Syllabus for

**Editing the News**

JMC 3605:0001

Fall Semester 2017

1:30 - 3:20 Tuesday/Thursday
W332 Adler Journalism Building

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

**Instructor and contact information**

**Charles Munro**, Instructor
- Phone: 319 862-1739. (This is a direct line available to students 24/7.)
- E-mail: charles-munro@uiowa.edu.
- Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30-5:00 pm in E328 AJB and by appointment.

**Required reading**

There is no textbook for this course. There will, however, be a substantial number of reading assignments posted on the course ICON site. In addition students will be required to bring in readings researched from outside sources. [See “Earning Your Course Grade”] I expect all students to have either a copy of – or access to – the following reference publications:

- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* by Associated Press. It is 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.

Course learning outcomes
The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn an SJMC degree. We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes. You can find more information about these learning outcomes at the following link:
https://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/sjmc-assessment-plan

Parts of this course will help reinforce your knowledge of law and ethics with particular reference to:
• the application of the First Amendment and the rights protected by the First Amendment in different media contexts;
• main areas of media law, including libel, invasion of privacy, obscenity, commercial speech, intellectual property, and the freedom of the press;
• anticipating and recognizing ethical issues when they arise and to reason through them taking multiple perspectives and contexts into account;
• ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse group of people.

Other parts of this course will contribute to your proficiency in understanding writing and storytelling with assignments that allow you to demonstrate your ability to:
• gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences;
• access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards;
• apply above concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media.

In addition this course will challenge you to understand the principles of media literacy to develop the skills necessary to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains. Specific outcomes include:
• demonstrating knowledge of the basic tenets of media literacy and how media literacy relates to personal media habits and professional development;
• developing critical thinking skills to analyze and interpreting media messages through an understanding of media practices and institutions;
• learning how to create and disseminate media messages in various forms.

Other course goals include:
• Ability to proof and improve written and visual news stories by holding them to professionally accepted standards.
• Developing and publish examples of best editing practices to post publicly for professional review on a personal blog site.
• Recognizing good management communication and coaching skills.
• Knowing how to critically evaluate and, where necessary, modify stories so that they appeal to specified audiences.
• Understanding 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 collectively upon the performance of your group, not just your own individual work. Collaborating is common in today’s professional workplaces. Thus, you should make a concerted effort to work well with your classmates, regardless of their perceived skill level. You must also coordinate your time with others to ensure you make deadlines. If for any reason you find it difficult to engage in group work productively, please see me immediately to discuss alternative arrangements.

Earning your course grade
You course grade will be based on how well you perform in the five equally weighted areas. All grading is on a percentage point system. [Letter grade equivalents to points follow below.]

1. ENGAGEMENT (20%). I expect students to be engaged outside of class sessions by posting weekly items for class discussion on our course ICON site, by replying to classmates’ posts, and by participating in discussion themes and threads. There are three ICON discussion modules described below with which must actively engage by regularly reading, posting and offering opinions, perspectives and comments. Students wishing to earn maximum points must post in at least two of the three modules each week class meets or the equivalent of 28 separate weekly discussion posts spread throughout the semester.

   1) Critics is where you post critical analyses from an items you have found published in media. Examples would include:
   • Questioning or complimenting an editorial decision you found in published in professional media along with a description of the decision with link or attachment included.
• Analyzing the reporting of a noteworthy event, happening or news item of importance in media, including a link or attachment to the source.
• Finding and displaying a published mistake in grammar, spelling, word choice or editorial judgment. Students who find and post such “gaffes” earn special recognition.
• Replying to a classmate’s post with an additional observation or perspective.

2) “Hots” is where you post timely news or industry events found as you consumed news media during the week and that you find worth sharing. Such items often lend themselves to colorful editorial analysis. “Hots” posts should use the following format:
• Description the event and its source (with link or attachment).
• Background and context.
• Why you found it worth sharing.

3) “Just Thinking” is an opportunity to write personal observations of class themes. It is a place to start a thread or add to an existing thread. Thoughts can be general (e.g. your personal thoughts about editorial philosophy) or specific, such as:
• Reflections on assignments or thoughts about something discovered in class or reading.
• Comments you think might be interesting to share with the class.
• A reply to a classmate’s “Weekly Critics” post that expands on its content counts as a good subject for a “Just Thinking.”

2. PRESENTATIONS (20%). Assignments marked “projects” are ones in which you will collaborate with a partner or team to present findings to class. Specifics of topics and teams will be assigned and may include analyzing of a media company’s editorial approach, comparing cross-platform products, providing a background to famous or infamous editorial judgments, or solving a scenario that presents a difficult editorial challenge.

3. TRACKING TESTS (20%) You will take two review tests designed to 1) ensure that you are tracking with course content to that point; and, 2) to give you an indication of how well you are understand and are applying learning concepts. Your point score will be equivalent to the percentage of correct responses over all test questions.

4. “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

You learned how to construct a Wordpress site in the prerequisite, basic multi-media course. If you do not have a saved blog, or if you need a brush up on how to construct one, you should seek help to familiarize yourself with the process before week 5.
5. **PARTICIPATION (20%).** 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, if you arrive late, or offer little interaction in class. Your participation grade is made up of two components:

   a) *Attendance.* Missing and/or repeatedly arriving late to class /leaving early from class can lower your grade. Signing the attendance roster at the beginning of each class is an important responsibility. If you have an unavoidable conflict or are ill, please notify me as soon as possible. *Ultimately, you are responsible for class material in any class you do not attend for any reason.*

   b) *Interaction.* I expect a student not to be spectators but to be fully engaged in class discussions by interacting with classmates, by offering constructive critiques and by being an active contributor to team projects. Questions about my application of this component are always welcome.

**Final letter grade chart**
Your final letter grade will be equivalent to the percentages points you achieved in the five areas above:

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<th>Grade</th>
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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 https://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 https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/ for information.

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom

The University of Iowa is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University's Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, diversity@uiowa.edu, or visit diversity.uiowa.edu.

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.
# Editing the News
## Course Plan

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>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Out of Class Preparation</th>
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<td>Subject to change!</td>
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| 1    | Tue 8/22 | **Introduction and Course Overview**  
What is an Editor? What Does and Editor Do? | Fill out survey (ICON)  
Re-read: pp.3-4 (above) for Hots, Critics posting formats. |
|      | Thu 8/24 | **Editor as Judge:** Characteristics of a good editor: judgments news value, media savvy.  
Understanding audience consumption of various media and each’s distinctive editorial challenges.  
Understand curation vs. editing.  
Survey editing across various media platforms.  
Discuss how editorial decisions are affected by business considerations. | Assignment comparative publication exercise (work with partner)  
Read: “The News Can Survive Newspapers” |
| 2    | Tue 8/29 | **Competition and the consumer experience:** Media organizations are companies. Discuss: how companies compete for consumers. | Present comparative publications exercise with partner in class |
|      | Thu 8/31 | **Editorial decision making products and people.** Judgments; weighing priorities based upon company brand in composing and editing content. | Note: copy editing exercise (assigned in class)  
Read: “Reinventing Student Media” |
| 3    | Tue 9/5  | **Workshop:** Attend today’s budget meeting hosted by Grace Pateras, Editor-in-Chief, The Daily Iowan | Prepare to discuss ideas for student media |
|      | Thu 9/7  | **Copy editing and proof reading**  
Guest speaker: Laura Behrens, Founder and Owner, Red Pen Communications | Work on copy editing exercise (due next class) |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tue 9/12</td>
<td><strong>Proofing Workshop of copy editing exercises,</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>test yourself: grammar, spelling, punctuation.</strong></td>
<td>Submit copy editing exercise</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thu 9/14</td>
<td><strong>The Editor as Manager</strong> Setting accountabilities. Coping with management challenges.</td>
<td>Read: [TBA]</td>
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<td><em>Workshop:</em> Work in groups on management scenarios.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Tue 9/19</td>
<td><strong>Challenges of Public Affairs/Investigative Reporting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Guest speaker: Lyle Muller, Executive Director Editor, Iowa Watch</td>
<td>Read: “Blog Examples” (ICON)</td>
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<td>Thu 9/21</td>
<td><strong>Building a personal “I Am An Editor” blog</strong></td>
<td>Compose personal Wordpress blog site with title, description, and statement of purpose.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Tue 9/26</td>
<td><strong>Tracking Test 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;<em>Workshop:</em> Work on blog in groups</td>
<td>Work on blog.</td>
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<td>Thu 9/28</td>
<td><strong>Understanding Audiences.</strong> Research. Guest speaker TBA.</td>
<td>Read: [TBA]</td>
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<td>Discuss incorporating research into blog design</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Tue 10/3</td>
<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> 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>
<td>Read: “Good Taste and Bad Journalism”</td>
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<td>Thu 10/5</td>
<td><strong>The Editor as Teacher</strong> Developing skills of coaching staff and setting rules for taste, decency, and acceptability. Discuss examples of lapses in editing for taste</td>
<td>Review: content judgment team exercise for presentation Tue. Read: “Duties of Editors and How to Help Writers”</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tue 10/10</td>
<td><strong>Content judgments presentations I</strong></td>
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<td>Thu 10/12</td>
<td><strong>Content judgments presentations II</strong></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tue 10/17</td>
<td><strong>Ethics and Legal Issues.</strong> Work on ethical scenarios in groups.</td>
<td>Read: “Ten Mistakes Reporters Make Covering Polls” and “Media Accuracy is Road Kill”</td>
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<td>Thu 10/19</td>
<td><strong>Accuracy Greatest gaffes</strong> - 10 deadly sins.</td>
<td>Read and prepare accuracy assignment to present with partner</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Tue 10/24</td>
<td><strong>Accuracy Presentations I</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thu 10/26</td>
<td><strong>Accuracy Presentations II</strong></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Tue 10/31</td>
<td><strong>Tracking Test 2</strong></td>
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<td>Thu 11/2</td>
<td><strong>Blogs critique Workshop:</strong> Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
<td>Work on blog site presentation</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Tue 11/7</td>
<td><strong>Editing Across Platforms.</strong></td>
<td>Review assignment “Cross Platform (Written and Oral) Project”</td>
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<td>Thu 11/9</td>
<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Tue 11/14</td>
<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
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<td>Thu 11/16</td>
<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> Work on individual blogs and presentations</td>
<td>Submit written piece of Cross Platform Project</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td><strong>Thanksgiving Break</strong></td>
<td>No classes</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Tue 11/28</td>
<td><strong>Cross Platform Oral Presentations I</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thu 11/30</td>
<td><strong>Cross Platform Oral Presentations II</strong></td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Tue 12/5</td>
<td><strong>Final Personal Blogs Published</strong> <strong>Workshop:</strong> personalizing content of your blog</td>
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<td>Thu 12/7</td>
<td><strong>Blog Critique Sign Off</strong></td>
<td>Submit blog Course evaluations and survey</td>
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