Eastern Illinois University
Course Revision
2901 JOU, Introduction to Copy Editing

Note: This proposal asks that Journalism 2901 be changed from 1-2-2 to 2-2-3. The increase is sought because of a noticeable decline in student competency in the basic skills covered in this course and the inability in the current format to devote more time to addressing these needs.

1. Course description
   (a) Journalism 2901
   (b) Introduction to Copy Editing
   (c) 2-2-3
   (d) On demand
   (e) Copy Editing
   (f) The study of principles and practices of editing copy for various journalistic media. Emphasis on editing for accuracy, fairness, legal and ethical problems and proper style, grammar, word usage, and punctuation.
   (g) Prerequisite: A minimum grade of “C” in JOU 2101

2. Objectives and Evaluation of the Course
   (a) Course objectives
      • To improve students’ editing skills
      • To help students learn about the role of language in appreciating differences among people and diversity
      • To show the importance of accuracy to the editing process
      • To encourage an awareness of current events and the world around them
      • To provide an understanding of the work of journalists, including copy editors
      • To develop an awareness of the impact of the media and their obligations in a diverse, multicultural society and global world.
   (b) NA
   (c) Methods of assessing students’ achievements of objectives:
      • Exams assessing student knowledge and skills involving news judgment, grammar, spelling, word usage, sentence structure, and proper style
      • In-class and out-of-class assignments designed to assess student skills in editing. These assignments require students to practice their skills by editing actual stories for various media. The assignments will be critiqued by the instructor. Some assignments will require revisions.
   (d) NA
   (e) NA

3. Outline of the Course (two 100-minute class sessions per week)
   (a) Week 1: Introduction to the editing process. Fundamentals of editing. Importance of style and consistency in the media. Use of stylebooks.
   Week 2: Role and responsibilities of copy editors. Copy editing as a career. Punctuation basics and rules.
   Week 3: Common grammatical errors: Agreement problems, misuse of modifiers and voice. Other writing problems.
   Week 4: Correct word usage. Common spelling rules.
Week 5: Tightening stories. Getting rid of word clutter and editing for brevity. Simplifying language.
Week 6: Importance of accuracy in the media. How to use almanacs and other reference materials.
Week 7: Using statistics and numbers correctly.
Week 8: Checking for missing information. Making the story complete.
Week 9: Language sensitivity: Diversity, fairness and the copy editor. Role of language in creating and perpetuating stereotypes.
Week 10: Editing for libel, privacy and other legal problems.
Week 11: Clear writing: Importance of leads. Different types of leads. Sharpening the lead to grab the reader or listener.
Week 12: Improving story organization and focus.
Week 13: Rewriting and combining stories in different media.
Week 14: Editing special types of stories. Relationship between editing and public relations.
Week 15: Application of editing to different types of writing. Review of course.

(b) NA

4. Rationale
(a) This course is intended to introduce students to the importance of the copy editing process for various media. It is required of Journalism majors and minors.
(b) Because of the introductory nature of the course, the 2000-level designation is appropriate. The only prerequisite is a minimum grade of “C” in JOU 2101.
(c) If this course is approved, it will replace the current JOU 2901 (1-2-2) course. The additional hour for this course is sought because of the continued emphasis on the skills covered in this course in the profession and the inability under the current course format to devote the time and attention to them that students require.
(d) This course is required for all journalism majors and minors.

5. Implementation
(a) Howard Price, Mary Wohlrabe, Joe Gisondi
(b) NA
(c) Texts:
(d) Spring 2004

6. Community College Transfer: A community college course may be judged equivalent to this course.

7. Date approved by Journalism Department: November 21, 2002

8. Date approved by CAH Curriculum Committee: December 18, 2002

9. Date approved by CAA: January 30, 2003