

# Communications 332

## Editing and Page Design

Fall 2009

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### Professor Tom Clanin

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Course Web site: <http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/tclanin/Comm332/Comm332.htm>

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 1 to 3 p.m. and by appointment

**Note:** Please put "Comm 332" in the subject line of any e-mail you send me.

The university catalog states: A student who registers for a class whose name appears on the first-day-of-class list should attend all class meetings in the first week. ... if a student is absent without notifying the instructor or department office within 24 hours after any meeting in the first week, the student may be dropped administratively by the instructor.

Prerequisites: Comm 201 or equivalent.

### Catalog Description

Principles and practice of newspaper editing: copy improvement, headline writing, news photos and captions, wire services, typography, copy schedules and control, page design and layout, law and ethics.

### Course Description

Skills involved in applying the principles and practice of newspaper editing and layout include:

- Determining newsworthiness
- Improving copy
- Writing headlines
- Handling photos and captions
- Handling wire service copy
- Working with typography
- Laying out eye-catching pages
- Understanding media law and ethics

## Background

This is an advanced journalism course, not a grammar course. Students must have mastered the fundamentals of writing and English grammar before they enroll in this course. Those who are deficient in grammar and spelling are urged to take an English refresher course.

Copy editors are an integral part of the team that produces newspapers each day. They are the last people to work with copy and pages before the paper goes to press. These editors check the reporters' stories for errors in grammar, spelling, word usage and style. But catching and correcting mechanical errors is only a small part of an editor's job. Copy editors also can serve as writing coaches to help reporters create sharp, award-winning copy. Copy editors must have a working knowledge of myriad topics so they can spot factual errors in stories and inconsistencies from previous stories. They must be able to recognize potentially libelous statements. In short, copy editors are the last line of defense for a newspaper's credibility.

Copy editors don't just work with words. Many copy editors also lay out news pages. They need to know the principles of good page layout as well as how to work with photos and graphics to create eye-catching news pages. Learning these skills requires an understanding of design along with a working knowledge of specialized computer software.

Copy editors might serve as wire editors, monitoring the paper's wire services and selecting and editing the national and international stories and briefs.

In addition, copy editors are expected to keep abreast with current events on topics ranging from the sports and entertainment to world, national and local news. Knowing what is going on in the world is essential for good news judgment and for ensuring that the stories going into the paper are current.

**Note:** While we be discussing some common grammar errors in class, you are expected to understand the rules of grammar and to be able to spot grammar errors in copy. Here are some Web sites that can you with your grammar:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html>

<http://www.aliscot.com/bigdog/>

<http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~russial/grammar/grambo.html#thetest>

[http://www.geocities.com/gene\\_moutoux/diagrams.htm](http://www.geocities.com/gene_moutoux/diagrams.htm)

<http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/errors.html> (Be sure to scroll down.)

## Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be expected to demonstrate an ability to:

- Make informed news judgments regarding the use of stories, graphics, photos and photo captions;
- Make informed news judgments based on legal and ethical considerations;
- Effectively use wire copy to develop roundup stories, rewrite leads, reorganize stories and edit several lengthy wire stories into a column of briefs;

- Critically evaluate and improve others’ copy, meticulously scanning it for inaccuracies; for comprehension; for writing quality; and for errors in word usage, AP style, punctuation and spelling;
- Write effective headlines that are clear and concise and meet column-width and type-size requirements;
- Apply the principles of page design – both for print and for the Web – to develop effective presentations;
- Use computer technology to edit stories, write headlines and captions and design pages; and
- Evaluate and crop photographs.

### **Texts And Tools**

- “Copy Editors Handbook for Newspapers,” by Anthony R. Fellow and Thomas Clanin, 3rd Ed.
- The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, recent edition
- A computer with Internet access
- A flash (aka jump or thumbnail) drive
- Access to a daily newspaper

### **Course Procedures**

Class time will be divided between instruction and the realistic application of each unit of study. Because some assignments require a computer with publication software, the lab time sometimes may be used for homework assignments.

### **Classroom Conduct**

- Students may not use the computers during lectures.
- Students may not work on homework for this class or other classes during class lectures or labs without approval of the instructor.
- All work must be original. Students copying another person’s assignment will receive a zero for that assignment. Two students turning in identical homework will each receive a zero for that assignment.
- Students caught cheating on quizzes or tests will receive a zero for that quiz or test.

### **Student Assessment**

Students’ assessment is based on homework assignments, quizzes, presentations and a final project. No midterm or final tests are given in this course. Grades are determined by:

Final project	400 points
Editing tests	300 points
Current events quizzes	150 points
Homework	150 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,000 points</b>

Grading policy for this course includes plus grades (C+, B+ etc.) but not minus grades (C-, B- etc.). Letter grades are determined by the amount of points you earn:

985 to 1,000 points	A+	700 to 784 points	C
900 to 984 points	A	685 to 699 points	D+
885 to 899 points	B+	600 to 684 points	D
800 to 884 points	B	below 600 points	F
785 to 799 points	C+		

Grades for homework and editing tests are on a curve. The curve is determined by either counting the highest score as 100 percent or counting the average or median score as 75 percent. I will use whichever method results in the higher grade.

I will regularly update grades on the course Web site. Check your grades to ensure you have been given proper credit for your work.

### **Final Project**

A final project – to lay out and edit a four-page newspaper – will be due during finals week. The project involves:

- Demonstrating informed news judgment by determining which stories and pictures will go into the paper.
- Laying out the pages with those stories and pictures using computer technology.
- Editing those stories for clarity, accuracy, grammar, syntax, AP style and length.
- Dealing with the photos you decide to put on the pages.
- Writing captions, headlines, deck heads and other text.
- Editing stories to create a column of news briefs.

Stories, photos and graphics for the final project will be provided. You do not have to write stories or create images or ads for the project. The paper's mast head, index and Page-1 teases and folios already have been created, and the ads have been placed on the pages.

No class discussion is planned during Weeks 13 and 14 of the semester to give students time to work on the project. I will be in available, however, to answer any questions or offer other assistance.

### **Editing Tests**

Four copy editing tests will be given during the semester. The test consist of sentences with problems in style, syntax, comprehension, word usage, clarity or accuracy. Students must edit the sentences on the classroom computers and then print and turn in the test.

You may use a stylebook, dictionary, Web sites and other language-references during the quiz.

Makeup tests will be given only by prior arrangement or if the student contacts me as soon as possible about the emergency that prevented the him or her from attending class.

## **Current-Events Quizzes**

Students will be given a short, current-events quiz at the beginning of the first class period each week. The questions usually will cover major news events of the previous week. They may also ask you to identify newsmakers. The quizzes will include a bonus question dealing with critical thinking, civics or other general knowledge.

Hint: I regularly read the Los Angeles Times, The Orange County Register, the Daily Titan and the online edition of The New York Times. I regularly listen to National Public Radio; I and try to watch the BBC World News in the evening.

You may not make up current-event quizzes.

## **Homework**

Doing the homework and getting feedback are essential to learning the necessary skills to get a good grade. All editing assignments are to be completed on a computer. Most of them must be turned in typed, double-spaced, in at least 12-point type. Some assignments require that stories be in the same format that they would be published in a newspaper. Stories edited with a pen or pencil, other than last-minute fixes, will not be accepted.

You can download the stories to edit from the publisher's Web site. Use the link on the course Web site.

Headlines and photo captions must also be typed. All headlines must be in the actual size and column measure assigned, or in some cases 50 percent of the actual size and column measure. Reading assignments should be completed before the first class meeting of the week they are assigned.

Homework is due at the start of class. Homework will be considered late if it is not ready to turn in at the start of class. I will accept late homework, but only before we discuss the homework assignment in class. It is my goal to always return homework at the next class session after it was turned in. This means you must turn in late homework by the next class session. The grade for late homework will be reduced by 50 percent.

## **Extra Credit**

You may earn extra credit by pointing out typos in the textbook. Photo copy the page, correct the error and put your name on the copy. Each correction is worth one point.

## **Attendance**

Although students will not be graded on attendance, roll will be taken at the start of class. Absences will affect the quality of students' work and grades because students cannot expect to do well if they are not present to have the instructor explain and critique their work. Students should let me know if they have to miss class because of job conflicts, campus sports, family emergencies, religious holidays etc. I can help you keep up with the work if you make the effort to communicate with me.

Please let me know if you need to miss class because of holiday or holy days. I can arrange for you to make up the work if you notify me ahead of time.

Because many students taking this course hope to enter the journalism profession, class time also will be devoted to discussing the news industry and other current mass-media issues.

### **Some other thoughts**

**Classroom civility.** Students disrupt the class when they walk in late, use cell phones, visit with students or take frequent breaks during class. Please show respect to your fellow students and the instructor.

**Contribute to the class discussion.** It is in your best interest to participate in the class. Your comments and questions help you understand what we are talking about.

**Visit me in my office.** Let me get to know you and learn what you expect to get from this course. Don't wait until the end of the semester – or worse yet, after the semester ends – to talk to me about problems you are having. I have little sympathy for people who come to me at the end of the semester begging for mercy.

**Academic accommodations.** Any student requesting academic accommodations based on disability should notify me as soon as possible. Please go to UH101 to obtain the necessary paperwork if you need to take an examination at Disabled Student Services. The office phone number is 714-278-2408.

**In case of an emergency...** In the event of a fire, earthquake or manmade disaster, follow my instructions.

### **Readings And Activities**

#### **Week 1: Aug. 24**

Discussion: Introduction to class, the copy editor's role in the newsroom; news judgment  
Readings: Chapter 1, Working on the Desk; Chapter 2, Understanding News Judgment

#### **Week 2: Aug. 31**

Discussion: Grammar, AP style  
Readings: Chapter 3, Editing for Grammar; Chapter 6, Editing for Style  
News quiz on Monday

#### **Week 3: Sept. 7**

##### **Monday is Labor Day. Campus is closed**

Discussion: Editing, headline writing, Adobe InDesign  
Readings: Chapter 4, Editing for Precision and Accuracy; Chapter 9, Writing Headlines with Impact

#### **Week 4: Sept. 14**

Monday is Presidents Day; campus closed  
Discussion: AP style, editing, headline writing, Adobe InDesign  
Readings: Chapter 5, Editing for Language;  
News quiz on Wednesday  
**Editing test No. 1 on Wednesday**

**Week 5: Sept. 21**

Discussion: Wire service copy, headline writing, editing, AP style, Adobe InDesign

Readings: Chapter 7, Selecting and Editing Wire Service Copy

News quiz on Monday

**Week 6: Sept. 28**

Discussion: Ethics, libel, headline writing, editing, AP style, page layout

Readings: Chapter 8, Editing for Libel and Ethical Issues; Chapter 12, Designing Pages

News quiz on Monday

**Week 7: Oct. 5**

Discussion: Photos, page layout, headline writing, editing, AP style

Readings: Chapter 10, Using Pictures

News quiz on Monday

**Week 8: Oct. 12**

Discussion: Page layout, headline writing, editing, AP style

News quiz on Monday

Editing test No. 2 on Monday

**Week 9: Oct. 19**

Oct. 20-22 are designated a university furlough days.

**Wednesday's class is canceled**

Discussion: Page layout, headline writing, editing, AP style

Readings: Chapter 13, Words and Images on the Web

News quiz on Monday

**Week 10: Oct. 26**

Discussion: Page layout, headline writing, editing, AP style

News quiz on Monday

**Week 11: Nov. 2**

Discussion: Final project, page layout, headline writing, editing, AP style

News quiz on Monday

**Week 12: Nov. 9**

**Wednesday is Veteran's Day. Campus is closed.**

Discussion: Final project, page layout, headline writing, editing, AP style

News quiz on Monday

**Editing test No. 3 on Monday.**

**Week 13: Nov. 15**

Work on project. No class discussion

Thanksgiving break is Nov. 23-27

**Week 14: Nov. 30**

Work on project. No class discussion

**Week 15: Dec. 7**

Discussion: Final project and other related problems/topics

News quiz on Monday

**Editing test No. 4 on Wednesday**

**Week 16: Dec. 14**

Finals week. There is no final exam in this class. You may use the time scheduled for the final and finish and print your projects.

Project is due Wednesday at 11:20 a.m. You may turn in the project early.

Project grades will be reduced by one letter grade for each day they are late.