

## **J461/J561 NEWSPAPER EDITING**

CRN: 22666/22731

Winter 2023

Mondays and Wednesdays, 12 to 1:50 p.m.

Allen 302

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**Student drop-in and appointment hours:**

### **WHAT YOU'LL LEARN**

Let's get this out of the way first: Yes, you're going to need to know grammar. And yes, you'll work so much with Associated Press style, which is our industry's standard, that you'll accidentally memorize much of it.

But this is not a class about grammar and style.

This is a class about language and why it matters. About readers and why they matter. About learning to work as a team to make news coverage more readable, more accurate, more accessible to the public, more useful to our democracy. This is a class about teamwork, whether your team is the copy desk at a big internet newsroom, the entire staff at a small community newspaper or just you and a writer, laboring together to make stories the best they can be.

Grammar and style are two of the tools that editors use to make all of that happen. You'll get familiar with many more. More important, this class will put you in situations that require you to think like an editor, who is positioned at an all-important distance from the reporting. It will sharpen your math and your fact-checking skills, and it will introduce you to key design principles. It will reinforce how vital diversity and inclusion are to the industry, especially with trust in the news media at an all-time low, and empower you, as an editor, to help repair that lost trust, particularly with underrepresented groups.

Plus, you'll find that this class will improve your writing—often dramatically.

Rajeev and I will be your guides. He's a doctoral student in media studies who has magazine and university editing experience. While my job title hasn't always reflected it, I've been editing copy and working with writers since 1989, when I became the first "day sports editor" at Penn State's independent student newspaper, The Daily Collegian. I am building from the foundation that retired SOJC associate professor John Russial, who taught this class for more than two decades, has carefully and thoughtfully laid.

By the end of this class, you'll be able to do the following:

- Verify accuracy of information in news stories and headlines.
- Identify and correct errors in grammar, Associated Press style and basic mathematics.
- Recognize and correct structural flaws in news stories.
- Evaluate news stories for fairness, missing perspectives and misunderstandings.
- Demonstrate familiarity with legal and ethical principles of journalism.
- Write headlines and social media posts that accurately reflect both the content and tone of news stories.
- Apply basic principles of newspaper and web design.

### WHAT YOU'LL READ AND WHAT YOU'LL NEED

You will need to use The Associated Press Stylebook (preferably 2022). Here are your options:

- Free through the Knight Library: [click this link](#) (you'll need your DuckID)
- You can also buy the book through the Duck Store, or you can subscribe to the [AP Stylebook Online](#). (I like the online version, which is slightly more expensive, because it automatically updates.)

But you are going to read a lot. I'll post excerpts from these books on Canvas, and they'll be part either of your out-of-class reading or our in-class activities:

- A World Without Whom, by Emmy J. Favilla
- Between You and Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen, by Mary Norris
- Dreyer's English, by Benjamin Dreyer
- The Elements of Editing, by Arthur Plotnik
- Strategic Copy Editing, by John Russial
- The Subversive Copy Editor, by Carol Fisher Saller
- Math Tools for Journalists, by Kathleen Woodruff Wickham

You will also get familiar with two other style guides, both available online, which you will use for an out-of-class assignment:

- [Buzzfeed Style Guide](#)
- [Conscious Style Guide](#)

And you must **read** news. I'm not going to dictate what, exactly, but here are two excellent options:

- The [New York Times Evening Briefing email](#), which is free.
  - **Free access to the New York Times**, which you'll need while clicking through on the Evening Briefing email: Go to [nytimes.com/passes](https://nytimes.com/passes) and follow the instructions. Be sure to use your [uoregon.edu](mailto:uoregon.edu) email. The access will expire after 24 hours, but you can just re-register when it runs out. There are unlimited passes.

- [The Daily Emerald](#). Student media matters. Read it.

## The Technology:

- **Canvas:** Everything you need for this class is at [canvas.uoregon.edu](https://canvas.uoregon.edu); log in with your DuckID.
- **Zoom:** I will set up a link in case COVID-19 prevents us from meeting as a group. You can access it through Canvas.
  - **A note on your camera in case we need to meet remotely:** I'm sure you can appreciate that it's easier for me to see your faces; it's hard to interact with a blank screen. That said, I also appreciate that there are times when you can't or don't want to show where you are. (I've been there myself.). So ***the camera is optional, but please consider turning it on when you can.***
- **Technical support:** If you have questions about accessing and using Canvas, visit the [Canvas support page](#). Canvas and Technology Support also is available by phone or live chat: [541-346-4357](tel:541-346-4357) | [livehelp.uoregon.edu](https://livehelp.uoregon.edu).
  - **If you face Internet access challenges:** Companies are offering free access during this challenging time. To learn more about options, visit Information Services' [web page on going remote](#).

## COMMUNICATING WITH ME

My favorite part of teaching is talking with students—getting to know you, coaching you, connecting you with former students I think you should know. So please don't hesitate to contact me with questions, suggestions ... even complaints. I mean it.

This is how you can reach me—and how I'll reach you. Communication is a two-way street, and I'll do my best to hold up my end.

- **Canvas announcements:** This is the easiest way to reach the entire class, so I'll primarily post updates and changes here. You should receive announcements in your inbox.
- **Email:** I am reachable via email, [lshontz@uoregon.edu](mailto:lshontz@uoregon.edu), and I'll get back to you within 24 hours.
  - I am building time offline into my schedule this term, and I recommend you do the same. This means:
    - I do not answer emails on Saturdays or after 8 p.m. weekdays.
    - I also don't answer emails first thing in the morning—that's my thinking/reading time.

*Important: If something's not working for you, let me know as soon as you can.*

## BASIC NEEDS

If you have challenges outside the classroom that are making it harder for you to learn, there is help for you. If you're comfortable telling me about any such challenge you are facing, please do so. If there is anything I can do to help, I will.

**You can also get information and help at these links:**

- **Mental health:** The UO's [Counseling Center](#) is open; see the link for information about in-person appointments and remote options. And the American Psychological Association has [information and strategies for coronavirus anxiety](#).
- **Food:** If you are having trouble affording food, please [visit this webpage](#), where the UO has a list of resources and programs with free food.
- **Internet:** If you are having trouble getting online, please [visit this webpage](#), which has some no-cost and low-cost options for students.
- **Computer:** [Visit this webpage](#) for information on loaner laptops. [This webpage](#) has general support for "going remote."
- **Accessible Education Center:** I know that some of you may have disabilities or other health conditions that make remote instruction more difficult. And as always, *the University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. I encourage you to contact the [Accessible Education Center](#) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).*
- **In general:** If you are having trouble connecting with the university in any way, email [uoadvising@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoadvising@uoregon.edu).

## WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

**Come to class – when you are healthy.**

- **Attendance policy:** This is a face-to-face class, and you need to be here and to interact with the rest of the class to be successful. A successful class, like a successful piece of journalism, requires a diversity of perspectives, which means your attendance matters. I want you to benefit from coming to class. I want your classmates to benefit from your presence. I want to benefit from having you all in class, too.
  - ***While there is no automatic grade deduction for missing class, if you miss more than four classes this term, you are unlikely to pass.*** The activities we do during class time are directly connected to your final project.
  - That said, we are still in a pandemic. COVID-19 can be a serious illness, and no one wants to get the flu or RSV, either. **If you are sick, do not come to class.** I'll work with you.

- You can find the university’s COVID resources [at this link](#). Let’s take care of each other.

**Participate, and be respectful:** There are lots of ways to participate, well beyond just raising your hand to talk in front of the entire group. You can listen actively. Do your part in small group activities. Visit Rajeev and/or me during office hours. We will all learn together—and I include myself in that “we.” Journalism is in disruption, so we’re all learning all the time.

**Make deadline:** Every assignment has a deadline, and there’s a good reason for them. Reflections are due so that Rajeev and I have time to read them and use your insights to help plan class sessions. Out-of-class editing and stylebook assignments are spaced so that we have time to give you actionable feedback for the next assignment and your final project.

- **Late Assignment policy:** Life happens, in j-school and in newsrooms. When you’re editing daily breaking news, deadlines are not negotiable, but in other circumstances they can be. In recognition of this, *I allow three late assignments with no penalty. You can use a 24-hour grace period three times.* You don’t have to email me; just turn it in when you are finished. If you need more than 24 extra hours or find yourself needing more than three automatic extensions, then email me, and we’ll talk about solutions.
- **Be accurate:** Credibility is everything in journalism. Although this is a 400-level class, it’s a beginning editing class, so you’ll have some time to get the hang of it. **Starting Feb. 13 (Week Six), missing a major fact error such as the misspelling of the subject’s name, the incorrect outcome of an event or a misidentification of a major figure will result in an F for the assignment.** Minor factual errors and earlier major errors will be penalized less harshly.
- **Collaborate:** You’ll often work in groups or pairs during class (although not for graded assignments). That’s because newsroom copy desks work as a team, brainstorming headlines together, batting around the finer points of style and enjoying particularly excellent wordplay. Think of yourself as the newsroom copy editors, and Rajeev and me as your copy chiefs.
- **Have fun!** I know this might seem odd, or even wrong, given all that is happening right now. But editing, even when the work is hard, should have moments of joy. Editing requires a broad base of knowledge, much of which you’ll acquire along the way. It’s a great way to meet interesting people, explore important issues and be among the first in the know. Plus, you’ll be a star at trivia nights. I hope our editing community will be a comfortable and safe space for you to visit.

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME

- **Prompt feedback and return of assignments:** My goal is to return your assignments—with feedback and, if applicable, a grade—before the next assignment

is due. Usually, that will be within four to seven days of turning in an assignment. If something prevents me from meeting my goal, I will let you know in advance when to expect feedback/grades.

- **High standards:** As I said above, I'm not going to penalize you for circumstances beyond your control. That said, I would be doing you—and the industry—a disservice if I didn't hold you to a high standard on your major assignments. To get an A or a B, expect to spend at least four hours a week outside of class reading, listening, editing, writing and reflecting.
- **Help:** If you're struggling, let me know. *If my comments on your work are unhelpful or if you don't understand them, email me and let me know.* Communication requires at least two people; I will work to hold up my end of the conversation.

## GRADING

You'll have four kinds of assignments in this class, which are weighted like this:

- **Weekly editing practice:** 100 points. The first three weeks are practice. For the final seven weeks, you'll be able to drop your two lowest scores.
- **Reflections:** 50 points. Five assignments, 10 points each. Most of these are readings, although there are some podcasts, too.
- **Editing assignments:** 200 points. That's four assignments, 50 points each.
- **Final editing assignment:** This will be a bit of everything. You'll get it at the end of Week Nine, and it's due Monday of finals week.

**Final grades:** Nothing fancy—I will total your points and use basic percentages. I will also be paying attention to improvement—if you're on the border, that will make the difference.

▪ A	93-100 percent	▪ C+	77-79 percent
▪ A-	90-92 percent	▪ C	73-76 percent
▪ B+	87-89 percent	▪ C-	70-72 percent
▪ B	83-86 percent	▪ D	60-69 percent
▪ B-	80-82 percent	▪ F	0-59 percent

**Grad students:** If you are taking this class as a graduate student, you will be responsible for one additional assignment, due at the end of Week Nine, **11:59 p.m. Sunday, March 12.** We'll discuss an appropriate assignment by Week Five.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University Student Conduct Code ([conduct.uoregon.edu](https://conduct.uoregon.edu)) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct.

In J461—and in any journalism class or environment—that means the following:

- **Do not plagiarize:** Do not copy someone else's work and pass it off as your own. That includes the work of professional reporters as well as the work of your classmates, friends, family, fraternity brothers, sorority sisters, teammates, roommates, fellow club officers, etc. You get the picture.
- **Don't copy directly from websites or other background sources:** This is plagiarism, too. Don't think you can fool me—or your readers—by changing a word or two around. That doesn't fly. Again: Attribute your work properly. *Be especially careful if you are cutting and pasting information from the internet.* In fact, don't do it.
- **Do not make things up:** Don't invent sources, facts, people, scenarios, scores, quotes, etc. I truly hope this is self-evident.
- **IF YOU AREN'T SURE, ASK:** You're still beginning journalists. If you are unsure about whether you're skirting too close to the line, ask me.

*If you plagiarize or otherwise violate these principles of academic integrity, you will flunk this class. Period.*

## WRITING CENTRAL

Need another pair of eyes on your writing? Need someone to brainstorm interview ideas with? You should. No one writes in a vacuum, especially journalists, whose work informs the public.

Starting Week Two, you can get that help at Writing Central, where trained undergraduate coaches help with everything from fleshing out story ideas to crafting stronger sentences and improving your grammar/AP style. Coaches also can help with resumes and cover letters, personal statements and scholarship applications.

Feedback is available three ways:

- Pop-In Hours, 3-5 p.m. Monday through Thursday in Allen 106.
- Appointments: In person or over Zoom.
- Drop-n-Go: submit your work online and receive feedback within 48 hours.

To make appointments use the Drop-n-Go feature, visit [writingcentral.uoregon.edu](https://writingcentral.uoregon.edu).

## TITLE IX

I am an assisting employee. For information about my reporting obligations as an employee, please see [Employee Reporting Obligations](#) on the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance (OICRC) website. Students experiencing sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence

should call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE [7244] or visit [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu) for help. Students experiencing all forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment may contact the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator/OICRC at 541-346-3123. Additional resources are available at [UO's How to Get Support webpage](#).

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

The best journalism reflects the community it covers. That's why I am passionate about increasing and maintaining diversity in newsrooms. If everyone is the same gender, race, ethnic group, sexual identity, religion, etc., you're going to produce a homogenous publication that is at best boring, at worst riddled with errors of fact and/or omission.

In this class, I will encourage open inquiry, freedom of expression and respect for difference. I expect you to respect the differences among you and your classmates and between the class and me. I will respect yours. We can certainly disagree—in fact, I expect that we will at times. But we can all respect each other, and we can all learn from each other.

If anything in this class makes you uncomfortable, let me know ASAP. Let's talk about it.

## SCHEDULE

- **A note on structure:** Each week has a theme or a topic, which mostly centers on the reflection for that week. But the interactive activities and the editing practice sessions aren't that rigid. We will come back to the same topics and ideas after a break. That's because, as James Lang writes in *Small Teaching*, the latest research on learning shows that the best way to retain information and skills is to do two things:
  - Space out learning sessions over time.
  - Mix up the practice of skills.

Working in journalism or any communications field—especially as an editor—means you're going to need to be a continuous learner, so I want to be up front about these kinds of techniques. This way, you can take them with you wherever you go.

- **Weekly grammar/style/math quiz note:** Remember that we will have one in-class quiz every week. The first three are practice; the last seven will be graded. Usually these will be Wednesdays, but not always.

## WEEK ONE: Jan. 9-15

**Life as an editor:** Basics of the job.

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Thursday:** Letter to Lori (send me an email with info in the body, not an attachment or Google doc)
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Reflection No. 1
  - By Way of Introduction, by Benjamin Dreyer, pp. xi-xviii (PDF on Canvas)



- Confessions of a Comma Queen, by Mary Norris, pp. 1-14 (PDF on Canvas)
- Language is Alive, by Emmy J. Favilla, pp. 13-35 (PDF on Canvas)

### WEEK TWO: Jan. 16-22

**Words matter:** Digging into style, grammar and how language evolves. Also, why language matters when talking and writing about about race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.

- **No class Monday:** It's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Thursday:** Editing assignment No. 1
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Reflection No. 2
  - Accuracy, by John Russial, pp. 34-46
  - [How talking about Trump makes him normal in your brain](#), On the Media (12 minutes)

### WEEK THREE: Jan. 23-29

**Fact checking and verification:** Developing ways to heighten your instincts for finding mistakes. Also, we'll begin to look at bias and false balance in journalism. Yes, these two pieces are related.

- **Guest speaker alert:** Gregory Perrault, associate professor of journalism at Appalachian State University, will join us Monday to discuss coverage of rural communities and coverage of religion, two areas that journalists often overlook.
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Reflection No. 3
  - [The View From Somewhere podcast](#), by Lewis Raven Wallace, episode 2 (How Black Lives Matter changed the news, 34 minutes)
  - [A reckoning over objectivity, led by Black journalists](#), by Wesley Lowery, for the New York Times

### WEEK FOUR: Jan. 30 to Feb. 5

**News judgment, part 1:** Objectivity. Power. Privilege. How do you decide what's news? Why does it matter?

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Thursday:** Editing Assignment No. 2

### WEEK FIVE: Feb. 6-12

**Visual thinking: An introduction to design and InDesign:** With a heavy dose of news values, and with principles for dead-tree publications and web publications.

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Reflection No. 4
  - Headlines, by John Russial, pp. 139-169 (PDF on Canvas)

## WEEK SIX: Feb. 13-19

**Social media, headlines and thinking visually:** An introduction to headline writing, often the only thing anyone sees on Twitter.

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Thursday:** Editing Assignment No. 3

## WEEK SEVEN: Feb. 20-26

**News judgment, part 2:** Objectivity. Power. Privilege. Again. Because this matters so much.

- **Guest speaker alert:** SOJC alum Patsata Reang, journalist and author of the memoir *Ma and Me*, will join us Wednesday to discuss being a journalist of color and a member of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Reflection No. 5:
  - [Quoting Immigrants: A media toolkit for anonymous sources](#), by Define American

## WEEK EIGHT: Feb. 27-March 5

**Disinformation, misinformation, malinformation:** Editors' responsibility when information is weaponized—and techniques to stop reporters (and yourselves, and your families) from sharing it.

- **Due 11:59 p.m. Thursday:** Editing Assignment No. 4

## WEEK NINE: March 6-12

**Communicating with writers:** Care and feeding for the insecure. Plus: Keeping the readers and the community in mind.

- **Guest speaker alert:** Valérie Bélair-Gagnon, assistant professor and director of the Minnesota Journalism Center, will join us Monday to discuss happiness and well being in media work.
- **Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday:** Reflection No. 6
  - *The Subversive Copy Editor*, by Carol Fisher Saller, pp. 3-11 (PDF on Canvas)
  - *Working for the Reader, Through the Writer*, by Carol Fisher Saller, pp. 23-30
  - *Editor and Writer* by Arthur Plotnik, pp. 25-33 (PDF on Canvas)

## WEEK 10: March 13-19

**Putting it all together:** How editors can foster connections with the public—and make our democracy stronger. No, that's not an exaggeration. It's a beginning. We'll review everything, from fact checking to design.

## FINALS WEEK

**Due 11:59 p.m. Monday:** Editing Assignment No. 5