

JOMC 157: News Editing

Spring 2008 ■ Monday/Wednesday, 8 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. ■ Room 58

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About the course

OVERVIEW: Welcome to JOMC 157. In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of editing for print and online. 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 Web site's centerpiece. You will learn how to edit copy, write photo captions (we'll call them cutlines) and headlines, and design news pages. You'll become an expert in AP style and gain an appreciation for accuracy 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, 2007 edition. Stylebook of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. 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, USA Today 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 mobile phones and similar devices at the start of class. Be ready to participate in class discussions and class exercises. Please refrain from checking e-mail, blogging and cruising the Web 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 most class meetings.

ASSIGNMENTS: Much of the work you will do in this class will be what you would do in a newsroom: editing stories, writing headlines, etc. You will also take a series of tests

on AP style and pop quizzes on current events and names in the news. The one outside 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 1,700) 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 EXPERIENCE: I am a print journalist with more than 10 years of newspaper experience. Most recently, I was Nation & World editor at The News & Observer in Raleigh. I also worked on the sports copy desk and in the Chapel Hill bureau during my time at the paper. I was a copy editor and page designer at the News & Record in Greensboro and part-time copy editor at The Advocate newspaper in Baton Rouge, La.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND 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, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1993.

PERSONAL: I was born in New Orleans and grew up in Florida. I live in Raleigh. I am married and have a 7-year-old son, Ross. I love movies, travel and '80s music.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, Jan. 9

Topic: Introductions.

Monday, Jan. 14

Topics: What editors do; getting down to basics.

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

Assignment: Punctuation exercise.

Wednesday, Jan. 16

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.

Monday, Jan. 21

No class; Martin Luther King Day.

Wednesday, Jan. 23

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

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 3-7. Editing notebook, pages 1-8. AP Stylebook, F-M.

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

Monday, Jan. 28

Topics: Story editing.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapters 11, 14. Editing notebook, pages 9-10; 29-38.

Wednesday, Jan. 30

Topics: Using news judgment; getting acquainted with wire copy.

Readings: Editing notebook, pages 39-47; Blue Pages guide; AP Stylebook, N-R.

Assignments: Getting going with InDesign; working the wires. Style quiz, N-R.

Monday, Feb. 4

Topics: Editing for accuracy; checking facts and numbers.

Assignments: Accuracy exercise.

Wednesday, Feb. 6

Topics: Watching out for bias.

Readings: Working with Words, Chapter 13. AP Stylebook, S-Z.

Assignments: Settling a style question; AP style quiz, S-Z.

Monday, Feb. 11

Topic: Media law, ethics and copy editing.

Reading: Briefing on media law in AP Stylebook.

Assignments: Libel/ethics exercises.

Wednesday, Feb. 13

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

Readings: Local stylebook, pages 2-18.

Exercises: Quiz on local stylebook; story editing.

Monday, Feb. 18

Topic: Headline writing.

Reading: Editing notebook, pages 49-57.

Assignment: Headline exercise.

Wednesday, Feb. 20

Topic: More headlines.

Assignments: Headline/editing exercise.

Monday, Feb. 25

Topic: Adding dropheads and subheads.

Assignments: Headline exercise.

Wednesday, Feb. 27

Topic: More headlines.

Assignment: Headline blitz!

Monday, March 3

Topic: Editing briefs columns.

Assignment: Compiling and editing a briefs column.

Wednesday, March 5

Assignment: Midterm exam.

Monday, March 17

Topic: Photos and cutlines.

Reading: Editing notebook, pages 59-64.

Assignment: Cutline exercise.

Wednesday, March 19

Topic: More cutlines.

Assignment: Cutline exercise.

Monday, March 24

Topic: Standalone cutlines.

Assignment: Writing a standalone cutline.

Wednesday, March 26

Topic: Standalone cutlines on the Web.

Assignment: Creating a slide show.

Reading: Blue Pages, page 25.

Monday, March 31

Topic: Online headlines.

Assignment: Rewriting headlines for online.

Wednesday, April 2

Topic: Copy editing and design.

Reading: Editing notebook, pages 65-72.

Assignment: Newspaper critique.

Monday, April 7

Topic: More on layout.

Assignment: Putting together an inside page.

Wednesday, April 9

Topic: Working on newspaper critiques.

Assignment: Open lab.

Monday, April 14

Topic: Newspaper critiques.

Assignment due: Presentations of critiques.

Wednesday, April 16

Topic: Editing graphics.

Assignment: Editing graphics.

Monday, April 21

Topic: Exploring alternative story forms.

Assignment: Editing exercise.

Wednesday, April 23

Assignment: 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 include breaking a long sentence into two sentences, tightening wordy copy and improving the structure of a story.

Guidelines for grading your headlines and cutlines

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 cut or head 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 double meanings.

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