

English 392, Editing for Audience, Style, & Voice: Course Information

Fall 2009 – Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:30-11:45
Prof. E. Shelley Reid

Contact Points

Robinson A420: Mon. 11:30-1:00
Tues. 1:30-3:00
Thurs. 9:15-10:00 – and by appointment

Office Phone: 703-993-2772

Online: ereid1@gmu.edu
<http://engl392001fallo9.pbworks.com/>

Goals

This class is designed to provide an introduction a range of skills and rhetorical strategies associated with textual editing. We'll pay attention to the details of close copyediting, learn to analyze the nuances of word-choice and syntax that contribute to a text's "style," and explore some principles of visual design. We'll also explore the situated negotiations editors face as they attend to local, institutional, or publication expectations; communicate with authors; and prepare texts for publication. Assignments in this class will focus particularly the skills necessary for non-fiction textual editing, but you will have the opportunity to apply those skills to other kinds of editing.

By the time you finish this class, you will better be able to do the following:

- Understand how to adapt texts for different audiences, styles, and genres
- Make editorial judgments that balance the needs of the author and the publication
- Consider and respond to a range of rhetorical and institutional expectations regarding text-editing
- Consistently employ skills in editing for fluent, correct, persuasive, lively, and stylistically appropriate prose
- Edit both hard copy and electronic documents, attending to both alphabetic and visual elements, using both manual copymarking and online editing tools
- Describe the many roles that professional editors may assume, and their ethical and professional responsibilities

Of Note: While good writers and good editors share some skills, the correlation isn't complete or exact. Good writers frequently need to ignore their inner editors; good editors often need to divest themselves from the intellectual or emotional goals that drive writers. You should thus be prepared to find your newly enhanced editor's brain and your ever-vital writer's soul at odds with one another at some points this semester, rather than always working in easy tandem.

Tools

Textbooks

The Copyeditor's Handbook (2nd ed.) by Amy Einsohn

The Non-Designer's Design Book (2nd ed.) by Robin Williams

Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace (9th ed.) by Joe Williams

Note: Several slightly different titles, versions, & editions of this book exist; please try to purchase the one listed above

A Writer's Reference With Exercises (6th ed.) by Diana Hacker—or another recent, comprehensive, grammar-and-style reference book

Also locate or purchase

One current issue apiece from two different magazines

A significant sample of writing from each of two different prose authors

Software: You need access to MS Word or other program that allows change-tracking

Grading Overview

Short Editing Projects	30%
1. Style/Audience Analysis Project	6%
2. Edited "Expert" essay + commentary	6%
3. Revised "Expert" essay + commentary	6%
4. Style/Audience Translation Project	6%
5. Informational Poster/Flyer OR Editor's Choice Project + commentary	6%
Editing Exams	10% (5% + 5%)
Quizzes, Homework, Participation	25%
Includes homework with corrections & explanations, quizzes, in-class writing, participation in workshops and discussions	
Weekly Sentence Log	10%
Collaborative "Live Editing" Project	15%
Includes work plan, letter to author, edits with explanations, final project, and final report	
Final Exam	10%

Completion Policy: You must complete all projects and exams to pass the class.

Grading Expectations for Project Assignments

To earn "A"-level grades, your work will need to be

- **complete**, including all steps or pieces, and responding to all designated questions
- **correct at the sentence/mechanics level**, according to current standards of Edited American English
- **stylistically appropriate**, according to the audience and purpose of the piece—this may include visual as well as textual style
- **demonstrative of best practices in editing**, including standard editing marks/processes, design or layout elements, and editorial ethics
- **rhetorically adept**, with attention to the needs of the individual author and the general context, purpose, genre, and/or professional situation
- **aware of complexities**, alternatives, contradictions, and/or multiple variables, as demonstrated in reflective or explanatory writing as well as in editorial comments

Grading Expectations for Homework Assignments, Quizzes, & Logs

Homework assignments and quizzes will be graded as follows: **H** (Honors, 100%), **S** (Satisfactory, 80%), **U** (Unsatisfactory, 60%), or **0** (zero). The distinction between H and S grades for homework assignments will be based on the degree to which your explanations acknowledge the rhetorical difficulties of good editing. The distinction between H and S grades for quizzes will be based on the degree of correctness and/or propriety of responses.

Homework assignments will comprise roughly 15% of the final grade; quizzes, about 5%.

Sentence logs will be evaluated every 3-4 weeks during the semester, and given a grade of **H**, **S**, or **U** (see above). To earn an S, the log needs to include the minimum number of entries, generally complete and on time; the entries should be relevant to current class discussions, and the explanations need to be reasonably accurate and specific. Logs that meet those qualities and exceed them—in range of sentences studied and/or in quality of explanation—will earn H grades. Some bonus credit may be given in each marking period for a higher *quantity* of sentences logged & commented upon (assuming all other requirements are met), with extra comments upon peers' sentences earning somewhat more favorable notice.

Note: Except where specified or in emergency situations, assignments generally may not be turned in via email, drop-off, best friend, mailbox, or carrier pigeon.

Course Exams

All course exams will be open book, open note, and open internet.

Good editors don't need to look *everything* up, because that slows down their work pace, but they are smart enough to recognize when they don't know something and need to check a reference work. (Quizzes will be closed-book, to encourage you to develop memory & speed.)

Other Policies of Note:

Attendance is expected. This is a collaborative, workshop- and participation-intensive class, so missing class will affect your participation grade. (And we'll miss you!)

Late work: Homework and quizzes will not be accepted late; they cannot be made up. Other late work will be penalized one full letter grade for each calendar day beyond the due-date. Lateness or absence due to rare, uncontrollable, natural disasters won't be penalized; please contact me as soon as possible to work things out. You have one **emergency pass** for the semester: the chance to turn in any assignment up to three days late without penalty. (Passes may not be used for an assignment your team was depending on for the live-editing project.)

Classroom conduct: Although it goes without saying, sometimes saying it is important, especially for an interactive class: you should maintain an attitude of respect and courtesy—though certainly not always agreement—toward other class members. Your collaborative team will also set expectations for the Live Editing Project, by which you'll be expected to abide.

Professional conduct: As an editor, you also need to demonstrate respect and courtesy toward the authors whose texts you review. In many cases this semester they will be real people who have trusted you with their work. You should not discuss or distribute such texts outside class without their permission. We'll talk this semester about how to balance your own reactions of humor, frustration, and/or confusion with the need not to speak disrespectfully about the texts or the authors who created them. Generally, though, professional editorial conduct goes **beyond "the golden rule"**: you might not mind if someone said/did X or Y concerning your writing, but your author might.

Students with disabilities: Students with documented disabilities are legally entitled to certain accommodations in the classroom. Students requesting such accommodation should present me with a contact sheet from the Disability Resource Center (703-993-2474). I will gladly work with students and the DRC to arrange fair access and support.

A few suggestions about emailing me

I spend a lot of time on email, and would much prefer to answer your question when you have it (and while it's still a small question) than to have you forget the question or have it turn into a large frustration! You can help me to help you if you can . . .

- use or include your **GMU address** in the email; for privacy reasons, I will respond only to that address.
- put the **course number**—"Engl 392"—in the Subject line, along with a short description of your reason for writing, and take the extra minute to write a professional piece of communication (salutation, message, signature, absence of glaring errors, etc.).
- **be specific** in your question or comment: what have you already tried or considered, and what are you now concerned about?

I read email daily, but I don't always respond immediately; I usually do email catch-up at the end of the week. If your question is **time-sensitive**—you need a response soon to meet a deadline—please indicate that in your message. If I don't get back to you over a weekend, please send me a quick reminder in case I've forgotten.