

**It's not *all* about
copy editing.**

Editing involves making a series of choices.

- First, it requires working productively with writers.
- Some choices entail adhering to standards; others involve instinct, experience and perceptions of the audience.
- Fixing copy is important, but others require choosing the right topic and approach for your writer and audience.
- No two editors will make the same choices.
- There's no perfect edit of any story, though you want to maintain standards of accuracy and consistency.
- The audience ultimately decides what works, and it's up to editors and writers to respond.

What editing is not (or shouldn't be):

- Being a grammar snob
- Enjoying telling writers they're wrong
- Lording over younger journalists
- Being the biggest pain in the ass in the newsroom

What editing is (or should be):

- The person who works with writers
- The final line of defense before publication
- The keeper of consistency
- The person who makes writers (and their stories) look good
- The person with a bigger-picture perspective

With all this in mind...

- In this editing class, I've made several choices as an instructor.
- I teach the class very differently than a lot of other professors.
- This doesn't mean they're wrong – I just feel this way works best for me in this context.
- This class evolves differently every semester.

This editing class vs. others

First half of semester: Story content

- **Copy Editing**
 - Spelling, grammar, word usage, etc.
 - Adherence to AP style
 - Common errors (capitalization, confusing syntax, etc.)
- **Editing for Content**
 - Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy
 - Fact checking, clarity, fixing loose ends
 - Providing context, resolving conflicts
- **Story Flow**
 - Facts can be accurate, but must create compelling narrative
 - First reference vs. later ones
 - Bad flow can mislead readers
- **Grab Their Attention**
 - Leads, headlines, subheads – catchy but informative
 - Photos, graphics, other visual elements

This editing class vs. others

Second half of semester: Working together

- **Generating, Assigning and Adjusting Story Ideas**
 - Brainstorming to improve story topics, approaches
 - Assigning stories to writers or working with them on topics
 - Working with writers as their stories develop
- **The Reporter's Voice vs. the Editor's Job**
 - Clean up writing while maintaining tone of writing
 - Work with writers to improve stories over time
 - Long-term continual process
- **Working Through the Editing Process**
 - Edit for copy, then for content
 - Show writer why edits are needed
 - Give writer chances to respond
 - Collectively arrive at final story