

COURSE: MEJO 157 (News Editing) TERM: Spring 2018  
TIME: Section 2: Tuesday and Thursday, 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
PLACE: Room 58

INSTRUCTOR: Denny McAuliffe  
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after class, 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. You will update and rewrite stories, assemble news digests, and make decisions about story selection and “play” for publication. 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 editing your resume and cover letter to 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 writer (the best editors in the newsroom always seem to be the best writers and voracious readers). You may even reshuffle all your career plans and decide to become 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 about \$40 from [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com). You can access the Stylebook, quizzes and dictionary at [apstylebook.com](http://apstylebook.com) on all your devices. **You must be able to use InDesign on your laptops** (free access via [adobe.unc.edu](http://adobe.unc.edu)).

RECOMMENDED READING: Read The Washington Post, since your instructor works there (free digital access with an .edu email address, allegedly). You also should subscribe to The New York Times (also free for students, allegedly). And The New Yorker! Read those every day instead of skimming the Skimm. We will begin many classes 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, and The Daily Tar Heel, which you will bring to class. 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 absences 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 also is 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, “call in sick” (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 here. Please refrain from talking, texting, tweeting (unless you’re following the @realDonaldTrump), Facebooking, YouTubing, Instagraming, Tumblring, Flickring, LinkIning, Google+ing, Pinteresting, Snapchatting, shopping, emailing or dating on your cellphones, tablets or laptops 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 and cutlines, publishing content on our class WordPress website. Expect lots of grammar and AP style drills, which you will do on your online version of the AP Stylebook. We’ll also have a weekly current events quiz, courtesy of washingtonpost.com. As the course progresses, the stories and assignments will become longer and more complex, and by the end of the course you will be editing stories for both print, using InDesign, and Web. The one out-of-class assignment will be preparing a critique of an assigned weekly or daily state newspaper and website, for an oral presentation in class.

## GRADING

All of your editing will be graded on a point system. Stories are worth 100 points each, including the final story. 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, in which we'll edit more complex stories and do page design, 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. This will soften the shock and awe of what may be low grades in the first half, as you wrestle the preciseness required of being a copy editor and start getting the hang of headline writing.

**Grades will be computed as follows:** I will divide the total number of points you earned by the number of assignments (including the doubling described above). In a typical semester, you will do 13 graded assignments, starting with a grammar and style test at the end of our weeks-long "boot camp" grammar and Stylebook review, and concluding with a final story and oral presentation.

**Each assignment will be worth the following percentage:**

Style and grammar test:	5.5%
Editing assignments 1-5:	5.5% each
Editing assignments 6-10:	9.5% each
Oral presentation:	9.5%
Final story:	10.0%

**Letter grades will be calculated based on the following scale:**

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 deductions for story editing and additions for headlines (or deductions if they're really bad). 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 errors (is it advisor or adviser – I corrected one of those the other day at work -- anti-aircraft or antiaircraft?) that I've stressed in class and you

should have easily looked up in your web-based AP Stylebook or dictionary but didn't), **minus 5**; other Stylebook errors (i.e., those not stressed in class but listed in Stylebook), **minus 3**; grammar that I've stressed in class (that/which), **minus 3**, and miscellaneous grammar-punctuation errors (those pesky commas), **minus 1**. While these deductions seem low, especially compared with the minus-50 whoppers you suffer for misspelled names in other courses at this school, they do add up!

#### SEEKING HELP:

If you need individual assistance, it is 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 nearly 25 years, mostly as night editor for the Foreign and Financial desks. I now work remotely on The Post news (multiplatform) and Editorial copy desks three to four 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 sixth 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 or two 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. 11

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

Assignment: Take Washington Post or New York Times weekly news quiz.” Read copy editor’s obituary for cxes.

### Tuesday, Jan. 16

Topic: What editors do in print and online.

Reading: AP punctuation guide.

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

### Thursday, Jan. 18

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. 23

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. 25

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. 30

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. 1

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. 6

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. 8

Topics: Cleaning your copy.

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

Assignments: Take Poynter’s “Cleaning Your Copy” course.

Tuesday, Feb. 13

Topic: Web headlines (and why are you misspelling that word?)  
Assignment: AP Stylebook: 2017 Stylebook changes (Quizzes 81-83)  
Edit news story, write headline, tweet, cutline; add hyperlinks.

Thursday, Feb. 15

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.

Tuesday, Feb. 20

Topic: Editing and fact-checking.  
Assignment: AP Stylebook: Religion (Quizzes 31, 53-54)  
Fact-check all quotes in news story, plus headline, cutline, etc.

Thursday, Feb. 22

Topic: Personal editing: Applying AP style to your other writing.  
Assignments: Copy-edit and rewrite (if necessary) your cover letter and resume.

Tuesday, Feb. 27

Topic: Doing the math (and intro to inDesign).  
Assignment: AP Stylebook: Fashion and military terms (Quizzes 32, 34, 29)  
In inDesign, edit news story full of math, numbers and percentages.

Thursday, March 1

Topic: Editing an obituary.  
Assignment: AP Stylebook: Academy Awards (Quizzes 25, 27)  
Edit obituary of TBD. Hefty trim required. In inDesign.

Tuesday, March 6

Topic: Print headlines (Say what? 1-, 2- and 3 cols main and bank heds)  
Assignment: AP Stylebook: Terms to avoid (Quizzes 40, 41)  
Edit news story in InDesign story editor.

Thursday, March 8

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/Thursday, March 13/15  
*Spring Break. No class.*

Tuesday, March 20

Topic: Print headlines 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 22

Topic: Pick papers to critique for presentations in last class (Apr. 26)

Assignments: AP Stylebook: Social Guidelines and Quiz 50.

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

Tuesday, March 27

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, March 29

Topic: You Be the Page One Editor

Assignment: AP Stylebook: (Quizzes 84-86).

Pick six stories (out of a long list of that day's wires). Decide their "play" or placement on A1 of The Washington Post, then write their headlines based on that day's layout of The Post.

Tuesday, Apr. 3

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

Assignment: AP Stylebook: Food (Quiz 63) and Quizzes 87-90.

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

Thursday, Apr. 5

Topic: Editing as rewriting.

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

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

Tuesday, Apr.10

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. 12

Topic: Editorials.

Assignment: AP Stylebook: 2017 Stylebook updates (Quizzes 81-86).

Draw and edit editorial in inDesign, publish on WordPress.

Tuesday, Apr. 17

Topic: Print layout.

Assignment: Put together a page in InDesign. Edit story, write cutline. Publish on WordPress with web headline.

Thursday, Apr. 19

Topic: More on print layout.

Assignment: Put together a page in InDesign. Edit story, write cutline. Publish on WordPress with web headline.

Tuesday, Apr. 24

Topic: More on print layout.

Assignment: Put together a page in InDesign with multiple stories, photos.

Publish on WordPress with web headline.

Thursday, Apr. 26 (last class)

Oral/PowerPoint presentations of critiques of North Carolina daily or weekly papers.

Tuesday, May 8, 4 p.m.

*Three-hour 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 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.

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