

JOU 4201 Editing lecture / fall 2012

Sections 2680, 2682, 4617 and 7021

Tuesday period 5, Florida Gym 230 / Thursday period 5, Turlington L005

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If office hours are inconvenient, make an appointment. Or if my door is open, drop in.

Course Objective

Journalists are increasingly expected to post raw content online without another set of eyes to proofread first. Therefore, the goal of the course is to enable you to be an excellent self-editor through a superior knowledge of grammar, punctuation, word use, concision and numeracy.

This summer, the publisher of iFixit.com [wrote](#) that he “won’t hire people who use poor grammar.” He’s not alone. Thus, this course exists to help you improve your job chances.

Learning Outcomes

By the conclusion of the course, you should be able to:

- Use grammar at a level required of a professional writer
- Write without excess verbiage, word usage errors or bias
- Compose basic headlines
- Employ online analytics to find stories and choose search-friendly words
- Calculate percentages, averages, area, volume, per-capita figures and probabilities
- Place numbers in a context most readers can understand
- Correctly interpret opinion polling and spot mistakes
- End world hunger ☺

Lecture and Lab Differ

JOU 4201 has two parts: a two-hour lecture and a three-hour lab. Unlike what you’ve experienced with reporting and MMC 2100 or JOU 3109c, editing lecture and lab are not coordinated.

The reason the two differ is they have different missions. Lecture is designed to reinforce your knowledge of grammar, punctuation, headlines and grammar, and to enable you to avoid common math mistakes. Lab is designed to let you hone your self-editing skills by editing the work of others on deadline.

This syllabus covers only the lecture portion of the class.

At the end of the semester, your lab instructor will give me percentage scores for your performance in lab. I will put those scores into a spreadsheet to calculate the overall JOU 4201 grade. Your lab score will be 60 percent of your grade. Your lecture score will be the remaining 40 percent.

What that also means is that I'm not the boss of your lab instructor. If you have a disagreement with your lab instructor, you should contact that person first and attempt to resolve the dispute. If that is unsuccessful, you can speak to the department chair, Dr. Wayne Wanta.

Textbooks

You should have these from previous journalism classes:

- "When Words Collide" by Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald, any edition.
- The Associated Press Stylebook, any edition; 2012 or 2011 preferable

Neither is required for the lecture portion of the course. Each, however, is an excellent resource that can help you in this course and in your career.

Calculator

For test 3, which will focus on numeracy, you may use a nonprogrammable calculator. Perhaps 95 percent of calculators made fit this description. Typical examples include solar calculators, \$5 calculators or nicer business or trigonometry calculators such as the TI-30 commonly used in the UF business school. If the calculator displays just one line for numbers, it's acceptable.

Prohibited are devices that can store data (and thus can be used for cheating), such as:

- A programmable calculator such as a TI-84. These have a larger, multi-line display.
- An iPod Touch or the like.
- A cellphone of *any* type, whether a smartphone (iPhone, Android, Windows, etc.) or a Blackberry or a "dumb" phone that only makes calls.

Calculators will be inspected before test 3.

Anyone who forgets to bring a nonprogrammable calculator will use paper and pencil.

Also, each student must have a calculator. No sharing is allowed.

Free Online Resources

For grammar:

- Hundreds of questions from a former journalism professor at [Newsroom 101](#).
- Take more than 50 [quizzes](#) on the American Copy Editors Society website.
- At [Free Rice](#), help feed the hungry and learn vocabulary. Learn grammar, too.
- Take a free [grammar course](#) from Poynter Institute's News University.
- If you like blogs, try [After Deadline](#) from the New York Times copy desk.
- For podcasts, try [Grammar Girl](#) (Mignon Fogarty) or [Grammar Grater](#) (Luke Taylor).

For math and polling:

- Take a free [math course](#) from Poynter's News University.
- Take a free [polling course](#) from Poynter's News University.
- Learn more about mean, median and percent from Professor Robert [Niles](#).
- Polling [guidance](#) for journalists from the National Council on Public Polls.

Sample Test Questions

About 80 percent of the test questions will probe for two words or phrases, like this:

1. Choose the best answer.
 - a. The quart of strawberries are on the table, ready for whoever wants a snack.
 - b. The quart of strawberries are on the table, ready for whomever wants a snack.
 - c. The quart of strawberries is on the table, ready for whoever wants a snack.
 - d. The quart of strawberries is on the table, ready for whomever wants a snack.
2. Choose the best answer.
 - a. Mary felt bad about asking her sister to work full time this summer.
 - b. Mary felt bad about asking her sister to work full-time this summer.
 - c. Mary felt badly about asking her sister to work full time this summer.
 - d. Mary felt badly about asking her sister to work full-time this summer.

About 20 percent of the questions will be of this style:

3. Joel collects beer steins and Nicole collects ceramic figurines. Evaluate this sentence and choose the best answer: **Although Joel's and Nicole's collections were lost in the fire, the family was grateful that its home appeared to be salvageable.**
 - a. The word **Although** should be **While**
 - b. The word **Joel's** should be **Joel**
 - c. The word **its** should be **their**
 - d. The sentence is correct as written

(The correct answer are 1c, 2a and 3d)

How to Succeed in This Course

- Write something every day to practice grammar and punctuation.
- Read (not skim) a quality newspaper, magazine, blog or book for 15 minutes daily.
- Learn to use a dictionary not just for spelling, but to find the *right* word.
- Come to each class on time and ready to learn.
- Use the online resources noted above to supplement classroom instruction.
- Ask questions if you're not sure. I exist to help you learn.

How to Fail This Course

- Avoid daily practice of writing something with correct grammar and punctuation.
- Cram the night before a test. (Cramming is the *least* effective way to retain knowledge.)

Course Assignments

For lecture, 100 percent of the course grade will be based on three multiple-choice tests:

Test	Date	Portion of grade	Covered
Test 1	Tuesday, Oct. 2	30%	Grammar to that point
Test 2	Tuesday, Nov. 6	35%	About two-thirds since test 1; cumulative
Test 3	Tuesday, Dec. 4	35%	About two-thirds since test 2; cumulative

No final exam will be given during finals week.

Missed Tests

Scheduled absences: UF policy allows for students to make up a test if conflicts arise with religious holidays, military obligations, court-imposed obligations (jury duty or a subpoena) and participation in official university activities such as athletic (not club) or academic competitions. If one of those schedule conflicts affects you, let me know immediately in the semester.

Unscheduled absences: Allowances for illnesses or family emergencies are possible if and only if you call my office phone (352-392-5137) no later than 30 minutes before the test and promptly provide official written documentation such as a statement from a medical provider.

Grading

The lecture portion of the course accounts for 40 percent of your overall grade in JOU 4201. (The rest is from your lab and is determined by your lab instructor.) Lecture test grades will be posted on the class Sakai page on the [e-Learning](#) site. Here's the UF grading [policy](#).

The grade for the entire course is based on a modified minus grade scale. Because an A is hard to obtain in this class, 89.5% and above is an A, with no minus. However, to differentiate between an 86 and an 80, a B-minus is used, per this schedule:

A	100 to 90%		
B+	89 to 87%	C+	79 to 77%
B	86 to 83%	C	76 to 73%
B-	82 to 80%		Anything below 72.5% is not a passing grade

The lecture portion of the course has no extra credit or makeup points.

Dow Jones Test

On Friday, Oct. 26, the journalism department will administer the Dow Jones national editing test. The highest scorers on this test qualify for a terrific, paid summer internship with a leading news organization.

The past three years, four Gators have won summer editing internships at the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Indianapolis Star and Dow Jones Newswires. Will you make it our fourth year in a row?

The Dow Jones test requires a solid knowledge of grammar, punctuation, word use, headline style and AP style, as well as a working knowledge of current events. You can take [sample tests](#) from previous years to see what the Dow Jones test is like. [Infoplease](#) can help you brush up on current events.

Put Away the Cellphone

Cellphone use in class is verboten. Why? Research shows the human brain is wired to do one thing at a time. People who drive while using their cellphones are *four times* more likely to get in an accident. Multitasking is a myth.

“But our generation is different; we know how to multitask,” students tell me. Umm, not so much. Research has shown that only 3 percent of people can multitask. The other 97 percent of us are fooling ourselves. And age doesn’t matter. We are simply unable to do two things well at the same time.

So if whatever you’ve got going on the phone is so important you can’t put your phone away for 50 minutes, then skip class. But don’t pretend you can pay attention to both by sneaking in a few texts during class – unless, of course, you’d like to increase the likelihood you’ll flunk the class.

Laptop use is also forbidden unless required to accommodate a disability, per a disability letter. You can download the PowerPoint after class from Sakai. Your learning is best served by focusing on the classroom discussion rather than furiously copying down PowerPoint slides.

Academic Integrity

University of Florida students live by an [honor code](#) that prohibits academic dishonesty such as cheating. Students have an affirmative obligation to know what those policies prohibit. If you are unsure, ask me in advance.

When I discover cheating, I fail all the students involved – not just for that test, but for the entire course. I also send the details of the case to the Dean of Students Office.

Students with Disabilities

If you would like to request disability-related accommodations, contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) as early in the semester as possible. The center will provide documentation so appropriate accommodations can be made. The center is in Reid Hall, 392-8565.

Help With Coping

The UF [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) is a terrific, free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive after-hours assistance, call 352-392-1575.

Tentative Schedule

Note that the Tuesday and Thursday classes meet in different locations

Class	Day	Date	Location	Topic
1	Thu	Aug. 23	TUR L005	How to get a job
2	Tue	Aug. 28	FLG 230	How to be a brand (Professor McAdams)
3	Thu	Aug. 30	TUR L005	Parts of speech
4	Tue	Sept. 4	FLG 230	The sentence
5	Thu	Sept. 6	TUR L005	Minor punctuation
6	Tue	Sept. 11	FLG 230	Apostrophe
7	Thu	Sept. 13	TUR L005	Comma
8	Tue	Sept. 18	FLG 230	That, which & who
9	Thu	Sept. 20	TUR L005	Hyphen
10	Tue	Sept. 25	FLG 230	Agreement
11	Thu	Sept. 27	TUR L005	Review
12	Tue	Oct. 2	FLG 230	Test 1
13	Thu	Oct. 4	TUR L005	Pronoun case (who & whom)
	Tue	Oct. 9		No class; interview day
14	Thu	Oct. 11	TUR L005	Lay & lie / affect & effect
15	Tue	Oct. 16	FLG 230	Misused words
16	Thu	Oct. 18	TUR L005	Accuracy
17	Tue	Oct. 23	FLG 230	Bias
18	Thu	Oct. 25	TUR L005	Online metrics (Professor Sheehan)
19	Tue	Oct. 30	FLG 230	Headlines 1 (Dr. Rodgers)
20	Thu	Nov. 1	TUR L005	Headlines 2 (Dr. Rodgers)
21	Tue	Nov. 6	FLG 230	Test 2
22	Thu	Nov. 8	TUR L005	Math 1, Percent
23	Tue	Nov. 13	FLG 230	Math 2, Average
24	Thu	Nov. 15	TUR L005	Math 3, Comparisons
25	Tue	Nov. 20	FLG 230	Math 4, Probability
	Thu	Nov. 22		No class; Thanksgiving
26	Tue	Nov. 27	FLG 230	Math 5, Logic
27	Thu	Nov. 29	TUR L005	Math 6, Polling
28	Tue	Dec. 4	FLG 230	Test 3