

# **Copy Editing, Journalism 301, Fall 2009**

(Journalism 201, News Writing, is a prerequisite for this course)

**Tuesday-Thursdays: Noon – 1:15 p.m.**  
**Weinstein Lab, Room 418.**

**Mike Spear, Instructor**  
**Office: 427 Weinstein Hall**  
**Hours: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.**  
**Mondays and Wednesdays**  
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**Course Objectives:** Journalism 301 teaches the fundamentals of copy editing, principally as they apply to all publications, whether online, magazines or newspapers. The course emphasizes word understanding, accuracy, style and the fundamentals of English usage. You will edit news, feature and editorial copy (stories), write headlines and design pages. Emphasis is given to verification of facts, libel, ethics and to printing and newsroom technology. The Associated Press style will be used in all copy. If you apply yourself, you will leave this course prepared to edit well in a number of media.

Texts:

1. "Copy Editors' Handbook for Newspapers" by Anthony R. Fellow & Thomas N. Clanin, Morton Publishing Co. Englewood, Colo. 2003.
2. "A Pocket Style Manual" by Diana Hacker, St. Martin's Press. New York, 1993.
3. A pocket dictionary, preferably "The American Heritage Dictionary," Dell Publishing Co. Inc. New York.
4. The New York Times online, daily and Sunday. (<http://www.nytimes.com>)
5. "The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual," Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. Inc., (latest edition).

**Grading Policy:** Classroom and homework exercises begin with a raw score of 100. Plus points may be earned for making improvements in the copy beyond those normally expected of a copy editor. They may be earned for a particularly effective job of simplifying clearly a complex point, the strengthening of a local angle, improvements in the lead or in the story's organization. Their values vary, depending on the quality and extent of the improvements.

**Remember:** A copy editor's job is not to rewrite. It is to help the writer. Ideally, a copy editor with any publication would contact the writer about any significant changes that need to be made in copy.

You are expected to work to the best of your ability. Don't expect plus points to be added for C-level work. Plus points will be added when the work is clearly superior.

**An automatic F** comes with misspelled names, misquotes or other major factual errors. Deductions may increase when new errors are edited into the copy. Points may be deducted also for other editing oversights, such as failing to tighten wordy or redundant copy or failing to convert a vague statement into a specific one when the specific information is available.

**Responsibility:** Grading in this course is based on the assumption that the copy editor is the last person able to catch any problems in copy before the publication goes to readers. At the very least, spelling and grammatical errors must be eliminated by the copy editor and AP style must be consistent. Each time an error in spelling, grammar or anything else appears in the copy, the publication loses credibility in the eyes of the readers. The grading system, therefore, is designed to encourage careful and accurate editing. **Note: When a source such as a name or a historical date can be looked up in a reference source, you must do this.**

**Course Grades:** Course grades are based on performance in the classroom, on homework and on a series of quizzes on subjects, including style, grammar and usage.

Editing requires skills that can only be developed and improved through practice. You will be required to do much editing in this course. To help you develop, I will evaluate your work closely. These time-consuming critiques are for your benefit, to help you learn and improve. If you ignore them, you will not do well in this course. Final course grades will be distributed this way:

Class work, quizzes	-- 65 percent
Progress and attitude	-- 5 percent
Midterm	-- 5 percent
Final	-- 25 percent

The "progress and attitude" portion of your grade is based on a careful evaluation of your work throughout the semester, considering your application of principles, responsibility in meeting deadlines, attendance and participation, among other factors.

Grade Values: Here are the grades and their values for this course:

- A = 90-100 (Clearly Superior Work)
- B = 80-89 (Above Average Work)
- C = 70-79 (Average Work)

D = 60-69 (Below Average Work)

F = 59 and below (Failing)

**Note:** The grading system applies to all homework, classroom exercises, tests and quizzes.

Some grading abbreviations:

Awk	Awkward Phrasing
Gr	Grammatical Error
Pct	Punctuation Error
AP	Style Error
Sp	Spelling Error
Tense	Incorrect Verb Tense
Tr	Transition Problem

**Cheating and Dishonesty:** Personal integrity is an essential part of good journalism. Therefore, I expect all work done in this class to be your own. **Sign the pledge on all work.**

**Plagiarism:** The easy access to sources provided by the Internet has brought about a rash of plagiarism cases on campuses across the country. This involves taking someone else's words and using them as your own. Not only is this illegal but it is unethical and an honor code violation. If you are involved in plagiarism on any paper in this course, you will automatically flunk the course. It is fine to use material--narrative, quotes and indirect quotes--as long as you provide sources for each so that it is clear to the reader where the information comes from.

**Attendance:** You must be punctual, and you cut class at your peril. If you miss a class editing exercise, you get not an F, but a zero. There is a difference. (F usually is only 59.) Make-ups will not be given. This course is packed with information and is fast moving. If you miss a class, you will have a big editing gap to make up. If you are forced to miss class, get an official excuse and I'll help you make up what you have missed. (Give me notice if you know you must miss class.)

**Note Carefully:** At the end of the semester, if you have perfect attendance, **I will drop your lowest grade during the critical last five weeks of the course.** When you miss class you are expected to find out what the assignment is and complete it when it is due. I don't accept late assignments. If you miss three classes during the semester, you will lose a letter grade for the course. If you miss five classes, you will lose two letter grades. If you miss six or more classes, you fail the course.

**Vocabulary:** Copy editors must have a strong vocabulary in order to fully understand what is being reported. I will give you vocabulary words to learn each week. For each word, you must define it fully, **include the part of speech** and write two sentences that show you can use the word properly. These must be turned in at the beginning of class each Tuesday. A quiz on these same words will follow immediately. You can earn extra

points on these by knowing the 100 vocabulary words I gave you to complete during the holidays. From this list, I will select five words on your regular vocabulary quizzes each week. Each is worth two points. But you must get 100 on the main test in order to get the extra credit. This makes it possible for you to get 110 on each of the vocabulary tests if you get all correct.

These listserves are useful for helping you improve your vocabulary.

word@m-w.com

join-wordoftheday@lists.lexico.com

**Important:** To help you develop as a professional journalist, I will evaluate your work according to professional standards, regardless of your experience, appearance or personality. Grading is based on performance. Criteria include accuracy, clarity, thoroughness, language usage, news judgment, balance and fairness, story organization, conciseness and simplicity, proper use of AP style and libel.

### **AP Stylebook Study Guide for Thursday tests:**

Sections covering A through D should be mastered by Sept. 3. Look especially at abbreviations and acronyms; academic degrees; departments/titles; accused; A.D.; addresses; adopt, approve, enact; averse/adverse/Al Fatah; adviser; affect/effect; ages; aid/aide; Alaska; allege; allude/refer; altar/alter; all right; amok; among/between; annual; anticipate/expect; apostrophes; apposition; Arabic numerals; arbitrate/mediate; arctic; army; arrest; assassin, killer, murderer; as if; assault/battery; attorney/lawyer; attorney general/attorneys general; author; awhile/a while; bad/badly; because/since; bail; biannual/biennial; bloc/block; blond/blonde; burglary, larceny, robbery, theft; capitalizations; Capitol; chairman/chairwoman; chief justice; Chinese names; collective nouns; collide/collision; the colon; comma; complement/compliment; composition titles; compared to/compared with; compose/comprise/constitute; continual/continuous; couple/couple of; courtesy titles; court-martial; dangling modifiers; the dash; datelines; demolish/destroy; dilemma; dimensions; directions; discrete/discreet; diseases; disinterested/uninterested; and duel.

Sections covering E through J should be mastered by Sept. 10. Pay close attention to each other/one another; earth; ecology; either...or/neither...nor; ellipses; e-mail; emigrate/immigrate; ensure/insure; entitled; espresso; essential clauses-phrases/non-essential clauses-phrases; euro; ex.; extra; execute; false titles; Fannie Mae; farther/further; faze/phase; feather bedding/featherbedding; felony/misdemeanor; fewer/less; figuratively /literally; first lady; fiscal/monetary; flack/flak; flair/flare; flaunt/flout; flier/flyer; flounder/founder; following; forcible rape; forego/forgo; fractions; fulsome; gamut/gantlet/gauntlet; gibe/jibe; gourmand/gourmet; governmental bodies; grade/grader; grisly/grizzly; guerrilla/gorilla; habeas corpus; hang/hanged/hung; highway designations; historic/historical; holidays; hopefully; hyphen; imply/infer; in/into; indiscreet/indiscrete; input; injuries; irregardless; junior/senior; judgment; jury.

Sections covering K through O should be mastered by Sept. 17. Look closely at ketchup; kidnap; Kmart; knot; Korean names; Ku Klux Klan; lady; late; latitude/longitude; lay/lie; lectern/podium/pulpit/rostrum; legislative titles; legislature; like/as; livid; magazine names; machine gun; Medal of Honor; middle initials; miles per gallon/miles per hour; milquetoast; millions/billions; minus sign; mishap; months; mph; mujahedeen; mullah; names; nautical mile; naval/navel; nicknames; none; numerals; obscenities/profanities, vulgarities; oral/verbal/written; organizations/institutions; and over.

Sections covering P through T should be mastered by Sept. 24. Here you should look especially at parentheses; pardon/parole/probation; part time/part-time; party affiliation; pedal/peddle; penitentiary; people/persons; percent; percentages; personifications; Peter Principle; Ph.D/Ph.Ds; Philippines; pica; plead/pleaded/pleading; plurals; p.m./a.m.; political parties and philosophies; polls and surveys; pore/pour; port/starboard; possessives; presently; pretense/pretext; presently; principal/principle; prior to; prison/jail; professor; prove/proved/proving; quotation marks; quotations in the news; ratio; ravage/ravish; rack/wrack; rebut/refute; reign/rein; revolver; rifle/riffle; scurrilous; semiannual; the semicolon; shall/will; should/would; sizes; slang; sneaked; spokesman/spokeswoman; sic; space shuttle; sports utility vehicle; state names; straight-laced/strait-laced; subjunctive mood; Taliban; teenager; temperatures; that/which/who/whom; time element; time of day; times; titles; toward; troop/troupe; and trustee/trusty.

Sections covering U through Z should be mastered by Oct. 1. Look closely at ukulele; under way; unique; United Kingdom; United Nations; upstate; upward; Vaseline; versus; vice; Virginia; vote tabulation; weapons; weather terms; weights; weird/weirdo; whiskey; who's/whose; widow/widower; -wise; women; Xerox; X-ray; years; yellow journalism and Zionism.

### **Proposed Schedule:**

Week 1: Course introduction: Preface and Chapter 1: Working on the Desk. Editing symbols, vocabulary assessment, natural word order with attribution, attribution placement, titles and names.

Week 2: Chapter 2: Understanding News Judgment. Bremner test, sequence of tenses, affect/effect. Cutting needless words.

Week 3: Chapter 3: Editing for Grammar.

Week 4: Chapter 3: Continued. Superlatives.

Week 5: Chapter 4: Editing for Precision and Accuracy.

Week 6: Chapter 5: Editing for Language.

Week 7: Chapter 6: Editing for Style.

**Fall Break begins after classes Oct. 9. Classes resume Oct. 14.  
Midterm will fall on or about Oct. 6.**

Week 8: Chapter 7: Selecting and Editing with Service Copy.

Week 9: Chapter 8: Editing for Legal and Ethical Issues.

Week 10: Chapter 9: Writing Headlines with Impact.

Week 11: Chapter 10: Using Pictures.

Week 12: Chapter 12: Designing Pages.

Week 13: More on Designing Pages.

Week 14: Chapter 13: Words and Images on the Web.

**Last day of classes is Dec. 4.**

Useful web sites:

<http://www.copydesk.org>

<http://www.theslot.com>

CJR'S LANGUAGE CORNER:

<http://www.cjr.org/tools/lc>

WEBSTER'S UNABRIDGED:

<http://www.m-w.com>

GUIDE TO GRAMMAR AND STYLE

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/>

THE CLICHE FINDER

<http://www.westegg.com/cliche/>

BASIC STATISTICS

<http://nilesonline.com/stats/>

COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS: <http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html>

GOOD SITE: <http://www.robertniles.com/>