

9-2009

## JOUR 580.01: News Editing

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### Recommended Citation

Swibold, Dennis L., "JOUR 580.01: News Editing" (2009). *Syllabi*. 1228.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/1228>

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# News Editing/580

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## Course objectives

Every journalist needs an editor. No matter how the news business changes, a commitment to accuracy, clarity and good judgment remains at the heart of what professionals do. This course aims to sharpen your eye and news judgment. You will learn how to keep a diverse audience's trust by becoming a better fact-checker and judge of what's news. We aim to make you guardians of style, spelling, usage and grammar. You will learn to write headlines, captions and blurbs to attract your readers' attention in print or on the web. You will learn to avoid libel and thoughtless acts of stereotyping and bias. You will wrestle with problems of fairness and taste. You will edit stories long and short and learn to get the most from those who write them. We'll do it all under the deadline pressure.

We'll measure your learning with quizzes, lab exercises, student presentations and exams. By the course's end, successful students should be ready for internships as copy editors at print or online news organizations.

## Class meetings

We'll meet from 9:40 to 11 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays in DAH 009. Attendance is mandatory, and so is your participation. I will monitor both. Treat this like a job. If you miss a class without my pre-arranged permission in advance, you won't be allowed to make up any work assigned in that class.

## How the class works

We will spend roughly the first two-thirds of the semester building and honing your skills as copy editors. The final third will focus on the care and feeding of writers and evaluating news. We have a lot to discuss. Editing is an art, not a science, and there are often many ways to solve problems. Don't be shy. Expect to be called upon to contribute.

**KEY POINT:** It is impossible to prepare you for all the problems you might encounter in editing a breaking news story. Your success in this course, and as a journalist, depends on your willingness to ask questions, to look things up and to stay current with news.

## Assignments

Expect daily quizzes on style, spelling, grammar or current events. In addition to regular homework, you can also expect to do a fair amount of in-class editing on deadline. You will take midterm and final exams, both of which will be modeled on the hiring tests given to applicants for copy editing jobs and internships.

## SUNDAY EXPRESS

### An Apology

*"On Sunday, Aug. 2, in our article 'Robin Hood and His Merry Hell In The Pub,' we said that Russell Crowe had been banned from, among others, the Brickmakers pub in Windlesham, Surrey, while staying in the area filming a new Robin Hood epic.*

*"We have been informed that Mr. Crowe has never been to the Brickmakers pub and therefore the incident never took place.*

*"We also acknowledge that Mr. Crowe has not been banned, ejected or asked to leave any pub in Windlesham, Surrey or anywhere else in the UK during the shooting of Robin Hood.*

*"We apologize to Mr. Crowe for the embarrassment and stress caused directly by our error."*

## Exams and the Dow Jones Editing Test

Most of our work in the first six weeks will focus on preparation for the midterm, which will be a great tuneup for those of you interesting the copy editing test for the Dow Jones Editing Internship Program, a nationwide competition for the best collegiate copy editors. Winners get a paid summer internship, additional training and a scholarship. See [www.editteach.org](http://www.editteach.org) for more information.

- ▶ The midterm will be taken in class on Thursday, Oct. 22.
- ▶ The Dow Jones Test will be given at 5 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 29.
- ▶ The final exam will be given at 8 a.m. on Monday, Dec. 14.

## Evaluating your work

Your cumulative performance on quizzes, deadline exercises and homework assignments will account for 40 percent of your grade. The midterm exam and final exam will count for the 20 percent each (40 percent total). Participation and attendance, taken together, are worth 20 percent.

**Grading:** When we begin editing news stories, your work will be held to the professional standards of good news organizations. An "A" is a story that I deem to be publishable. From there, your grade will depend on how much work your supervising editor would have to do to make your work meet that standard. A "D" story is one your supervisor would send back to you for major revisions, or worse, kick over to another editor on deadline. An "F" story contains gross factual errors, libelous statements, or an inordinate number of style, grammar and spelling problems.

## Texts and Online Resources

You should have "The Associated Press Stylebook" and "The Elements of Grammar," a good grammar and usage guide. Other handy portable reference works include a late edition of "Webster's New World College Dictionary" and the latest almanac. Get in the habit of bringing these books to class. For in-class editing labs, you will have access to an assortment of special reference books and the Internet. For a good selection of credible online reference works, I recommend the reference section at [www.powerreporting.com](http://www.powerreporting.com). For quizzes and skill-building help, see [www.editteach.org](http://www.editteach.org) and [www.copydesk.org](http://www.copydesk.org).

✎ **KEY POINT:** You must stay abreast of the news. Read local, national and even international news sites regularly, and don't limit your reading to only those subjects that interest you. News editors have to KNOW EVERYTHING. You can't begin to approach that admittedly impossible standard if you read only the sports section or the horoscope.

## Academic Honesty

All students must practice 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. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

## Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor *during the first week of classes*. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at [www.umt.edu/dss/](http://www.umt.edu/dss/).