

JOMC 157: News Editing

Fall 2012 ■ Tuesday/Thursday, 11 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. ■ Room 58

Instructor: Andy Bechtel

E-mail: abechtel@email.unc.edu

Office hours, 213 Carroll: Tuesday-Thursday, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Web: editdesk.wordpress.com

Twitter: www.twitter.com/andybechtel

About the course

OVERVIEW: Welcome to JOMC 157. In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of editing for print and online media. We'll talk about the little stuff such as commas and the big stuff such as what goes on the front page of a newspaper and what photo to run as our website's centerpiece. You will learn how to edit news stories and how to write photo captions, tweets and headlines. We'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, Sixth Edition. The Associated Press Stylebook, 2012 edition. Stylebook of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (available online at jomc.unc.edu/stylebook). News Editing notebook.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS: Webster's New World College Dictionary. You should also read a daily newspaper (either in print or online) such as The News & Observer, The New York Times or the Herald-Sun as well as The Daily Tar Heel.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: You must adhere to the University's honor code. Some assignments will be collaborative, but in general, there should be no sharing of information while you are working on assignments.

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 I can arrange makeup work.

ETIQUETTE: Please turn off cell phones and similar devices at the start of class. Be ready to participate in class discussions and class exercises. Please refrain from texting, tweeting and checking email and Facebook during class. 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: Most of the work in this class will be what you would do in a newsroom: 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 test is worth 50 points. The final exam will likely be worth about 250 points. In the end, I will divide the number of points you earned by the total possible points (typically about 1,500) and use the following scale to calculate your grade:

90-100: A
80-89: B
70-79: C
60-69: D
59 or less: F

BONUS ROUND: You can also get extra credit by bringing in an error in a 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, textbooks and this syllabus are fair game. Student newspapers, fliers stuck on telephone poles and online 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 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 paper's Chapel Hill bureau and on the Nation & World desk. I was an "intern" in the summer of 2008, working as an editor at the website of the Los Angeles Times.

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.

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree in journalism, University of South Carolina, 1989.
Master's degree in journalism, UNC-Chapel Hill, 1993.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Tuesday, Aug. 21

Topic: Introductions.

Thursday, Aug. 23

Topics: What editors do in print and online; getting down to basics.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 1, 2 and 9. Punctuation guide in AP Stylebook.

Assignment: Punctuation exercise.

Tuesday, Aug. 28

Topics: Eliminating redundancy, misspellings and other miscues.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 8, 10 and 12. AP Stylebook A-E.

Assignments: AP style quiz, A-E; wordiness exercise.

Thursday, Aug. 30

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

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 3-7. Editing notebook, pages 1-8; 13-28.

Tuesday, Sept. 4

Topic: Story editing.

Readings: AP Stylebook, F-M. Working with Words, Chapters 11, 14, 16. Editing notebook, pages 9-10; 29-38.

Assignments: Assignments: AP style quiz, F-M; editing exercise.

Thursday, Sept. 6

Topics: Editing for accuracy and credibility; checking facts and numbers.

Assignment: Accuracy exercise.

Tuesday, Sept. 11

Topics: Watching out for bias and avoiding stereotypes.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapter 13; AP Stylebook, N-R.

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

Thursday, Sept. 13

Topic: Media law, ethics and editing.

Reading: Briefing on media law in AP Stylebook.

Assignments: Libel/ethics exercises.

Tuesday, Sept. 18

Topics: Editing with InDesign.

Readings: Blue Pages guide; AP Stylebook, S-Z.

Assignments: AP style quiz, S-Z.

Thursday, Sept. 20

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

Readings: Local stylebook, pages 2-18.

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

Tuesday, Sept. 25

Topic: Editing and Twitter.

Assignment: Writing tweets

Thursday, Sept. 27

Topic: Editing online.

Assignment: Editing a story in WordPress.

Tuesday, Oct. 2 (First Amendment Day)

Topic: Editing with Storify.

Assignment: Building a Storify page.

Thursday, Oct. 4

Topic: Headline writing.

Reading: Editing notebook, pages 45-52.

Assignment: Headline/editing exercise.

Tuesday, Oct. 9

Topic: More headlines.

Assignment: Headline/editing exercise.

Thursday, Oct. 11

Topic: Adding dropheads and writing multiple-line headlines.

Assignments: Headline/editing exercise.

Tuesday, Oct. 16

Assignment: Midterm exam.

Thursday, Oct. 18

No class; fall break

Tuesday, Oct. 23

Topic: Photos and captions.

Reading: Editing notebook, pages 53-58.

Assignment: Caption exercise.

Thursday, Oct. 25

Topic: More captions.

Assignment: Caption/editing exercise.

Tuesday, Oct. 30

Topic: Standalone captions.

Assignment: Writing standalone captions.

Thursday, Nov. 1

Topic: Standalone captions online.

Assignment: Creating a slide show.

Tuesday, Nov. 6

Topic: Online headlines.

Assignment: Writing headlines for online.

Thursday, Nov. 8

Assignment: Online story package.

Tuesday, Nov. 13

Topic: Editing and print design.

Reading: Editing notebook, pages 59-66.

Assignment: Newspaper critique.

Thursday, Nov. 15

Topic: More on layout.

Assignment: Putting together a page.

Tuesday, Nov. 20

Topic: Editing graphics.

Assignment: Editing graphics.

Thursday, Nov. 24

No class; Thanksgiving

Tuesday, Nov. 27

Topic: Working on newspaper critiques.

Assignment: Open lab.

Thursday, Nov. 29

Topic: Exploring alternative story forms.

Assignment: Editing exercise; newspaper critiques due.

Deadline for extra credit.

Tuesday, Dec. 4

Final exam.

Guidelines for grading your story editing

Point deductions

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 cutlines will be 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.

16: 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 or fact error.