

ENG 483: Professional Editing

Department of English & Journalism § Western Illinois University
Spring 2006 § Simpkins 027, T Th, 2:00-3:15pm
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Introduction

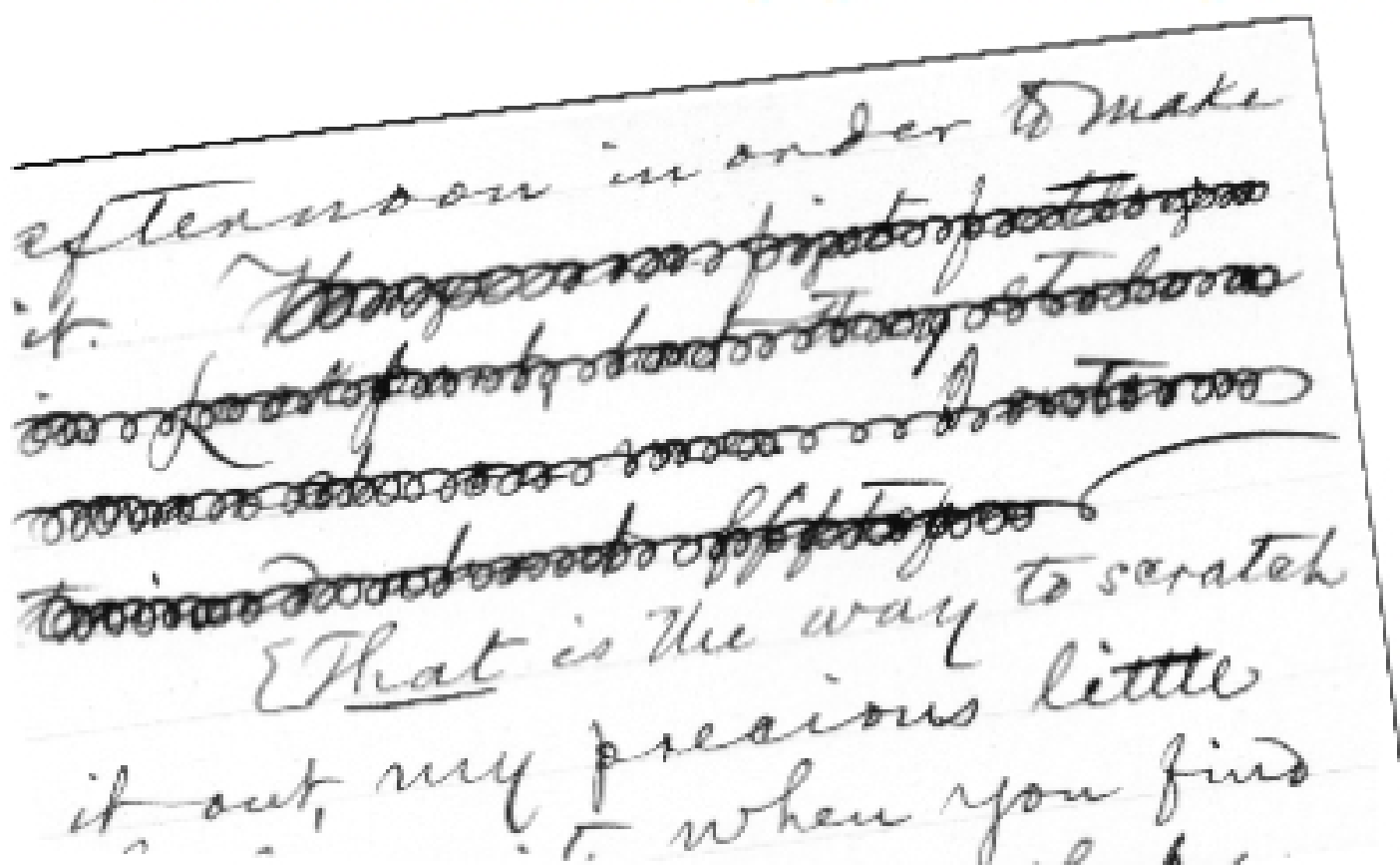
In ENG 483, we'll learn professional editing, the art and craft of improving the style, clarity, correctness, and structure of unfinished manuscripts and more polished documents.

In this sixteen-week course, you won't become professional editors, but you will get the foundation you need to develop your editing acumen, given continued practice. You will learn methods and systemic approaches which can improve the accuracy, consistency, and speed of your editing. More importantly, you should also learn the attitude of professional editors: believing that all writing can improve, but balancing the desire to make changes with respect for writers' texts and their personal investment in their writing. ENG 483 will help you become effective editors of your own documents and diplomatic critics of those produced by clients or co-workers.

The course content breaks down into two large areas:

- ✓ First, we will learn established principles, recommended procedures, and best practices for publication and editing.
- ✓ Second, we will familiarize ourselves with “nuts and bolts” matters—English grammar, writing style, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and other conventions associated with the production of all texts. We'll rely heavily on our textbooks for this second content area, since it is difficult (if not impossible) to remember all of the relevant “rules” which apply to professional writing.

ENG 483 requires writing experience. Prerequisites will be enforced. If you have taken few writing courses, or have limited writing experience, I encourage you to wait until next year.



afternoon in order to make
it. ~~That is the way to scratch
it out, my precious little
when you find~~
That is the way to scratch
it out, my precious little
when you find

Letter from Samuel Clemens
to Livy Langdon, 1869.

Objectives

Through careful reading, re-reading, collaborative work, class discussion, practice editing, and service learning, you will learn the following:

- Standard theories, practices, and conventions of professional editing, such as copyediting marks, style sheets, and editing terminology;
- Techniques for ensuring regular, accurate editing, such as multiple-pass editing, style sheet generation, bubble queries, and use of reference material;
- Methods for determining the amount and type of editing necessary for a document, given time constraints and audience, from light to comprehensive (substantive) editing and revision;
- How to use a style manual such as the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the *Associated Press Stylebook*, or the *MLA Guide to Scholarly Publishing*;
- How to identify and correct common shortcomings of English grammar and style;
- Common conventions for “nuts and bolts” elements of writing, such as punctuation, capitalization, spelling, enumeration, and abbreviation;
- Best practices for tracking editing work, for communicating with clients as a professional editor, and for managing editing projects.

Readings

Three texts are required. Previous editions of course texts are not acceptable. In the first week of class, we'll discuss other texts which come strongly recommended.

- Course pack, from Quickprinters, 1120 E. Jackson, 309.833.5250.
- Amy Einsohn, *The Copyeditor's Handbook (2/e)*, U of California P. ISBN 0-520-24688-8.
- *The Chicago Manual of Style (15/e)*, U of Chicago P. ISBN 0-226-10403-6.

Actively engaging with the course readings—reading them multiple times and note-taking—is a must. Generally speaking, I expect that you will learn methodologies presented in our texts “by heart,” and familiarize yourself with other content so you can find necessary material quickly while editing. I will provide you with more details about my expectations for reading during the semester.

Assignments

There are three major assignments in the course:

1. collecting documents which you encounter in your daily life into a “vulture portfolio,” then editing those most in need of improvement;
2. performing a light edit on one of the winning essays from the Leland Essay Contest;
3. completing a service learning project which involves comprehensive editing of documents used by a not-for-profit organization or department at Western, in the Macomb community, or in your home town (if you live elsewhere).

Assignment sheets will be distributed and discussed in class, and we'll devote class time to working on drafts and other assignment components. Draft assignments are required. Because the process of editing is critical, you will be asked to submit graded drafts with final projects. So plan to file your work carefully, and always photocopy any text you need to mark up.

Minor assignments which contribute to your class participation points include group work and practice editing. Regular reading quizzes help ensure that everyone is up to speed. We will have a comprehensive final examination on May 4.

Policies

Even if you've already had classes with me, please read the following carefully.

Attendance and participation

Please be on time and attend as many classes as possible. You can miss up to three classes for any reason with no penalty, but after that, more absences, for whatever reason, will lower your class participation grade.

Everyone should participate actively in class activities and discussions. If you aren't asking to speak in every class, you aren't participating enough. Bring your textbooks to every class and be ready to discuss all assigned readings. If you aren't prepared for class, stay home; if you come to class unprepared, I will ask you to leave. I'll evaluate your participation in writing twice: at midterm (3/9) and the end of the semester (5/10).

Ethical and professional conduct

I expect every student to follow the highest professional standards for ethical behavior, especially regarding respect for other students. In class, lively discussion is great, but rudeness or antagonism are unacceptable. When you are working as a student editor outside of class, plan to dress professionally and to conduct yourself as if you were operating a small business.

I also expect academic honesty. Plagiarism (use of another's ideas, data, and statements with little or no acknowledgment), collusion (unauthorized or undocumented collaboration), or re-submission (presenting an assignment previously completed for course credit) are not permissible. These ethical lapses will be reported to CAGAS in accordance with WIU policies.

Feedback

Please help me be a better teacher by telling me when you enjoy a class or benefit from an assignment. On the other hand, if something doesn't work well, I'd also like to know. I always shape courses through student suggestions—I'm willing to change almost anything about the course to help you learn more effectively. (That's why we do midterm evaluations.)

If you want to remain anonymous, put a printed note in my mailbox, or contact me through Dr. David Boocker, Chair of the Department of English & Journalism.

Grading

You earn points for each completed assignment. Some assignment sheets break down the number of points even further than the distribution below. A ten percent per letter grade scale is used for all assignments and final grades.

Please keep track of your grades and keep all graded assignments.

<i>assignment</i>	<i>points</i>	<i>grade</i>	<i>points</i>
Vulture portfolio	225	A	900-1000
Leland essay editing	100	B	800-899
Service project	325	C	700-799
Class participation	150	D	600-699
Reading quizzes	100	F	599 or fewer
Final examination	100		
Total points	1000		