

COURSE: MEJO 157, News Editing  
TERM: Maymester 2017  
PLACE: Room 58, Carroll Hall  
TIME: 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Monday-Friday

INSTRUCTOR: Andy Bechtel  
EMAIL: [abechtel@email.unc.edu](mailto:abechtel@email.unc.edu)  
OFFICE HOURS, 213 CARROLL: Monday-Friday, 1 p.m. to 2 p.m.  
BLOG: [editdesk.wordpress.com](http://editdesk.wordpress.com)  
TWITTER: @andybechtel

## ABOUT THE COURSE

**OVERVIEW:** Welcome to MEJO 157. In this course, 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, tweets and headlines. You'll become an expert in AP style and gain an appreciation for accuracy and fairness in language. The goal is to help you become a better communicator, for your career and for your life.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Working With Words, Ninth Edition. The Associated Press Stylebook, 2016 edition. Stylebook of the School of Media and Journalism (<http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu>).

**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 or The New York Times as well as The Daily Tar Heel.

**HONOR CODE:** All students will conduct themselves within the guidelines of the university's 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 university's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community, and the university 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 NEEDS:** If you have any disability or other special situation that might make it difficult to meet the requirements described above, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. If you have not done so already, you should also contact the Department of Accessibility Resources & Service (AR&S) at 919-962-8300 or [accessibility@unc.edu](mailto:accessibility@unc.edu).

**ATTENDANCE:** It's crucial, especially during Maymester. 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.

**ETIQUETTE:** Be ready to participate in class discussions and 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. Be polite. 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:** 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 and names in the news.

**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 1,200) and use the following scale to calculate your grade:

93-100: A	78-79: C+
90-92: A-	73-77: C
88-89: B+	70-72: C-
83-87: B	68-69: D+
80-82: B-	60-67: 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 and textbooks are fair game. So is this syllabus. Student publications, fliers stuck on telephone poles and digital 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.

**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 communications interests you, and I am happy to help you with career advice, internships, etc.

## OUR SCHEDULE

### Wednesday, May 17

Topic: Introductions; what editors do; getting down to basics.

Assignment: Punctuation exercise.

### Thursday, May 18

Topics: Eliminating redundancy, misspellings and jargon. Working with quotes.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 1, 2, 8, 10 and 13. AP Stylebook A-E.

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

### Friday, May 19

Topics: Story editing and adding hyperlinks.

Readings: AP Stylebook, F-M. Working with Words, Chapters 3, 11, 12.

Assignments: Editing a news story. AP style quiz, F-M.

### Monday, May 22

Topics: Editing for accuracy and credibility; watching out for bias and avoiding stereotypes.

Readings: AP stylebook, N-R. Working with Words, Chapter 14.

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

### Tuesday, May 23

Topic: The law and editing; editing with InDesign and InCopy.

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

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

Wednesday, May 24

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

Reading: Local stylebook ([jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu](http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu)).

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

Guest speaker: Laura Poole, freelance editor.

Thursday, May 25

Topic: Digital editing and social media.

Assignments: Editing a news story and adding links in WordPress; writing tweets.

Friday, May 26

Topics: Exploring alternative story forms; caption writing.

Assignment: Writing captions.

Monday, May 29

*No class; Memorial Day.*

Tuesday, May 30

Topic: Headline writing.

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

Assignment: Headline exercises.

Wednesday, May 31

Topic: Adding decks and summaries; writing multiple-line headlines.

Assignment: Headline/editing exercise.

Thursday, June 1

Topic: Headlines and slideshows for digital media.

Assignment: Writing headlines for digital media; creating a slideshow.

Friday, June 2

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.