

# THE ART & CRAFT OF EDITING



As we'll learn firsthand this semester, there are **many kinds of editors** and **many kinds of editorial tasks**. Most editors, no matter what their job, have **strong writing skills** and an **eye for detail**. Having a **good grasp of grammatical principles** is important, as is being **meticulously observant**, but such skills are only part of the larger equation as we'll learn first-hand from professional editors this semester. For example, not all editors concentrate on final manuscripts, checking for grammar, spelling, consistency and other formatting issues, as do copy editors. Some editors focus on matters much earlier in the production process. Acquisition editors, for instance, primarily work on identifying new projects and seeking out authors for those projects. Section editors for newspapers help identify stories that need to be told and guide their reporters through the reporting and writing process. Social media editors help their organizations use social media tools to engage better with readers. In fact, being an editor is often as much about the **editor's ability to work with the people who produce the content** as it is about the content itself. And editors' reputations—as magicians or overbearing know-it-alls and everything in between—are often linked to their style of working with those content producers.

We offer this course in the English Department because many undergraduate students who major or minor in English (and even those with advanced degrees in English) end up working as editors at some point in their careers, if not their entire careers. You don't have to work as an editor, however, to benefit from learning the skills that editors must have in order to do their jobs well. Furthermore, even though editing generally entails working with other people's writing, you should find that your own writing has improved as you learn to pay close, careful attention to various manuscripts.

In one semester, we won't master everything there is to know about every aspect of editing. A course is not a substitute for the hands-on (and lifelong) experience of an editing internship and/or job. But here's what we can and will do:

- Learn first-hand from a variety of editors the professional requirements and necessary skills needed to complete an array of editorial tasks and jobs
- Learn standard copyediting marks and practice copyediting tasks
- Learn to follow style sheets (and style guides)
- Strengthen our own writing skills and review grammar principles in order to identify and fix errors in what we are editing
- Try on the multi-faceted roles of an editor in various assignments, including our class production of the 2016 Commencement Edition of the Hawk

## Instructor Information

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Office Hours: M 1 - 2 p.m., Wed 9 - 11 a.m. *and by appointment*

## Required Materials

*Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, Buzz Bissinger

All other course materials can be accessed via our class Schoology account.

You also need to have Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

## Editing Projects:

**Editors at Work Blog Post and Revision (10%)** Each student in the class will be assigned one of the guest editors who has agreed to talk to our class. Based on our SKYPE or in-person interview of the editor as well as any follow-up exchanges that you may have with the editor yourself, you will write a post for our series "Editors at Work" that will appear on the English Department blog and be disseminated through various social media outlets. Posts should include snippets of conversation (advice, words of wisdom, etc.) that engage readers, who are primarily students at Saint Joseph's University and who may be considering editing careers. In addition, posts should follow the style sheet that you will be given for the assignment. You should also secure a photo from the editor to use in the post, which should not exceed 500 words. Also, at the bottom of the post, include any information about internship opportunities, if they exist, where the editor works. All posts will be edited by another student in the course. Once your editor has provided feedback, you will revise your post and submit it to the series editor (Dr. Spinner!) for one last proof and publication. Additionally, when you submit your revised blog post for publication, you should also include a short paragraph of response to the editing that you received. **Timeline: Blog Posts are due to editors one week after the class interview. Editors must return edited posts to writers the first Monday after they receive it. Revisions and response-to-editing paragraphs are then due the Friday of that week.**

**Editors at Work Blog Post Edit (5%)** As the editor, your job is to fact check any information provided in the blog post, provide any additional feedback regarding content, and make sure the post conforms to the assignment's style sheet. Because the post is written in a Q & A format, you should not change any words in direct quotes (though you may copyedit for spelling and punctuation). The writer should submit to you any interview notes from follow-up exchanges with the editor in the event that you need to double-check any quotes. You will mark the text using proper copyediting symbols.

**How-To Instructions and Revision (10%)** For this project, you will write instructions for one of your classmates to follow in order to complete a task of your choice. Pick something that you know how to do well and that one of your classmates can complete with minimal to no cost and within a short amount of time (no more than an hour or so). As a writer of the instructions, your job is to be thorough and clear and to produce a technically clean document that follows the assignment's style sheet. Once your editor has copyedited your instructions, you will revise them. Additionally, you will write a short paragraph of response to the editing that you received. **Timeline: How-To Instructions are due to editors on Monday, Feb. 8. Editors must return edited instructions to writers by Monday, Feb. 15. Final instructions and response-to-editing paragraphs are due Monday, Feb. 22.**

**How-To Instructions Edit** (10%) Edit the How-To instructions that one of your classmates has written. As the editor, your job is to point out any failings in the instructions that cause confusion or complications as you attempt to complete the task. You will also edit the instructions for clarity, technical correctness and style conformity, marking the text using proper copyediting symbols.

**Video Instructions and Revision** (10%) For this project, you will create a digital version of your How-To instructions. As the producer of this video, your job is to be thorough and clear and to make sure that any text included in the video is technically clean. Once your editor has provided feedback to your video, you will revise it. Additionally, you will write a short paragraph of response to the editing that you received. **Timeline: Video Instructions are due to editors on Monday, March 21. Editors must provide written feedback to producers by Wednesday, March 23. Final videos and response-to-editing paragraphs are due Friday, April 1.**

**Video Instructions Edit** (5%) Provide feedback on the How-To video that one of your classmates has created. As the editor, your job is to point out any failings in the instructions that cause confusion or complications as you attempt to complete the task.

**Commencement Edition Project** (25%) For this project, our class will work as a team in order to help produce the 2016 Commencement Edition for the Hawk student newspaper. As a team, we will pitch an overall idea for the edition to the Hawk editors for approval. Each student in the class will be assigned both a content production and an editorial role on the team based on interests and strengths. Some content may also be sought from students outside the class, either from students in other journalism courses or from members of the Hawk staff.

**Small Assignments** (15%) Small assignments include both in-class and out-of-class writings and exercises, quizzes, and preparation for and participation in class interviews.

**Final Exam** (10%) Your final exam will consist of two parts. The first part will be completed in class during the final exam period and will test you on copyediting tasks and grammar skills highlighted in our class discussions. The second part, which you will complete ahead of our exam period, will be a written review of a contemporary style/grammar book of your choice that you have read cover to cover. I'll provide you with a list of possibilities (e.g., *Woe Is I*; *The Elephants of Style*; *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*; *The New Well Tempered Sentence*; *Grammar Snobs Are Great Big Meanies*, etc.) but you are welcome to propose your own selection. **Timeline: You must clear your chosen book with me by Wednesday, March 2).**

## Policies:

**Regular attendance and participation** is not only required but essential to our classroom community. They're especially important on the days in which we are interacting with people outside the classroom, whether they are guest editors or members of the DMZ staff. If for some reason you must miss class, I ask that you notify me as far in advance as possible to let me know that you will not be there. E-mail notification is fine. You then need to speak to me or one of your classmates to clarify missed work and/or discussion. After three absences, your final grade will be lowered. After six absences, you will receive an "FA" (failure due to excessive absence) on your transcript. Failure to prepare for or participate in the guest interviews will also negatively impact your final grade.

Violations of the University's **Academic Honesty policy**, found [here](#), will result in failure of the course, and your infraction will be reported to the Academic Honesty Board. Please note that more than one reported violation may result in your dismissal from the university. If you are EVER tempted to cheat, copy, fabricate, plagiarize or pass off work done for another course, stop—and see me first. I'd rather negotiate an extension than see you risk ruining your academic (and perhaps professional) career.

I am happy to meet with you any any point during the semester, so please don't hesitate to see me if you ever have any questions or desire additional feedback on your work. You may also wish to take advantage of **Writing Center** assistance for the works that you produce for class (not for the editing that you are required to do). The main Writing Center is located in Merion Hall 162; the satellite is located in PLC 128. (To make an appointment, go to [sju.mywconline.com](http://sju.mywconline.com).) Additionally, the **Digital Media Zone** on the second floor of the Post Learning Commons offers tutoring in digital technology, and the professionals on staff there can assist you with your digital projects.

For those of you who have or think that you may have a disability, the University will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities in accordance with state and federal laws. Contact **Service for Students with Disabilities** at (610) 660-1774 (voice) or (610) 660-1720 (TTY) as early as possible in the semester for additional information and so that an accommodation, if appropriate, can be made in a timely manner.