

MEJO 157.2: News Editing Fall 2019

Meeting time: 3:30 to 5:45 p.m. Mondays/Wednesdays

Meeting place: Carroll Hall, Room 58

Instructor: Margaret Moffett

Email: mmoffett@ad.unc.edu

Cell: 336-707-1982

Office hours: By appointment

About your instructor: I was a full-time newspaper reporter and editor for 28 years, 23 of them at the Greensboro News & Record (jobs included general assignment reporter, an investigative reporter, City Hall reporter, assistant sports editor and assistant city editor). In 2018, I became managing editor of Triad Business Journal. I'm now a full-time freelancer (and teacher) doing a mix of journalism and PR. I've taught English at Guilford Technical Community College and journalism at High Point University. Here's my [LinkedIn page](#).

I believe journalism can save the world.

Overview: In this course, you'll learn the fundamentals of editing for print and digital media. You'll 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 materials:

- The Associated Press Stylebook, 2019 edition (Online version is \$35).
- Stylebook of the School of Media and Journalism (<http://jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu>).
- InDesign on your laptops (free access via adobe.unc.edu).
- Read a newspaper (either in print or online), such as The News & Observer or The New York Times as well as The Daily Tar Heel.

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 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, 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 here. Please refrain from talking, texting, tweeting, Facebooking, YouTubing, Instagraming, Tumblring, Flickr-ing, LinkIn-ing, shopping or emailing on your cellphones, tablets or laptops during class. You may leave to take a break at any time.

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 group design critique of a daily newspaper.

Grading: Your assignments will be graded on a point system. The more complex the assignment, the more it's worth. For example, an AP style quiz is worth 50 points. The final exam is worth 200 points. Most assignments are worth 50 to 100 points. At the end of the semester, I will divide the number of points you earned by the total possible points (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+ = 77-79
- C = 73-76
- C- = 70-82
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 60-66
- F = 0-59

Guidelines for grading your story editing

- Misspelled proper name: -50
- Missing first reference: -15
- Other fact error: -25
- Misspelled word: -10
- Style error: -5

- Wordiness and redundancy: -5
- Grammar error: -5
- Punctuation error: -3 to -5
- Other errors: -3 to -25

Guidelines for grading your headlines and captions

Headlines, tweets and captions are worth up to 25 points.

- **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.

Extra credit: 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 on telephone poles and digital media are not. I am the final arbiter of what counts and what doesn't.

On some assignments, you can get points by performing heroic acts of editing. These may include breaking a long sentence into two sentences or identifying a "hole" in a news story. I also will award points if you bring in a hilarious correction printed in a newspaper between Jan. 8 and April 10. [Here are examples](#) of some published in 2019.

Class Schedule

Wednesday, Jan. 8

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

Monday, Jan. 13

Topic: What editors do; getting down to basics.

Reading: Punctuation section of AP Stylebook.

In-class assignment: Punctuation exercise.

Wednesday, Jan. 15

Topic: Eliminating redundancy, misspellings and other miscues.

Readings: AP Stylebook A-E.

Quiz: AP style quiz, A-E (50 points)

In-class assignment: Conciseness/editing exercise (100 points).

Monday, Jan. 20

No class (MLK Day).

Wednesday, Jan. 22

Topic: Editing beyond news.

Readings: AP Stylebook, F-M.

Quiz: AP style quiz, F-M (50 points).

Undergraduate class drop (no record) period ends today: Last day for students to drop a class in ConnectCarolina and reduce course load, with tuition adjusted and no record of the class. Full-time students must maintain 12 credit hours. (Dropping requires a term withdrawal and follows the withdrawal and prorated refund policy.)

Monday, Jan. 27

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

In-class assignment: Editing a news story (100 points).

Wednesday, Jan. 29

Topic: Watching out for bias and avoiding stereotypes.

Readings: AP Stylebook, N-R.

Quiz: AP style quiz, N-R (50 points)

Monday, Feb. 3

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

In-class assignment: Fact-checking exercise (100 points).

Wednesday, Feb. 5

Topic: Editing and the law.

Reading: AP stylebook, S-Z.

Quiz: AP style quiz, S-Z (50 points).

In-class assignment: Libel exercise (100 points).

Monday, Feb. 10

Topic: Editing and social media.

In-class assignment: Tweeting the news (50 points).

Wednesday, Feb. 12

Topic: Curating the news.

Monday, Feb. 17

Topic: Working with InDesign and InCopy.

Guest speaker: Dale Edwards, editor, News of Orange County (Hillsborough)

Wednesday, Feb. 19

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

Quiz: Quiz on MEJO stylebook (50 points).

In-class assignment: Editing a news story (100 points).

Monday, Feb. 24

Topic: Headline writing.

In-class assignment: Critiquing headlines.

Wednesday, Feb. 26

Topic: More headlines.

In-class assignment: Headline/editing exercise (100 points).

Monday, March 2

Topic: Adding decks and writing multiple-line headlines.

Undergraduate class drop (on record) period ends Tuesday, March 3: Last day undergraduate students can drop classes in ConnectCarolina. Drop transactions processed between weeks 3-8 will remain on the student's record with a grade notation of "W" and also noted as a withdrawal by choice "WC."

Wednesday, March 4

In-class assignment: Headline blitz (100 points).

Monday, March 9

No class (Spring Break).

Wednesday, March 11

No class (Spring Break).

Monday, March 16

Topic: Digital editing.

In-class assignment: Editing a story and adding links in WordPress (50 points).

Wednesday, March 18

Topic: Digital headlines.

In-class assignment: Critiquing digital headlines.

Monday, March 23

Topic: More digital editing.

In-class assignment: Editing a story and writing a headline/summary using WordPress).

Wednesday, March 25

Topic: Photos and captions.

In-class assignment: Caption-writing in InDesign (50 points).

Monday, March 30

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

In-class assignment: Story package in InDesign/InCopy (100 points).

Wednesday, April 1

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

In-class assignment: Story package in WordPress (100 points).

Monday, April 6

Topic: Editing and design.

Take-home assignment: Group newspaper critique (to be presented in class April 22). We will discuss this in class.

Wednesday, April 8

Topic: More on design.

In-class assignment: Putting together a page.

Monday, April 13

Topic: Exploring alternative story forms.

Wednesday, April 15

Topic: More on alternative story forms.

In-class assignment: Remixing a news story.

Monday, April 20

Topic: Photo galleries.

In-class assignment: Putting together a photo gallery.

Wednesday, April 22 (LAST CLASS)

Topics: Presentation of critiques (150 points).

Monday, May 4 (4 p.m.)

Final exam (200 points).

ACEJMC values and competencies relevant to this course:

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

Honor code: All students will conduct themselves within the guidelines of the university's honor system (<https://studentconduct.unc.edu>). You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility under the Honor Code, please see me or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle.

Diversity and inclusion: UNC-Chapel Hill's policy on prohibiting harassment and discrimination is available at <https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/ppdhrm>. The university is committed to providing a welcoming environment for all members of our community. 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 status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Accessibility: If you have a disability or other situation that might make it difficult to meet the requirements described of the course, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. If you have not done so already, you should also contact the Accessibility Resources & Service at ars@unc.edu.