

Course Title

Honors Journalism

Course Instructor

Shari Adwers, MJE

Grosse Pointe North High School

sadwers@gmail.com

@sadwers

Course Description

This is a year-long course that meets daily for 50 minutes. It is a prerequisite for the newspaper production course and earns English credit for students in grades 9-12.

Notes

- Some of these lessons are done on an accelerated timeline with students doing some work independently, as this is geared at an honors pace.
- Editing lessons would begin with Week 10 and continue throughout. Show the slideshow in pieces during Week 10, then give quizzes weekly until students demonstrate proficiency. Integrate editing lessons as needed during any revision process as well.

Student Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to understand, apply and demonstrate proficiency with:

- The role of the media in a democracy
- Legal restrictions of media law
- Ethical decision-making skills
- News gathering
- News writing and editing
- Basic photojournalism
- Writing for web

Course Calendar

Weeks 1-2 *What is news? Why is it important?*

Day	JEA Lesson
1	News Defined: What is News? A basic lesson to teach students to recognize that news must be informative, interesting and factual, or it is not news.

2-4	News Values: What Makes It News A lesson on the values of news using the “Rule of Eight” and a few other news considerations
5	Why News Matters A lesson on the importance of journalism and news information in a democracy
6	Understanding News Literacy In this lesson, students are introduced to the fundamental conventions of news literacy and are asked to reflect upon their own expectations for today’s news media.
7	Evaluating Your Media Savvy Students will evaluate their own personal news media habits based on the media log assigned in the previous lesson (Understanding News Lit) and by answering self-reflective questions. Students will consider how their perspectives on news media have developed over time, and what influences their family, community, and education have had on their expectations for journalism.
8	The Changing American Newsroom This lesson explores the changing culture of the newsroom, especially in light of new media technologies. As news gathering and reporting changes, so does our concept of what news is, and our expectations for traditional journalism. Students will discuss perceptions of news coverage and will reflect on their own role as news consumers.
9-10	Discuss and review. If time allows, show “Shattered Glass” and discuss as an introduction to the next unit on law and ethics.

Week 3 *News Judgment*

Days	JEA Lesson
1-3	News Judgment This lesson defines news judgment and eight news values used for determining whether something is newsworthy. Following a presentation on the news judgment, students will analyze current news stories based on the eight news values and/or apply the news values to their previously published story and to one idea for a future story. The lesson concludes with a test that requires students to appropriately identify the news value and potential sources for which they will write questions pertaining to the news value chosen.
4-5	Journalistic Research After viewing a slideshow that identifies various types of research journalists use, students will practice locating information based on one of five story scenarios using Internet research. Students also will prepare a short summary

	of their research in which their sources are cited as they are in journalistic writing and they will defend why their sources are valid and reliable.
--	---

Weeks 4-7 Law & Ethics

Days	JEA Lesson
1	Overview of the First Amendment A lesson on determining the five freedoms in the First Amendment
2	Press Freedom An overview of the importance of a free student press and what it means
3	Building Vocabulary This lesson helps students define these words that can easily be misconstrued in ethical conversations
4	Libel Law An overview of libel law and how it pertains to the student press
5	Copyright Law An overview of copyright law and how it pertains to the student press
6	Invasion of Privacy An overview of laws addressing invasion of privacy and their relation to journalism
7-10	Intro to Student Press Law Cases Students will evaluate and analyze a court case for presentation to the class. The presentation will include background, main points, decision and its implication. This lesson will take four days of class time: two for research and two for presentations.
11	State Free Expression Status This lesson exposes students to the presence or absence of state student freedom of expression laws. Students then research a current instance and use the information to participate in a Socratic seminar in which they look at the case and examine the need for the legislation.
12	Freedom of Information Laws Students will learn about obtaining access to public records and meetings. Students will be taken through the types of Freedom of Information (FOI) as well exemptions. Students will also learn how to request access to open records and meetings.
13	Reporter's Privilege Students will be exposed to Reporter's Privilege, its history and its application to scholastic journalists. The SPLC slideshow addresses source confidentiality

	as well as what to do if journalists are asked to relinquish notes, photos, etc. by someone in an official capacity.
14	Just Because You Can, Doesn't Mean You Should Students will evaluate the differences between journalism law and ethics using other professions as a starting point. Students will define ethics and examine Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics.
15	Red Light, Green Light Ethics Students will learn about the Red Light, Green Light approach, which is a positive way to examine ethics. Students will take notes on the slideshow. Students will apply this approach to two scenarios while in groups during the slideshow.
16	Using the TUFF Formula to Make Ethical Decisions For students to explore ethical situations using the TUFF formula as described in the lesson. Students work in groups on six scenarios. This unit focuses possible discussion points for inclusion in editorial policies.
17	Navigating Ethical Situations Students will work through one sample scenario and then role play several others. After playing out each scenario, students will analyze the situation and decision using the handout provided.
18	With Freedom of the Press Comes Great Responsibility Students should have a basic understanding of their responsibility to provide fair, balanced and accurate content that is complete and coherent. From studying examples of content and role-playing on situations that they may have to address, this lesson prepares students for the kinds of decisions they will make with their own publication.
19	Review day Law Review These scenarios serve as review for some of the information in the slideshows: Press Freedoms, Libel, Copyright, Invasion of Privacy, Freedom of Information Act and Reporter's Privilege. Unit Review and Exam Students will create questions covering the topics discussed during the law and ethics unit. Upon question completion, students will play a review game as review for the test.
20	Exam day

Weeks 8-9 News Gathering Basics

Days	JEA Lesson
1-5	Interviewing Basics

	This lesson begins with an introduction to interviewing including how to plan, conduct and conclude an interview, suitable for beginners who have no interviewing experience. In part two of the lesson, students will play an ice-breaker game that will help make them comfortable with asking questions, and they will critique each other's performances. In part three, the culminating lesson, students will use the 5W's and H as well as other question types to conduct their first interviews for profile stories about each other. After preliminary interviewing and research, or using a guided set of questions provided, students will develop their own questions and interview each other in depth. They will transcribe their interviews, conduct additional interviews for the same story, and write a simple profile story to share with the class.
6-8	Fact Finding and Observation This is the culminating lesson for the Basic Reporting unit. In this lesson, students will practice essential skills of a reporter: finding and researching facts, interviewing and observation. The lesson includes a school-wide scavenger hunt that requires students to use their reporting skills to uncover information while familiarizing them with the sources of information in their school. The scavenger hunt is meant to be conducted in small groups over 2-3 days. While some groups are out scavenging, other groups will participate in the Note-Taking Practice lesson.
9-10	Interview Practice This lesson reinforces the basic interviewing process. It may be used as a routine assignment for advanced or honors students on any interviewing assignment. It can also be used for students who need additional practice after the Basic Interviewing lesson. Students will conduct basic research and develop questions for a one-on-one interview. Students will take notes and transcribe their interview in preparation for publication. This lesson may be extended into a feature-writing assignment or for an alternative format such as a profile box or used as part of a video feature.

Weeks 10-20 Writing and Editing

Days	JEA Lesson
1-2	The Basic News Lead – The 5W's and H A multi-part lesson introducing students to the basic information required for news with a four-step process for writing basic news leads
3-4	Analyze the Pros: Reading News from a News Writer's Perspective A lesson in analyzing current news to help students understand how to put facts in a logical order and how basic news is structured
5-7	News Writing Structure A multi-part lesson teaches a basic, effective structure for news writing, a modified inverted pyramid form of Lead-Quote-Transition-Quote (LQTQ)
8-9	Finding the News

	A three-day lesson on how to find and report the news by being aware of the audience for a publication or broadcast
10	The Right Source A lesson on choosing the best sources for a story and preparing questions
11	Beyond the Snore: Covering Annual Events A two-day lesson on how to find a fresh angle for covering events, occasions and issues that come up every year, using a strategy called story paths
12-13	Writing Briefs A lesson on how to write effective briefs and short news stories
14-15	News Writing Tips and Tricks This lesson is best for advanced and honors students who have already mastered a basic level of writing. Students will learn what to do and what not to do when writing news articles while writing and revising their own work.
16-17	Writing a Preview Story A lesson on how to write a news story about an event that will take place in the future with the goal of informing readers who might want to attend or participate
18-19	Writing Sports News A lesson for advanced journalism students on the particulars of covering sports News Gathering for A Sports Story In this assignment, students will learn what sources and research are essential to sports writing and practice using those resources. This is a flexible lesson that teachers may fit to program needs by requiring students to gather information for one or more types of sports stories, including an advance, a game report, a season recap and/or a sports news feature. Students will gather information on a particular team and use that information to write the story or stories they are assigned.
20	Using Alternative Formats and Polls to Enhance the News A lesson introducing students to alternative ways of presenting news using a variety of text features
21	News Reports Versus Feature Stories A lesson introducing feature story characteristics and categories
22-24	Types of Feature Stories A lesson introducing and exploring feature story types
25	How to Find New Stories A lesson on the origins of features
26	Building Background: Starting the Reporting Process A lesson on how to begin research for a feature story
27	Finding the Theme

	Students will review the differences between news and feature stories. Then, they will learn how to construct a theme/thread/spine of a story to connect separate elements into a cohesive feature. This is the third of several lessons on extended feature writing.
28-29	Start Strong, End Strong Students will learn how to construct strong leads and endings to their feature stories by exploring leads types and experimenting with different leads and endings for their own features.
30	What's in the Middle Students will learn how to organize the middle of a feature story and maintain a thematic connection throughout. When Reporting Changes Your Story Students will consider how what they've gathered through reporting may have changed their angle.
31-32	Feature Writing Workshop A two-day (or three-day) workshop for students to finish first drafts and gain feedback from peers
33	Introduction to Personality Profiles A lesson to introduce profile basics including content, differing types and the final assignment of a 500-700 word profile
34	Personality Profile: Finding a Theme and Gathering Information A lesson about what makes a good profile subject and how to gather information
35	Developing Questions for a Profile A lesson in which students develop interview questions and begin the interview process for their personality profile
36	Critiquing the Interview and Drafting a Profile A lesson in which students critique their own work, determine if they need to do follow-ups and begin drafting their profile pieces
37	Headlines A lesson introducing basic headline writing style and techniques
38	Difference Between News and Opinion A lesson on determining the purpose of a piece of writing
39	Parts of an Opinion Section A lesson on the different features students may run into in a newspaper opinion section Types of Opinion Stories A lesson comparing the three types of opinion stories

40	Types of Editorials A lesson that outlines the difference between editorials and columns and types of editorial topics
41	Editorials and News A lesson on how editorials are often connected to news stories
42	Ethical Concerns with Editorials Students look at how their decisions in writing editorials may affect others
43	Using Evidence in Editorials A lesson on researching information and using evidence in writing editorials
44	Organizing an Editorial A lesson on editorial structure and how to order its parts
45	Editorial Voice A lesson about how voice can affect how the audience perceives an editorial
46	Peer Editing and Sharing An activity in which students edit their work in their editorial teams, then revise their editorials
47	Say Something with Columns A lesson on sharing opinions and insights of newspaper column Ethics of Column Writing Students learn how the SPJ Code of Ethics applies to opinion writing and work in groups to discuss how they would deal with potentially difficult ethical situations in writing
48	Brainstorming Column Ideas Students brainstorm ideas for their columns, then narrow down their ideas conduct research on a selected topic
49	Descriptive Writing & Expertise A lesson on using descriptive language to back up opinions, and the importance of writing about things you are an expert in
50	Parts of a Review Students will learn about key features of a review, then read reviews and label parts Ethics, Leadership and Reviews A lesson exploring ethical situations reviewers may encounter
51	Review Assessment A lesson to preview and analyze the rubric followed by work time on students' reviews
52	Peer Revision on Reviews

	An opportunity for students to discuss what they like best in reviews and decide which one to run
53	A&E Sections A lesson on planning the Arts and Entertainment section of a publication Top 10 Reasons to Write a List Review A lesson on writing with bite-sized information for the A&E section
54	Ethics and Satire A lesson on ethical considerations when writing satire for a student publication Avoiding Libel in Satire A lesson reviewing libel and how to avoid it in writing satire
55	Editorial Cartoons A lesson about the reasons for editorial cartoons, their parts and how to read and create them

Weeks 21-22 Photojournalism Basics

Days	JEA Lesson
1	Exploring the History of Photojournalism In this two-day lesson, students will work in groups to fill in the blanks on a photojournalism timeline and begin to make sense of photojournalism's unique and complicated history. Then, students will have the opportunity to work in groups to explore a specific section of photojournalism's history and make an informal presentation to the class about their findings.
2-3	A Picture Never Lies In this four-day lesson, students will read an article by photojournalist Snorri Gunnarsson about the ethics of manipulating photos. Students will discuss the ethical issues that surround using tools like Adobe Photoshop to edit a photo, including looking at examples and discussing how much editing is too much. Then, students will work in pairs to research a famous manipulated photo and present their findings to the class.
4	Capture the Moment In this lesson, students will learn about the importance of storytelling in journalistic photography. Using selected student photography, they will discuss the visual impact that can occur when photojournalists capture unique storytelling moments.
5	Play by the (Composition) Rules In this lesson, students will learn basic composition techniques (rule of thirds, framing, leading lines, strong subject, angles, repetition, selective focus) as well as common composition errors. After that, students will work with partners to take a sample photo of each of the seven composition rules, and the class

	will discuss and critique photos together. Students will then write a short reflection about what they have learned during this lesson. They will also look at sample photo stories to determine how to tell an effective story through photography.
6	Caption Writing and Headlining Photos In this lesson, students will discuss the importance of including a caption for each photo included in a publication. Then, students will learn about AP Style for writing captions and headlines for photos as well as how to expand photo captions for traditional yearbook photo captions. They will finish the lesson by practicing writing their own captions and headlines to go along with photos.
7	News and Feature Photos In this one-day lesson, students will explore the differences between news and feature photos. They will learn techniques for shooting different types of photos and then will practice them as a homework assignment.
8-9	Introduction to Basic Exposure During this three-day lesson, students will learn about basic exposure techniques, including ISO, shutter speed and aperture. Then, students will participate in teacher-led practice activities that help to solidify that knowledge.
10	Photo Editing Basics During this two-day lesson, students will learn about basic photo editing skills, including cropping, color adjustment, resolution and file modes, dodging, burning and cutouts. They will also examine different ways to save photos depending on the medium in which a photo will be used. Then, they will have the opportunity to practice using those skills in a photo editing software.

Weeks 23-28 Web

Days	JEA Lesson
1-2	Comparing Print and Online Journalism A lesson on common differences between print and online stories, coverage
3	How We Read Online Students read excerpts from two articles synthesizing key research about online readers and demonstrate an understanding of how online readers interact with content.
4-5	Search Engine Optimization A lesson on using search engine optimization to drive traffic
6-7	The Return of the Inverted Pyramid A refresher on the inverted pyramid structure, an explanation of why it is often used in online journalism, and an opportunity to write an online breaking news story using the inverted pyramid structure

8-9	Chunking, Linking and Liking - Making Online Stories Reader Friendly A lesson on three strategies to make online stories easier to read
10-11	How a Breaking News Story Unfolds Online: A Boston Marathon Bombing Case Study Students evaluate how professional news organizations break news using the Web and social media tools.
12-13	Covering Developing Stories Students read a series of stories covering a developing story to understand how continuous online coverage differs from the periodical print coverage most high school media staffs are accustomed to.
14-16	Going Live: A Comparison of Real-time Coverage Options Students explore three strategies for real-time coverage, evaluating coverage scenarios to select the most appropriate method.
17-18	Beat Coverage and the Web — Why it Makes Sense Students explore beat coverage on the web and develop a beat list for their own campus.
19-20	Generating Stories for Online Beat Coverage Building upon student understanding of online beat coverage, students will generate beat story ideas for one beat.
21-22	Using Data to Cover a Beat Students read a blog post on using data to find stories, then apply the principles to their own beat coverage and generate story ideas.
23-24	Understanding the Why in Online Story Package Design Students will evaluate online news and feature packages to discover the reasoning behind their design and to understand how journalists and editors decide how to package online stories.
25	Planning a Multimedia Package Students learn how to plan a multimedia package, then work in small groups to create their own online package plan.
26-28	Interactive Alternative Copy Tools for the Web Students explore a variety of multimedia tools and experiment with one of them. Improve Beats by Adding GIFs and Featured Images Students use simple tools to add multiple media elements to their beats.
29-30	Using Data Visualizations in Online Story Packages Students will learn about the rationale for using data and the possibilities with data visualization tools, then create their own data visualization.

Weeks 29-32 Capstone Projects

During these final weeks, students will work to create two final projects that demonstrate their skills as well as teach them some basic InDesign skills for the print publication and online skills for the website.

Students will be provided pre-designed pages from the newspaper and will learn to place their stories within the pages using preset styles. They will also create graphics or photos to accompany the stories and write headlines and cutlines for each.

Students will be introduced to the website platform (WordPress) and taught the basics to set up their own site and host a digital portfolio. See [Web Capstone](#) for instructions and details.