

J550: Digital Media Editing/Production

Spring 2018 syllabus

This course will allow students to be immersed in a newsroom environment, build their experience and prepare for internships. As a large part of the class, students will work for the University Daily Kansan and Kansan.com, editing stories, writing headlines and cutlines, creating packages, working on search engine optimization and creating graphics.

J550 will build on the skills of JOUR 419: Multimedia Editing, giving students hands-on experience with editing stories and creating packages for a live publication. Students will delve deeper into the finer points of editing and hone their critical-thinking skills.

Requirement: Must obtain a grade of C (2.0) or higher to advance.

Course goals

- Improve your **critical-thinking skills**, especially your ability to **read at a deeper level**, **ask pointed questions** and **think in innovative ways**.
- Improve your **understanding of news story structure**: completeness, news value, interest.
- Improve your sense of a **fair, complete, accurate news story**: correct facts, inclusion of appropriate and diverse sources, and lack of bias, generalizations and stereotypes.
- Hone your **language skills** – including grammar, vocabulary and style – and helping you apply that understanding to the material you edit.
- Improve your **ability to move between print and online**, and to create visual elements for stories.
- Understanding the **principles and practice of fact-checking and source verification**.
- Understand how to read, use and accurately present **numbers and data**.
- Develop an understanding of **online content management**, search engine optimization and social media optimization, and digital analytics.
- Develop a strong sense of **story management** and **collaboration** with co-workers.
- Develop your **leadership skills** and your understanding of professionalism, ethics, accuracy, fairness and diversity in the workplace.
- Deepen understanding of the **news media industry** and editors' roles in it.

Things to know

Instructor:

Lisa McLendon
lisamclendon@ku.edu
112 Stauffer-Flint
(The Bremner Center)
785-864-7623

Office hours:

M & W: 1-3 p.m.
T, Th & F: 9:30 a.m.-noon
and by appointment

Class meets:

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Mondays and Wednesdays
107 Stauffer-Flint

Kansan newsroom:

Second floor of Dole
785-766-1491

Meeting the goals

We will work toward the course goals in several ways:

- **Newsroom shifts:** This is the heart of the class, and it provides an opportunity to gain hands-on experience editing, writing display type, and helping manage online content. Insist on your “Edited by” tagline, as that ensures you get credit (and helps me keep track of who is doing what).
- **In-class critiques, discussions and exercises**
- **Professional development**
- **Relevant readings and assignments**



Newsroom shifts

Each student will work two four-hour copy desk shifts each week at the Kansan. You work in the Kansan newsroom. There may be additional shifts for special sections, or opportunities to work on other editing projects.

Important: You report directly to and are responsible to the editors of the Kansan for this portion of the class. Treat this as you would a job: that is, show up, be there on time, come prepared to work, act like a professional.

This portion of your grade will be determined by your write-ups, my evaluation of your work, and assessments from your respective supervisors. We may meet individually during the semester and talk about how you are doing, and you may also have meetings with your newsroom supervisor.

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In-class work and participation

During the class meetings, we will discuss topics relevant to editing, current events and issues in journalism. We will also talk about the good and not-so-good work in the Kansan (see “Critiques”). So do the readings, keep up with the Kansan and **come prepared to participate**. Please don’t be a distraction to your classmates: **Turn your phones off during class and use other electronic devices only for class work.**

It is important that you feel comfortable expressing ideas and opinions, different perspectives and diverse experiences. **Be respectful of others** whose viewpoints and experiences may not be the same as your own.

Books and materials

- AP Stylebook. **You will have free access to the online stylebook** through the Kansan, but can buy a paper edition at the bookstore if you want one.
- Reading materials posted on Blackboard.
- The University Daily Kansan Policy, Style and Layout Guide (available online through the AP Stylebook site).
- A Twitter account, which you should use to follow the news as well as tweets from your classmates and @KUBremner.

Critiques

Once a week, **you will write up** a critique of one aspect (print, web, social media) of the Kansan and Kansan.com. The intent of the critique is not to call out individuals for mistakes, but to provide assessments of the quality of reporting, editing, presentation and multimedia components, pointing out both strengths and weaknesses. **Each person** is expected to contribute to any class critiques, and hand in a written critique each week via Blackboard (under "Journals"). *Late work will not be accepted.*

Assignments

Exercises and/or responses to readings will be assigned regularly, and one longer writing project (a profile of a professional editor) will be assigned at the end of the semester. These are due by class time on the due date. *Late work will not be accepted.*

Kansan work

Keep track of the stories you edit for the Kansan and pull them out of the paper or link to them on the website. Each week, **turn in a list** via Blackboard

(under "Journals") of all the stories you edited on your previous shift – including wire stories, briefs, calendar items, sports roundups, etc., as well as page proofs – plus comments on how you approached edits, headlines, trims, etc. If you had a particular issue with a story, briefly note what it was and how you resolved it. *Late work will not be accepted.*

Social media

Social media is an important part of editing: Many editors manage social media accounts and track engagement for their news organizations, and all journalists should be using social media to follow the news, trends and industry happenings, as well as to share their own content.

You should use your Twitter account to gather and share information relevant to your work as a journalist. Use the hashtag #J550 to share items of interest to the class.

Keeping up with the news

You should also keep up with events on campus and in Lawrence with the Kansan and the Lawrence Journal-World, as well as national and world events in other news outlets. Five newspapers are free on campus so pick them up and browse through them. Be prepared to discuss current events in class.



Professional development

Each student should already have an **online portfolio** that includes examples of your best work, including work from this semester, and that will help define you as a journalist. Start saving examples of your editing work from the beginning of the semester: headlines, stories you edit, summaries you write, cutlines, and so on. Your portfolio should reflect your goals and aspirations, but should also include some of your work from this class and your resume. You will also need to create or update a profile on **LinkedIn**. The last component of professional development will be a project in which you interview a professional editor about his or her job, write it up into a story and present it to the class (details on Blackboard).

Attendance

Approach this course as you would a job: you don't just fail to show up for work (not if you want to keep the job), so don't just fail to show up for class or for your editing shifts. If you cannot attend class or if you are going to be late, please call or e-mail me. Absences from class will affect your grade.

Attendance is mandatory for all copy editing shifts, as well as at meetings called by Kansan editors.

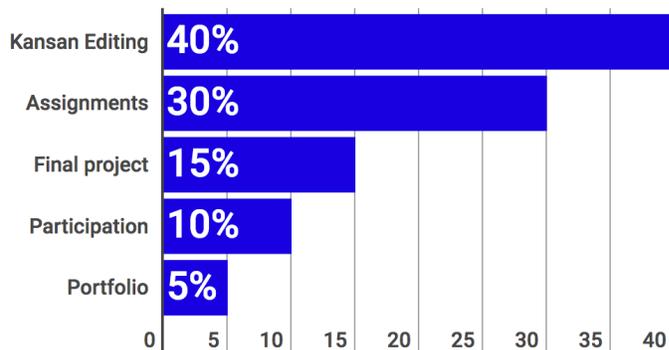
***An unexcused absence from your editing shift may result in a deduction of one letter grade from your final course grade. A second unexcused absence will very likely result in a failing grade for the course.*

But stuff happens: If you will miss or be late for an editing shift, **you must inform me AND your editors at the Kansan** as soon as possible and make a **sincere and timely effort** at securing a replacement. You have a list of all the people in the class and their contact info. It is OK to swap shifts with classmates **as long as you let me know and let your Kansan supervisor know**.

Grading

Grading for this class is on a +/- system. Your grades will be kept on Blackboard with a current running total. Here's how your final grade breaks down:

JOUR 550 grade breakdown



Advanced Editing Rubric

These are the criteria I will use when assigning grades to your Kansan editing work:

Story management

A - Catches nearly all errors in stories. Checks facts and names, and shows a high level of skepticism while editing. Ensures stories are properly structured and complete. Shows a mastery of and a comfort with grammar, and applies grammatical rules appropriately. Demonstrates familiarity with AP and Kansan style and uses style correctly throughout stories. Ensures published stories are complete, fair and easy to understand, flow well and reflect good judgment or meaningful improvements. Applies skills consistently. Does not insert errors or make changes for the worse.

B - Catches most errors, but lets some errors slip through. Could improve on skepticism. Is sometimes hesitant about making significant changes to stories.

C - Catches obvious errors but shows insufficient attention to the finer details of style, grammar and usage. Published stories are often in need of significant rewording or restructuring.

D-F - Makes detrimental changes or inserts errors while failing to make necessary edits.

Headlines, cutlines, other display type

A - Writes accurate, enticing headlines. Moves beyond the obvious and the clichéd. Cutlines add depth to the story and don't simply state what is obvious from looking at the picture. Summaries invite the reader without telling the entire story and other display type is free of errors.

B - Headlines are correct and appropriate but may be dull or not reflective of the most newsworthy or interesting elements of the story. Cutlines contain all the basic

information, but don't add details from the story.

C - Headlines consistently fail to reflect the story and display type often contains errors. Cutlines leave questions about the context of the picture and summaries frequently repeat just the first paragraph.

D-F - Display type is incorrect or libelous.

Work ethic

A - Flexible and open to suggestions about editing. Consistently calls reporters and asks relevant questions that help improve stories. Respects colleagues, arrives for shift on time and takes work seriously.

B - Mainly focused, but consistency is an issue. Quality of work varies from shift to shift or during a shift. Sometimes unwilling to compromise or listen to other approaches to a story.

C - Frequently late and off task. Does not seem to take work seriously and talks with reporters are a quick reading of changes rather than a meaningful discussion of how to improve the story.

D-F - Misses shifts. Does not communicate with reporters on significant questions about or changes to the story.

Improvement

A - Works at improving weaknesses and accepts critiques with a positive attitude. Shows awareness of common personal mistakes and works to avoid them. Researches to find answers.

B - Improvement is visible over the course of the semester, but many errors have to be addressed repeatedly.

C - Demonstrates little improvement or self-awareness.

D-F - Does not demonstrate any interest in improving skills.

The fine print

Academic misconduct

In this class, and in all journalism classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts and research. In a work setting, if you choose to violate professional standards, you will be fired. In this class, if you choose to violate the standards for academic integrity, you'll fail the course, and you may be expelled from or denied admission to the School of Journalism.

Plagiarism is stealing. It is taking someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words and presenting them as your own original work. This includes taking ideas from written sources, broadcast sources, online sources or work done by another student. Copying and pasting material directly from the Internet and presenting that work as if it were your own – that is, without quotation marks and proper attribution – is plagiarism. You will often need to incorporate another person's ideas, opinions and words into the stories you write, to make a point or to provide background. When you do this, it is essential that you attribute that information: explain where the information came from and give credit where credit is due.

Fabrication means that you made up information, sources, citations or quotes. This includes making up an entire interview or source or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic to make it sound better.

Don't do it. Ever. It's far better to miss a deadline and risk the wrath of your boss than to risk your credibility as a journalist.

Content "recycling": The expectation in this class is that you've come to learn, to be creative, to stretch your imagination, and expand your skills. Therefore, all the work you do in this class must be original. That means no "recycling" of your previous interviews, assignments, stories or work from other classes. The J-School considers recycling previous coursework as academic dishonesty.

Disability accommodation

If you have a special need that may affect your learning and for which you wish to request accommodation, contact **KU Student Access Services** in the Academic Achievement and Access Center (AAAC), which coordinates services for eligible students. Information about services can be found [online](#), at the office in Strong Hall Room 22, or by calling 785-864-4064. Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course; realize that you will need official documentation from the AAAC *before* accommodations are made.

Weather

KU decides when the weather is bad enough to close. To see whether classes are canceled, call 785-864-7669.

Recording of classroom lectures

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all material presented by the instructor in class, are the instructor's property. Recording of lectures *without instructor consent* is prohibited. On request, the instructor usually will permit students to record lectures, on the condition that these recordings are used only as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures *may not be modified, broadcast or published online, or transferred to any other person.*

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication or Falsification

The School of Journalism **does not** tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence or falsification of evidence.

Penalties for engaging in such behavior can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the school.

If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult your instructor.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

JOUR 550 Schedule of topics (Spring 2018)

Subject to change depending on circumstances

Specific readings and assignments are in each week's materials on Blackboard.

Weeks 1-2: Intro and skills review

- Page proofing
- Kansan and AP style refresher
- Deep grammar

Week 3: Editing: Structure and content

- News stories
- Sports stories

Week 4: Editing: Structure and content

- Feature stories
- Opinion columns

Week 5: Display type

- Print, mobile and online headlines
- Summaries
- Cutlines

Week 6: News analytics

- Using metrics to understand traffic and reader behavior

Week 7: Skepticism and fact-checking

- Asking questions
- Resources for verifying information

Week 8: Evaluating sources

- How to tell if sources are real and reliable

Week 9: Verifying online content

- Using tools to check information for accuracy and timeliness

Week 10: Presenting fact-checks

- Effective ways of sharing accurate or corrected information

Week 11: Stop and Think

- Recognizing biases
- Ensuring appropriate tone and accuracy

Week 12: Manage News Online

- Social media best practices
- Curation best practices

Week 13: Plagiarism and fabrication

- How to spot it and what to do if you find it

Week 14: Numbers and their presentation

- Understanding polls, statistics and other numbers
- When and how to present news graphically
- Editing news graphics

Week 15: Professional development

- Presentations of final projects
- Your professional online presence (portfolio, social media, LinkedIn)