First, Banish the Punctuation Police: Think Positively

Don’t think of punctuation only as a way to go wrong... Think of it as a way to become a better writer by putting more variety and emphasis in your writing. “For someone who is good at punctuation the words come out differently than for someone who is not. People who understand commas, semicolons periods—and especially colons—produce entirely different sentence structures from people who are no good at punctuation.” —Edward P. Bailey, The Plain English Approach to Business Writing

Note: Some of the policies relating to this course (such as the drop deadline) are governed by its administrative home, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, 120 Schaeffer Hall.

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Description of Course. This class offers an intensive review of the fundamentals of grammar and punctuation so you can move forward in your major knowing you have mastered the basics you need to know to steadily improve your writing skills and communicate clearly.

Objectives and Goals of the Course:
This course fulfills Learning Goal 3 for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication:

3. Writing and Storytelling Learning Goal
Understand that clear, concise, correct writing is at the heart of journalistic expression and that reporting and communicating effectively requires a knowledge and achievement of the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work.

Learning Objective 1. Students will demonstrate the ability to gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences.

Learning Objective 2. Students will display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.

Learning Objective 3. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.

Ouch!
Because we all know it’s not always fun to learn the basics, this will be a very active course. We will do everything we can to keep things interesting--group competitions, interactive exercises on the computer, game playing, and other activities.
Texts:
We will be using a McGraw Hill CREATE text entitled “Writing Fundamentals” ($15) available at Iowa Book. We will also be using a course packet available at Zephyr Copies downtown. **It is essential that you purchase these relatively inexpensive texts and bring them to every class as we will refer to the material in them extensively during class.** (There are no used copies of these materials available because they are new.)

**Expectations: Class Participation and Classroom Behavior:** The success of the class will depend on what you make of it as a group. Participation, as indicated by the rubric below, does not simply mean attending class or speaking frequently. Effective participation means actively listening, responding to comments and building on your classmates’ comments. This also means behaving courteously and respectfully to others. Students who are disruptive and distracting to the point of interfering with the progress of the class will automatically lose discussion points and may be asked to leave the classroom. Small group and paired activities will also be a factor in your class participation grade.

**Rubric for Class Participation and Behavior**

Class participation is crucial, not only to your grade in this class, but to your ongoing success as a student and professional an active interest in class activities will be rewarded with excellent class participation grades. These include students who take notes, pay attention, ask questions, and listen, who make comments that improve the quality of the discussion, and help make the class a productive place to be for other students.

The hallmarks of effective class participation include:
- Contributing interesting, insightful comments,
- Raising good questions,
- Listening and responding appropriately to others’ comments and building on them,
- Attending class meetings and being on time.

In contrast, texting, updating social media are unprofessional, distracting and disrespectful to other students who are trying to participate actively in class. To preserve a classroom atmosphere that allows us to hear one another without shouting and allows students to learn, students who carry on side conversations during class lecture and discussion will have points subtracted from their class participation grade.

**Rubric for Grading Class Participation in the Class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100-90 Pts.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shows clear evidence of having done the reading or being otherwise prepared for class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Regularly makes helpful, relevant contributions to the discussion. (Quality, not quantity counts here.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally offers observations that challenge others to think about the material in new ways.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actively participates and acts as a leader in group discussions and activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not text, check social sites, or read other material.</td>
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<td>Does not create disruptions by carrying on side conversations.</td>
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<th>90-80 Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Shows evidence of having done the reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occasionally makes helpful, relevant contribution to the discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actively participates in group collaboration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not text, check social sites, or read other material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not create disruptions by carrying on side conversations.</td>
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<th>80-70</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attends regularly and pays attention to discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some evidence of having done the readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occasionally contributes substantially to group collaboration discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texts, checks social sites or reads other material.</td>
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<th>Below 70</th>
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<tr>
<td>Does not attend regularly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little or no evidence of having done the reading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doesn’t pay attention to or contribute to group or class discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts, checks social sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regularly creates disruptions in class.</td>
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**Electronic Devices:** Use of laptops, tablets, cell phones or other electronic devices is not permitted in class unless permission has been specifically given. **All phones and laptops must be completely turned off and put away in knapsacks or bags during class time.** Failure to follow this rule may mean being asked to leave the classroom and losing participation points.

**Attendance and Lateness:**
With only five class periods, one absence means you have missed 20 percent of the class. Students are allowed one excused absence. (See description of excused absence below.) Two absences and you lose a full letter grade. (Remember you must receive a C in the course for it to count toward your major.) Three absences and you will fail the course.

Being late for class is disruptive to others and injurious to your own performance in the class. If you are not on time, you will miss important announcements about assignments and class procedures that are made at the beginning of class.

**University Policy on Excused Absences & Late Work:** According to University policy (please refer to [http://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources/student-absences for a detailed explanation of this policy](http://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/teaching-policies-resources/student-absences)), absences from class are excused in the following circumstances:

- Illness or injury.
- Family emergencies
- Mandatory religious obligations—must be documented and arranged IN ADVANCE.
- Authorized University activities—must be documented and arranged IN ADVANCE.

Late work will be credited only by arrangement with the instructor, and it may not always be possible to make up an oral presentation even if an absence is excused. Falsifying excused absences, including on Student Health self-reports, is a violation of the Code of Student Life and as such will be reported to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs & Curriculum, who can impose University sanctions.

**Late Work:** Because the assignments for this class are designed to build progressively on one another, turning in assignments late is self-defeating in terms of your performance in the course and what you get out of it. Full credit for late work is allowed only in the case of an excused absence. All other late work must be turned in within 24 hours to receive partial credit. Your grade will be lowered one grade reduction, i.e., B to C, every day it is late. No late work will be accepted after one week of the original due date. It is not possible to make up work done in class. There is no way to make up work done during class time.

**Communication with me:** I will be glad to talk with you about your work in class and during office hours or at a pre-arranged time outside of office hours as needed. I strongly encourage to arrange to meet with me if you have concerns and not to wait until it is too late to resolve them.

**Email Response Time and Policy**
I will try to respond to emails within 6-8 hours or less. To expedite this process, please be sure your emails have a subject line and a courteous tone. If your email does not demonstrate these minimal professional requirements, I may ask you to rewrite your email before responding to it. Use only uiowa email.

**Class Folder:** You will need to keep a simple two-pocket folder for this class that contains all the work you have done for the class including returned assignments. You are responsible for keeping all copies of your work in digital or print form.
Special Assignments and Group Project:

1. **Your Turn to Play the Grammar Police:** Everyone is required to bring one real-life example of a grammar or punctuation mistake to class (a snapshot on your camera will suffice). These examples cannot be taken from websites that compile such errors or from other students' papers. A prize will be awarded for the most interesting or humorous example.

   *Note: Your best bet is to look for errors in apostrophe or quotation marks use.*

2. **Group Project:** We will divide into project groups: The Commas, the Agreements, the Smoothies, and the Confused. Each group will create teaching exercises for its assigned subject matter. As a class project, groups will help compile a guide to grammar and punctuation for those who come after them and present it to the class in a 10-minute presentation, using PowerPoint and other teaching tools.

**Grading:** Final grades will be determined on the University’s A-F grade scale, with A as the highest possible grade. We will use the plus/minus grading system.

**Assignments and Percentage of Final Grade**
- Graded Quizzes: 10 quizzes at 10 points each: 100
- Class participation and informal individual and group presentations: 100
- Weekly assignments: 100
- Group project: 50
- Final exam: 150

**Total Points:**

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**Finally: Does Grammar Really Matter?**

Yes, according to Martha Brockenbrough, author of the book “Things That Make Us [Sic].” It matters a lot for--

1. **Getting a Job**
   In one survey of hiring managers, 75 percent said it was worse for an applicant to have a spelling or grammar error on his application than for him to show up late or—get this—swear during an interview.

2. **Keeping a Job**
   It continues to matter when you've landed that job. Remember the fictional TV lawyer Ed? He lost his job in a Manhattan law firm because of a misplaced comma in a contract. Just in case you think this sort of thing only happens on TV, think again. A utility company in Canada had to pay an extra $2.13 million in 2006 to lease power poles because someone stuck a comma in the wrong spot.

3. **Finding Love**
   Grammar also matters if you're looking for love. Raise your hand if you'd want to go out with someone whose personal ad contains spelling and grammar errors. That's right. It's a turnoff. It's the equivalent of having spinach in your teeth or having the zipper on your jeans undone.

4. **Understanding Appropriateness**
   Let's say you see a man in a Speedo. Are you at the beach? Let's hope so. In just the same way, using the wrong kind of language in the wrong place can send some pretty nutty messages. Let's say you sent your company president e-mail and you used the number 2 as shorthand for "to." Essentially, you're saying, "I don't need that raise this year after all. In fact, I might not really even need this job."
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sept. 30</th>
<th>Introductions to class and to one another. Discuss our approach and the syllabus.</th>
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| Week 1   | **Pretesting:**
|          | Course Pretest (You’ll take it again the last day of class to track your progress.)  
|          | **And** Can you pass this real-life writing test given at communication job interviews?  
|          | Emergency Online Grammar Test: This is only a test.  
|          | **Notorious Grammar Errors**
|          | Top 20 Grammar Mistakes of Journalists  
|          | **Form Project Groups**  
|          | **Getting Started: The Basics**
|          | Parts of Speech  
|          | What makes a complete sentence? What is a run-on sentence?  
| Oct. 7   | The Secret Key to Getting Punctuation Right: It’s All a Matter of Clauses and Phrases  
| Week 2   | Review Quiz over last class and Quiz over new material.  
|          | **DUE:** Homework exercises posted on ICON: print them out and bring to class.  
|          | Be prepared to teach the class the section of the reading you have been assigned.  
|          | In-class exercises on commas, “the throw pillows of punctuation.”  
| Oct. 14  | Other Punctuation Marks: Apostrophes, Quotation Marks, etc., Agreement, Writing MorePowerful Sentences  
| Week 3   | **DUE:** Homework exercises posted on ICON: print them out and bring to class.  
|          | **Read in text:** “Dashes and Parentheses,” p. 38; “Apostrophes,” p.36.  
|          | “Quotation Marks,” p. 40. And check out the Apostrophe Preservation Society on ICON.  
|          | **Writing More Powerful Sentences**  
|          | **Why Can’t We Just Agree?** The importance of having the parts of your sentences match up.  
|          | **Read in text:** “Shifting Verb Tenses” and “Verb Agreement, p.13-20. “Vague Pronouns,” “Consistent Pronouns”  
|          | **In packet:** Read material on agreement.  

## Oct. 21

**Week 4**

**Writing More Powerful Sentences (cont.)**

**DUE:** Homework exercises posted on ICON, print them out, and bring to class.

**In text read:** Parallel Structure,” “Mixed Sentence Patterns,” and “Dangling Constructions,” pp. 20-30.

**Usage: Getting the Words Right**

**In text read:** “Commonly Confused Words,” and “One Word or Two”? pp. 49-59.

Usage “spelling” bee: Who will be the last person standing?

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## Oct. 28

**Week 5**

**DUE:** Final review exercises posted on ICON, print then out, and bring to class.

Do homework exercises posted on ICON, print out, and bring to class.

Retake pretest to measure your improvement.

Groups present projects.

Final exam.

Bring your course folder to turn in.

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**Resources for Students; the Tutor Iowa site is also very valuable for students seeking extra help:** Tutor Iowa: [https://tutor.uiowa.edu](https://tutor.uiowa.edu)

**College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Policies**

**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:** The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (which includes but is not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor’s office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See [http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/](http://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/) for information.

**Academic Honesty:** All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS 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. 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).

**CLAS Final Examination Policies:** The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. 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 date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar’s web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student’s responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.
Making a Suggestion or a Complaint: 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).

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 Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator 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.