

JOUR 419 – Multimedia Editing

Fall 2016 Syllabus

Texts:

- Associated Press Stylebook (this must be the 2015 or 2016 edition)
- “The Associated Press Guide to News Writing” by Rene J. Cappon
- “Grammar Girl’s Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing” by Mignon Fogarty
- You will need to have access to a reputable (American Heritage or Merriam-Webster) dictionary or dictionary app
- You will be expected to keep up with current news (local, national and global). Read the University Daily Kansan, the Lawrence Journal-World and the New York Times.

Instructors

Lisa McLendon, lisamclendon@ku.edu

Kim Callahan, callahan@ku.edu

Course description

Editing will help you clean up, slim down and polish writing – others’ and your own – to make it accurate, clear and correct. Editors are the grammar police and the nitpickers, but also the ones who cut, add, move, restructure and clarify writing, and the ones who check facts, do the math and ask uncomfortable questions – editors are **the last line of defense** and, most importantly, **the**

first readers. If editors do their jobs well, no one notices.



The most important part of editing is **thinking critically**. This involves being skeptical, scrutinizing information and digging beneath the surface so that the story is as complete, fair and relevant as it can be.

And at heart, editing is about **understanding language**. Editors need to have a strong grounding in grammar, punctuation, style and usage. Through that lens, editors focus on issues big and small. Through proper grammar and usage, verified facts and correct punctuation they create clarity and trust, but editors also save news organizations from accusations of insensitivity, bias and libel.

Course goals

You don’t have to aspire to be an editor yourself to benefit from this class. That’s OK. The **skills you develop in editing will be useful in nearly any job** you hold for the rest of your life, plus they will make your writing better. (Feel free to be skeptical; that’s what editing is all about. But we think it’s true.) In a nutshell, here’s what you should learn in this class:

- Learn to edit copy for **correct grammar, usage, style, spelling and punctuation.**
- Learn to check for **factual accuracy.**
- Learn to eliminate **bias** in language, make sure a **diversity** of voices is represented and ensure copy is **fair**, and discuss other **legal and ethical** issues that editors deal with.
- Learn to write effective **headlines, cutlines** and other **display type** for a variety of platforms, including **social media.**
- Learn to **organize** stories sensibly and to understand how words, data, images and display type work together to form a **coherent package.**
- Learn to check and critically evaluate **numbers** and **statistics** in news stories and polls.
- Learn to recognize **lapses in logic and judgment**, and to **ask appropriate questions** about missing or incomplete information.
- Learn to distinguish the approaches used in **print, online** and **broadcast** media.
- Learn to more critically evaluate the **credibility** of news and information sources.



Course requirements

Much of the work in this class will be hands-on, as editing is a skill developed through practice. Because this is a hybrid class, it is imperative that you keep up with the online material. Each week's reading material and quizzes become available at noon the Thursday before that week and should be completed **before** that week's class meetings. Homework assignments, in-class exercises and quizzes will reinforce and measure what we've covered.

Deadlines are very important in journalism, and so are strictly enforced in this class. Late or missed work will not receive credit. No exceptions. Zeroes kill your grade, so be careful about this.

Homework and online assignments: These are assignments to reinforce the subject material. They are due by class time on the date noted by the instructor. If you do not turn in a homework assignment on time, it will not count. No exceptions.

In-class exercises: We will do exercises in class to practice specific skills. Some are graded and some are not. If you are not in class, you may not make up the exercises you miss.

Error spotters: One "error spotters" assignment is due every week by Thursday. These are:

- **errors** in spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage, fact or math (**NOT** AP style – it has to be something that would be wrong anywhere)
- that **YOU** see (you **MAY NOT** use something that someone else found and shared)
- in a **professional or commercial piece of communication:** a news story, TV super or crawl, advertisement, promotional material, corporate publication, sign, brochure, etc. (for example, a friend's text message or an internet comment doesn't count, but a CNN tweet or a mistake in a sign or menu does)



A good "error spotter."

These can be spotted in print, on TV or online. You need to submit a clip, screen grab or photo of the error with three pieces of information: 1) **where** you spotted it, 2) **what** the error is, and 3) **how** it should be fixed. **Do not** just submit a picture without comment. These are basically free points, but skipping them can negatively affect your grade, so keep up.

Quizzes: After you cover each week's online material, there is a **content quiz** on Blackboard over important concepts. This quiz can be taken multiple times and does not count for a grade, but you need a score of 100 percent to unlock the grammar/style/usage quiz, which DOES count for a grade. Each **grammar quiz** must be completed by 11:59 p.m. Monday – it shuts off then and if you haven't taken it, you get a zero. You may take each grammar quiz only once. If you miss a quiz, you may not make it up. No exceptions. Also, be prepared for a weekly **current-events quiz** in class.

Extra credit: There is no extra credit. Don't ask. Just come to class and do your work.

Grading

Grading for J419 is on a plus/minus system:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93+	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	59-

Your final grade will be determined according to this breakdown:

40 percent: Graded assignments and exercises (lowest grade is dropped)

30 percent: Quizzes (lowest grade is dropped)

20 percent: Ungraded assignments and exercises, including error spotters

10 percent: Participation/discussion

You will receive a rubric to show you how news story editing assignments are graded.



Participation

Engaged participation in this course is crucial to success. You should pay attention in class (in other words, don't sit in class texting or watching videos – it's distracting to your fellow students) and participate thoughtfully and respectfully in class discussions. Please feel free to ask questions whenever you need to – the only “dumb question” is the one you don't ask, because by not asking, you remain ignorant.

Attendance

In the workplace, people who fail to show up without notice are soon fired. You should approach this course as you would your chosen profession. As such, **attendance is mandatory**. The time you spend in class is an important part of your learning, and the exercises we do in class count for a significant part of your grade. Come to class prepared to participate and discuss. You are responsible for budgeting your time and meeting deadlines for assignments.

If you cannot attend class, or if you are going to be late, let us know, preferably **before** class. If you miss a class, you will not be allowed to make up in-class work from that day, though you may turn in any homework due that day **ahead of time** to receive credit.

If you miss two or more classes, expect your grade to suffer significantly.

The fine print



Academic misconduct

In this class, and in all journalism classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts, and research. In a work setting, if you choose to violate professional standards, you will be fired. In this class, if you choose to violate the standards for academic integrity, you'll fail the course, and you may be expelled from or denied admission to the J-School.

We strictly follow the code of Academic Misconduct detailed in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. University policies covering academic misconduct are spelled out in the current Student Handbook, which is available free in Room 213 of Strong Hall.

Here's some clarification:

If you use or attempt to use any unauthorized materials during a test, or if you give any unauthorized materials to someone else during a test, this is cheating. Unauthorized materials include written materials, such as notes on paper or on electronic devices, and nonverbal communication, such as coughing or kicking. Copying an answer from someone else's work is also cheating.

Plagiarism is stealing. It is taking someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words and presenting them as your own original work. This includes taking ideas from written sources, broadcast sources, online sources or work done by another student. Copying and pasting material directly from the Internet and presenting that work as if it were your own – that is, without quotation marks and proper attribution – is plagiarism. You will often need to incorporate another person's ideas, reporting or words into the stories you write, to make a point or to provide background. When you do this, **it is essential that you attribute that information:** explain where it came from and give credit where credit is due.

Fabrication means that you made up information, sources or quotes. This can include making up an entire interview or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic to make it sound better. **Don't do it. Ever.** No matter how pressed you are for time, it's far better to risk the wrath of your boss than to risk your credibility as a journalist.

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication or Falsification

The School of Journalism **does not** tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence or falsification of evidence.

Penalties for engaging in such behavior can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the school.

If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please ask your instructor.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

Content “recycling”: The expectation in this class is that you’ve come to learn, to be creative, to stretch your imagination, and expand your skills. Therefore, all the work you do in this class must be original. That means no “recycling” of your previous interviews, assignments, stories or work from other classes. The journalism school regards any efforts to recycle material as academic dishonesty.

Disability accommodation

If you have a special need that may affect your learning and for which you wish to request accommodation, contact KU Student Access Services in the Academic Achievement and Access Center (AAAC), which coordinates accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. Information about services can be found at <http://disability.ku.edu/>, at the office in Strong Hall Room 22, or by calling 785-864-4064. Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course. You will likely need official documentation and requests from the AAAC before accommodations are made, and accommodations cannot be made retroactively.

Journalism School and financial aid policy on classroom attendance

"Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent."

"The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid."

Classroom lectures and notes

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor’s property. Video and audio recording of lectures without instructor consent is prohibited.

Pursuant to the University of Kansas’ [Policy on Commercial Note-Taking Ventures](#), commercial note-taking is not permitted in J419. Lecture notes and course materials may be taken for personal use and may not be sold to any person or entity in any form. **Please note:** note-taking provided by a student volunteer for a student with a disability, as a reasonable accommodation under the ADA, is **not the same** as commercial note-taking and is **not** covered under this policy.



J419 schedule of topics

Unit 1: Intro; style

- What editing is and why we need it
- What AP style is and how we use it

Unit 2: Grammar and clarity

- Common grammar errors and how to fix them
- How to make writing more clear and direct

Unit 3: Punctuation, quotes and concise writing

- Using punctuation correctly
- Proper punctuation and formatting of direct quotes
- How to make writing more concise

Unit 4: Fact-checking

- What facts you should check
- Where to check facts
- How to judge a reliable source

Unit 5: News judgment and leads

- Review of what makes something newsworthy
- Ensure a news lead is clear, appropriate and accurate

Unit 6: Libel (and other ways to get into trouble)

- How to recognize potential libel in news stories
- How to fix potentially libelous statements

Unit 7: Taste, bias and fairness

- Understanding your audience, and potential problems involving taste, graphic details and stereotyping
- Ensure fair coverage of news events and sources

Unit 8: More on responsible journalism

- How to be aware of and remove bias from language, particularly concerning race, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation

Unit 9: Headlines

- What headlines look like
- The elements of a good headline

Unit 10: More on display type (mobile, search and social media headlines, plus summaries)

- Various forms of display type and how they differ, depending on platform and audience
- How to write clear, concise summaries of news stories

Unit 11: Outlines and other editorial responsibilities with photos

- What goes into a good outline
- Editors' roles in working with photos

Unit 12: Broadcast style and writing for the Web

- Elements of broadcast writing style
- How to turn a broadcast script into an online story

Unit 13: Math and graphics

- Review of percents, percentage points and other math that comes up in news stories
- Choosing an appropriate graphic for a news story
- What to look for when editing graphics

Unit 14: Social media and online content

- How people read online
- Emphasizing accuracy in an era of immediate news
- Knowing your audience and writing for them

Unit 15: Pulling it all together

- Review of concepts
- Tips for professional development