

JOU3202: EDITING AND COACHING

Fall 2025

Section 22806

3 credit hours

WHEN AND WHERE

- Mondays, 3 to 4:55 p.m. in Weimer Hall, Room 3024
- Wednesdays, 3 to 3:50 p.m. in Weimer Hall, Room 1090

INSTRUCTOR

Ethan Magoc, Interim Director, Innovation News Center and WUFT News

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Office hours: Friday, 8 to 10 a.m. and by Microsoft Bookings at tinyurl.com/magocetimes

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS

I prefer to receive questions via email and will respond within 24 hours of receipt Monday through Friday and usually much faster. If you're already in the INC's Slack channel from enrollment in another course, that's a good way to reach me timely, too.

COURSE DESCRIPTION (PER UF CATALOG)

Intermediate newsroom editing and coaching, which teaches thinking like an editor from a macro- and micro-perspective to improve critical thinking toward journalism content across platforms. Also, challenges journalists to report accurately, fairly, and more completely.

REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS:

You need not purchase a textbook to succeed in this course, but you will rely upon:

- Select course readings available on Canvas
- AP Stylebook via apstylebook.com/smathers-libraries-at-the-university-of-florida

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students in this course will learn to:

1. Identify the historical and modern role of an editor in enhancing the public's information consumption and entertainment.
2. Generate ideas of interest to an audience with a sense and strategy for how to assemble different story elements and to do so across mediums.
3. Evaluate a story on a macro basis, with an ability to check its accuracy, newsworthiness, structure, balance, completeness, sensitivity and ethics or libel concerns.
4. Clean a story with micro-editing — ensuring against problems with AP Style, grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage and concision.
5. Learn different approaches for delivering feedback to others about how to improve their writing that engenders buy-in and cooperation.
6. Develop a self-editing ability that positions a student for employment opportunities in newsrooms and beyond.

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The only prerequisite requirement is JOU3101: Reporting. From that course and other life experiences, you should be developing the skills to find, pitch and improve story ideas, report them journalistically and engage in the editing process with an instructor. There are three other traits you'll need to demonstrate in this course:

- Curiosity
- A keen eye for detail
- Kindness toward colleagues

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

I am not an instructor who enjoys listening to himself talk for the duration of class meetings. Lecture sessions will be informational and interactive. Your participation is encouraged and required. We will work through slide decks but also discuss in-class readings, short videos and film excerpts. You can also expect to learn from guest speakers with relevant experience and insights. During labs, my talking is minimal; you'll usually complete a quiz, hold a pitch meeting with colleagues, discuss readings and receive prompts for in-class assignments related to the topic explored in the previous lecture.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE AND MAKE-UPS

Per the UF attendance policy, an absence is unexcused unless you provide the instructor notice in advance and documentation after the fact. Regardless of why you miss class, you must let me know beforehand for the absence to be excused. In-class work missed for unexcused absences earns you no points and may not be made up. In-class work missed during an excused absence must be made up within seven days of the absence. This is a deadline profession oriented around being present. Late-class arrivals and early departures are noted. Missing more than 30 minutes of a class session counts as an absence. Chronic tardiness will also result in a point deduction. If you miss class, get notes from a classmate. In this and every course you take, please never ask the instructor if you "missed anything important."

Arriving without a pitch for your colleagues to evaluate represents an unexcused absence. Multiple unexcused absences will double in penalty: Five points deducted for your first absence, 10 points for your second, 20 for your third, etc.

Note for guest speaker days: Failing to have your camera on during a majority of class time in which we welcome guest speakers can amount to up to four unexcused absences (75% of your attendance grade). Please let your instructor know if you are encountering technical difficulties in meeting this standard. You will also incur this penalty if you do not actively participate in at least two of the guest speaker sessions by asking a question of them.

CLASS Demeanor

Here's a rule I expect you to follow this semester: "Be tough on the writing, easy on the writer." Journalism is a calling that's difficult enough without mixing in animosity toward your colleagues. Writing can feel very personal. And receiving feedback? Even more so.

Keep this in mind as you offer and receive suggestions and revisions. Classroom discussions will be civil. We can disagree during the editing process, but I insist that we remain cordial.

Students are at all times to show respect for one another as well as for the instructor. If something was said concerning this class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to your instructor about it.

DEVICES

You can use your laptop for taking notes and completing in-class quizzes and activities, but please tuck away your phone during our time together. Laptops should not receive your attention during discussions, pitch meetings and film/video viewings.

COURSE EVALUATION

A portion of our final class together will be set aside for your instructor to exit the classroom as you provide honest feedback on the course, its instruction and how to improve it in future semesters. Feedback can be offered at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu>.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty shall not be tolerated in this course. That includes – but is not limited to – using any work done by another person and submitting it for a class assignment; submitting your work done for another class; copying and pasting text written or published by another person without attribution; or illicit fabrication. The usage of artificial intelligence is forbidden unless given guidance from your instructor asking you deploy it on a particular assignment.

UF Student Honor Code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Call 352-392-4357 for help resolving computer-related and other technical issues related to Canvas, WIFI/VPN connectivity, email or GatorLink authentication issues.

UF Computing Help Desk: <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu> or helpdesk@ufl.edu

Walk-In Support: HUB 132

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

COUNSELING CENTER

Personal or health issues such as depression, anxiety, stress, career uncertainty or relationships can interfere with your ability to function as a student. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) offers support for students in need. CWC is located at 3190 Radio Road and open weekdays from 8 to 5.

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignment	Number	Points	How to succeed
Attendance	24 class sessions	100	Attendance is required. Show up on time to the lecture and lab sessions. Arriving without a pitch for your colleagues to evaluate represents an unexcused absence. Multiple unexcused absences will double in penalty: Five points deducted for your first absence, 10 points for your second, 20 for your third, etc.
Lab activities	10	200	Complete a series of deadline-driven editing tasks during lab meetings. These are to be submitted by the end of lab; blown deadlines are eligible for a maximum score of 50%.
Editorial meetings	5	100	These will require you to research and craft story ideas from your bureau and offer them to colleagues for feedback. You will also be graded on the coaching you offer a colleague on their pitch. The same penalty system as the attendance assignment is in effect. Late pitches will earn a maximum of five points.
Quizzes	10	100	Take a 20-minute Canvas quiz about the previous week's lecture, readings, guest speaker visits and/or lab material. These open-book quizzes will be completed during lab meetings.
Short essay	1	100	Read excerpts from Marty Baron's 2023 book and write an 800-to-1,000-word reflection on three key moments from his tenure at the Washington Post. This is due in the second half of the semester but can be submitted at any point earlier on. Late submissions, no matter the reason, will earn a score of zero.
Final project	1	400	This project will tie together core skills learned this semester. You will edit drafts of a story for structure, concision, taste, grammar, accuracy and their headlines. Recorded feedback, as if delivered to your writers, will be required as part of the project submission.

GRADING SCALE:

- 930-1,000, A
- 929-900, A-
- 899-870, B+
- 869-830, B
- 829-800, B-
- 799-770, C+
- 769-730, C
- 729-700, C-
- 699-670, D+
- 669-630, D
- 629-600, D-
- 599 and below, E

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Week of Aug. 25
 - Monday lab: Course introduction and the universe of editing opportunities
 - Wednesday lecture: Why we edit
- Week of Sept. 1
 - Monday lab: Labor Day/no class
 - Out-of-class quiz: Why we edit
 - Wednesday lecture: Idea development and pitching
- Week of Sept. 8
 - Monday lab activity: Baseline peer edit
 - In-class quiz: Assessing the pitch
 - First editorial meeting: News features
 - Coaching tips: Sharing control
 - Wednesday lecture: Macro editing overview
- Week of Sept. 15
 - Monday lab activity: Restructuring stories
 - In-class quiz: The big picture
 - Coaching tips: Consulting with writers
 - Wednesday lecture: Micro editing overview
- Week of Sept. 22
 - Monday lab activity: Chasing concision
 - In-class quiz: AP Style
 - Editorial meeting: Evergreen ideas
 - Coaching tips: Models for editors
 - Wednesday lecture: A brief history of editing
- Week of Sept. 29
 - Monday lab activity: Cleaning and polishing copy
 - In-class quiz: Editing history
 - Coaching tips: Confidence
 - Wednesday lecture: Writing for SEO and packaging story elements
- Week of Oct. 6
 - Monday lab activity: More clarity and concision
 - In-class quiz: Editing for digital
 - Coaching tips: Inclusion and completeness
 - Wednesday lecture: Broadcast news editing

- Week of Oct. 13
 - Monday lab activity: Getting scripts ready for air
 - Coaching tips: The process
 - Editorial meeting: Sound and visual packages
 - Wednesday lecture: Editing breaking news (Guest speaker: Melissa Hernandez)
- Week of Oct. 20
 - Monday lab activity: Coaching exercise
 - In-class quiz: Editing breaking news
 - Editorial meeting: Magazine pitches
 - Coaching tips: A form of leadership
 - Wednesday lecture: No class/instructor traveling
- Week of Oct. 27
 - Monday lab activity: Fact-checking on deadline
 - Coaching tips: Real talk
 - Wednesday lecture: Magazine Editing (Guest speaker: Elly Ayres)
- Week of Nov. 3
 - Monday lab activity: Checking for bias
 - In-class quiz: Editing at a magazine
 - Editorial meeting: AI-assisted ideas
 - Coaching tips: Values
 - Wednesday lecture: Standards and ethics, including libel, slander, legality and propriety
- Week of Nov. 10
 - Monday lab: Editing longform
 - In-class quiz: Standards and ethics
 - Documentary viewing: “Turn Every Page”
 - Wednesday lecture: Recruitment and management (Guest speaker: Mary Shedden)
 - Assignment due: Short essay by Friday at 6 p.m.
- Week of Nov. 17
 - Monday lab activity: Edit a colleague
 - In-class quiz: Editing longform
 - Coaching tips: Keep growing
 - Wednesday lecture: ACES Conference takeaways, tools and tips
- Week of Dec. 1
 - Monday lab: Exploring editing career opportunities (Guest speaker: Ebony Joseph)
 - Wednesday lecture: No class, but final project is due at 6 p.m.

Disclaimer: This syllabus represents my plans and objectives on day one of the semester. Plans may change to enhance our learning opportunities. Such changes, communicated clearly and akin to any newsroom’s breaking news pivot, are not unusual and should be expected.