

Editing—Fall 2009
Journalism 61-224, Clow 148
Mondays & Wednesdays 10:20 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Mondays & Wednesdays 12:40 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.

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Required Texts

- Associated Press stylebook (most recent edition preferred).
- “Watch Your Words” (second edition), Dunsky.
- You can thank me now for not requiring an editing textbook and thereby saving you upwards of \$100. Don’t spend it all in one place. ;~) We will use PowerPoint presentations that cover what would otherwise be covered in a textbook.

Course Prerequisite

To take this course, you must have completed Journalism 61-221 (Writing for the Media) with a grade of C or better.

Course Content

To succeed in the 21st century, a journalist, or more broadly a media worker, will need a mix of “old-school” and cutting-edge skills. The position of editor, traditionally defined as someone who oversees, corrects and coordinates the work of others, is disappearing, but the function of editor—preparing content for dissemination to a targeted audience—is becoming the key determinant of achievement.

In many cases, you will be expected to be your own editor, using a mix of social, linguistic and technological skills to produce informational or promotional messages that have impact. Because you may or may not have the luxury of working with another editor to catch your mistakes or to elevate the quality of your work before it is loosed upon the universe, you will be expected to be expert in your use of the English language as well as competent in your use of a variety of software programs. This course will get you started down that path.

We will work this semester in the context of an established medium, the newspaper. But don’t make the mistake of thinking that we are working on skills that are somehow out of date or will soon become so. The work routines and standards of newspapers are at the base of many other forms of media, including magazines, broadcast news, PR messages and advertising. By learning how a paper works, you will gain insight into how other forms of media have evolved and their relative strengths and weaknesses.

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:

- Evaluate and improve written texts, identifying information gaps, fixing factual mistakes, correcting grammatical errors, and adding precision and color.
- Make efficient use of reference sources, including the AP Stylebook.
- Use your news judgment to categorize articles and rank them.
- Spot flaws in copy, including 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.
- 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, and 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 are absent for any reason, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed in class by contacting other students. If you cannot make it to class, do not expect your instructor to accommodate your situation by providing individualized instruction.

You will not be able to make up quizzes, exams or other assignments unless you notify the instructor before class meets and provide an acceptable excuse as provided under the university's instructional policies.

You will need your Stylebook in every class, and to ensure academic integrity you will not be allowed to borrow your instructor's or a classmate's.

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 discussions and exercises.
- Up to 100 points for newspaper critiques.
- Up to 100 points for online quizzes.
- Up to 50 points for editing drills.
- Up to 300 points for lab exercises.
- Up to 100 points for Newsroom 101.
- Up to 100 points for a midterm exam.
- Up to 50 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	B-	776 to 800
A-	876 to 929	C+	751 to 775
B+	851 to 875	C	700 to 750
B	801 to 850	D/F	000 to 699

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 875 will translate into a B+ and will not be rounded up to an A-. 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 (100 points).

You will be graded on your ability and willingness to contribute meaningful information to class projects and discussions.

II. Online Editing Critique/Newspaper Scavenger Hunt (100 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. Over the course of the semester, you will be given specific assignments to look for certain things published in a newspaper: perhaps an article, a headline that could be improved or a particularly well-written sentence.

You will document your findings in an online forum created in D2L. To get full credit you will be expected to make an original post and comment on the posts of two other students.

III. Online Quizzes (100 points).

You will complete 10 quizzes covering specific problem areas related to grammar, style and punctuation.

IV. Editing Drills (50 points).

You will develop your editing skills by working on a series of articles during the semester. You will get points for participating in these drills rather than a score for right answers. But it is important that you do your best to improve your editing in these drills because the graded exercises are quite challenging.

V. Lab Exercises (300 points).

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. These exercises are designed to reinforce specific skills from class lectures, and you will do better on them if you try to apply the points that have been discussed in class. They cover both the editing of text and the use of publication software.

VI. Newsroom 101 (100 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. Midterm Exam (100 points).

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

VIII. Editing Project (50 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.

IX. 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

The software that we will be using this semester is generally stable, but it is not crash-proof. The final project in particular will involve multiple steps, and if your computer fritzes out on you, you could lose a significant amount of work. The solution is to save your files—and to save frequently. (Get in the habit of resting your left thumb over the Apple key and hitting the s key with one of your fingers. This is the keyboard shortcut for saving a file.)

You will also need to store various kinds of files that will be distributed to you for the project. The easiest way to do that is by using TitanFiles.

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.

Your documentation must be typed and must itself be free of style and grammatical errors. You do not have to provide a copy of the errors you find (although you may find this to be an easy solution), but you have to give enough of a description for your instructor to understand what you are talking about.

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.

Students who hand in five “errors” that are actually correct will be disqualified from further participation in this extra credit opportunity.

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

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

You cannot earn an A on the basis of extra credit if your base grade is a B or lower.

The schedule on the next page is intended as a guide and may be subject to change.

Course Calendar

DATE	TOPIC	SKILLS/TOOLS/CONCEPTS	ACTIVITIES
9/9	<i>Editing theory.</i>	<i>Editing theory & practice.</i>	<i>Project articles.</i>
9/14	The edit process.	News judgment; spotting errors.	Edit drill; D1.
9/16	<i>Editing project.</i>	<i>Story budgets; parts of speech.</i>	News judgment lab.
9/21	Grammar.	Grammar (including collective nouns and relative pronouns).	Newsroom 101 quiz (1-2); WYW: grammar; Q1.
9/23	<i>Precision & accuracy.</i>	<i>Avoiding common errors.</i>	<i>Edit drill; D2; Q2.</i>
9/28	Punctuation.	Improving language skills.	Article lab; WYW: punctuation; Q3
9/30	<i>Desktop publishing.</i>	<i>InDesign handout.</i>	<i>Layout lab; D3; Q4.</i>
10/5	Usage.	WYW: Usage; grammar & diction.	Newsroom 101 quiz (2-7); article lab; Q5.
10/7	<i>AP style.</i>	<i>WYW: p.42; editing for style.</i>	<i>Edit drill; D4; Q6.</i>
10/12	Diversity.	Handout; inclusiveness.	Newsroom 101 quiz (1-10); article lab; Q7.
10/14	<i>Legal issues.</i>	<i>Dodging bullets.</i>	<i>Edit drill; D5. Q8.</i>
10/19	Whadayano?		Dow Jones Editing Test; article lab; Q9.
10/21	<i>Story editing.</i>	<i>Start to finish.</i>	<i>Practice midterm; D6; Q10.</i>
10/26	MIDTERM EXAM		
10/28	<i>Intro to photos.</i>	<i>Selection, cropping.</i>	<i>D7.</i>
11/2	Photos—2.	Cutlines.	Article lab.
11/4	<i>Verbal & visual.</i>	<i>Graphics.</i>	<i>Photo lab; D8.</i>
11/9	Page design.	Dummy sheets; modular pages.	Newsroom quiz (16-20); photo lab 2.
11/11	<i>Editing project.</i>	<i>Front page design; the centerpiece.</i>	<i>Edit drill; final story budget.</i>
11/16	Headline intro.	Headline basics.	Article lab.
11/18	<i>Page design—2.</i>	<i>Inside pages.</i>	<i>Graphic lab; D9.</i>
11/23	Editing project.	Jumps.	Hed lab 1.
11/25	THANKSGIVING		
11/30	Headlines—2.	<i>Improving heads.</i>	<i>Project layouts.</i>
12/2	Web editing.	Producing Web content.	Hed lab 2; D10.
12/7	<i>Editing project.</i>	Open lab.	
12/9	Editing project.		Edit lab.
12/14	<i>Class wrap-up.</i>		<i>Newsroom quiz (TBA).</i>
12/16	FINAL EXAM		