

**Loyola University Chicago**  
**COMM 259-201 RMinkoff**  
**News Editing Spring 2023**  
**LOYOLA SOC100 MWF 1130a-1220p**

**Instructor:** Randy Minkoff

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to show you in great detail how to edit copy for all types of journalistic situations from blogging to broadcast to print. This includes proper language skills in a world of social media as well as a thorough knowledge of style, grammar, spelling, punctuation, fact-checking, design, Web packaging, headline and caption writing, and editorial planning.

The course will make you a better editor and writer as you learn how to produce crisp, tightly written stories as well as improving communication skills that may be used in securing employment. It will make you more aware of current reporting trends, interpretation of news events and distinguishing different styles of stories by various traditional and new (social) media, and the challenge of exercising good news judgment. It is also an important skill for current and future employment, where accuracy and professionalism are essential.

It is extremely important that you are aware of current news stories and trends. This course places a heavy emphasis on news judgment, current events and how they are reported and transmitted to the public. You should use a variety of news sources – daily newspaper, weekly magazines, websites, blogs, radio and television news, to learn how each handles stories and provides details of news events. These will be a point of discussion in all classes. Class discussion is an integral part of the class as many editing situations are subjective.

With that in mind, consider this syllabus as a general tool, **SUBJECT TO CHANGE**, depending upon news events and trends. Journalism is adaptation and do not view this overview as a class schedule that is etched in granite.

## **REQUIRED TEXT**

*The Associated Press Stylebook*, preferably most recent edition. Online acceptable

## **GRADING**

For most assignments you will receive a letter grade: A(excellent), B(very good), C(average), D(poor),m F(automatic for any incomplete assignments). Your grades are based upon demonstrating a good grasp of the concepts and techniques, progress and improvement in writing style, written quizzes, and attendance and in-class participation. In some isolated cases you will receive a 'complete' for an assignment; I will be very clear up front about grade expectations for each project. You may and are encouraged to ask about progress you are making during the term either in person or via e-mail. There will also be a final exam and final research project to be completed.

**ABSENCES:** All projects are due at the assigned deadline time: papers turned in after deadline will be graded down accordingly. Class attendance is essential; participation in discussion of assignments and issues will be a key part of your overall grade. You must notify me immediately if there is an issue with attendance or assignment. Unexcused absences will directly affect your grade in the course (as well as

your ability to complete projects, exams and quizzes. ) Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in

need of support. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa; phone number 773-508-8840, email [deanofstudents@luc.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@luc.edu)

**SAKAI:** All assignments as well as selected printed material will be posted on Sakai for review. Selected videos may be posted on Sakai but it is up to you to take notes on ALL videos and discussions in class. Materials will usually stay on Sakai for ONE week, and will be taken down before quizzes and exams..

### **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

1. We will start on time; lateness is highly discouraged.
2. Classroom discussion and participation will be an **integral** part of the course and your overall grade. All topics that are reviewed, and how to handle them, will be included on tests and papers.
3. All assignments are due on the day they are listed.
4. If you expect to be absent, notification **MUST** be emailed immediately before the class. It will be up to YOU to check with a classmate to get the assignment and all information discussed in class.
5. Quizzes will be administered promptly at the start of class.
6. If you miss a quiz, you may not make it up, with the exception of an excused absence.
7. Don't ever hesitate to ask me for clarification or direction at the time the assignment is given. Don't wait until the last minute to ask questions about what the assignment requirements are.
8. ALWAYS be honest with me and with your work. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (Subject to change because of the nature of current events and issues that may come up during the semester)**

#### **Week 1: Evolution of the editing, why it is needed. Jan 18**

How the news media (print, broadcast, internet) has evolved, how the public views journalism and the need to fact check. Dealing with the "fake news" era and the role journalists play in combatting a negative image.

#### **Week 2: Style , blogging, interviewing skills Jan. 23**

Semester blog assignment Emphasis will be placed on the AP stylebook, proper grammar and tight writing. Capitalization, punctuation, controversies surrounding style changes. You will interview a fellow student and edit a short bio of the classmate.

#### **Week 3: Story structure, choosing stories Jan 30**

Quiz on style. The evolution of the lead paragraph; differences in style between conservative wire service writing and more colorful magazine approach. How the web has changed editing style and approach to stories.

**Week 4: BREAKING NEWS. Feb. 6th**

You will participate in a real time news conference with a SOC Associate Dean John Slania, asking questions and then putting together an edited story based on the information gathered in the briefing. The assignment will be done in class and will be turned in at the conclusion of class. The goals are to effectively take notes, decide what is the lead (and headline) for your website/newspaper/broadcast outlet

**Week 5—FAKE NEWS Feb., 13<sup>th</sup> How to handle it and the connection with social media. How to deal with the increasing problem of incorrect information spread through internet sites. Screening documentary “The Turning Point: produced by Trevor Noah.**

**Week 6:Guest speakers: Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> Pam Huey and Paul Walsh of the Minneapolis Star Tribune:** Pulitzer Prize winners discuss editing, reporting and how they covered the George Floyd story for a national audience.

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**Week 7— Feb 27 State of the Union assignment (slated for Tuesday, March 1)** Coverage of a major event and how it is processed in a partisan. Midterm exam and assignment

**Week 8 Spring Break March 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> no class**

**Week 9 Headlines, Captions and Images March 13th**

Headline writing practice; images and captions: best practices

The role of the sound bite on today's journalism and its impact on other news sites.

**Week 9 March 20 Sports/feature editing**

The differences in the approach to non-breaking stories; the latitude sport and feature writers have in their copy and the differences and challenges of their deadlines.

**Week 10 March 27<sup>th</sup> Business journalism (March 27TH).**

The rise of business reporting, specialty publications, websites, and broadcast programs. Challenges of knowing the audience, tailoring copy to fit the demographics of the reader.

**Week 11Broadcast journalism and editing. April 3rd<sup>th</sup> Guest speaker, Ron Gleason, news director of WBBM all-news radio Chicago.** The difference in writing for broadcast compared to print. No Class April 7<sup>th</sup> Good Friday

**Week 12 Plagiarism and how to combat it. (April 10)**

Screening of “Shattered Glass” and how other similar influences have shaped the culture of background checks, news editing, etc.

**Week 13—Editorials/commentaries and op-ed pieces. April 17** Do they need editing/fact checking or should they be left alone because they are opinion pieces?. A history of the impact that opinion pieces and art have had on history; censorship and how to deal with controversial editorials & cartoons. Time will be given to prepare assignment.

**Week 15—April 24<sup>th</sup>---Blog review Finals (two parts, quiz and editing)**

**Week 15 Semester blog due May 2--** Submission of the semester blog