

**Loyola University Chicago**  
**COMM 259-201 News Editing**  
**Spring 2019**  
**Lewis Towers Room 410 T-Thurs 1-215p**

**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 journalistic situations from blogging to broadcast to print. 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 as well as improving communication skills that may be used in securing employment. 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. This course places a heavy emphasis on current events and how they are reported and transmitted to the public. 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. Class discussion is an integral part of the class as many editing situations are subjective. With that in mind, consider this syllabus as a general tool, **SUBJECT TO CHANGE**, depending upon news events and trends. Journalism is adaptation and do not view this overview as a class schedule that is etched in granite.

## **REQUIRED TEXT**

*The Associated Press Stylebook*, preferably most recent edition

## **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. You may and are encouraged to ask about progress you are making during the term either in person or via e-mail. There will also be a final exam and final research project to be completed.

**ABSENCES:** 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. Unexcused absences will directly affect your grade in the course (as well as your ability to complete projects, exams and quizzes. )

## **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 before the class. 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 at the time the assignment is given. Don't wait until the last minute to ask questions about what the assignment requirements are.
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 because of the nature of current events and issues that may come up during the semester)**

### **Week 1: Course introduction; News judgment (Jan. 19-21)**

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. 22-26),**

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

### **Week 3: Story structure (Jan. 29-Feb. 2)**

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: BREAKING NEWS. (Feb. 5-9<sup>th</sup>)**

You will participate in a real time news conference with a top Loyola SOC official, asking questions and then putting together an edited story based on the information gathered in the briefing. The assignment will be done in class and will be turned in at the conclusion of class. The goals are to effectively take notes, decide what is the lead (and headline) for your website/newspaper/broadcast outlet.

**Week 5: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. (Feb. 12-16<sup>th</sup>). Included will be the PBS documentary on how Facebook has impacted journalism, triggered more charges of "fake news" and how the public has transformed from getting their news from traditional (old) media to new (social media) sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.**

**Week 6: Headlines, Captions and Images (Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>)**

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 7—Midterm exam and quiz. \_**

**Spring Break March 6-11TH, no classes**

**Week 8 Sports/feature editing (March 12-14<sup>th</sup>)**

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 9 Business journalism (March 19-22<sup>st</sup>).**

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 10: Plagiarism and how to combat it. March 26-28<sup>th</sup>**

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

**Week 11: The evolution of communications in American history: From editorials and editorial cartoons to today. (Wed April 4-6<sup>th</sup>)**

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

**Week 12: The future of news and how it will be handled by reporters/editors (April 11-16<sup>th</sup>).**

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 13: JEOPARDY (April 18-23<sup>rd</sup>)**

In preparation for the final exam, the class will compete in Editorial Jeopardy, played along the same format as the television show. Categories will be issues and items we have discussed during the term and teams will study ahead of time to be prepared to win the game.

**Week 14: April 26<sup>th</sup>—In class conferences**

**April 28<sup>th</sup>: part I of final exam**

**April 30<sup>th</sup>—Part II of final exam**

**—Final paper will be due Finals week**