Syllabus for

*Editing the News*

JMC 3605:0001

Fall Semester 2015
4:30 – 6:20 pm Tuesday/Thursday
W340 Adler Journalism Building

*Editors perform a variety of important roles within news media organizations. This four-semester hour course will explore those roles while also focusing on critical editorial skills and responsibilities that go with applying them in news organizations and across media platforms.*

**Instructor and contact information**
Charles Munro, Instructor
- Phone: 319 862-1739. (This is a direct line available to students anytime day or night!)
- E-mail: charles-munro@uiowa.edu.
- Office hours: Wednesday 10:00-11:30 am; Thursday 3:30-5:00 pm in E328 AJB or by appointment.

**Textbook (required)**
- *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.)

**Recommended books**
- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* by The Associated Press (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 SJMC Resource Center E350 AJB.)

**Other readings**
- Read newspapers, television newscasts, trade and/or online news websites daily, and criticize them for class discussion. 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.

*Reading note: good writers with an eye toward 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.*
Course description
This course will explore traditional and contemporary editorial roles, while also sharpening journalistic skills commonly exercised by editors and thinking critically and creatively. Students will edit the work of peers, exercise common editing tasks and strengthen their knowledge of Associated Press and other styles to become adept practitioners. Because the news is fluid, editors and by extension students in this class, must be capable of adapting to change and making informed decisions based upon solid journalistic standards. Readings, guest speakers, assignments and discussions are designed to help students achieve these goals.

Why take this course
Editors are the staff members responsible for the final news product, and often work as part of a team to this end. They may not carry the editor title (director, manager, supervisor and producer are among those used), but commonly they assign, supervise and coach staff. Editors’ responsibilities range from such matters as the visual presentation of content to assuring accuracy. Some editors attend to managerial duties, including news planning and understanding audiences, managing people and resources, assuring adherence to legal and ethical standards. This course will be particularly useful to anyone aspiring to work in fields related to the creation, development, presentation and management of journalistic content and people.

Learning outcomes
The course goals are for students to show competency in the following seven ways:
1. Ability to proof and improve written and visual news stories by holding them to professionally accepted standards.
2. Demonstrate a high level of news judgment in the selection and presentation stories.
3. Develop and publish examples of best editing practices to post publicly for professional review.
4. Because a high performing editor is not just a news curator but a manager with skills to communicate, coach, and modify behavior.
5. Knowing how to critically evaluate and, where necessary, modify stories so that they appeal to specified audiences.
6. Demonstrate the ability to revise the content and/or visual presentation for diverse distribution across multiple media.
7. Know how to balance the commercial imperatives of commercial business against accepted standards for ethical decision making.

Required facilities and time
In addition to attending class sessions twice a week, SJMC guidelines also recommend you allot two hours outside the classroom per week for each semester hour or approximately eight hours per week to complete course work.

Collaboration and group projects
Throughout the term you will be working individually on assignments and also on group projects. There is, therefore, a possibility that a portion of your course grade could depend upon the collective quality of your group, not just your individual work. This is common in today’s professional workplaces that increasingly rely on team interaction. Thus, you should make a concerted effort to work well with your classmates, regardless of their skill level. You must also coordinate your time with other members of your group to make deadlines. If you find it difficult to engage in your group work because of conflicting time schedules – or for any other reason, please see me immediately to develop alternative arrangements.
How you will earn your grade
You course grade will be based on how well you perform in the following SIX areas:

1. **MY ICON POSTINGS (20%)**
   On the course ICON “Discussions” site you will find topics: “Critics,” “Hots,” and “Just Thinking.” A new set of these three topics will appear each week. You will be posting material that you find on your own throughout the semester. You must do so frequently since you cannot go back - all the topics are refreshed each week. Explanations of the topics are below. The figure in parenthesis is the minimum number of posts you must make during the semester to earn full credit for “Postings.
   
   - **“Critics” (10)**
     - These are critical analyses posted on the course ICON “Discussions” site under “Weekly Critics” from an item in published media in which you
       - Question or compliment editorial decision making you found in professional media (include link or description)
       - Note an event happening or news of importance in media (include link or description).
     - Post these anytime during the week for possible discussion in class.
   
   - **“Hots” (8)**
     - These are timely news or industry events of the day that you found as you consumed news media during the week. An example would be a story in the news that you feel is worth sharing or an event you have found that impacts a media organization. You will
       - Describe the event
       - Tell where here found it
       - Put it into news context
     - Share at class sessions and also post on ICON Discussions under “Daily Hots.”
   
   - **“Just Thinking” (5)**
     - These are personal written observations based upon of class material such as assignments, discussions, or any Discussions post by a classmate. They can be general (e.g. your personal thoughts about editorial philosophy) or specific, such as:
       - Personal reflections on assignments
       - Comments you think might be interesting to share with the class
     - A response to a classmate’s “Weekly Critics” post counts for this topic but it must appear as a “Reply” on the week it was posted.

   To keep current on important editorial topics and industry happenings I encourage you to post more than these minimum numbers.

2. **“I AM AN EDITOR” BLOG (20%)**
   You will create a personal blog entitled “I Am an Editor” and work on it during the second half of the semester. It will contain:
   - Industry news
   - Audience data
   - Selections from your “Critics” or “Just Thinking” posts
   - Personal facts (resume style)
   - Discoveries and Reflections
I will provide more specific instructions in week 5. If you do not already have a blog, you should familiarize yourself before week 5 with instruction on how to make one.

3. **TRACKING TESTS (10%)**
I will direct you to take a review test on selected weeks in the early weeks of the course. The tests will appear on ICON “Quizzes” and may or may not be announced in advance. These enable you to receive an early grade result so you can see how well you are understand and are applying course material.

4. **GROUP PRESENTATION (10%)**
Early in the semester I will divide the class into groups of 3-4 students each. There will be substantial group work in this course. I will try to divide the group so that they include students with similar interests using these three general interest areas:

   - PUBLIC RELATIONS/STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS
   - BROADCAST /DOCUMENTARY/ENTERTAINMENT
   - PRINT/ MAGAZINE / VISUAL DESIGN

Some changes in groups may be necessary to accomplish the one group presentation comparing how a story is treated across media. I will supply specific instructions and grading rubric for that later on in the semester.

5. **FINAL PRESENTATION (20%)**
In the final week of class you will prepare and present an editorial analysis of a company’s product that includes

   - Name of company
   - The media business it conducts
   - How it competes in its marketplace
   - It’s brand
   - Your critical analysis of the quality of its output

I will supply more specific presentation instructions and rubric later in the semester.

6. **PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT (20%)**
For these courses we use two standards to determine how you earn participation points.

1. **Attendance.** Each class session is designed to provide valuable information, much of it through class discussions, the value of which you miss if you are not there or if you arrive late. Missing and/or repeatedly arriving late to class /leaving early from class will lower your grade. *Ultimately, you are responsible for class material in any class you do not attend for any reason.* Signing the attendance roster at the beginning of each class is an important responsibility. Be sure you do so!

2. **Engagement.** Simply showing up and completing assignments will not earn you a high participation grade. I expect a student not to be spectators but to be fully engaged in class discussions by working vigorously on exercises, by offering thoughtful critiques, and by being an active contributor to projects that require working with classmates. Students wishing to earn the full participation points keep current with text and outside reading, ask for clarification when confused, post items, and engage in class discussions.

   Graduate students must see me for instructions on a graduate project for this course.
Final grade chart
Your final letter grade will be equivalent to the percentages points you achieved in the six areas above:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From %</th>
<th>To %</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>78</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>73</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>39</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>38</td>
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Communicating with the instructor:
You should feel free to communicate with me at outside of class about course content, procedures, standards, or to discuss matters of personal concern. I do not want a student ever to feel constrained, intimidated, or in any way discouraged from using any of the following means to reach me.

- Remain online after class session. I will not log out until I have addressed all student issues.
- Schedule an appointment for a personal call at my direct number or by email. See the first page of this syllabus for contact details. Please do not leave voicemail messages at the university phone extension listed for me.

If you feel I have not resolved your complaint or concern, you should then feel free to contact Dr. David Ryfe, Director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, in person at E305 AJB by arranging an appointment with SJMC Administrator, Rebecca Kick, at 319 335-3390.

Rules and Policies:
This course is subject to rules and policies established by the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. I have excerpted several of the more important ones on the next page. Please take a moment to review them. If you have questions, please ask.
**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences rules and policies:**
The important rules and policies that follow apply to all of us who teach, learn, and administer in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. They also describe your rights to accommodation and the complaint procedure beyond that contained in the above paragraph.

**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 Academic Policies Handbook at [http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook).

**Electronic Communication**
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2 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/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) for more information.

**Academic Honesty**
All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's [Code of Academic Honesty](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/): "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the 【IOWA Challenge】. 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://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/)).

**CLAS Final Examination Policies**
The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. **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. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site.

**Making a Suggestion or a Complaint**
As specified on the preceding page, students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/)).

**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](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) 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 [Department of Public Safety website](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/).
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. This course primarily addresses the items underlined.

We learn...
1. To write correctly and clearly
2. To conduct research and gather information responsibly
3. To edit and evaluate carefully
4. To use media technologies thoughtfully
5. To apply statistical concepts appropriately

We value...
6. First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups
7. A diverse global community
8. Creativity and independence
9. Truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity

We explore...
10. Mass communication theories and concepts
11. Media institutions and practices
12. The role of media in shaping culture
# Editing the News

## Fall 2015 Course Schedule

Check the course ICON site frequently. You are responsible for changes announced in class or posted on ICON.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Have Ready for Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Tue 8/25</td>
<td><strong>Introduction and Course Overview: The All-Encompassing Role of the Editor.</strong> Characteristics of a good editor: judgments news value, media savvy. Copy editing.</td>
<td>Fill out survey</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu 8/27</td>
<td><strong>Editing in a Multi-Media World.</strong> Understanding audience consumption of various media and each’s distinctive editorial challenges.</td>
<td>Newsroom Ch. 1 “Dynamic world of editing.” Work on copy editing exercise (ICON)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Tue 9/1</td>
<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> Compare and critique editing of various media output. Discuss how editorial decisions are affected by business considerations.</td>
<td>Ch. 2 “What makes a good editor?” Ch. 3 “The rise of the new editor.” Work on output comparison exercise (ICON)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu 9/3</td>
<td><strong>The Business Side of Editing.</strong> Media organizations are companies; how companies operate. News of the day exercise. Survey and critique of Media.</td>
<td>Reading TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Tue 9/8</td>
<td><strong>Decision Making</strong> about products, content, and people.</td>
<td>Ch. 4 “The editor as decision maker in a multimedia age.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu 9/10</td>
<td><strong>Editing and Content.</strong> Judgments; weighing priorities based upon company brand.</td>
<td>Ch. 6 “Making decisions about copy: Editing for content.” Ch. 7 “Making decisions about copy: Editing for structure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Tue 9/15</td>
<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> Attend Daily Iowan’s budget meeting. Comment.</td>
<td>Tracking test, Read today’s <em>The Daily Iowan</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu 9/17</td>
<td><strong>Editor as Manager.</strong> Setting accountabilities. Coping with management challenges; coaching people.</td>
<td>Ch. 5 “Making decisions about people.” Ch. 8 “Coaching writers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Tue 9/22</td>
<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> Work in groups on management scenarios. Form blog-editing groups based on complementary subject/theme areas.</td>
<td>Bring in a finished personal Blogspot or Wordpress blog site for posting assignments the remainder of the semester.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Reading/Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 9/24</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td><strong>Editor's Perspectives.</strong> Hearing from the manager. Guest speaker TBA, questions and discussion.</td>
<td>Ch. 9 “Making decisions about coverage”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Workshop: Work on blog in groups</td>
<td>Tracking test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu 10/1</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td><strong>Understanding Audiences.</strong> Research. Discuss and assign blog project. Guest speaker TBA</td>
<td>Audience measurement reading TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Workshop: Discuss incorporating research into blog design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 10/8</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td><strong>Editing for Visual Presentation and Design.</strong></td>
<td>Ch. 10 “Making decisions about presentation.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Workshop: (Consider how might presentation 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?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 10/15</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td><strong>Legal and Ethical Editing.</strong></td>
<td>Ch. 11 “Making decisions about legal issues.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td>Workshop: Work on ethical scenarios in groups.</td>
<td>Ch. 12 “Making decisions about ethics.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 10/20</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td><strong>Comparative Story Treatment.</strong> Begin work on group presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td><strong>Group Presentations I</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 10/27</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td><strong>Group Presentations II.</strong> Sign up for individual conference.</td>
<td>Sign up for individual conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tue</td>
<td><strong>Individual Conferences.</strong> Discuss blog progress and final projects.</td>
<td>Meet at scheduled conference time per sign-up sheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thu 11/5</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td><strong>Professional Starting Points.</strong> Guest speaker TBA</td>
<td>Ch.13 “Toward excellence in editing.”</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tue 11/10</td>
<td>Workshop:</td>
<td>Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu 11/12</td>
<td>Workshop:</td>
<td>Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tue 11/17</td>
<td>Workshop:</td>
<td>Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu 11/19</td>
<td>Workshop:</td>
<td>Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>No classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Tue 12/1</td>
<td>Project Presentations I</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thu 12/3</td>
<td>Project Presentations II</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tue 12/8</td>
<td>Project Presentations III</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thu 12/10</td>
<td>Project Presentations IV</td>
<td>Submit blog</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Course evaluations and survey</td>
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</tbody>
</table>