

# J550: Digital Media Editing/Production

## Spring 2016 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

- Improving your **critical-thinking skills**, especially your ability to **read at a deeper level, ask pointed questions** and **think in innovative ways**.
- Improving your **understanding of news story structure**: completeness, news value, interest.
- Improving your sense of a **fair and accurate news story**: correct facts, inclusion of appropriate and diverse sources, and lack of bias, generalizations and stereotypes.
- Honing your **language skills** – including grammar, vocabulary and style – and helping you apply that understanding to the material you edit.
- Improving your **ability to move between print and online**, and to create visual elements for stories.
- Developing **familiarity with social media** and how you can use it as a journalist.
- Understanding the **principles and practice of creating news graphics** and using **alternative story forms**.
- Understanding how to read, use and accurately present **numbers and data**.
- Developing an understanding of **Web content management**, search engine optimization and social media optimization.
- Developing a strong sense of **story management** and **collaboration** with co-workers.
- Developing your **leadership skills** and your understanding of professionalism, ethics, accuracy, fairness and diversity in the workplace.

### Things to know

**Instructor:**

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

**Office hours:**

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

**Class meets:**

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

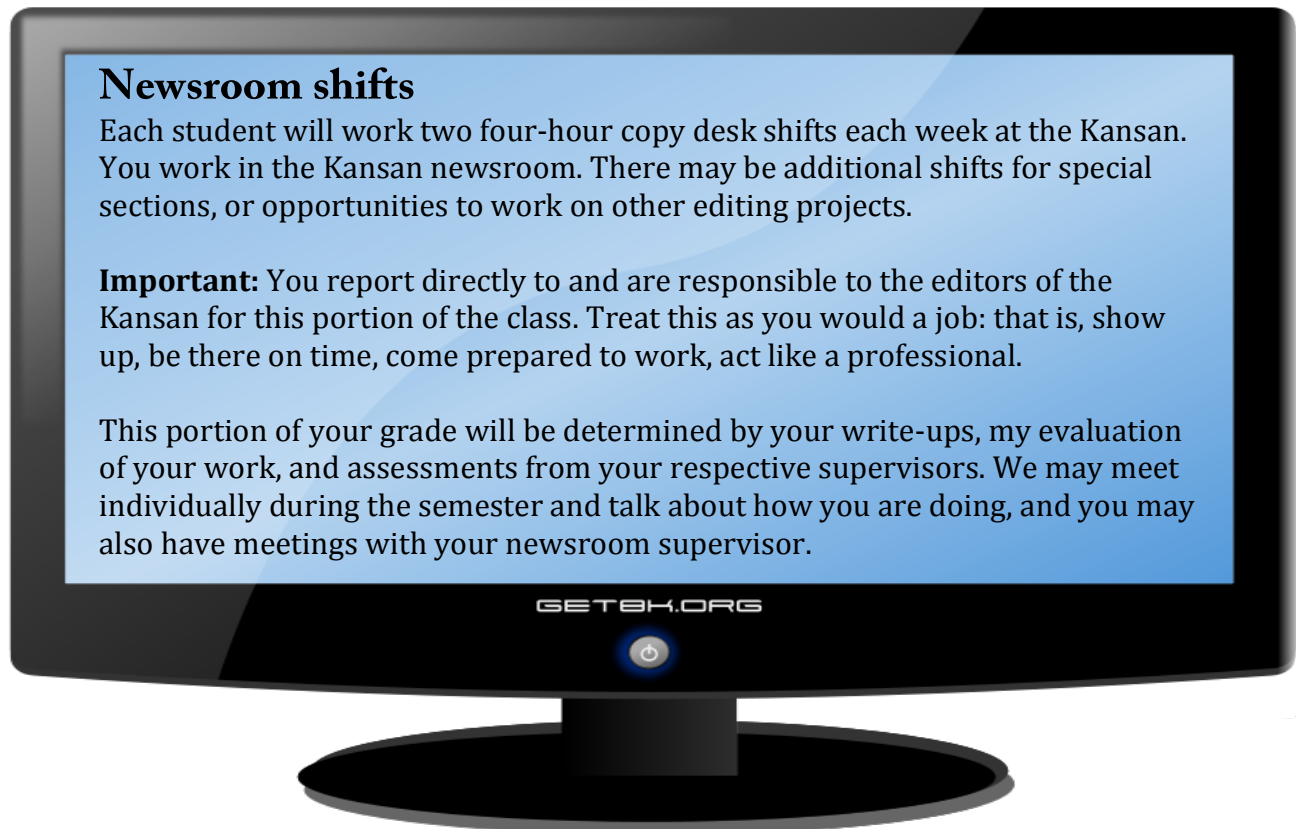
**Kansan newsroom:**

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 assignments.**
- **Use of social media.**
- **Relevant readings and assignments.**



## In-class work and participation

During nearly every class period, we will discuss your work in the newsroom and with editing. We will also talk about the good and not-so-good work in the Kansan (see “Critiques”), and discuss current events, issues in journalism and topics in the readings. So do the readings, keep up with the Kansan (that is, read the days *besides* the ones you edit) and **come prepared to participate**.

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. Our hashtag is #J550.

## 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. 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 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.

As part of this class, each of you will create a Twitter account (or use an existing one) to gather and share information relevant to your work as a journalist. You will be expected to tweet at least twice a week with the hashtag #J550 to share items you think would be 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.



## Portfolio

Each student will create or update an **online portfolio** that will include samples of work from the semester and that will help define you as a journalist. Start saving examples of your work from the beginning of the semester: headlines, stories you edit, summaries you write, cutlines, and so on. If you already have an online portfolio, just add materials from this class to it. If you don't, you can create one through the J-School's site or elsewhere (more details on this when we get to it). You can (and should) connect your social media presence to your portfolio. Your portfolios should reflect your goals and aspirations, but must also include some of your work from this class and your resume. You will also need to create or update a profile on the professional networking site **LinkedIn**.

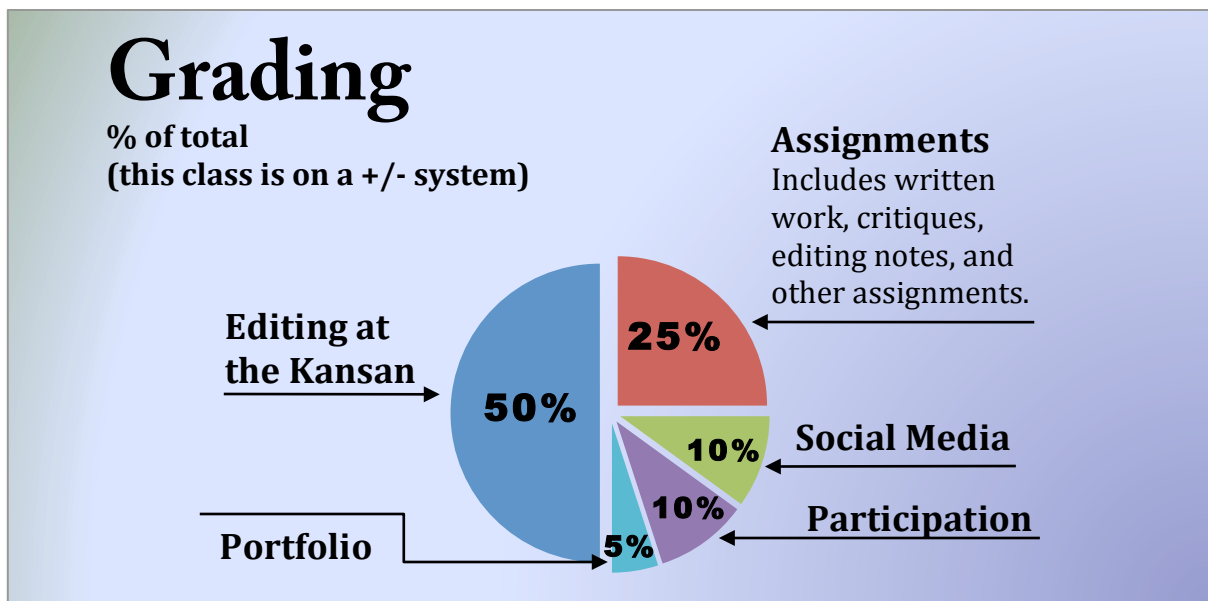
## Attendance

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 will 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**.



## **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 from night to night. Does not insert errors or make changes that worsen the story.

**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 and grammar and usage. Published stories are often in need of significant rewording or restructuring or are overly wordy.

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

### **Headlines, cutlines and 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. Blurbs invite the reader without telling the entire story and other display type is free of errors. Break boxes and pull quotes are added to complex or number-heavy stories when necessary.

**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 blurbs frequently just repeat the first paragraphs of the story.

**D-F** - Display type is factually incorrect or libelous.

### **Work ethic**

**A** - Flexible and open to suggestions about editing. Consistently calls reporters and asks relevant questions that help improve stories. Shows respect for colleagues and 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 conversations with reporters are a quick reading of changes rather than a meaningful discussion of how to improve the clarity of 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. If unclear on a point, researches to find answer/consensus.

**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.

### Here's some clarification:

If you use or attempt to use any unauthorized materials during a test, or if you give any unauthorized materials to someone else during a test, this is cheating. Unauthorized materials include written materials, such as notes, as well as nonverbal or electronic communication.

**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.

## 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 the instructors.**

*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.

**Fabrication** means that you made up information, sources or quotes. This can include making up an entire interview or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic to make it sound better. **Don't do it. Ever.** No matter how pressed you are for time, it's far better to 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 journalism school regards any efforts to recycle material 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 accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. Information about services can be found at <http://disability.ku.edu/>, at the office in Strong Hall Room 22, or by calling 785-864-4064. Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course, and realize that you will likely need official documentation and requests from the AAAC before accommodations are made.

### **Journalism School and financial aid policy on classroom attendance**

"Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent."

"The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid."

### **Inclement weather**

In the event of bad weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 785-864-7669.

### **Recording of classroom lectures**

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's property. Video and audio 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, may not be broadcast or published online, and must not be transferred to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

# JOUR 550 Schedule of topics (Spring 2016)

## **Weeks 1-2:** Intro and skills review

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

## **Week 3:** Display type

- Headlines (print, mobile and online) and teasers
- Summaries
- Cutlines

## **Week 4:** Principles of analytics

- Using tools to track your audience

## **Week 5:** Editing: Structure and content

- News stories: structure and content
- Sports stories

## **Week 6:** Editing : Structure and content

- Feature stories (including personal profiles)
- Opinion columns

## **Week 7:** Managing news online

- Curation, summaries and links

## **Week 8:** Breaking news online

- Verification, corrections and ethics

## **Week 9:** Using Twitter as a journalist

- Gathering news on Twitter
- Following and verifying information on Twitter
- Sharing news on Twitter

## **Week 10:** Plagiarism and fabrication

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

## **Week 11:** Objectivity

- Recognizing subtle bias
- Ensuring diversity

## **Week 12:** Numeracy

- Understanding polls, statistics and other numbers

## **Week 13:** Graphics

- When to present news graphically
- How to choose the right graphic format
- Creating basic news graphics

## **Week 14:** Trimming

- Making writing more concise
- Cutting stories to fit a determined space

## **Week 15:** Your professional online presence

- Creating and maintaining a portfolio
- Establishing a LinkedIn profile