

Writing 374 – Magazine Editing and Production

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Course Description

WRIT 374 Magazine Editing and Production creates a studio-driven experience for students to walk through editorial considerations, design, and production of themed periodical publications such as magazines, journals, and websites whose content is released in issues. The course considers elements of magazine editing and design such as managing editorial staff, developing editorial policies, calls for and review of submissions, elements of layout and design, editing of writing, production mechanisms and decisions (for both print and electronic publication), and related subjects. Students will learn these aspects of magazine editing by serving on the editorial staff of *Young Scholars in Writing* or another periodical publication, and will evaluate submissions and compose readers' reports; copyedit manuscripts; apply house style; compose author queries; and maintain editorial records. In addition to editorial work, each student will also propose, draft, and edit a critical study on some aspect of editing and publishing. The course is open to students in all majors.

Learning Outcomes

- Build and show firsthand experience with a variety of elements of editing, including manuscript review and publication design.
- Demonstrate understanding of the major aspects of and roles in magazine and journal editing.
- Discuss the present state of online and print magazine publication processes.
- Practice using a range of design aesthetics and strategies.

Course Texts

- Carol Fisher Saller, *The Subversive Copy Editor: Advice from Chicago*. 2nd ed. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Gerald C. Gross, ed. *Editors on Editing: What Writers Need to Know about What Editors Do*. 3e. Grove Press, 1994.
- John Morrish and Paul Bradshaw. *Magazine Editing: In Print and Online*. 3e. Routledge, 2011.
- Robin Williams. *The Non-Designer's Design Book*. 4th ed. Peachpit, 2015.

Assignments and Course Credit

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|---|------------|
| • Engagement in readings and reading responses, participation in online class discussion and chats, and short writings (including introduction video and team interest statement) | 25% |
| • Team support factor: team members' assessment of your team contribution | 15% |
| • Planning and editing documents (magazine analysis, mag concept proposal) | 10% |
| • Peer-reviewing journal content (<i>Young Scholars in Writing</i>) | 30% |
| • Team magazine prototype: a short version of your team's own magazine | <u>20%</u> |
| | 100% |

Course Flow and Projects

The course will consist of four main projects, focused on the following subjects:

- Getting Started: info and small projects to orient you to the course. Projects include the introduction video you make, a team interest statement, and your first reading discussion post.

- Magazine Concept Development: how magazines take their shape from readership and editorial interests. Projects include your magazine analysis and magazine concept proposal.
- Content Development and Management: how editors work with writers to shape verbal content. Projects include peer-reviewing for *YSW* and elements of your magazine prototype.
- Design and Style: how editors create the shape, look, and feel of a magazine with visual elements. Projects include your magazine prototype.

Evaluation and Grading

Credit Grades are full credit, partial credit, no credit, and extra credit. Credit grades are given for work which is, simply, either done well to a reasonable standard, or not. Extra credit acknowledges work which rises well above the typical standard the majority of the class achieves.

Letter Grades are reserved for final versions of professional writing (e.g., magazine analysis, magazine concept proposal, and magazine prototype). I'll judge writing quality by:

- Match to intended genre and/or assignment guidelines
- Audience awareness and appropriateness of document for them
- Clarity of argument and strength of support for it, as fits the assignment
- Source use appropriate to genre/assignment and writer's needs
- Careful crafting of writing and document design
- Editing and proofreading

A writing shows little or no weakness in any of these traits.

B writing shows some weakness in some traits.

C writing shows some weakness in most traits, or great weakness in some.

D writing shows some weakness in all traits, or great weakness in most.

F writing shows great weakness in all traits.

Writing letter grade / percentage conversion

A+	100	B+	88	C+	78	D+	68	F	50-0
A	95	B	85	C	75	D	65		
A-	92	B-	82	C-	72	D-	62		

Course Policies

- **Your work in this class is always public.** Don't submit writing you can't let us all read.
- If your **work becomes lost or missing**, you must provide another copy no matter whose fault it is.
- I decide whether to accept **late work** case-by-case. Do not assume yes or no; check with me. (When other students will be disadvantaged by you having extra time, late work is grade-penalized.)
- You're welcome to **chat with me** about class business at downsdoug@gmail.com.
- **Plagiarism:** You are always responsible for in some way acknowledging source material in your writing. Cheating—whether by claiming others' work as your own (fraud) or by fabricating material—will result in a course grade of F and a report to the Dean of Students.
- **ADA:** If a documented physical or psychological disability prevents you from meeting the requirements outlined in this syllabus or course assignments, you must tell me as soon as you are aware of that disability. Disabled Student Services (x2824, 155 SUB) will assist you in documenting the disability and will coordinate any resulting accommodations with me.
- **I reserve final discretion in adjusting grades to account for unanticipated circumstances.**
- **I may use copies of your work**, anonymously, for samples in future classes or for research.

Your continued enrollment in this course constitutes your acceptance of this syllabus and its policies.

Strategies for Success in This Course

1. **Be Professional.** *As in any professional writing situation, your performance here affects more people than just yourself.*
 - It affects your teammates—the grades they earn, when they can get their work done, and their experience in the course.
 - Because you become staff on an actual scholarly journal, your work in reviewing for *Young Scholars in Writing* influences the work of the 50-60 writers submitting to the journal as well as the rest of the journal’s editorial team, including Faculty Advising Editors who will base their decisions about manuscripts submitted to the journal in part on your peer reviews. What “professionals” do is detailed in the following points.
2. **Be Easy to Communicate With.** Make yourself readily accessible to your teammates, the more ways the better. Be one of the people in your group who is comfortable with / has available texting, e-mail, skype, and preferably a google account enabling google chat, hangouts, and collaborative workspace in google docs. Share your contact info and be available by those means of contact. Respond promptly to e-mails. And make sure your group has a plan for when communications fail -- sometimes they do.
3. **Meet Deadlines and Submit All Assignments.** When you’re on your own in a course, it’s easy to set priorities that allow deadlines to slip or assignments not to be completed at all. You’re not on your own in this course. Almost any deadline you miss will negatively impact other students and professionals, even if it’s just a reading assignment (because your group and I are counting on you to know the material in that reading). You can quickly get an overview of assignment flow in the course by seeing the Course Schedule (which also appears in the downloadable syllabus) or the Calendar for this course.
4. **Play to Your Strengths / Divide and Conquer.** The beauty of team work environments is that not everybody has to be good at everything. Especially when it comes to creating your magazine prototype, you may find it best to let one team member get really good at page layout software while another specializes in images and design and your third focuses on story ideas. While everybody will usually need to contribute at least something to all aspects of the work, deciding who your “sharpshooters” are for various project aspects will usually lead to the highest-quality outcomes with the least frustration and effort.
5. **Take Up Slack.** We could call this the “Be excellent to each other” principle. If you see a team project dragging because a teammate isn’t able to get to work that the project needs, or because they simply need help doing that work, don’t form a circular firing squad and say “It’s not my job.” Get the work done even if it’s not yours. Document who’s doing what, so that if a teammate regularly fails to pull their weight and you’re saving your team’s butt repeatedly, I can factor that into grading. But, first and foremost, *get the work done*. Blame and recrimination doesn’t solve problems. Play for karma and trust that people notice your sacrifices. Someday, you’ll need the same grace from them.
6. **Set Priorities and Manage Your Workflow Awarely.** The course calendar provides a graphical layout for when work is due (set it to view the whole month) to help you visualize how various projects and deadlines in the course fit together and relate to each other. Use it! Remember that for most projects in the course, you’ll need to coordinate your own workflow with your teammates’ schedules as well. Get used to that way of thinking and do such coordination early, following the principle of being easy to communicate with.
7. **Try New Technology, and Don’t Be Afraid to Click on Things.** The online world you encounter in this course is yours to explore. Almost never can you break something just by following links or clicking buttons. Commit to a spirit of exploration in encountering new websites and software. Check

out [Wiggio](#) and see if it would make a good collaborative space. Open your first Google Doc with a friend and see the magic of live-editing each other's documents online from different places. Download [Scribus](#), our open-source publication layout/design software, and play with creating documents and effects in it. Spend time on the [Young Scholars in Writing website](#) and see where various links take you.

8. **Ask Questions and Seek Help.** This is a college course. You're here to learn, to take risks, and to stretch yourselves. There is no penalty for saying "I don't know," for asking "Why?" or "What's going on?", for saying "I need help." There is a vulnerability in these kinds of questions and admissions that is counterintuitive, it's true. But you help yourself and your team more by embracing the need to know more, than you do by trying to conceal or deny that need. It may often be easiest to ask your questions within your team. But don't hesitate to bring them to me. I try to be very quick in responding to e-mail, and in a pinch, I'm textable - 406-451-2842. (Just be sure to say who you are in the text. I suck at mindreading.)