

COURSE: MEJO 157, News Editing

TERM: Spring 2018

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 12:30 p.m.

WEBSITE: editdesk.wordpress.com

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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 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. 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, 2017 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.

ACCESSIBILITY: If you have any disability or other 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.

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 silence your phones at the start of class. Please refrain from texting and checking social media during class. You may leave the room to take a break at any time. 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:

A = 93-100

A- = 90-92

B+ = 87-89

B = 83-86

B- = 80-82

C = 70-79, with +/- ranges the same as for B

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

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 about a dozen years of newspaper experience. The bulk of my experience was 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 journalism interests you, and I am happy to help you with career advice, internships, etc.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, Jan. 10

Topic: Introductions.

Monday, Jan. 15

No class: MLK holiday.

Wednesday, Jan. 17

Topics: What editors do; getting down to basics.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 1, 15.

Assignment: Punctuation exercise.

Monday, Jan. 22

Topic: Eliminating redundancy, misspellings and other miscues.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 2, 13, 16. AP Stylebook A-E.

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

Wednesday, Jan. 24

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

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 6, 7, 9.

Assignment: editing exercise.

Monday, Jan. 29

Topic: Watching out for bias and avoiding stereotypes.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapter 14. AP Stylebook, F-M.

Assignments: Settling a style question; AP style quiz, F-M.

Wednesday, Jan. 31

Topics: Using news judgment; editing a story and adding links.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 3, 12.

Assignments: Editing a news story.

Monday, Feb. 5

Topic: Editing and the law.

Readings: AP Stylebook, N-R.

Assignments: Libel exercise; AP style quiz, N-R.

Wednesday, Feb. 7

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

Assignment: Fact-checking exercise; editing news graphics.

Monday, Feb. 12

Topic: Editing beyond news.

Guest speaker: Laura Poole, freelance editor.

Reading: AP stylebook, S-Z.

Assignment: AP style quiz, S-Z.

Wednesday, Feb. 14

Topic: Editing and social media.

Assignment: Writing tweets.

Monday, Feb. 19

Topic: Editing with InDesign and InCopy.

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

Assignments: Editing a story in InCopy; quiz on MEJO stylebook.

Wednesday, Feb. 21

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

Assignment: Story-editing exercise using InDesign/InCopy.

Monday, Feb. 26

Topic: Headline writing.

Assignment: Critiquing headlines.

Wednesday, Feb. 28

Topic: More headlines.

Assignment: Headline/editing exercise.

Monday, March 5

Topic: Adding decks and writing multiple-line headlines.

Assignments: Headline/editing exercise.

Wednesday, March 7

Assignment: Headline blitz.

Monday, March 19

Topic: Digital editing.

Assignment: Editing a story and adding links in WordPress.

Wednesday, March 21

Topic: Digital headlines.

Assignment: Writing digital headlines.

Monday, March 26

Topic: More digital editing.

Assignment: Editing a story and writing a headline/summary using WordPress.

Wednesday, March 28

Topic: Photos and captions.

Assignment: Caption-writing exercise.

Monday, April 2

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

Assignment: Story package in InDesign/InCopy.

Wednesday, April 4

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

Assignment: Story package in WordPress.

Monday, April 9

Topic: Editing and print design.

Assignment: Newspaper critique.

Wednesday, April 11

Topic: Exploring alternative story forms.

Assignment: Editing exercise.

Monday, April 16

Topic: More on layout.

Assignment: Putting together a page.

Wednesday, April 18

Assignment: Open lab to work on critiques.

Monday, April 23

Topics: Presentation of critiques; review for final exam.

Assignment: Design critique due.

Wednesday, April 25

No class; ACES conference.

Friday, May 4

Assignment: Final exam.

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

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.