

**Editing—Spring 2007**  
**Journalism 61-224, Clow 148**  
**Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:20 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**  
**Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:50 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

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**Office Hours:** MW 12:40 p.m. to  
1:40 p.m.; TTh 12:40 to 1:40 p.m.

**Required/Recommended Texts:**

- “Copy Editors Handbook for Newspapers” (second edition), Fellow & Clanin.
- “InDesign CS for Macintosh and Windows,” Cohen.
- Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (2006).

**Other Required Materials:**

- A binder to hold the text, handouts and exercises.
- A ruler.
- A flash drive. (As an alternative you may be able to use your Novell server account to store files, but this method has not always been reliable.)

**Course Prerequisite**

To take this course, you must have completed Journalism 61-221 (Writing for the Media) with a grade of C or better. You are expected to have the following skills and knowledge:

- Ability to gather information and produce a comprehensive news article that meets basic format and style requirements.
- Ability to use a computer for word processing and simple file manipulation.
- Grasp of standard English grammar, spelling, punctuation and word choice.
- Ability to use the terminology of news (such as attribution, inverted pyramid style, paraphrasing, editorializing, sourcing).

**Course Content**

This is a course on the mechanics and ethics of editing. The mechanics are relatively straightforward and can easily be covered in a semester. They include such things as improving copy, writing headlines, handling photographs and cutlines, and designing pages. The ethics, on the other hand, have to do with standards, values and judgment, and learning them is really a lifelong process. As you can imagine, this course will be no more than a start along that path.

**Because this is a prerequisite course for further journalism study, you must earn at least a C grade to continue in the major (or the minor).**

## Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will have been given the chance to learn how to:

- Make efficient use of reference sources, including the AP Stylebook.
- Evaluate and improve the copy of others, identifying information gaps, fixing factual mistakes, correcting grammatical errors, and adding precision and color.
- Compile copy—rewriting leads, supplying transitions and reorganizing elements as necessary.
- Process wire copy and understand its uses.
- Use your news judgment to categorize articles and rank them.
- Spot flaws in copy, especially potential problems related to libel, invasions of privacy, copyright or community standards.
- Write headlines that are accurate, eye-catching and properly sized.
- Conceptualize and create effective page designs.
- Evaluate photographs, crop them and write cutlines.
- Create simple graphics to expand the presentation of an article.
- Describe the organization of publishing operations.
- Appreciate the critical role of editors in producing a successful publication.
- Use desktop publishing software to create newspaper pages.

## Class Expectations

Class time will be devoted to a mixture of lecture, discussion and lab work. Each day's reading assignment should be done before you come to class.

Your presence in class is extremely important, both for the sake of your own grade and for what you can contribute to others. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for that day's material. In general, however, you will not be able to make up missed quizzes, exams or other assignments unless you notify the instructor before class meets and provide an acceptable excuse, such as illness, religious observance or participation in university activities at the request of university officials.

**You will need your textbook and the Stylebook in every class.**

## Grades

Your final grade will be based on a 1,000-point scale. You can earn points as follows:

- Up to 100 points for participation, including class preps.
- Up to 150 points for critiques of the Advance-Titan.
- Up to 50 points for contributions to our Vocab Confab project.
- Up to 50 points for contributions to our Common Knowledge project.
- Up to 250 points for lab exercises.
- Up to 50 points for Newsroom 101.
- Up to 50 points for a research report.
- Up to 100 points for a midterm exam.
- Up to 100 points for the editing project.
- Up to 100 points for the final exam, which will be based on the editing project.

Final letter grades will be based on the following scale:

A	930 to 1,000	C	700 to 759
AB	890 to 929	CD	650 to 699
B	810 to 889	D	600 to 649
BC	760 to 809	F	000 to 599

You must complete the assignments in each area. Even if you have enough points to receive a passing grade for the course without turning in a particular assignment, you must still do that assignment. Otherwise you will get an incomplete for the course.

**The cutoff points for grades are not negotiable. In other words, an 889 will translate into a B and will not be rounded up to an AB. It is possible that you will come within a handful of points for a higher grade, but if you wish to receive that higher grade, you must earn it, which you can do by putting maximum effort into each assignment.**

### **I. Participation, Including Class Preps (100 points).**

You will be graded on your ability and willingness to contribute meaningful information to class projects and discussions. In addition you will have small assignments to do in advance of class meetings. Each one of these class preps will be worth five to 10 points and must be completed by the beginning of class if you wish to receive credit for it.

### **II. Critiquing the Advance-Titan (150 points).**

A good way to improve your editing skills is to review what other editors have done and to evaluate the good, the bad and the ugly of their efforts. For 10 weeks during the semester, you will be expected to read the A-T and comment on it. You will post your comments on the A-T Critique Web log, which is accessible from my Web site. **Your comments are due by noon on Friday.**

Each week, different members of the class will serve as a kind of “shadow” editorial board and respond to the comments from the class. Each student will be a “shadow” editor at least twice during the semester. You can earn extra credit for participating up to two more times (10 points each).

During the first week of the semester, you will get an e-mail inviting you to join this Web log. Follow the directions contained in that e-mail. You will need an account from Blogger to do this assignment.

When you start your Blogger account, you'll be asked to supply a user name and a display name, which is what will be used to identify your posts. You may be more comfortable making your comments under a display name that you make up. That's perfectly OK (and may even be preferable), but you need to tell me what your display name is so that I can give you credit for your work.

The A-T Critique Web log can be found at <http://atcritique.blogspot.com/>.

### **III. Vocab Confab (50 points).**

The English language has about 5 million words, and the typical college student knows no more than 40,000 of them. This isn't a big problem for living day to day. But if you wish to prepare for a career in communications, one of your priorities should be

improving your language skills. A good place to start is with vocabulary.

For this project, each student is expected to contribute to an effort to expand our common vocabulary by bringing to class (on the second class meeting of the week) a word that you have learned in the last week. It's likely that you will encounter new words in your classes or through your reading. But if you don't, you can always turn to the dictionary.

For each word:

- Give its part of speech (noun, verb, etc.).
- Provide a definition that uses only commonly understood words.
- Tell where the definition came from (e.g. which dictionary you used).
- Trace its entry of the word into English (its etymology).
- Tell where you came across the word.
- Use it in a sentence.

Here's an example:

### **Metatarsal**

**According to Webster's New World Dictionary, this is an adjective that refers to the metatarsus, which is the part of the human foot consisting of the five bones between the ankle and the toe. The word comes from the Greek words "meta," meaning "after," and "tarsus," meaning "the flat of the foot."**

**I found this word in my human physiology textbook.**

**Example: Doctors warn that metatarsal pads in high heels can cause foot problems.**

The written portion of this assignment must be entered into the Vocab Confab blog, which can be found here: [vocabconfab.blogspot.com](http://vocabconfab.blogspot.com). It must be in your own words (not a cut-and-paste from another source) and must be written in grammatical, complete sentences. Otherwise points will be deducted from your score.

**For full credit you must include all of the bullet items above.**

The class will discuss the words in small groups, and each group will report to the full class on a word that it finds particularly interesting or unusual. A vote of the class will award five extra credit points a week to the student who comes up with the "best" word (but only two points if it's mispronounced).

It's possible that two (or more) students will come up with the same words. That's OK, but if the rest of the assignment is not clearly your own work, you will be dealt with according to the university's rules on academic misconduct.

This project will run for five weeks, with the first assignment due Feb. 8.

#### **IV. Trivial Pursuits—or Expanding our Common Knowledge (50 points).**

Several studies have shown that the most frequent type of error in news articles is an incomplete or inaccurate description of a person, institution or process. These inaccurate descriptions often spring from a lack of knowledge on the part of reporters and editors.

For this project each student is expected to contribute to an effort to expand our common knowledge by bringing to class (on the second class meeting of the week) some tidbit of information that you do not believe to be common knowledge (and that will be once you share it with us).

This tidbit should be something that you can describe in no more than a paragraph and can come from your reading of the news, from other classes or from any other learning experience that you have had. In addition to telling the class about your discovery, you will also hand in a written description that consists of no more than one paragraph and that clearly states the source of your information.

This is a very open-ended exercise, and almost any kind of information will be acceptable, as long as it is factually accurate and verifiable. The only exception is that you will not get full credit if more than half the class thinks your information is already common knowledge, or if two or more students present the same piece of information. In other words, telling us the outcome of a nationally televised sporting event will not suffice.

A vote of the class will award five extra credit points a week to the student who comes up with the “best” piece of information.

**Note well that the written portion of this assignment, which must be typed, must be in your own words (not a cut-and-paste from another source), must be written in grammatical, complete sentences and must include a statement describing your source. Otherwise points will be deducted from your score.**

This project will run for five weeks, with the first assignment due March 29.

#### **V. Lab Exercises (250 points).**

Editing is a process that requires steady, ongoing effort rather than bursts of activity. During the semester you will have a series of graded lab exercises. No single one will be that important, which means that if you have a bad day (or two), it will not wreck your semester grade.

#### **VI. Newsroom 101 (50 points).**

Newsroom 101 is a set of online, interactive exercises that are designed to help students expand their knowledge of English grammar, vocabulary and AP style. Over the course of the semester, you will complete 20 of these exercises.

You’ll be surprised—they’re actually fun to do! And you can keep doing them until you have a perfect score. The URL is <http://newsroom101.com/>. There’s also a link from my Web site.

From time to time, you will be quizzed on the specific points that are covered in these exercises.

#### **VII. Research Report (50 points).**

Because a major part of editing is interpersonal communication, you will be given a chance (i.e. required) to practice this skill by making a presentation to the class based on assigned research. Your task will be to examine an incident in the life of an influential editor.

### **VIII. Midterm Exam (100 points).**

The midterm will focus on basic language skills, including vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and AP style.

### **IX. Editing Project (100 points).**

Over the course of the semester, we will be working on an editing project that will require you to apply all of the skills you have learned in this class, from copy editing to headline writing to page design, as you put together a front page of a newspaper and an inside page. You will be given class time to work on this project, but you may also have to work on it outside of class.

### **X. Final Exam (100 points).**

As a cumulative test of what you have learned over the semester, you will receive a breaking news story that you will have to incorporate into the pages you have created for your editing project.

### **Course Policies**

To the extent possible, class sessions will be conducted in a manner simulating the style and atmosphere of a working newsroom. Among other things, this means:

- You should get in the habit of addressing your instructor by his first name.
- You don't necessarily have to show up for class on time but should expect to be severely penalized (as much as 100 percent) for any assignments on which you fail to meet deadline. At a minimum, late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 10 percent of the total points available per day.
- You had better have an extremely good reason for missing class. Unless you come to class, you will not learn the skills you need to carry out the assignments on which you will be graded. As a wise man (I think it was Woody Allen) once said: "Ninety-eight percent of life is showing up."
- Unless you have a worksheet or specific instructions that call for you to write in your answers by hand, all assignments for this class must be typed. You should expect to lose points for material that is written by hand or not in complete sentences.
- You should expect the unexpected.

### **Academic Integrity**

Don't cheat. The university has rules and procedures that could lead to severe disciplinary action, including expulsion, for academic misconduct.

The university's student code of discipline states that "examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas; stealing examinations or course materials; submitting, if contrary to the rules of a course, work previously presented in another course; tampering with the laboratory experiment or computer program of another student; knowingly and intentionally assisting another student in any

of the above, including assistance in an arrangement whereby any work, classroom performance, examination or other activity is submitted or performed by a person other than the student under whose name the work is submitted or performed.”

### **Protect Your Work Files**

If you don't already have one, you need to invest in a flash drive for this course. Flash drives are small, keychain-sized devices that can plug into the USB ports on the keyboards of any of the machines in the labs. You can buy one at an electronics or computer store or online. They connect to any computer that has a USB port, Mac or PC. Remember that like any other disk you have to drag it to the trash to “eject” it before you can remove the drive from the USB port. You will use the flash drive to save some relatively large files for use in your editing project, and it will have many other uses for you in future journalism classes.

### **Special University Services**

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to students with special needs. Contact the Dean of Students at 424-3100 (voice) or 424-1319 (TTY). The Web site is <http://www.uwosh.edu/dean/disabilities.htm>.

### **Edit the World!—Extra Credit**

You have the opportunity to earn extra credit by finding printed errors in the world around you. For the first seven weeks of the course, you can get two points toward your final grade for an error found in a newspaper, magazine or Web site and four points for errors found in other kinds of publications (such as menus, course syllabi, posters, fliers, church bulletins, etc.). For the final seven weeks, the point awards will fall to one and two, respectively.

You will not get more than 10 points from any given publication or for the same type of error. In the final two weeks, you may earn no more than 30 points total.

You must document each error, saying what's wrong—using complete sentences—and showing how you'd correct it. You should also give the name of the publication and the date of publication, approximating if necessary. Incomplete submissions will not receive credit.

Since it is expected that this will be your own work, and not the result of collective enterprise, please include the following statement, followed by your signature, on each extra credit submission:

**I am submitting this report based solely on my own work. No other student assisted me, and I am providing this information to no other student.**

The instructor reserves the right to amend the rules as the semester progresses.

**SPECIAL BONUS: Students who find errors in this syllabus get 25 points per error, but only the first student to find an error gets credit. (There is at least one error.)**

The following schedule is intended as a guide and may be subject to change.

## Course Calendar

DATE	TOPIC	READING	SKILLS/TOOLS	LABS/ASSIGNMENTS
1/30	<i>A theory of editing.</i>	<i>None.</i>	<i>Editing strategies,</i>	
2/1	<b>The editorial process.</b>	<b>Chapters 1 &amp; 2.</b>	<b>Applying news judgment; parts of speech.</b>	<b>Class prep No. 1.</b>
2/6	<i>Editing project.</i>	<i>Project articles.</i>	<i>Story selection.</i>	<i>Project budget lab (5 points).</i>
2/8	<b>Editing for grammar.</b>	<b>Chapter 3.</b>	<b>English grammar.</b>	<b>Newsroom 101 quiz (1-2). Initial editor research.</b>
2/13	<i>Precision &amp; accuracy.</i>	<i>Chapter 4.</i>	<i>Avoiding common errors.</i>	<i>Class prep No.2. Practice article lab No. 1.</i>
2/15	<b>Editing for language.</b>	<b>Chapter 5.</b>	<b>Improving language skills.</b>	<b>Class prep No.3. Practice article lab No. 2.</b>
2/20	<i>Desktop publishing.</i>	<i>Cohen: pp. 1-16; 45-74.</i>	<i>InDesign.</i>	<i>Layout lab (5 points).</i>
2/22	<b>Language skills—2.</b>	<b>TBA.</b>	<b>Grammar &amp; diction.</b>	<b>Newsroom 101 quiz (2-7).</b>
2/27	<i>Style.</i>	<i>Chapter 6.</i>	<i>Editing for style.</i>	<i>Class prep No.4.</i>
3/1	<b>Diversity.</b>	<b>Handout.</b>	<b>Inclusiveness.</b>	<b>Article lab No. 1.</b>
3/6	<i>Wire copy.</i>	<i>Chapter 7.</i>	<i>Editing the wires.</i>	<i>Class prep No.5.</i>
3/8	<b>Story editing.</b>	<b>None.</b>	<b>Start to finish.</b>	<b>Article lab No. 2</b>
3/13	<i>Legal issues.</i>	<i>Chapter 8.</i>	<i>Dodging bullets.</i>	<i>Class prep No.6. Newsroom 101 quiz (1-10).</i>
3/15		<b>MIDTERM</b>	<b>EXAM</b>	
3/27	<i>Intro to photos.</i>	<i>Chapter 10.</i>	<i>Selection, cropping.</i>	<i>Class prep No.7.</i>
3/29	<b>Photos—2.</b>	<b>None.</b>	<b>Cutlines.</b>	<b>Article lab No. 3</b>
4/3	<i>Verbal &amp; visual.</i>	<i>Chapter 11.</i>	<i>Graphics.</i>	<i>Class prep No.8. Article lab No. 4.</i>
4/5	<b>Page design.</b>	<b>Chapter 12.</b>	<b>Dummy sheets; modular pages.</b>	<b>Newsroom quiz (11-15).</b>
4/10	<i>Editing project.</i>		<i>Front page design.</i>	<i>Class prep No.9. Final story budget.</i>
4/12	<b>Headline intro.</b>	<b>Chapter 9.</b>	<b>Headline basics.</b>	<b>Class prep No. 10.</b>
4/17	<i>Page design—2.</i>		<i>Inside pages.</i>	<b>Headline lab (30 points).</b>
4/19	<b>Editing project.</b>		<b>Jumps.</b>	<b>Cutline lab (10 points).</b>
4/22	<i>Headlines—2.</i>		<i>Improving heads.</i>	<i>Project layouts.</i>
4/26	<b>Web editing.</b>	<b>Chapter 13.</b>	<b>Producing Web content.</b>	<b>Article lab No.5.</b>
5/1	<i>Editing project.</i>			
5/3	<b>Editing project.</b>			
5/8	<i>Class wrap-up.</i>			<i>Newsroom quiz (15-20).</i>
5/10		<b>FINAL</b>	<b>EXAM</b>	