

Loyola University Chicago
COMM 259-201 News Editing
Spring 2015
SOC 003; MWF 1:40-2:30 p.m.

Instructor: Randy Minkoff

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to show you in great detail how to edit copy for all types of publications with an emphasis on news editorial. This includes proper language skills in a world of social media as well as a thorough knowledge of style, grammar, spelling, punctuation, fact-checking, design, Web packaging, headline and caption writing, and editorial planning.

The course will make you a better editor and writer as you learn how to produce crisp, tightly written stories. It will make you more aware of current reporting trends, interpretation of news events and distinguishing different styles of stories by various traditional and new (social) media, and the challenge of exercising good news judgment. It is also an important skill for current and future employment, where accuracy and professionalism are essential.

It is extremely important that you are aware of current news stories and trends. You should use a variety of news sources – daily newspaper, weekly magazines, websites, blogs, radio and television news, to learn how each handles stories and provides details of news events. These will be a point of discussion in all classes.

REQUIRED TEXT

The Associated Press Stylebook, preferably most recent

GRADING

For most assignments you will receive a letter grade: A(excellent), B(very good), C(average), D(poor),m F(automatic for any incomplete assignments). Your grades are based upon demonstrating a good grasp of the concepts and techniques, progress and improvement in writing style, written quizzes, and attendance and in-class participation. In some isolated cases you will receive a 'complete' for an assignment; I will be very clear up front about grade expectations for each project. There will also be a final exam which will be more heavily weighted. All projects are due at the assigned deadline time: papers turned in after deadline will be graded down accordingly. Class attendance is essential; participation in discussion of assignments and issues will be a key part of your overall grade. You must notify me immediately if there is an issue with attendance or assignment. (see next page)

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. We will start on time; lateness is highly discouraged.
2. Classroom discussion and participation will be an integral part of the course and your overall grade. All topics that are reviewed, and how to handle them, will be included on tests and papers.
3. All assignments are due on the day they are listed.
4. If you expect to be absent, notification **MUST** be emailed immediately. It will be up to you to check with a classmate to get the assignment and all information discussed in class.
5. Quizzes will be administered promptly at the start of class.
6. If you miss a quiz, you may not make it up, with the exception of an excused absence.
7. Don't ever hesitate to ask me for clarification or direction.
8. **ALWAYS** be honest with me and with your work. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE(Subject to change)

Week 1: Course introduction; News judgment

Exercises on how to notice even the smallest details. Emphasis will be given on the differences in traditional media and today's media that often includes use of social media and so-called new media (blogs, YouTube, etc). How stories are given their place on a front page of the paper, website or newscast. Decisions about what information to use or hold back in a story.

Week 2: Answering the questions (Jan 19, MLK Holiday/no class),

Emphasis will be placed on the AP stylebook, proper grammar and tight writing.

Week 3: Story structure

The evolution of the lead paragraph; differences in style between conservative wire service writing and more colorful magazine approach. How the web has changed editing style and approach to stories.

Week 4: Headlines, Captions and Images

Headline writing practice; images and captions: best practices

The role of the sound bite on today's journalism and its impact on other news sites.

Week 5: Plagiarism and theft of quotes, information.

Screening of "Shattered Glass" and how other similar influences have shaped the culture of background checks, news editing, etc.

Week 6: Corrections, mistakes, how to approach them in the wake of instant journalism and a shrinking number of editors in handling copy.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (continued)

Week 7: Lab work, preparing for mid-term.
Feb 27– Midterm

Week 8: Spring Break March 2-6, no classes

Week 9: Sports/feature editing

The differences in the approach to non-breaking stories; the latitude sport and feature writers have in their copy and the differences and challenges of their deadlines.

Week 10: Business journalism.

The rise of business reporting, specialty publications, websites and broadcast programs. Challenges of knowing the audience, tailoring copy to fit the demographics of the reader.

Week 11: Instant reporting; breaking stories and news conferences.

The challenge of editing instantly, taking dictation and editing on the fly, the need to sacrifice time for speed in getting out breaking news.

Screening of “Page One: Inside the New York Times” and subsequent discussion.

Week 12: (Friday, April 3, Monday, April 6th no class/Easter break.)

Editorials and editorial cartoons.

A history of the impact that opinion pieces and art have had on history; censorship and how to deal with controversial editorials & cartoons. Writing tight editorials.

Week 13: The future of news and how it will be handled by reporters/editors.

Will editors still be relevant in the future or will the readership not care about style, tight editing or checking of facts? Will social media replace traditional media as the only source of information?

Week 14: Lab work to prepare for final exam.

Week 15: April 27th: Final exam part one
April 29th: Final exam part two