. 19

Topic: Intro to class news website, mcawfulnews.wordpress.com

Readings: AP Stylebook, A-B. Grammar: subject-verb agreement

Assignment: AP Stylebook Quizzes 1-3; edit and publish a story.

### Tuesday, Jan. 24

Topic: "Meet Your Morning Paper": How an editor reads the paper.

Readings: AP Stylebook, C-F. Grammar: noun-pronoun agreement

Assignment: AP Stylebook Quizzes 4-6; edit and publish a story.

### Thursday, Jan. 26

Topic: Names, titles and quotes.

Readings: AP Stylebook, G-L. Grammar: prefixes (hyphen or no hyphen)

Assignment: AP Stylebook Quizzes 7-9; edit and publish a story.

### Tuesday, Jan. 31

Topic: Numbers, numbers, numbers: Stylebook's "numeral" entry.

Readings: AP Stylebook, M-O. Grammar: Passive voice

Assignment: AP Stylebook Quizzes 10-12; edit and publish a story.

### Thursday, Feb. 2

Topic: Diversity: Watching out for bias and avoiding stereotypes.

Readings: AP Stylebook, P-R. Grammar: Choosing the right word

Assignments: AP Stylebook Quizzes 13-15; edit and publish a story.

### Tuesday, Feb. 7

Topics: Things you must *always* check.

Reading: AP Stylebook, S-U. Grammar: Essential/non-essential

Assignments: AP Stylebook Quizzes 16-19; edit and publish a story.

### Thursday, Feb. 9

Topics: Cleaning your copy.

Reading: AP Stylebook, V-Z. Grammar: Is that a complete sentence?

Assignments: Take Poynter's "Cleaning Your Copy" course. Edit, publish story.

Tuesday, Feb. 14

Topic: Editing news stories, writing news headlines and adding hyperlinks.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Science and medicine (Quizzes 28, 29, 77)

Edit news story, write headline, tweet, cutline; add hyperlinks.

Thursday, Feb. 16

Topic: Editing and fact-checking.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Religion (Quizzes 31, 53-54)

Fact-check all quotes in news story, plus headline, cutline, etc.

Tuesday, Feb. 21

Topic: Updating news stories, adding inserts and trimming.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Business (Quizzes 35, 65)

Edit national news story and insert graphs on Chapel Hill or UNC.

Thursday, Feb.23

Topic: Doing the math.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Academy Awards (Quizzes 25, 27)

Edit story news story full of math, numbers and percentages.

Tuesday, Feb. 28

Visit by Courtney Rukan, Washington Post's deputy copy-desk chief.

Thursday, March 2

Topic: Editing an obituary.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Fashion and military terms (Quizzes 32, 34, 29)

Edit obituary of TBD. Hefty trim required.

Tuesday, March 7

Topic: Old-school hedline counts.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Terms to avoid (Quizzes 40, 41)

Edit news story in WordPress, write and count a print headline.

Thursday, March 9

Topic: "Face time" with instructor.

Assignment: Each student will hold private 10-minute meeting with instructor.

Rest of class edits news story in WordPress, writes social and print headlines.

Tuesday, March 14, and Thursday, March 16

*Spring break. No class.*

Tuesday, March 21

Topic: Print hedlines and trimming to fit.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: March Madness (Quizzes 58, 59)

Trim story with InDesign story editor, write 2-col., 3 col. heads.

Thursday, March 23

Topic: Editing, trimming and updating multiple stories on deadline.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Food (Quiz 63).

Edit, trim three news stories; write 1-col., 2-col., 4-col. main and bank headlines.

Tuesday, March 28

Topic: Personal editing: Applying AP style to your other writing.

Assignments: Copy-edit and rewrite (if necessary) your cover letter and resume.

Thursday, March 30

Topic: How editors guide and shape The Big Story.

Movie Night: "Spotlight." Write review, edit to conform with AP style.

Tuesday, Apr. 4

Topic: Pick papers to critique for April 27 presentations.

Assignments: AP Stylebook: Social Guidelines and Quiz 50.

Choose AP/Reuters wires to include in news digest, then assemble and edit it.

Thursday, Apr. 6

Topic: Editing as rewriting.

Assignments: AP Stylebook: Reviewing topics (Quizzes 20-24).

Combine and rewrite AP/Reuters wire stories on same event.

Tuesday, Apr. 11

Topic: Editing and design (print and online). Social media discussion.

Assignment AP Stylebook: Troublesome terms (Quiz 78).

Draw and edit story on Twitter troubles in inDesign, publish on WordPress.

Thursday, Apr. 13

Topic: Editorials.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Troublesome terms (Quiz 78).

Draw and edit editorial in inDesign, publish on WordPress.

Tuesday, Apr. 18

Topic: More on print layout.

Assignment: Working in pairs, put together a page in InDesign.

Thursday, Apr. 20

Topic: More on print layout.

Assignment: Working solo, put together a page in InDesign.

Tuesday, Apr. 25

Assignment: Final story (if students unanimously decide to hold final during the last class; otherwise, you'll take it during scheduled final-exam period).

Thursday, Apr. 27 (Last class)

Topics: Presentation of critiques of North Carolina daily or weekly newspapers.

## **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 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 tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.