

Journalism 438

Editing Magazine Nonfiction

Fall 2007

Wednesdays 6:00 p.m. - 9:20 p.m.

ASC 225

Michael Parrish

Journalism 438 offers students an introduction to practical magazine editing, through creation of each student's individual magazine. The course includes an overview of the industry and analysis of various types of magazines—how they differ, how they aim for a target audience and how each section of a magazine serves a purpose. The class will look at the important roles of specific editors and discuss the range of editorial functions—from giving a publication overall direction, to assigning and editing copy, to packaging stories and working with the art director and photo editors. Students will conceive of and write articles for their own magazines, and do hands-on editing. The course also provides basic practical experiences of magazine production, including layout, design and copyediting. The semester begins with a broad view of magazines—why magazines exist, what they attempt to do and how they attempt to do it. Then the focus will turn to the nuts and bolts of editorial life: developing ideas, working with writers, making assignments, line editing, writing headlines and sidebars, how to handle ethical, legal and fact-checking concerns. Each student's central project, constructed as the course progresses, is a magazine of eight pages or more—conceived, written and produced by the student.

Grading:

10%	Class participation
10%	Headline exercises and quizzes
10%	Delivering self-edited, clean copy
10%	The major feature
20%	Mid-term exam
40%	Final project

Grade Scale:

A	= 95 to 100%
A-	= 90 to 94.9%
B+	= 87 to 89.9%
B	= 83 to 86.9%
B-	= 80 to 82.9%
C+	= 77 to 79.9%
C	= 73 to 76.9%
C-	= 70 to 72.9%
D+	= 67 to 69.9%
D	= 63 to 67.9%
D-	= 60 to 62.9%
F	= 59.9% and below

Attendance:

On-time attendance and meeting deadlines are extremely important, just as they are when you work for a magazine. Assignments turned in late may not receive feedback from me, and that will naturally lower the grade they receive. If, by such event as a natural catastrophe of Southern California-wide proportions, or you otherwise know that you won't make a class, please email me immediately (parrishm@att.net). If I don't respond soon, or if yours is an especially time-sensitive emergency, call my cell phone: 213-500-3510. Email is generally the best way to set up a convenient time to talk with me about a question you may want to discuss between class sessions. I won't be keeping regular office hours but will be happy to meet you before class or at another mutually agreeable time and place. If you do miss a class, however, it's up to you to borrow notes from other students as appropriate. I won't meet you to repeat a class discussion or lecture that you didn't attend.

Required Texts:

"The Magazine from Cover to Cover," by Sammye Johnson and Patricia Prijatel, 2nd Edition.
Jour 438 Course Reader.

USC Annenberg School of Journalism - Academic Policies:

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined as taking ideas or writings from another and passing them off as one's own; in journalism, this includes appropriating the reporting of another without clear attribution. The following is the Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity as published in the University catalog: "Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and will be dismissed as a major from the School of Journalism. There are no exceptions to this policy."

Academic Accommodations: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the professor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. The office is located in the Student Union, Room 301, and the phone number is (213) 740-0776.

Internships:

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course who undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to one percent of the total available semester points for this course.

Assignments:

With the exception of the editing and layout exercises, all written assignments should be sent by email, as a Word attachment, to all students, and to me—48 hours before the next class. That gives you two days to read, edit and print out your editorial comments on your classmates' work. All elements of each week's writing assignment should be in a single Word document. Put your name and a page number on every page. Bring these hard copies, with your comments, to the next class. All work with the exception of the layouts should be submitted in 12-point Times New Roman, single-spaced, with one-inch margins.

SCHEDULE (subject to change):

Week 1 - August 29: Introduction. In class, you will write a description of your current goals for the course and, if you have a notion of it, your career. This will also include a brief history of your experience in journalism, including internships and other courses taken.

Discussion of the course direction, and the final project that the written weekly assignments will build towards: your individual magazine of eight or more pages.

Reading assignment: Materials on the history of the magazine industry, editorial concepts.

Writing assignment: To analyze recent issues of three magazines—People, Smithsonian and Los Angeles magazine—and to write a concise sentence or two defining the basic editorial formula of each. (Example: “Glamour magazine provides practical information and advice to women in their late teens and early ‘20s on fashion, health, relationships and adult life.”) You will also write a longer paragraph detailing what you can learn from your own research, using various sources, to describe specific demographics of each magazine’s intended audience.

Week 2 - September 5: Discussion of the previous assignment: an in-depth look at what each magazine is attempting to do. Why magazines are broken into different sections and how those sections create a whole. What service journalism is and what roles it can play.

Class exercises: To write for in-class critique a table of contents of stories appropriate to one of the magazines assigned last week.

Reading assignment: Materials on the wide variety of special-interest magazines in the current market and the role of magazine journalism in the broader industry.

Writing assignment: You will develop a specific table of contents (TOC) for the magazine you will be creating as your final project of eight or more pages, with headlines and blurbs appropriate for all sections. (These will naturally be subject to change as the course progresses. You may make a magazine longer than eight pages if you need the extra space to improve your layouts. All additions must be made in two-page increments, however.)

Week 3 - September 12: Your final-project TOCs discussed. Discussion of how magazines develop a tone, and how editors find ideas and assign stories.

Class exercises: You will write headlines and decks for several briefs, to be read and discussed in class. Using your TOCs, the class will discuss your apparent editorial formulas and how these succeed or could be improved.

Reading assignment: What editors do for a living, how magazines are organized.

Writing assignment: You will revise and refine your table of contents based on the class discussion. You will also write a tightly conceived editorial formula for your magazine.

Week 4 - September 19: A guest speaker: During the first half of class, an experienced editor talks about the job.

2nd half: Discussion of your revised TOCs and editorial formulas. Discussion of the responsibilities of an editor. How assignments are made, matching the idea with the right writer, what to look for in a query, when you should check out references, writing assignment letters and dealing with writers.

Writing assignment: Write one assignment letter, based on a story in your table of contents. Begin reporting and writing your major feature of 1,000 words or more.

Reading assignment: Analyses of various magazine writing styles and tone.

Week 5 - September 26: Lecture and discussion about writing—the foundation on which all magazines are built. How to tell good writing from bad. Why writing styles differ from magazine to magazine. What makes a story entertaining—details of the reporting, anecdotes, humor, hype.

Class exercise: You will read and analyze a short, unedited manuscript, discussing what went wrong or right, providing general strategies for how it could be fixed or improved. We will also briefly discuss your assignment letters.

Writing assignment: To finish one substantial feature of 1000 words or more, to be discussed in class next week. This will become part of your final project.

Reading assignment: Materials on the histories of individual magazines, creative editing, the careers of some prominent editors

Week 6 - October 3: Features discussed in class.

Writing assignment: Do a detailed, hand's-on edit of another class member's feature.

Reading assignment: Materials on philosophies and techniques for editing manuscripts. Materials on problems faced by editors—legal, ethical and others. Review previous reading, for next week's test.

Week 7 - October 10: Brief lecture and discussion of legal and other problems faced by editors
2nd Half: A detailed, closed-book, mid-term written test of concepts, terminology, editing practices and the history of magazines.

Class exercises: Writing retractions, corrections, the practical dilemmas of using unnamed sources, revising copy to avoid problems.

Reading assignment: Materials on fact-checking and verifying manuscripts, other specialized concerns of an editor.

Writing assignment: Finish your edit of a colleague's feature; deliver Mon. October 15.

Week 8 - October 17: Individual conferences to assess your work to this point, including your feature, mid-term test results, feature edit, as well as to answer any questions you have at this point about magazines.

Reading assignment: Begin readings on basic layout and typography.

Writing assignment: Annotate a copy of your own feature, noting how you checked facts and which sources you used.

Week 9 - October 24: Discuss the annotated features—the fact-checker’s version—as well as your feature edits. Discuss basic elements of magazine design: the well, jumps, dingbats, white space, art and captions.

Assignment: Produce rough layouts of your cover, with logo, and at least a two-page spread of your feature. Create thumbnails of the rest of your magazine.

Reading assignment: More materials on basic magazine layout and typography.

Week 10 - October 31: Guest speaker: A writer’s view of editors. Rough layouts and thumbnails due for discussion in class.

Assignment: You are to polish and complete layouts of your cover and one feature spread for your final project, including the art you would use. These will all be critiqued next week by a guest art director.

Week 11 - November 7: Guest speaker on layout. Discussion of the working relationship of art directors and editors.

Class exercise: Critiques of your polished layouts by the guest lecturer and the class.

Reading assignment: Examples of briefs, criticism, arts reporting and other front- and back-of-the-book material.

Writing assignment: Write several brief items for your project’s front of the book.

Week 12 - November 14: Discussion of your brief items.

Reading assignment: Materials on non-traditional magazines.

Writing assignment: Two short pieces suitable for back-of-the-book departments in your magazine.

Week 13 - November 21: Class is virtual (many of you will be traveling on Thanksgiving eve).

Writing assignment: Any outstanding pieces for your final project that haven’t yet been completed.

Week 14 - November 28: Guest speaker on online journalism, blogs and the like. Class critique of students' departments.

Assignment: Complete assembling your magazines. Carefully give one last edit from front to back of your magazine, to pick up typos, vary the language, catch inconsistent details in your layouts.

Week 15 - December 5: Final magazines due. At your option, final individual conferences to be held to present and discuss your magazines, or discuss anything else that you want to talk about.

MICHAEL PARRISH

- 2002 - Adjunct lecturer, Annenberg Center for Communication, USC; magazine writer; principal, EditingCompany.com.
- 1997 - 2002 Writer, magazine/newspaper features: The New York Times (business, travel), Los Angeles Times (travel), Worth, Playboy, Outside, InvestmentNews, Electronic Media; contributing writer, Microsoft Investor (<http://investor.msn.com>); contributing writer, Medical Economics; writer, Scientific Learning Corp. and University Access, two Web-based educational materials producers. Author of *For the People: Inside the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office* (Angel City Press, 2001).
- 1996 - 1997 Writer, Web indexing project: Luckman Interactive.
- 1995 - 1996 Writer, editor, consultant:
Magazine/newspaper writing: science, technology, energy, health, travel.
Corporate writing: Technical fact sheets, newsletters, Web site copy, Op-ed writing, grass-roots shareholder/legislative communications.
- 1989 - 1995 Staff writer, Los Angeles Times business pages. Beats: energy, environment, utilities, agriculture.
- 1985 - 1989 Founding editor, Los Angeles Times Magazine.
- 1979 - 1985 Writer, magazine features.
- 1977 - 1979 Assistant editor, Los Angeles Times Op-Ed and Opinion pages.
- 1976 Editor, Los Angeles Free Press.
- 1975 Founding editor, City magazine (of San Francisco).
- 1973 - 1975 Managing editor, San Francisco Magazine.
- 1972 Editorial production manager, LA newspaper.
- 1971 - 1972 Managing editor, San Francisco Fault.
- 1970 Editorial assistant., I.F. Stone's Biweekly.

Major articles published in: Life, Smithsonian, Playboy, Worth, Health, American Health, Outside, Oceans, Glamour, New Age Journal, California, New West, Los Angeles, Rocky Mountain magazines; Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, San Francisco Examiner; Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego Readers.

Has reported from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Australia, West Africa, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Alaska and most of the American West.

Has taught magazine feature writing at UCLA Extension, editing at USC.

Was a writer/researcher on "That's My Line," a syndicated TV magazine of Goodson-Todman Productions.

Conversational in French and Spanish. Peace Corps volunteer 1966 to 1968, Niger, West Africa. B.A. (English) Reed College.