University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
**Spring 2014 - 19:136:SCA Editing the News**  
4 semester hours  
Tuesdays and Thursdays – 4:30-6:20 p.m.  
W340 Adler Journalism Bldg.  
*Course policies are governed by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. CLAS policies are included in this syllabus.*

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

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 news planning, gathering and work routines, and to the adherence to legal and ethical standards of the industry. In addition, they also may serve as a liaison with the public.

With 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.

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**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. Electronic copies also are available. 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. Annual online/app subscriptions are also available. A copy is available on reserve at the Resource Center, E350 AJB.)

*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 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 while applying writing skills. 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 discussions. 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, including meeting deadlines, are expected in all course work.
Attendance: Students are expected to attend class and arrive on time. Showing up late and leaving early are considered disruptive and can be discourteous to classmates. 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. This is a workshop class requiring significant in-class assignments, which 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 and engage in in-class 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. Using these devices for purposes not related to class will result in grade deductions for inattention to class discussions.

Grades: Unless otherwise requested, grades in use will include plus/minus A through F. Earning an A+ in this class is rare and requires outstanding achievement in all assignments and course requirements.

Final grades will be based on the following:
40 percent – Editing assignments, reaction papers and exercises
20 percent – Final project
20 percent – Blog project
10 percent – Participation
10 percent – Attendance

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

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/or student learning needs.

WEEK 1 Introduction and Overview

Tuesday, Jan. 21 Introductions and course overview.

Thursday, Jan. 23 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. 28  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 1 – “Dynamic world of editing.” *Come to class prepared to discuss the news of the day.*

Thursday, Jan. 30  Readings for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 2 – “What makes a good editor?” and Ch. 3 – “The rise of the new editor.” *Discuss news of the day.*

WEEK 3  What Makes a Good Editor

Tuesday, Feb. 4  Read for class today to learn more about the roles of editors, Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 4 – “The editor as decision maker in a multimedia age.” *Discuss news of the day.*

Thursday, Feb. 6  The DI’s daily budget meeting will be held in class today to allow us to observe the dynamics.

WEEK 4  More on What Makes a Good Editor

Tuesday, Feb. 11  Assignment due today: Locate information about an editor working with a news medium of your choice. Write a paper reflecting on this editor, and address 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. 13  Read Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 5 – “Making decisions about people” and Ch. 8 – “Coaching writers” for class today to further the discussion of the roles of editors as supervisors. Assignment due today: Rewrites of your editor reaction paper. Include your draft with editing comments.

WEEK 5  Think Like an Editor

Tuesday, Feb. 18  Readings for class today on blogs and editing. In class today, blog-editing groups will be formed based on complementary subject/theme areas.

Thursday, Feb. 20  Create an individual blog in class. Come prepared to pitch a blog entry idea to your group.

WEEK 6  Editor’s Perspective

Tuesday, Feb. 25  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 6 – “Making decisions about copy: Editing for content.” Assignment due today: Visit three blogs written on topics of interest to you, and write a one-page reaction paper (*double-spaced, 12-point font*) on each blog. In each paper, react to: Why you chose the blog; the voice of the writer(s); the blog production schedule; visual presentation; writing format and interactive features, such as comments sections. Does the writer respond to comments?

In class work: Small group editing of blog reaction paper assignment. Write first blog post.

Thursday, Feb. 27  Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 7 – “Making decisions about copy: Editing for structure.” Due today: Rewrites of blog reaction papers are due, with edited drafts. In class assignment: Small group editing of blog posts.
WEEK 7 Editors as Specialists

Tuesday, March 4 Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 9 – “Making decisions about coverage.” Be prepared to write your second blog entry in class today.

Thursday, 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. 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 11 Reading for class today: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 12 – “Making decisions about ethics.” Be prepared to write your third blog entry in class today. Discussion of the final project begins today.

Thursday, March 13 Edit blogs and discuss your next entry (on a visual topic) in small groups.

WEEK 9 SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10 Visual Presentations and Design

Tuesday, March 25 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 27 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, April 1 Reading for class today: Headlines and captions. Write final blog entry. Assignment due: Reflection paper on preliminary plans for your final project. *Paper should be 1-2 pages, double-spaced; 12-point font.*

Thursday, April 3 Review and edit your blog’s headlines and captions. 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.

Sign-up for final project presentations.

WEEK 12 Editors as Standard Bearers

Tuesday, April 8 Reading for class: Accuracy and Fairness. In-class editing exercises.

Thursday, April 10 Field work to develop multimedia projects and presentations.
WEEK 13  Editors in the Future

Tuesday, April 15  Reading for class: Editing for Today’s Newsroom Ch. 13 – “Toward excellence in editing.” Assignment due: Your resume with a career objective listed; and a cover letter seeking a job or internship.

Thursday, April 17  Reading for class: Career options and search tools will be explored. Assignment due: Resume and cover letter rewrites due, include the originals with edits marked.

WEEK 14  One Last Thing …

Tuesday, April 22  Editing exercises to review what we’ve learned.

Thursday, April 24  Editing exercises to review what we’ve learned.

WEEK 15  Editors as Collaborators and Consultants

Tuesday, April 29  Media project presentations

Thursday, May 1  Media project presentations

WEEK 16  Editors – It’s a Wrap!

Tuesday, May 6  Media project presentations

Thursday, May 8  Evaluations and wrap up

Final projects due by 5 p.m., Tuesday, May 13, 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 Honesty
All students taking CLAS courses have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge (http://thechallenge.uiowa.edu/) I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook - http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code.)

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The date and time of every final examination is announced by the Registrar generally by the tenth day of classes. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, and then the departmental DEO Julie Andsager, the SJMC interim director, 325-3486 and E305 AJB. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook - http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities#rights.

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. In the Adler Building, the tornado shelter is located in the lower level, accessible via stairwells on the south and north ends of the building. 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://police.uiowa.edu/stay-informed/emergency-communication/.

*These CLAS policy and procedural statements have been summarized from the Web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences - http://clas.uiowa.edu/and The University of Iowa Operations Manual - http://www.uiowa.edu/~our/opmanual/index.html.