

MCM 364: News Editing
Credit: 3 Hours
Fall 2007

Mike Blackman, Visiting Professor/Warner Chair

Room: Rather 122. **Phone:** 936-294-1335 (o), 817-846-2630 (c) 817-926-4238 (h)

e-mail: mlb011@shsu.edu **Office hours:** Monday: 3-7 p.m; Tuesday: 3-6 p.m.

Wednesday: All day (by appointment). Thursday: noon-1:30 p.m.; Friday: by appointment.

Required materials

Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual

Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*, and a good dictionary

Course Objectives

To prepare students for entry-level editing jobs in the professional media: This will be done through a comprehensive study of editing, from copy editing to news editing, and headline/cutline writing; additionally, the course will include how to plan coverage of major breaking-news stories.

Methods

This course will emphasize the basics of good editing – spelling, punctuation, word usage, grammar, syntax, etc. Further, we will learn to deal with more substantial elements of good editing, such as story organization, focus, the use of proper supporting material (including background and quotes). We will learn to not over-promise in our leads or overlook attribution. We will learn, in the context of the news of the day, the merits of a story and how to determine how prominently it should be played.

It is imperative that you take seriously our quizzes and exercises, for they will be the backbone of this course. Their purpose: To prepare you to handle editing duties in a professional environment.

You will never make it as an editor if you don't keep up with what's going on – if you don't know what's in the news daily. I will be giving unannounced current-event quizzes. So read every chance you can the local newspapers, including the *Houstonian*, *Huntsville Item* and the *Houston Chronicle*. Get in the habit of reading the *New York Times* as much as possible; the Sunday paper would be a good start. The *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* are also important to keep up with. Read news on the Internet, watch TV news, local, network and cable. Radio news programs can also benefit you.

Required Work

This class includes lectures, quizzes, exams, and class discussions in which I expect all to participate.

Grading

Quizzes/exercises: 50 percent; **Mid-term exam:** 20 percent; **Final exam:** 30 percent.

Worth remembering

Don't miss class or your grades will suffer, for we're going to cover a lot of ground, as this is a quiz-heavy course. Don't be late. Be respectful of your classmates; in other words, don't distract them in class, because they may want to learn something. Pay attention, work hard, mind your manners and don't look for an easy or convenient way to avoid work. Do not turn on your computer during class unless told to by your instructor. If you miss class, find out from a classmate about assignments.

Good editors are hard to find – but, good ones are paid and promoted accordingly. If you do particularly well in this class you could be opening the door to a prominent, influential and fun future in the media. Good luck.

Student Syllabus Guidelines: You may find online a more detailed description of the following policies. These guidelines will also provide you with a link to the specific university policy or procedure:

<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Academic Dishonesty: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Classroom Rules of Conduct: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Students with Disabilities Policy: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

Visitors in the Classroom: Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

