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JRNL 330.03: News Editing

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News Editing

JOUR 330/Spring 2022

Instructor: Dennis Swibold, DAH 432, Dennis.swibold@umontana.edu, 243-2230

Class meetings: 9:30 to 10:50 p.m., Mondays and Wednesdays, in DAH 210.

Office hours: 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment.

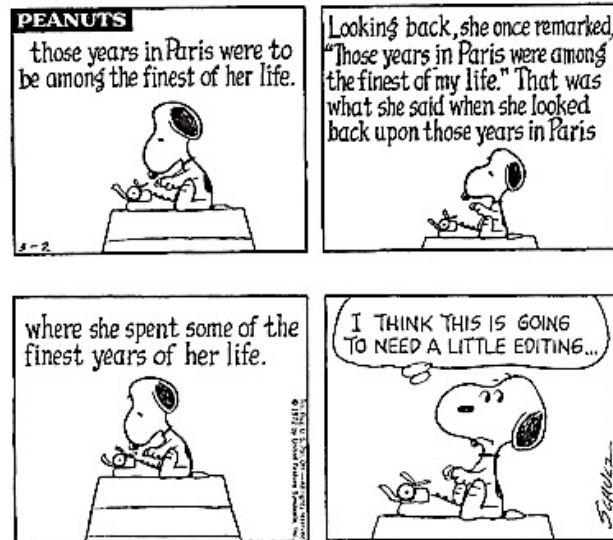
Holidays: Martin Luther King Jr. Day,

Jan 17; President's Day, Feb. 21,

Spring Break, March 21-25. Last day of classes, May 4.

About the course

As my colleague Professor Jule Gardner Banville says, "Solid copy skills are not fashionable. They won't get you dates. They make for lousy conversation at parties. But accurate, clear and clean copy is the foundation of every kind of journalism. It matters."



This class aims to sharpen your skills at spotting and fixing mistakes of fact, grammar, usage, punctuation and AP Style in writers' work. We'll do some writing too because editors are responsible for headlines, captions and some rewriting. We'll wrestle with legal and ethical issues, hone your news judgment (notice there's no 'e' in judgment – unless you're British), and make you aware of the need for diverse perspectives in the news. We'll heal ailing stories while treating writers with respect. We'll even help edit this semester's Native News Honors Project.

Outcomes

Successful students will:

- Sharpen their skills at spotting mistakes in fact, grammar, style and punctuation. That includes mistakes in math.
- Spot and solve problems with news judgment, fairness, taste, clarity and organization.
- We'll discuss the importance of diversity and learn to spot stereotypes and assess a story's effect on audience members from cultures other than our own.
- Write effective headlines, captions and other display type for online and print publication.
- Spot and avoid potentially libelous language.

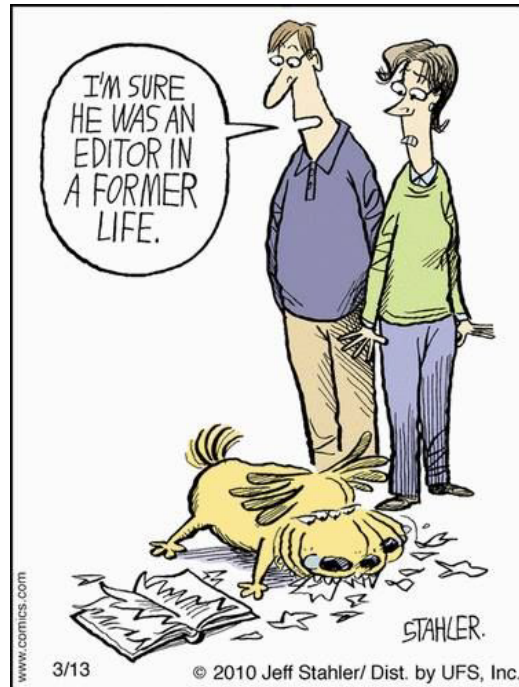
- Communicate effectively and constructively with reporters.
- Improve their online searching.

Required texts

A hard copy of the latest “The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual,” is required. I also recommend good grammar guide such as “Working with Words (Tenth Edition): A Handbook for Media Writers and Editors,” which you may rent as an e-book online.

Other reading

Keep up with local and national news. My advice is to visit a local and national daily and follow credible news sources on social media. It pays to keep up with everything. The more you know, the less you'll need to look up on deadline. Still, be prepared to look up lots of stuff. That's what editors do, so get comfy with the stylebook, dictionary and grammar guides, and stretch your online searching skills.



How we'll work

Every class period will include a mix of instruction, quizzes and hands-on editing exercises, some of which you'll be required to do between classes. You will get a chance to teach each other about editing, so be prepared to make presentations too.

You are expected to attend every class, and I will take roll. I won't let you make up any quizzes or homework you miss due to unexcused absences. If you must miss a class, get my approval **before the absence**. That's how pros do it.

Schedule and Topics

- First half – The focus is on basic skills: style, usage, grammar and punctuation. We'll learn to check for accuracy and avoid stereotypes and prejudice against minorities
- Second half – We'll write headlines and captions, discuss legal and ethical issues and learn to spot problems in longer stories. We'll learn how to give writers constructive feedback and explore how editors can win the respect of those they help.

Grading

- Attendance, discussion, presentation: 20 percent
- Native News Project: 20 percent
- Midterm: 20 percent
- Graded quizzes/exercises: 40 percent

Stylebook and midterm deadlines (tentative)

- Stylebook finalized – March 9
- Midterm – March 30

Covid precautions

Until UM announces otherwise, all students and faculty must wear protective facemasks indoors, and that includes our [classroom](#). I'll keep a seating chart and make sure there's room to spread out with an empty seat between students. Students required to quarantine must notify me as soon as possible. Otherwise, I'll expect you to be in class.

Policy on devices

Unless otherwise instructed, keep your phones, tablets and computers out of sight. Active participation requires your attention to the topic at hand. You may think you can multi-task, but few people do it well. Ask any editor.

Plagiarism warning

Plagiarism is representing another's work (their words, their ideas, their exclusive scoops) as your own. In my book that includes editing a story based someone else's work. Students who plagiarize may fail the course or be suspended. The solution is to do your own work and attribute the source of anything that isn't yours.

Academic honesty

Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code at <https://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/student-code-of-conduct-2021-pdf>

Accommodations for students with disabilities

This course is accessible to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable modifications in coursework or exams, please talk to me during the first week of classes. Disability Services for Students may assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Office of Disability Equity at <https://www.umd.edu/disability/>

Preliminary schedule of topics (subject to change)

- Jan. 19 – Introduction and overview; accuracy
- Jan. 24, 26 – Punctuation, grammar and usage.
- Jan. 30, Feb. 2 – Libel, fairness and taste.
- Feb. 2, 7 – Ethical and diversity issues
- Feb. 9, 14 – Native News Stylebook (Style quiz)
- Feb. 16, 23 – Native News Stylebook
- Feb. 28, March 2 – Native News Stylebook/Climate Change
- March 7, 9 – Edit and deliver Native News Stylebook
- March 21-25 – Spring Break
- March 28, 30 – Midterm review and midterm
- April 4, 6 – Editing features and longer stories
- April 11, 13 – Coaching writers.
- April 18, 20 – Captions and headlines
- April 25, 27 – Proofread Native News
- May 2, 4 – Final exercise and last class