

# JCOM 3120 **The Newspaper Copy and Design Desk**

Instructor: Bill Keshlear  
E-mail: [bkeshlear@comcast.net](mailto:bkeshlear@comcast.net)  
Home: 801-487-1304; Cell: 801-699-7773  
Office hours: Tuesday, 10:30 a.m.

## Syllabus

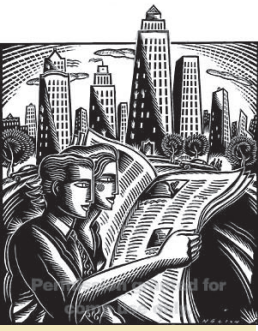
### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This is an intensive, broadly designed, skills-based course intended to acquaint you with copy editing, headline writing and page design. The emphasis will be on newspaper journalism, although general principles discussed apply to related fields such as public relations, advertising and political activism.

After successful completion of JCOM 3120, you will be better prepared for a career in journalism or a related field by having developed a set of specialized professional skills and by gaining a more sophisticated view of newsroom processes and the role newspapers play in creating news and interpreting current events.

Specifically, you will explore the history, craft and significance of newspaper copy editing; become familiar with Associated Press style; gain a deeper understanding of the parts of speech, spelling, grammar and punctuation; develop skill in rewriting copy and writing headlines and cutlines; acquire knowledge of graphic design fundamentals and their application in newspaper settings; gain experience with a computer-based page layout tool; and develop a sense of the importance of newsroom collaboration.

The course comprises two sequences: 3120A, copy-editing/headline writing; and 3120B, design. Each sequence is 16 weeks. The design portion requires beginning-level proficiency in InDesign, a widely used page-design application. Successful completion of a one-credit, self-paced tutorial conducted in the Computer Lab is required before continuing in the course's design sequence. The tutorial runs concurrently with the two sequences. You may waive the tutorial requirement by demonstrating an acceptable level of proficiency.



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### TEXTBOOKS (required)

- Michael Strumpf and Auriel Douglas, “The Grammar Bible”
- Tim Harrower, “The Newspaper Designer’s Handbook”
- Paul Martin Lester, “Visual Communication: Images with Messages”
- The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual

### VIDEOS/DVDs (I have copies to loan or they can be rented)

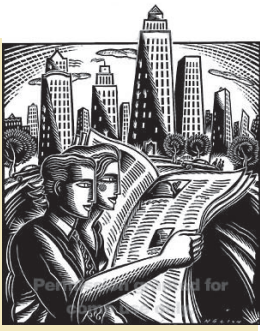
- “All the President’s Men” – on sources
- “Absence of Malice” – on ethics
- “Apollo 13” or “Hoosiers” – on team-building

### USEFUL TEXTS

- Garner’s Modern American Usage
- Otto G. Ocvirk and others, “Art Fundamentals: Theory & Practice”
- William Ryan and Theodore Conover, “Graphic Communications Today”
- Mario Garcia, “Contemporary Newspaper Design: A Structural Approach”
- The Best of Newspaper Design, editions 18-27

### INTERNET RESOURCES

- [www.usu.edu/journalism/faculty/sweeney/resources/3120web.html](http://www.usu.edu/journalism/faculty/sweeney/resources/3120web.html) – a compilation of editing and writing resources
- [www.bartleby.com/100/index.html](http://www.bartleby.com/100/index.html) – Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations
- [www.m-w.com/](http://www.m-w.com/) Merriam Webster dictionary, [thesaurus.humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/forms\\_unrest/ROGET.html](http://thesaurus.humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/forms_unrest/ROGET.html) – Rogets Thesaurus online
- [www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/) – William Strunk Jr., “The Elements of Style”
- [www.americanpressinstitute.org/content/3696.cfm](http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/content/3696.cfm) – API’s copy-editing resources
- [www.americanpressinstitute.org/toolbox/](http://www.americanpressinstitute.org/toolbox/) – Journalists’ toolbox compiled by API
- [www.newspagedesigner.com](http://www.newspagedesigner.com) – Examples of recent news and features pages posted by individual newspaper designers
- [www.snd.org](http://www.snd.org) – Society of News Design home page
- [www.newseum.org](http://www.newseum.org) – Front pages of newspapers worldwide; updated daily



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### COURSE STRUCTURE

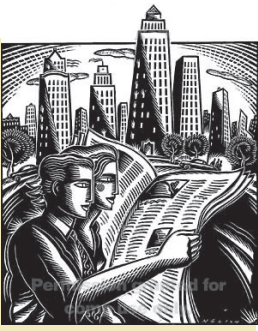
The course is framed conceptually around “Writing, Editing, and Design,” or WED, which refers to a collaboration of various specialists in producing print journalism.

Professional newspaper copy editors and designers work as part of a specialized group of journalists called a copy desk, elements of which may be subdivided into task areas called a features desk or a community news desk or a sports desk or a design desk or a special projects team.

Roughly two-thirds of the two-sequence course will focus on the basics of copy editing, headline writing and design. The rest of the course will cover related topics, including ethics and team-building.

### TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

You will be using Microsoft Word, Adobe InDesign, and the Internet extensively through the university’s computer labs or your personal computer.



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The following are descriptions of the point totals that determine your final grade.\* They will give you an indication of my expectations.

• “A” caliber work has a sophisticated sense of readership, purpose and context. It contains few or no errors. It demonstrates that the student editor/designer understands the course material thoroughly and is thinking about how newspaper readers would actually use their newspaper. It reflects work expected of a professional designer/copy editor.

(continued on next page)

\* The descriptions are adapted from the work of Christine Seifert, PhD., of Westminster College in Salt Lake City.

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### GRADING

Your final grade in the two sequences of JCOM 3120 (copy editing and design) will be determined based upon the following point formula in three general areas:

1000-940 points: A  
930-91 points: A-

900-880 points: B+  
870-840 points: B  
830-810 points: B-

800-780 points: C+  
770-740 points: C  
730-710 points: C-

700-680 points: D+  
670-640 points: D  
630-610 points: D-

600 or less: E

### AREA 1 (copy editing and design)

- Participation (100 pts.)
  - Conferences (50 pts.)
  - Credibility survey (50 pts.)
- Total: 200 points**

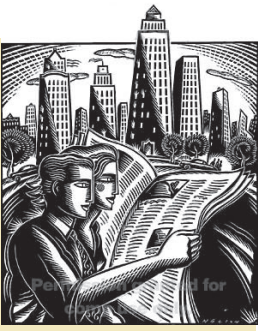
### AREA 2 (copy editing)

- AP style quizzes (75 pts.)
  - Re-write assignments (150 pts)
  - Self-assessment (25 pts)
  - Midterm and final exam (150 pts)
- Total: 400 points**

### AREA 3 (design)

- Design exercises (75 pts.)
  - Midterm exam (100 pts.)
  - Final project (225 pts.)
- Total: 400 points**

**COURSE TOTAL: 1000 POINTS**



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### GRADING: AREA 1

**Participation (100 pts.):** Attendance is essential. Grades are assigned, in part, based on in-class participation.

**Conference (50 pts.):** All students are required to schedule and attend a series of informal conferences with me throughout the semester. We'll discuss your progress as a copy editor and designer.

**Credibility survey (50 pts.):** Nowadays, few outlets of the mass media seriously attempt to independently and accurately document world-shaping events or explain the complex issues that impact American democracy. Many communication researchers believe that most mass-media generated messages are skewed to favor the political and commercial viewpoints of those with access to power and privilege, many of whom – including media owners and investors – may not have the best interest of American democracy at heart. However, some daily newspapers remain committed to their First Amendment responsibilities, and copy editors are on the frontline.

One of a copy editor's primary responsibilities is to detect bias and find and correct errors before they are published. As an exercise to discover the amount and kind of error that can creep into copy, students will conduct a survey of sources quoted in stories published by dominant Utah daily newspapers.

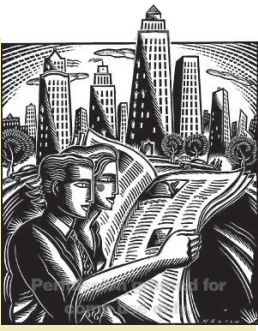
200 POINTS

• “B” caliber work is above average. It has a clear sense of readership, purpose and context. It contains a few errors. It demonstrates that the student editor/designer understands the course material and is thinking about how newspaper readers would actually use their newspaper.

However, does not rise to the level expected of a professional newspaper copy editor/designer.

• “C” caliber work displays a sense of purpose and context but does not seem focused on reader needs and interests. It shows a partial understanding of the course material. Numerous errors indicate that it does not rise to the level expected of a professional newspaper copy editor/designer.

• “E” caliber work reflects the work of a student who is not engaged. Minimum requirements of the class have not fulfilled.



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### GRADING: **AREA 2 (copy editing)**

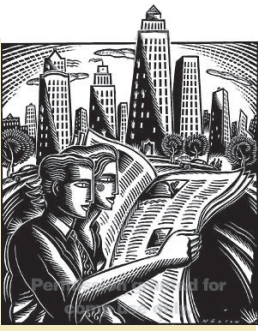
**Quizzes on The Associated Press Stylebook (75 pts.):** During the first weeks of the copy-editing sequence, you will review AP style – the primary reference for newspaper copy editors – and take three short quizzes.

**Re-write assignments (150 pts.):** You will re-write numerous news stories published in daily and weekly newspapers in Utah.

**Self evaluation (25 pts.):** On the second day of class, you will take a copy-editing test similar to one you would take if applying for a copy-desk job. At the end of the course, you will take a similar test, grade it, and perform a self-evaluation by answering this question: “How much progress have I made in mastering the craft of copy editing during the past 14 weeks.” Your answer – none (0 pts.); a little (10 pts.); some (30 pts.); a good deal; (40 pts.); a great deal (50 pts.) – determines the number of points awarded.

**Midterm and final exams (150 pts. each):** The two tests will cover all of the material presented during the course.

400 POINTS



# JCOM 3120 Copy editing and design for newspapers

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### GRADING: **AREA 3 (Design)**

**Design midterm (100 pts.):** Roughly half of JCOM 3160B will be devoted to principles of two-dimensional design, visual journalism and ethics. A midterm exam will test your mastery of the material presented.

**Design exercises (75 pts.):** Much of the rest of the course will be devoted to how those principles can be applied in a newspaper setting.

**Final project: A design stylebook (225 pts.):** This “capstone” project will enable you to gain a deeper understanding of the design principles discussed in class and give you an opportunity to design a portfolio document.

400 POINTS

### GRADING: **EXTRA-POINT POSSIBILITIES**

- One point extra credit for each Stylebook violation, grammatical blooper, punctuation gaffe, or misspelled word found in my quizzes or handouts. (You cannot share your discovery with other students and 10 is the maximum.)
- One point extra credit for each “public blooper.” A brief explanation is required. Five points maximum. A “blooper” is a billboard, highway signage, etc., that could have used a copy editor – something Jay Leno would use to get a laugh. For example, a sign at the entrance of SnowBird resort reads: “Reserved for Shuttle Busses.”
  - Fifteen extra credit points for successful completion of the “Word of the Day” assignment, which requires you to use the day’s misused or obscure word (see handout) in conversation every day of the semester. Requires signed “honor contract” within the first two weeks of the semester.



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### ADA STATEMENT

If you have a documented learning disability, a physical disadvantage or other special need, please discuss it with me and/or your faculty adviser before the end of the second academic week. Reasonable accommodations can be made to allow you to participate in course activities or meet course requirements.

### INSTRUCTOR PROFILE

I have worked as a designer, art director, copy editor and news editor at numerous newspapers over the past 20 years, including The Fort Worth Star-Telegram, The San Diego Union-Tribune and the The Salt Lake Tribune.

I earned a Master of Professional Communication from Westminster College in Salt Lake City. Areas of emphasis were media relations, writing and editing, visual communication, organization development and project management.

I have taught editing and design at Utah State University and reporting and writing at the University of Utah. In addition, I have led design workshops at the University of Utah.





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### ACADEMIC AND INTELLECTUAL HONESTY

Because public trust and personal credibility are essential to journalists and other professional communicators, the JCOM department and Westminster College observe a zero-tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty. The college expects students and faculty alike to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty.

To that end:

- Any documented form of academic dishonesty – including plagiarism – will result in an automatic “E” in the course and a report to the department head, the dean of the college and the vice president for student services.
- JCOM students who engage in documented academic dishonesty may be dropped from the major.
- Students who hand in similar or identical work will receive an “E” regardless of who copied from whom.
- Any suspicious work may be submitted to a database that compares student papers to other student and published work in a web database.
- Anything turned in for a grade that misrepresents your academic work, including page design, without giving proper credit to the originator is plagiarism.

If you have any questions about what’s acceptable work under strict codes of academic honesty, see the Code of Policies and Procedures for Students, or consult your adviser.





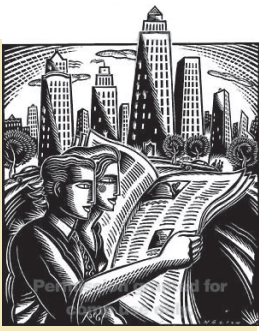
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## Syllabus (Page 10)

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

AUGUST 2007	3120A (COPY EDITING)		3120B (DESIGN)		
	classroom topic	assignment	classroom topic	assignment	
Monday, 27th	Introduction/Ice breaker Course overview	Read handout(s)	Introduction/Ice breaker Course overview		A self-paced tutorial to learn the basics of InDesign runs concurrently in the Computer Lab for the first three weeks of 3120B.
Tuesday, 28th	Topic: Workplace context Power Point: Trib Tour Quiz: #1	Read handout(s)	Design basics: Perception Power Point: Perception	Read Lester (ch. 1-5)	
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	SEPTEMBER				
<i>LABOR DAY</i>					
Tuesday, 4th	Topic: Historical context Editing self-assessment	Read Stylebook: A-E Read handout(s)	Design basics: Color theory In-class activity: Organization	Read Lester (ch. 4,5)	
Monday, 10th	Topic: The copy editor as journalist, "What is "WED" PowerPoint: A-E		Design basics: Form/function PowerPoint: Form/function		
Tuesday, 11th	Topic: Nuts and bolts of copy editing and headline writing Quiz: Stylebook A-E	Read Stylebook: F-M Read handout(s)	Design basics: Principles of two-dimensional organization PowerPoint: Organization Field trip to find examples of 2D organization	Scavenger hunt: form/function, color usage	
Monday, 17th	Topic: Nuts and bolts of copy editing and headline writing PowerPoint: F-M	Read handout(s)	Design basics: Principles of two-dimensional organization PowerPoint: Economy Scavenger hunt review		Students must pass an exam demonstrating their competence using InDesign



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### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER	3120A (COPY EDITING)		3120B (DESIGN)	
	classroom topic	assignment	classroom topic	assignment
Tuesday, 18th	<b>Topic:</b> Nuts and bolts of copy editing and headline writing <b>Quiz:</b> Stylebook F-M	<b>Read Stylebook: N-S</b> <b>Read Strumpf and Douglas (intro, ch. 1)</b>	<b>Design basics:</b> Principles of two-dimensional organization <b>PowerPoint:</b> Organization <b>In-class activity:</b> Figure/Ground	
Monday, 24th	<b>Topic:</b> The parts of speech <b>PowerPoint:</b> N-S		<b>Design basics:</b> Principles of two-dimensional organization <b>PowerPoint:</b> Harmony <b>In-class activity:</b> Harmony	
Tuesday, 25th	<b>Topic:</b> The parts of speech <b>Quiz:</b> Stylebook N-S	<b>Read Stylebook: T-Z</b> <b>Read Strumpf and Douglas (ch. 2)</b>	<b>Design basics:</b> Principles of two-dimensional organization <b>PowerPoint:</b> Balance	<b>Scavenger hunt:</b> figure/ground, harmony, balance
<b>OCTOBER</b>				
Monday, 1st	<b>Topic:</b> The parts of speech <b>PowerPoint:</b> T-Z  <b>Group assignments on source credibility survey</b>	<b>Read Strumpf and Douglas (ch. 3)</b>	<b>Design basics:</b> Principles of two-dimensional organization <b>PowerPoint:</b> Context <b>In-class activity:</b> Context <b>Scavenger hunt review</b>	<b>Read Harrower (intro., ch. 1-3)</b>
Tuesday, 2nd	<b>Topic:</b> The parts of speech <b>Quiz:</b> Stylebook T-Z	<b>Watch "All the President's Men" and write analysis</b>	<b>Design basics:</b> Principles of two-dimensional organization <b>PowerPoint:</b> proportion <b>In-class activity:</b> proportion	<b>Scavenger hunt:</b> context, proportion
Monday, 8th				



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### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

OCTOBER	3120A (COPY EDITING)		3120B (DESIGN)	
	classroom topic	assignment	classroom topic	assignment
Monday, 8th	<b>Topic:</b> Sources and "All the President's Men"		<b>Design basics:</b> Grids <b>PowerPoint:</b> Grids <b>In-class activity:</b> Piet Mondrian <b>Scavenger hunt review</b>	Read Harrower (ch. 4-7)
Tuesday, 9th	<b>Topic:</b> Parts of speech	Read Strumpf and Douglas (ch. 4,5)	<b>Visual journalism vs. visual communication:</b> newspaper conventions	Read Harrower (ch. 8-10)
Monday, 15th	<b>Topic:</b> Parts of speech	Read Strumpf and Douglas (ch. 6,7)	<b>Visual journalism vs. visual communication:</b> newspaper conventions	Read Harrower (ch. 11-13)
Tuesday, 16th	<b>MIDTERM REVIEW</b>		<b>Visual journalism vs. visual communication:</b> Society of News Design	
Monday, 22nd	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>		<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
Tuesday, 23rd	<b>Topic:</b> The copy desk team	Watch "Apollo 13" or "Hoo-siers" and write analysis	<b>The newspaper deconstructed:</b> typography <b>PowerPoint:</b> Design edit I	Page design exercise #1
Monday, 29th	<b>Topic:</b> Prepare presentations on source credibility survey.  <b>Turn in analysis of movie</b>		<b>The newspaper deconstructed:</b> graphics/typography/illustration/photography <b>In-class activity:</b> Review of page <b>PowerPoint:</b> Design edit II	Read Lester (ch. 8-10,12)
Tuesday, 30th	<b>Topic:</b> Group presentations on source credibility survey.	Watch "Absence of Malice" and write analysis	<b>Visual journalism vs. visual communication:</b> Visual literacy <b>PowerPoint:</b> Design edit III	Read Lester (ch. 6,7)



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### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER	3120A (COPY EDITING)		3120B (DESIGN)	
	classroom topic	assignment	classroom topic	assignment
Monday, 5th	<b>Topic:</b> The copy desk as ethical watchdog	Read handouts	<b>Visual journalism vs. visual communication:</b> Visual ethics <b>PowerPoint:</b> Visual ethics	Page design exercise #2
Tuesday, 6th	<b>Topic:</b> The copy desk as ethical watchdog <b>Turn in analysis of movie</b>	Re-writes #1-3	<b>Visual journalism vs. visual communication:</b> Visual ethics <b>PowerPoint:</b> Design edit IV	Final project: rough draft
Monday, 12th Tuesday, 13th Monday, 19th Tuesday, 20th	<b>Classroom editing lab</b>	Re-writes #4-6  Re-writes #7-9	<b>Classroom design lab</b>  <b>Review rough draft of final project</b>	Page design exercise #3 Page design exercise #4 Page design exercise #5 Page design exercise #6
<b>HOLIDAY</b>				
Monday, 26th Tuesday, 27th	<b>Classroom editing lab</b>	Re-writes #10-12 Take editing self-assessment quiz	<b>Classroom design lab</b>	
<b>DECEMBER</b>				
Monday, 3rd	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>  Turn in editing self-assessment quiz		Turn in final project	