Course Description, Objectives and Goals: Editors perform a variety of key roles within news media organizations. This course will explore those roles while also focusing on critical editorial skills and responsibilities.

Editors are responsible for the final news product, and often work as part of a team to this end. They coach staff and critique their performance prior to and after production, and are involved in such matters as the visual presentation of content and assuring it is accurate. Editors also attend to newsgathering and work routines, and to the adherence to legal and ethical standards of the industry. They also may serve as a liaison with the public.

In this age of multimedia journalism, the roles of editors have expanded to include pivotal ones in the dissemination of news across media platforms. These roles continue to develop.

With these traditional and contemporary editorial roles in mind, this course will help students to sharpen their journalistic skills, while being critical and creative thinkers as they engage in the editing process. Because the news is fluid, editors and by extension students in this class, must be capable of adapting to change and making informed decisions within the realm of solid journalistic standards. Readings, guest speakers, course assignments and discussions are designed to help students achieve these goals.

The Iowa Dozen: Editing the News adheres to several of the Journalism School’s core values and competencies outlined in the Iowa Dozen. Among them are:

- Editing and evaluating with care.
- Writing correctly, clearly and well.
- Valuing creativity and independence, along with truth, accuracy and fairness.
- Conducting research and gathering information responsibly.
- Using media technologies thoughtfully.
- Valuing a diverse global community.

A complete list of the Iowa Dozen follows the course schedule.
Course Information

Required Reading:

*Editing for Today’s Newsroom: A guide for success in a changing profession* by Carl Sessions Stepp  
(Available for purchase at the University Book Store, and online through Amazon.com and BN.com, approximately $49.95 new; $37.50 used. A copy is available on reserve at the Resource Center, E350 AJB.)

(Available for purchase at the University Book Store, and online through Amazon.com and BN.com, approximately $18.95 new; $14.25 used. A copy is available on reserve at the Resource Center, E350 AJB.)

Dictionary. *Webster’s New World Dictionary* is the standard.  
(Used and new copies are available for purchase at University Book Store, online through Amazon.com and BN.com, beginning at $7 used to $26 new. A copy is available on reserve at the Resource Center E350 AJB.)

Readings as assigned and provided by instructor.

Newspapers, television newscasts, and/or online news websites should be read/viewed daily, and critically consumed for class discussions. Editors need to be aware of developments in the world in general, and in their assigned areas particularly. This allows them to best perform their editorial responsibilities. By extension, this will enhance your class performance.

Recommended: Reading good writers with an eye towards news presentation and editing will strengthen your editorial skills. Reading and viewing all news media critically, with creative consideration of how effectively they were produced, will also enhance your skills as an editor. These skills will be routinely exercised in this class. Further, editors need to be well versed in a broad range of subjects, and particularly in the topics in their assigned areas.

Assignments: Students are expected to complete all readings, class exercises and projects. Editing exercises are designed to practice and learn skills discussed in class, in readings and lectures. These will include story rewrites, reflection papers, and stylistic, grammatical and spelling exercises to allow you to improve your skills and to acclimate you to the rigors of editing copy. In addition to providing an avenue for students to flex their writing and editing muscles, the reflection papers reinforce learning while students critically grapple with that information. As the semester progresses, assignments will require you to refine and advance your skills. Correct spelling, grammar and style are expected in all written assignments.

Web log/blog entries and a final multimedia project will be designed and completed by students. The blogs serve a dual function: Students will write about news media content from an editor’s perspective, thus reinforcing their learned experiences and honing an editorial eye; at the same time students will gain the experience of creating and maintaining a blog. Class projects will require teamwork as well as individual performance in a collaborative effort designed to somewhat simulate the editorial process in a newsroom. More information on the blog and final projects will be provided later in the semester.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on the basis of their individual performance in writing and editing assignments, mastery of course content as evidenced by papers, projects and exams, and class participation. Correct style, spelling, grammar and the performance of journalistic skills are significant factors in the instructor’s evaluations of course work. In other words, correct style, spelling, grammar and the performance of journalistic skills are expected in all course work.
**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend class and arrive on time. Showing up late and leaving early is considered disruptive and discourteous to class members. Excused absences are granted on a case-by-case basis, and should be *cleared* by the instructor *prior* to the session you will miss. This standard also applies to late arrivals and early departures. Notifying the instructor and explaining absences, tardiness and early departures does not automatically grant an excuse. If you miss a class session, you are responsible for all material presented and for assignments given during the missed session. In-class assignments cannot be made up if your absence is unexcused. In other words, you miss a class … you miss a lot!

**Participation:** Participation in class discussions and activities is crucial in this course. It facilitates not only your understanding of material, but also that of your classmates. Further, collaboration and discussion underpin the work of editors and, thus, this class. The class will routinely peer edit assignments. Consequently, attendance is an important factor in class participation. Contributing to class discussions and exchanging ideas in meaningful ways on a regular basis are important components of this participation and are expected. Students should avoid being distracted by the lure of computers, cell phones/texting and other electronic devices during class, except as approved by the instructor and for use in class activities.

**Grades:**

Unless otherwise requested, grades in use will include plus/minus A through F. Final grades will be based on the following:

- 50 percent – Editing assignments, reaction papers and exercises
- 20 percent – Final project
- 10 percent – Blog project
- 10 percent – Participation
- 10 percent – Attendance

Graduate students should talk to the instructor about assignments and requirements for this status.

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**Schedule**

This schedule is tentative and may be adjusted to accommodate developments, such as guest speakers and news events. Supplemental readings also may be assigned to address these developments and student learning needs.

**WEEK 1 Introduction and Overview**

- **Tuesday, Jan. 17**  
  Introductions and course overview.

- **Thursday, Jan. 19**  
  What is an editor? Let’s Be Friends: Facebook, social media and editing. *Really there’s a common thread.* A glimpse at the role of editors in news production. Come to class prepared to discuss the news of the day. This will be a routine practice. Most class periods we will discuss and critique the journalistic values, production and delivery of the news in various media.

**WEEK 2 The Editor’s Role(s)**

- **Tuesday, Jan. 24**  
  Discussion of news of the day, editorial content and presentation in the media. Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 1 – “Dynamic world of editing.”
Thursday, Jan. 26

Discuss news of the day. Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 2 – “What makes a good editor?”

WEEK 3  What Makes a Good Editor

Tuesday, Jan. 31

Read for class today to learn more about the roles of editors, Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 3 – “The rise of the new editor.” Assignment due today: Locate information about an editor in a select news medium. Write a paper reflecting on this editor, and include answers to these questions: Why you selected this editor? What did you learn about the role of an editor based on this research and our readings to date? What did you find encouraging and challenging? What did you find discouraging or of concern? Paper should be 2-3 pages; double-spaced; 12-point font.

Thursday, Feb. 2

Meet in room W121 Daily Iowan Conference Room today to observe the DI’s daily budget meeting. Assignment due today: Rewrites of your editor reaction paper. Include your draft with editing comments.

WEEK 4  More on What Makes a Good Editor

Tuesday, Feb. 7

For class today read Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 4 – “The editor as decision maker in a multimedia age.” Due today is a reaction paper in which you discuss the presentation of news in a select medium. Select an entire television or radio news segment, newspaper or magazine issue, or online news site. Consider the visual as well as textual presentation of the news, in addition to story selection, display and delivery. Who is the audience? Was this audience served well? What was done well? What could be improved? Paper should be 2-3 pages; double-spaced; 12-point font.

Thursday, Feb. 9

Read for class today to further the discussion of the roles of editors, Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 5 – “Making decisions about people.” Rewrites of media reaction papers due, with edited draft attached.

WEEK 5  Think Like an Editor

Tuesday, Feb. 14

Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 8 – “Coaching writers.” In class today, blog-editing groups will be formed based on complementary subject/theme areas. Creation of group’s blog.

Thursday, Feb. 16

Readings for class today on blogs and editing. Create an individual blog in class. Come prepared to pitch a blog entry idea to your group.

WEEK 6  Editor’s Perspective

Tuesday, Feb. 21

Be prepared to write your inaugural blog entry in class today. Assignment due today: Visit three blogs written on topics of interest to you, and write a reaction paper of 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font. In the paper, react to the blogs: Address why you chose them, describe the voice of the writer(s), the blog production schedule, visual presentation, and interactive features, such as comments sections. Does the writer respond to comments? How does this writing format compare to the medium you wrote about in the first class assignment.

Thursday, Feb. 23

Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 6 – “Making decisions about copy: Editing for content.” Due today: Rewrites of blog reaction
paper are due, with edited draft. In class work: Small group editing of blog entries. Come prepared to discuss a topic to write about in your next blog entry.

**WEEK 7**  Editors as Specialists

**Tuesday, Feb. 28**  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 7 – “Making decisions about copy: Editing for structure.” Be prepared to write your second blog entry in class today.

**Thursday, March 1**  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 9 – “Making decisions about coverage.” Small group editing of blog entries. Come prepared to discuss a topic to write about in your next entry.

**WEEK 8**  Editors, the Law and Ethics

**Tuesday, March 6**  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 11 – “Making decisions about legal issues.” Be prepared to write your third blog entry in class today.

**Thursday, March 8**  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 12 – “Making decisions about ethics.” Edit blogs in small groups. Discussion of the final project begins today.

**WEEK 9**  SPRING BREAK

**WEEK 10**  Visual Presentations and Design

**Tuesday, March 20**  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 10 – “Making decisions about presentation.” Visuals and Design. As you read about visuals, consider: How might this information also apply to your blog, online or television productions? What are the design concepts of paper, televised and online media that are the same, similar and different? How might they complement each other in storytelling? Be prepared to discuss these topics and others in class today. Write your fourth blog entry in class addressing some aspect of visual presentation and design; work on your blog’s visuals and design.

**Thursday, March 22**  Visuals and Design continued. Work on blog visuals and design. Small group editing of blogs. Pitch ideas for fifth and final blog entry.

**WEEK 11**  Reader Assistance

**Tuesday, March 27**  Reading for class today: Headlines and captions. Write final blog entry. Revisit and edit your blog’s headlines and captions. Assignment due: Reflection paper on preliminary plans for your final project. *Paper should be 1-2 pages, double-spaced; 12-point font.*

**Thursday, March 29**  Small group editing of blog entries, headlines and visuals. This is a chance to step back, review and revise all five blog entries. Assignment due: Rewrites of plans for your final project: include the original with edits marked.
WEEK 12  Editors as Standard Bearers

Tuesday, April 3  Reading for class: Accuracy and Fairness. Sign-up for final project presentations.

Thursday, April 5  More on accuracy and fairness. In-class editing exercises.

WEEK 13  Editors in the Future

Tuesday, April 10  Reading for class: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 13 – “Toward excellence in editing.”

Thursday, April 12  Field work to develop multimedia projects and presentations.

WEEK 14  Professional Options and Tools

Tuesday, April 17  Reading for class: Career options and search tools will be explored. Assignment due: Your resume with a career objective listed; and a cover letter seeking a job or internship.

Thursday, April 19  More on careers. Assignment due: Resume and cover letter rewrites due, include the originals with edits marked.

WEEK 15  Editors as Collaborators and Consultants

Tuesday, April 24  Media project presentations

Thursday, April 26  Media project presentations

WEEK 16  Editors – It’s a Wrap!

Tuesday, May 1  Media project presentations

Thursday, May 3  Evaluations and wrap up

Final projects due by 5 p.m., Thursday, May 10, in my office, room E346 Adler Journalism Bldg.
The Iowa Dozen

As one of more than 104 programs in journalism and mass communication accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), we must assess student learning to assure that each of our graduates meets the following standards.

We learn to …

1. Write correctly, clearly and well.
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
3. Edit and evaluate carefully.
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.
5. Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value …

6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
7. A diverse global community.
8. Creativity and independence.

We explore …

10. Theories and concepts.
11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions.
12. The role of media in shaping cultures.
Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/

Electronic Communication
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondence sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondence. (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Fraud
Plagiarism and any other activities in which students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is a serious matter and is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum. Instructors and DEOs decide on appropriate consequences at the departmental level while the Associate Dean enforces additional consequences at the collegiate level. See the CLAS Academic Fraud section of the Student Academic Handbook.

CLAS Final Examination Policies
Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment at www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/sexual-harassment-guide/index.html for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety website http://www.uiowa.edu/~pubsfty/.

*These CLAS policy and procedural statements have been summarized from the web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and The University of Iowa Operations Manual.*