

Editorial PROCESSES

Fall Semester 2020

COMM 313 • Three credits

Instructor: Ross F. Collins, Ph.D.

Good afternoon!

This is fall semester 2020 at North Dakota State University, Fargo. You are reading the syllabus for COMM 313, Editorial Processes.

You may get in touch with instructor Ross Collins by email at ross.collins@ndsu.edu, by calling 231-7295, by stopping at Minard 338B14 during office hours (9:30-11 Tuesdays and Thursdays), by appointment, or just stop by.

Email is the fastest way to reach Ross; he will try to respond within a couple hours. Class material and announcements will be posted to the Blackboard class management system. In most cases these will also be available directly from www.rosscollins.com. No password required.

Course objectives announced

FARGO, N.D.—A professor at North Dakota State University today announced course objectives for COMM 313, Editorial Processes. According to Ross Collins, students are expected to learn:

- how to correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage, leads, and AP style in written material;
- how to write headlines and headings;
- effective news judgment and promotional practices as they pertain to editing;
- effective handling of illustrations;
- principles of typography;
- design and make-up for print and multimedia. Basic InDesign and Photoshop software.

“My objective is to turn beginning mass communication students into precise and creative editors,” said Collins. “Editing is critical for credibility and quality in any publication or website.”

Bulletin description

Principles of media copy-editing, headline composition, publication design, photo editing, and computer editing. Prereq: COMM 200. Restricted to Communication professional majors and minors.

Observations for an exceptional semester

This fall we will return to NDSU during the greatest crisis in the history of American higher education, as the president of Princeton University called it last summer. It presents us with responsibilities and opportunities. We who have decided to return to the university during these difficult times will try to follow sometimes extraordinarily demanding protocols in an environment that is supposed to encourage personal and intellectual connections. Those have now become risky. We'll have to do our best through times when we'll feel despondent, anxious, overwhelmed, angry and scared. That is normal during a crisis.

But we have the opportunity as well to show our courage and strength through a global challenge the likes of which we have not seen since World War II. We have never faced something called COVID-19 before. But humanity has faced many pandemics. People with courage then did their best to mitigate spread, treat the sick and carry on. They knew that while a vaccine was impossible—now is the first time in history we could hope for such a thing—a pandemic always ends eventually. We too will carry on, perhaps a

What to expect: projects and examinations

You'll need to prepare for a final exam and two capstone projects. In-class assignments will help you master the skills you need to edit with precision. You'll be doing some of your work using InDesign and Photoshop software. *Note: you must have access to InDesign to complete the course.*

The final grade will be based on:

Final exam, 250 points; assignments/projects, 325 points. Tentative total: 575 points.

Grade percentages: 90-100=A; 80-89=B; 70-79=C; 60-69=D; below 60=F.

little more humble facing the forces of nature, with a greater understanding of our limits and weaknesses, but also having some satisfaction knowing that we persevered without giving up or giving in.

With this in mind I hope everyone this semester will be just a little more tolerant, a little more forgiving and a little more patient. Instructors are trying to do it all—teach face to face (mask to mask?) and online at the same time. That requires a lot of technology, and more savvy to use it than most professors have had. Classroom technology was not part of our major. We anticipate problems. We'll do our best to make the class as good as it can be. In return for your patience I promise to have patience with you, realizing that some days you may be sick, tired, afraid, anxious, or maybe just not be ready to face a sea of masked people trying to avoid each other. Don't give up. Stick with me. I'm not feeling great about this either. But I'll stick with you. And we'll stick together. You are a communication major. Be a communicator. Keep a journal or blog. Take pictures. It will help you think through your feelings, and give you something tangible when someday your children ask, “What was it like to be a student during the Pandemic of 2020?” Yes, they will ask.

Vital listing

What you'll need for COMM 313:

- Required text: Collins, ed., *Editing Across Media. Content and Process in a Converged World*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013). This text includes chapters by authors from around the country.

Highly recommended:

- Brooks et al., *Working With Words*.
- *AP Stylebook*, published by the Associated Press.
- Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*. The classic.

Daily bonus!

Editors learn to pay keen attention to detail. To help you improve your own skills, the instructor offers you this challenge: for every error you find in any published material, you will receive ONE HALF POINT of extra credit. This includes typos, misspellings, fact errors, grammar errors, usage errors. (Style is not included, as it depends on the publication.) Just copy or send URL, identify the source, correct the error, and submit. Ten points is worth an extra grade-A daily assignment! (10 pts. max.) Why not start now by finding possible grammar errors/typos in **this very syllabus? I've thrown in a few errors for you to catch.**

Tentative Schedule

Fall Semester 2020

Editorial
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Week One (August 24-28)

Introduction, importance of editing. Logical fallacies. Read *Editing Across Media*, Intro and Ch. 1. Study online readings 1 and 2 (see Blackboard for online reading links, or go to rossfcollins.com. Choose Classes, Editing.

Week Two (August 31-Sept. 4)

How editors work. Best of AP style. Begin study of grammar. Read *Editing Across Media*, Chs. 2-3. Study online readings 3-6, plus the sneaky word list and proofreader's marks. *Note Reading 6 includes four video podcasts covering aspects of grammar.*

Week Three (Sept. 7-11; no class Monday, Labor Day)

How to edit, view of reality. Grammar, word clutter.

Week Four (Sept. 14-18)

The words, continued; clichés, word clutter, quotes. Study online readings 7-10.

Week Five (Sept. 21-25)

Grammar, continued; slow leads, attributions, concise editing. Study online readings 11-13.

Week Six (Sept. 28-Oct. 2)

Editing for the web. The big picture. Law, plagiarism and editors. Read *Editing Across Media*, Ch. 4.

Week Seven (Oct. 5-9)

Begin headlines and headings. Read *Editing Across Media*, Ch. 5. Study online readings 14 and 15, plus "10 Common Typographic Pitfalls."

Week Eight (Oct. 12-16)

Headlines, continued. Read *Editing Across Media*, Ch. 6. **Midterm exam** is Friday, Oct. 13.

Headlines, continued. Read *Editing Across Media*, Ch. 6. **Midterm exam** is Friday, Oct. 18.

Week Nine (Oct. 19-23)

Typography and headlines, continued. Review InDesign for editors.

Week 10 (Oct. 26-30)

Photos and illustrations. Writing cutlines. Begin page design and make-up. Read *Editing Across Media*, Chs. 7-8. Study online readings 16 and 17.

Week 11 (Nov. 2-6)

Page dummying, page layout. Read *Editing Across Media*, Ch. 9. Study Online Reading 18. View "How they used to look: famous mass media, 1674-1974." If you need more help on dummy sheets, see link to instructor's YouTube video, "Dummy Sheets for Editors."

Week 12 (Nov. 9-13; no class Monday, Veterans Day observed)

Computerized pagination for editors (InDesign). If you need more help, view instructor's podcasts demonstrating basic elements of pagination.

Week 13 (Nov. 16-20)

Computerized pagination and publication design continued; newsletter practice exercise. Editing and convergence. Read *Editing Across Media*, Ch. 10.

Week 14 (Nov. 23-27; Wednesday-Friday is Thanksgiving break, no class)

Pagination continued; editing a broadsheet. Working with pdfs and printers. Read *Editing Across Media*, Ch. 11.

Week 15 (Nov. 30-Dec. 4)

Pagination, continued; editing a newsletter.

Week 16 (Dec. 7-11, "Dead Week"; Friday is last day of class).

Advanced design and editing; wrap up newsletter project, review for final exam. *Note: Extra credit submissions are due on or before the last day of class.*

Final exam period: 8 a.m. Monday, Dec. 14.

University official notices

Note: The instructor asks students to comply with all classroom requirements set by the university to help contain the COVID pandemic.

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the Office of Registration and Records. Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty. According to NDSU Policy 333 (www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/333.pdf), attendance in classes is expected. **Veterans and student service members** with special circumstances or who are activated are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible, and are encouraged to provide activation orders. As a member of the **Safe Zone Ally community network** of trained faculty at North Dakota State University, the instructor is committed to promoting an inviting and inclusive environment that is emotionally and physically safe for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) students.

☛ **Any students with disabilities or other special needs who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact the Disability Services Office (www.ndsu.edu/disabilityservices) as soon as possible.**

Want to know more?

Fowler, *Modern English Usage*. Many editions of this classic usage guide are available.

Kessler and McDonald, *When Words Collide. A Media Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style*.

Collins, *Weird Ways of News. A User's Guide to News Values*. Online: www.weirdwaysofnews.com.

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