

MEJO 557: Advanced Editing

Spring 2020

Meeting time: Monday/Wednesday, 2 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Meeting place: 253 Carroll Hall

Instructor: Andy Bechtel

Email: abechtel@email.unc.edu

Office hours, 213 Carroll: Monday/Wednesday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Website: editdesk.wordpress.com

Twitter: [@andybechtel](https://twitter.com/andybechtel)

About the course

OVERVIEW: Advanced Editing is a hands-on course that will build on your previous editing experience in print and digital media. We'll also explore the editor-writer relationship. This semester, you will be an editor at several news organizations, some real and one mythical:

- **THE DURHAM VOICE:** This is a real publication, both digital and print. It's a project of MEJO 457, Community Journalism. Students in that course are the writers/photographers, and we are the editors. See more at www.durhamvoice.org.
- **MEJO 356 (Feature Writing) and MEJO 584 (Documentary Multimedia Storytelling):** You will edit student work from these courses and in some cases write headlines and captions.
- **THE TRIANGLE TIMES:** This is our mythical newspaper and website. It's a hard-charging regional news organization that is competing against The News & Observer and WRAL.com. Its hypothetical audience consists of readers in Orange, Durham and Wake counties.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- "The Subversive Copy Editor (Second Edition)" by Carol Fisher Saller
- The Associated Press Stylebook, 2019 edition
- Stylebook of the UNC Hussman School (available at jschoolstylebook.web.unc.edu)

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 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.

ATTENDANCE and PUNCTUALITY: They are crucial, especially because many assignments will be team projects that require collaboration. If you miss an assignment because you are late, you may not make it up. If you miss class, you may only make up assignments 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 arrange makeup work.

GRADUATE STUDENTS: If you are a master's student, you have an extra assignment for the course. You will write a book review similar to ones published in academic journals. Please see me for details about this assignment.

GRADES: Your performance in the course will be graded on a point system. Each assignment, including the final exam, will be worth 100 points. I will divide the number of points you earned by the total possible points (approximately 1,800) 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, with +/- range the same as for B
- F = 0-59

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.

Tentative schedule

Wednesday, Jan. 8

Topic: Introductions.

Monday, Jan. 13

Topic: Refreshing your editing skills.

Readings: AP Stylebook.

Assignments: Style quiz; story-editing exercises.

Wednesday, Jan. 15

Topic: Editing local news and engaging readers.

Viewing: "Writing My Own Happy Ending."

Monday, Jan. 20

MLK holiday.

Wednesday, Jan. 22

Topic: Editing features.

Readings: AP Stylebook sections on food, fashion and religion.

Assignments: AP style quiz; practice editing a Durham VOICE story.

Monday, Jan. 27

Assignment: Editing a features page.

Wednesday, Jan. 29

Assignment: Editing for the Durham VOICE.

Monday, Feb. 3

Topic: Editing opinion pieces.

Assignment: Editing an op-ed page.

Wednesday, Feb. 5

Topic: Alternative story forms.

Assignment: Creating an alternative story form using Wakelet.

Monday, Feb. 10

Topic: Editing beyond news.

Guests: Ayse Erginer, executive editor of Southern Cultures; Lindsey Alexander, freelance editor.

Wednesday, Feb. 12

Assignment: Editing for the Durham VOICE.

Monday, Feb. 17

Assignment: Editing a features story from MEJO 356.

Wednesday, Feb. 19

Assignment: Editing a food page.

Monday, Feb. 24

Topic: Observing the editor-writer relationship.

Viewing: "Spotlight"

Wednesday, Feb. 26

Assignment: Editing for the Durham VOICE.

Monday, March 2

Topic: Editing news obituaries.

Assignment: Editing a news obituary using Wakelet.

Wednesday, March 4

Assignment: Midterm exam.

Monday, March 16

Assignment: Editing feature stories from MEJO 356.

Wednesday, March 18

Topic: Pushing the news.

Assignment: Writing push notifications.

Monday, March 23

Assignment: Editing a front page.

Wednesday, March 25

Assignment: Editing for the Durham VOICE.

Monday, March 30

Assignment: Creating and editing a local wiki page.

Wednesday, April 1

Topic: Editing as curation.

Assignment: Creating a prototype for an email newsletter.

Monday, April 6

Assignment: Editing feature stories from MEJO 356.

Wednesday, April 8

Assignment: Editing for the Durham VOICE.

Monday, April 13

Assignment: Editing content for MEJO 584, Documentary Multimedia Storytelling.

Wednesday, April 15

Topic: Editing sports.

Assignment: Quiz on sports section of AP Stylebook.

Guests: Jessaca Giglio of The News & Observer; C. Jackson Cowart of The Score.

Monday, April 20

Topic: Editing sports.

Assignment: Editing a sports page.

Wednesday, April 22

Topic: Reviewing our work.

Monday, May 4 (noon)

Assignment: Final exam.

Guidelines for grading your story editing

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

You can get points by performing heroic acts of editing. These include breaking a long sentence into two sentences, tightening wordy copy and improving the structure of a story.

Guidelines for grading your headlines/captions

Headlines and captions are worth 25 points. Here's how it works:

25: Shows unusual flair and cleverness; represents the story clearly and forcefully.

23: Solid, publishable; reflects the story and attracts reader interest.

21: Usable but lacks precision or feels flat.

18: Vague or difficult to understand; awkwardly structured.

16: Contains a major flaw; misses the major angle of the story; contains a punctuation error such as use of a semicolon where a comma is needed. Has unintended meanings.

0: Contains an obvious grammar error such as subject-verb disagreement. Has a misspelled word, fact error or libelous material.

Assignment: Guest Post

For this assignment, you will write a guest post for my website, The Editor's Desk. You can read the site at editdesk.wordpress.com.

TOPICS: You have plenty of leeway here, provided that the topic fits the mission of the blog as a place for thoughts on editing for print and digital media. Possible areas to explore include grammar questions, headline writing, news judgment and social media. Write about something you care about.

FORMAT: The post should be between 500 and 800 words in length. Include a suggested headline of up to 65 characters. Think of the post as a short essay in which you introduce your topic, provide evidence and offer a conclusion or recommendation.

Turn in your post by email to abechtel@email.unc.edu. Include a sentence or two about yourself.

WRITING: You may have a “voice” for the post, and first person is OK. Keep the journalistic audience of the site in mind and write accordingly. Use AP style and proper grammar and punctuation. Include at least two suggested links. Consider how linking is a sort of footnoting that can support an argument. Incorporate the links into the writing itself — avoid “click here” and similar phrases.

GRADING: This assignment is worth 100 points. You will lose 10 points for each day your post is overdue. I will consider these factors in grading your post: Timeliness and interest: Is the post about a current event and use recent examples? Is the topic introduced in a way that will grab the reader? Does the writer make a convincing argument? Does the post include relevant, specific links?

WRITERS AND DEADLINES

Jan. 17: Beauchamp

Jan. 24: Bennett

Jan. 31: Blake

Feb. 7: Crumpler

Feb. 14: Devarajan

Feb. 21: Farmer

Feb. 28: Fetsko

March 6: Jarrell, Johnson

March 20: Kenney

March 27: Keyes

April 3: Maloney, McClellan

April 9: Mills

April 17: Radford, Ruch

April 24: Schmidt, Sidebottom