JOURNALISM 331

Introduction to News Editing

Spring 2016

Room LA-4 107

Mon/Wed 12-1:50 p.m.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 2-3 p.m. (until Feb. 18), 11 a.m. – noon (as of Feb. 23)

LA-4 Room 206F

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this course is to make you an editor. Editors these days must have a wide variety of skills, as well as strong knowledge of the English language, an eye for detail, and a passion for accuracy and getting things right in print.

To be a good editor, you must first be a good copy editor. Therefore, for the first five weeks of class, we will be studying grammar and style from the editor’s perspective. We’ll go over different topics in grammar and AP style, and you’ll take a quizzes on those topics. We’ll also practice your skills with copyediting exercises, building each week on the topics we worked on the previous week. Then, in the second five weeks of class, we’ll focus on macroediting (otherwise known as story editing or line editing). We’ll do a lot of practice exercises, and we’ll go over them in class. Finally, in the last third of the class, we’ll work on writer-editor working relationships and news judgment. Throughout the class, I will expect you to participate in all discussions and complete in-class exercises as though you were a professional editor and this was your job.

By the end of the course, I want you to understand what an editor does and why. I want you to be able to apply copyediting and line editing skills to a wide array of stories. And I want you to know whether this is a good career path for you.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course intends to:

* Teach you basic grammar and AP Style necessary to work on a copy desk.
* Introduce you to basic line editing skills.
* Introduce you to editing “soft skills,” like assigning stories and determining whether a story’s fit for print.
* Teach you headline and caption writing and the use of photos and text.
* Teach you how to edit some of the most common news stories, as well as features and opinion stories.
* Teach you how to work with writers by assigning and evaluating stories, assessing stories as they come in, and directing rewrites of stories.
* Help you learn how to judge the importance of each story and put together a daily news budget.
* Introduce you to the role of the editor in various publishing venues.
* Help you work well under deadline pressure and develop professional editing attitudes.
* Discuss ethics, libel and the notion of objectivity from the editor’s perspective.
* Help you learn how to critically evaluate your own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

ANTICIPATED CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1

1/20 Introduction to class, syllabus review, etc.

Week 2

1/25 Lecture: Common grammar issues (punctuation, pronoun use, etc.), editing quotations.

1/27 Lab: In-class copyediting exercise #1: Copyediting for grammar/quotation errors

Week 3

2/1 Lecture: AP style for editors; fact-checking.

2/3 Lab: In-class copyediting exercise #2: Copyediting for style errors/fact-checking

Week 4

2/8 Lecture: Making sentences better, misused words/phrases.

2/10 Lab: In-class copyediting exercise #3: Revising bad sentences.

Week 5

2/15 Lecture: Headlines and captions; copyfitting and proofreading.

2/17 Lab: In-class copyediting exercise #4: Writing headlines and captions

Week 6

2/22 Exam #1 review; in-class copyediting exercise #5: Putting it all together2/24 **EXAM #1**

Week 7

2/29 Lecture: Basic line editing

3/2 Lab: In-class editing exercise #1: Line editing

Week 8

3/7 Editing by the story, part 1 (news stories)

3/9 Lab: In-class editing exercise #2: Line editing news stories

Week 9

3/14 Lecture: Editing by the story, part 2 (features/opinions/sports)

3/16 Lab: In-class editing exercise #3: Line editing feature and opinion stories

Week 10

3/21 Lecture: Legal and ethical concerns for editors; Exam #2 review

3/23 **EXAM #2**

**3/28 – 4/1: SPRING BREAK**

Week 11

4/4 Lecture: Working with writers: Where story ideas come from; making good assignments

4/6 Lecture: Working with writers: Directing the rewrite

Week 12

4/11 Pairs work: Story ideas, assigning (hard news)

4/13 Pairs work: Story ideas, assigning (features)

Week 13

4/18 Pairs work: Directing rewrites (hard news)

4/20 Pairs work: Final edits on hard news stories; check-in on feature stories

**HARD NEWS STORIES DUE**

Week 14

4/25 Lecture: News judgment, creating a budget, working with deadlines

4/27 News judgment/budget creation: Group work and presentations

Week 15

5/2 Pairs work: Directing the rewrite (features)

5/4 Pairs work: Final work/wrting on feature stories

Finals week

5/13: **FEATURE STORIES DUE**

GRADED WORK AND ASSIGNMENTS

**In-class exercises:** Every Wednesday for the first 10 weeks of class, we’ll do an in-class editing exercise that tests the concepts presented in the lecture. You will be allowed to drop your lowest score.

**Exams:** You will take two exams over the course of the semester. The first will focus on copyediting, and the second will focus on line editing.

**Stories:** You will work with a fellow student on a writer-editor team in the last part of the semester. You will write two stories (one hard news, one feature) that your fellow student takes through the editing process, and you will usher two stories the fellow student writes through the editing process. In other words, you will serve as both writer and editor. You will be graded on the final story and on a critique from the student you’re paired up with.

**Newsjudgment/budget presentation:** At the end of the semester, you will be split into teams of five, and you will be given a slate of stories and a (fictional) staff of reporters. As a group, you’ll have to decide which stories to cover, which reporters to send to each story, and how to treat each story (placement on the page, photos/graphics/illustrations, etc.). You will present and defend your decisions to the whole class.

**Attendance and participation:** Attendance is essential. Anyone missing more than two consecutive classes, for any reason that doesn’t fall within the boundaries of “exceptional circumstances” defined by CSULB policies (see the next page), will be docked one letter grade when final averaging is done.

**Make-ups:** There will be no make-ups for exams or in-class assignments unless you have arranged it with me in advance. If you miss either exam, you may make it up only if you’re reason meets the threshold set by CSULB policy, which defines excused absences as (1) illness or injury to the student; (2) death, injury or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) religious reasons; (4) jury duty or government obligation; (5) CSULB-sanctioned or approved activities. If your absence is not excused, please don’t ask for a make-up.

GRADING SCALE

In-class exercises: 25%

Exam #1: 15%

Exam #2: 15%

Stories (editor/writer): 30%

Budget presentation: 15%

A = 90% or higher

B = 80% to 89%

C = 70% to 79%

D = 60% to 69%

F = 59% and lower

**DEPARTMENTAL INFORMATION**

**Accommodation of Students with Disabilities in Journalism Courses**

Students with disabilities who need assistant or accommodation to participate in or benefit from university programs, services, and/or activities should inform the instructor and then contact Disabled Student Services. Students needing support services or accommodations should contact the instructor of the course within the first week of class. In addition, students should establish their eligibility for assistance by contacting the Disabled Student Services Office (Brotman Hall 270) at 562-985-5401.

Students are to provide to the instructor verification of their disability from Disabled Student Services. Typical accommodations available from Disabled Student Services, working with the journalism instructor, includes extended time for tests, test proctoring, private test rooms, note taking, Braille transcriptions, and referral for tutoring.

If the service offered is insufficient or inadequate, the student should confer with the instructor and the director of Disabled Student Services. If these efforts are unsuccessful, students have the option of directing their concerns to the Office of Equity and Diversity (University Student Union 301) at 562-985-8256. Responsibility for oversight and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act has been delegated to the campus director for disability support and accommodation.

**Department of Journalism and Mass Communication**

**Policies on Grading, Conduct of Classes, Drops, Absences and Cheating**

**Grading:** The grading policies and practices in this class are explained elsewhere in the syllabus. It is the student’s responsibility to read them and to seek clarification if necessary. The student should be fully aware of what is required for success in the course, such as group participation, writing, speaking, completing assigned readings, etc.

**Seat in Class:** An enrolled student may lose his/her seat in class if he/she misses the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. At the instructor’s discretion, a student who attends the first class but not subsequent classes may also be dropped from the course.

**Withdrawal from Class:** Students may withdraw from a class from the third to the 12th week for “serious and compelling reasons.” Normally these are defined as anything of import that is beyond the control of the student. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, death or serious illness in a student’s immediate family or a documented change in a student’s work schedule. Poor performance, tardiness and unexcused absences are not considered a serious or compelling reason beyond the student’s control for purposes of withdrawal.

**Absences from Class:** Grades in a course may be adversely affected by absences, and students should seek clarification from the instructor regarding the course absence policy. Make-ups usually are granted in strict accordance with CSULB policy, which defines excused absences as (1) illness or injury to the student; (2) death, injury or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) religious reasons; (4) jury duty or government obligation; (5) CSULB-sanctioned or approved activities [2002-03 Catalog, p. 75]. *These and any other requests for an excused absence must be documented.*

**CSULB Cheating/Plagiarism/Fabrication Policy:** CSULB takes issues of academic dishonesty very seriously. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam, or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating. If you use someone else’s ideas or work and represent it as your own without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if you can show that you honestly developed the ideas through your own work. Any instructor can show you the correct ways of citing your sources, and you should use quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes and bibliographic references to give credit to your sources according to the format recommended by your instructor.

**Responses, Penalties and Student Rights:** Students should consult the appropriate sections of the Catalog for examples of cheating, fabrication and plagiarism, and instructor and/or CSULB response options in such circumstances. The Catalog also outlines student rights. Any instance of academic dishonesty may result in your immediate expulsion from the class with a grade of “F” and/or other sanctions, as the instructor deems appropriate.

**Student Learning Assessment:** The national accrediting agency for journalism education has established a requirement that all accredited journalism schools assess student mastery of 12 core values and competencies that any graduate of a journalism and mass communication program should possess. According to the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), all graduates, irrespective of their particular specialization, should be able to:

1. Understand and apply principles of law of freedom of speech and press for the United States, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of expression around the world – including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in the United States in relation to mass communications
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
5. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
6. Work ethically in the pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
7. Think critically, creatively and independently.
8. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professionals in which they work.
9. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
10. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
11. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
12. Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.