



## **MPJO-675-01: EDITING & CURATION**

### **GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM**

Thursdays, 5:20 p.m. to 7:50 p.m. | Fall 2015

Instructors: Cindy Boren and Jen Chaney  
Downtown campus, C226 (Mac lab)

- Office hours are by appointment.

#### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

As the tools and practices of digital journalism continue to evolve, so do the roles of editors. Now an editor is just as likely to cover a breaking story by aggregating and curating the best of what's on the web as she is to assign a staffer or freelancer to report on the same subject. The ability to curate smartly and effectively is a crucial skill for both editors and writers, in print and the digital realm. Editors of all types now must think about how their content plays in numerous places, including the mobile landscape. Specific mobile editor and web editor jobs require the marriage of traditional journalism with these new skills and abilities.

This class will be broken up into two parts, exploring the traditional roles of magazine, newspaper and online editors - including assigning, copy editing and line editing - as well as the standards and practices involved in aggregating content and how to apply those practices to breaking news situations, blogging, commentary, multimedia and social media.

The class will take a multi-platform approach, building on the foundation set by Digital Essentials and Reporting and News Writing. Be prepared to tackle assignments at home, as well as exercises in class that will be completed on deadlines designed to replicate what students may encounter while working at a major news outlet. There also will be an expectation that students will use the newest tools in news and curation.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

During the semester, students will:

- Learn the basics of fact checking, copy editing and line editing
- Learn how to write headlines that are SEO-friendly and speak to an audience
- Learn how to edit other students' work and how to provide constructive criticism
- Learn tools to verify curated content (photos, video, etc.) according to journalism ethics
- Learn how to curate content from the standpoint of opinion/analysis/criticism
- Learn how to curate in time-sensitive environments

#### **REQUIRED READING**

There is no required text for this course. Instructors will instead assign weekly, online readings during the semester that students will be expected to read and be prepared to discuss in class.



Students should be prepared to use their AP Stylebooks (from Reporting and News Writing) or use the online AP Stylebook available through the Georgetown library.

## **ATTENDANCE**

As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences for classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

This class relies heavily on attendance and participation. Punctual attendance is critical. If you have to miss a class – family emergency, medical emergency or other act of God – you must let the instructors know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

## **CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES**

Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers or other communication devices while in class, unless required to use them for an in-class assignment. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. Students should come prepared for class discussions and for talks with speakers. Engagement in class discussions and with speakers will be evaluated as part of students' participation grade.

One of the key objectives in this class is to learn how to work with others constructively – both as editors and as content creators. A critical eye is important to learning how to edit others' work; a respectful tone will allow your criticism to be heard and acted upon.

The purpose of class and topical assignments is to increase your awareness as student journalists about working in real time in the digital era. Seeking information and assessing merit and veracity as information flies in from multiple platforms are critical to how the modern journalist works. Assignments will include hands-on work as well as critical assessments and development of ethical responsibility in the modern age. Contributions to a class blog will be part of the mix as well.

Strict deadlines separate journalism from other professions. You must meet them. All late work will receive a grade of a zero, unless you have asked for an extension of the deadline prior to an assignment being due. Students will only be excused from deadlines due to genuine emergencies, but all reasonable effort must be made to notify the instructors ahead of time. In the event of a weather emergency (or any other widespread emergency) that would close the Georgetown Downtown building, we will plan to meet virtually through online videoconferencing tools. More information will be provided on how this will work later in the semester.



## ASSIGNMENTS

**Topical assignments:** Throughout the semester, there will be seven graded, topical assignments related to the concepts we discuss in class. Grading rubrics, including word counts, for each assignment will be shared in class. The assignments are as follows:

1. Find three examples of well-curated stories and write a one-paragraph analysis of each, explaining what made that coverage effective. Include examples of how that effort incorporated social media.

**Format:** Document via e-mail

**Deadline:** Beginning of class, September 10

2. Create a curated piece of journalism based on an assignment you will receive from a class partner.

**Format:** Class blog

**Deadline:** Beginning of class, September 17

3. Edit the curated piece that your class partner filed to you.

**Format:** Class blog

**Deadline:** Beginning of class, September 24

4. Cover an event live as it's happening, either in person or from your couch. This can be a TV show, a sporting event, a Congressional session or any other news story. Use social media tools to report what's happening and capture all angles of the story. (Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, Periscope – any and all tools can be used.)

**Format:** Class blog

**Deadline:** Beginning of class, October 15

5. Write a blog post driven by images, videos or GIFs that has been assigned to you by a class partner. The pieces will be edited during the following class session.

**Format:** Class blog

**Deadline:** Beginning of class, October 29

6. Create a curated piece of opinion journalism. The pieces will be edited during the following class session.

**Format:** Class blog



**Deadline:** Beginning of class, November 5

7. Find a recent piece – it can cover politics, local news, sports, or entertainment -- and edit it, demonstrating how you would rework it with additional curated content to make it stronger.

**Format:** Class blog

**Deadline:** Beginning of class, November 19

**Final project:** Students will choose a specific topic - a particular Congressional race, a sports team's season, etc. - and track all news and information related to that topic throughout the semester. Each student will create 10 pieces of curated content that tell the story of that subject.

**Format:** All 10 pieces of curated content will be filed in the live blog. A one-page document summarizing the coverage - including why the story was noteworthy and why each form of curation was chosen - should be e-mailed to the instructors.

**Deadline:** 5 p.m. on December 3

## GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Topical assignments:	35 percent (5 each)
Overall class attendance and participation:	15 percent
Participation in editing exchanges:	15 percent
Final project:	35 percent
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100 percent</b>

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. There are no grades of C+, C- or D.

A	100-93	B-	82.99-80
A-	92.99-90	C	79.99-70
B+	89.99-88	F	69.99-0
B	87.99-83		

The instructors will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

## UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- MPS Writing Resource Program  
Lauinger Library, 217A | 202-687-4246  
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>



- Academic Resource Center  
Leavey Center, Suite 335 | 202-687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)  
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
One Darnall Hall | 202-687-6985  
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY**

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

### **GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM**

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

### **PLAGIARISM**

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

### **SYLLABUS MODIFICATION**

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of



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guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructors will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



## CLASS SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1 (THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3)

#### What It Means to Be an Editor and Curator Today

Introductions and overview of the class. We'll discuss the nature of an editor's job and how it has evolved in the digital era. We'll also discuss the meaning of curation, providing examples of outlets, editors and writers who do it effectively.

**Assignment:** Find three examples of well-curated stories and write a one-paragraph analysis of each, explaining what made that coverage effective, including examples of how that effort incorporated social media.

**Deadline:** Send to the instructors via email by the beginning of class, September 10.

**Note:** Please come to the September 10 class with a story idea that involves curating around a recent news event.

### WEEK 2 (THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10)

#### Editing in Real Time

We'll discuss the basics of editing - how to generate story ideas, how to decide whether to accept a reporter's pitch, writing effective headlines and blurbs - within the time-crunched environment of the digital journalist. We'll cover such topics as the importance of good headline-SEO and finding the right online tone for different types of stories. We'll also do some in-class exercises that involve editing and curating under tight time constraints, including assigning a story idea to a partner. That story should involve curation around a recent breaking news event and be fewer than 500 words in length.

**Assignment:** Create a curated piece of journalism based on the assignment you received from your class partner.

**Deadline:** Post to the class blog by the beginning of class, September 17.

### WEEK 3 (THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17)

#### Fact-Checking and Curation Procedures

We'll explore the practical side of editing and curation, including the practice of fact-checking and how it's done in the digital world. We'll discuss how to use curation tools like Storify, Twitter and Tumblr and the role multimedia (Instagram, Periscope, Vine, Snapchat) can play in curation. We'll also talk about the role of home page, mobile, tablet, social media and newsletter editors and how they determine which stories to shuffle in and out on a typical day.

**Assignment:** Edit the curated piece that your class partner filed to you.

**Deadline:** Post to the class blog by the beginning of class, September 24.



#### **WEEK 4 (THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24)**

##### **The Ethics of Curation**

We'll dive more deeply into the importance of responsible editing and curation, covering such topics as sourcing, knowing when to link out to other content, owning up to errors and overall transparency. We'll also break up into our partner groups so editors can explain their changes to their curators. This will be followed by larger class discussion.

#### **WEEK 5 (THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1)**

##### **Developing Sources and Resources**

We'll talk about developing sources in the digital age, using traditional means (the telephone: it still works!) as well as more modern ones. Topics such as how to organize your Twitter/Facebook/Instagram feeds, knowing which social media users to trust, how to capitalize on Reddit and turning crowdsourcing into your friend will be discussed.

**In-class exercise:** You will be asked to come up with a topic for a curated blog post and write that blog post, within 30 minutes.

**NOTE:** Be prepared to share the topic you plan to cover in your final project by October 8.

#### **WEEK 6 (THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8)**

##### **Covering and Curating Events, in Real Time**

We'll devote this week's class to live coverage of events, exploring how the media has documented actual events - from Supreme Court decisions to the NFL draft to the Academy Awards - as case studies.

**Assignment:** Cover an event live as it's happening, either in person or from your couch. This can be a TV show, a sporting event, a Congressional session or any other news story. Use social media tools to report what's happening and capture all angles of the story. (Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, Periscope – any and all tools can be used.)

**Deadline:** Post to the class blog by the beginning of class, October 15.

#### **WEEK 7 (THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15)**

##### **Building Community**

We'll discuss the importance of knowing and responding to your audience. Topics to be covered will include tracking online metrics, the perils and positives of the comments section, responding to reader feedback and creating an inclusive environment for readers on your blog, website and social media feeds. We'll talk about how to make posts more shareable on other platforms, including Facebook, and do in-class exercises in which students, as editors, must respond to "real" e-mails from readers.

**Note:** Please come to the October 22 class with an idea for a multimedia-driven blog post that





you will assign to a class partner.

## **WEEK 8 (THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22)**

### **Multimedia and Mobile**

We'll discuss editing from a multimedia perspective. What does a multimedia editor do and how does it differ from text-based editing? How can content be edited solely using photos, videos and GIFs? How can stories be translated to the mobile environment? We'll be joined by a guest speaker who works as a multimedia editor.

**Assignment:** Create a blog post driven by images, videos or GIFs, assigned to you by a class partner.

**Deadline:** Post to the class blog by the beginning of class, October 29.

**Note:** Please come to the October 29 class with a story idea for a curation-driven opinion piece.

## **WEEK 9 (THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29)**

### **Curating and Editing Opinion Pieces**

We'll spend some time editing the multimedia-driven blog posts from the previous week, and then turn our focus to opinion writing and editing. Curation is not just a subjective reporting and editing tool; it also can be used in writing that reflects a distinct point-of-view. We'll look at how curation is used in opinion writing and criticism, how to edit such pieces while maintaining the writer's voice and how to provide content that blends a writer's original thoughts with those gathered elsewhere.

**Assignment:** Create a curated piece of opinion journalism. The pieces will be edited during the following class session.

**Deadline:** Post to the class blog by the beginning of class, November 5.

## **WEEK 10 (THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5)**

### **Covering Politics and Local News**

We'll spend some time editing the opinion pieces from the previous week. Then we'll drill down into the first of two topic-specific areas: politics and local news. We'll have guest speakers join us as we discuss how to curate breaking political news and local news, what editors look for on both beats, when to infuse coverage with opinion and other issues related to two beats covered heavily by Washington, D.C.-based journalists.

## **WEEK 11 (THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12)**

### **Covering Sports and Entertainment**

We'll segue into our next topic-specific session, on covering sports and entertainment, during which we'll discuss how curation occurs around these subjects, how to strike the proper tone when editing sports and pop culture and how to make such pieces both fun and worth taking seriously.



**Assignment:** Find a recent piece – it can cover politics, local news, sports, or entertainment -- and edit it, demonstrating how you would rework it with additional curated content to make it stronger.

**Deadline:** Post to the class blog by the beginning of class, November 19.

### **WEEK 12 (FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13)**

#### **Field Trip to Washington Post**

We'll hold a special class session/field trip at The Washington Post where we'll meet with digital editors to discuss the day-to-day realities of working in a 21st-century newsroom. The time of the field trip is still being scheduled, but it will likely be in the latter half of the afternoon. Students should come prepared with lots of questions. Because this class is happening outside of the normal schedule, please get in touch with us individually if your work schedule will make this difficult.

### **WEEK 13 (THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19)**

#### **Long-Form Curation**

We'll begin class by discussing some of the issues raised during our Post field trip. Then we'll talk about the approach toward editing and curating long-form pieces, including how to decide if a story merits a long-read treatment, how to translate such pieces into a format that sings online and on mobile, when to build online "sidebars" and more.

### **NO CLASS – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26 FOR THANKSGIVING**

**\*\*Reminder:** Final projects are due at 5 p.m. on December 3.

### **WEEK 14 (THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3)**

#### **A Panel Discussion on Curation**

The focus of this session will turn to a panel discussion with journalists from a variety of disciplines who will share their take on many of the subjects discussed during the semester, including ethical curation, building online sources, feeding the non-stop online beast and other topics. Students should come to class prepared to ask questions. We'll also discuss the final projects and share thoughts on what we've covered throughout the semester.

### **NO CLASS ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 – STUDY DAYS**

### **WEEK 15 (THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17)**

#### **The Curation Olympics**

You've trained all semester, and now you're ready for the Curation Olympics. We'll spend this last session engaging in fast-paced classroom exercises that put everything students have learned to the test. We'll curate and edit breaking news blog posts, think pieces, pieces that are rife with errors, multimedia-driven stories and more, all while a stopwatch ticks away. After a



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moving medal ceremony, we'll close with a conversation about the future of editing and curation.