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Measuring Student Success in JOUR200A: Fundamentals of Editing & Reporting I: A Beginning Writing, Editing and Reporting Class

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Peer Review of Teaching Project Course:

Jour200A Fundamentals of Editing & Reporting I

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MEASURING STUDENT SUCCESS IN JOUR200A: FUNDAMENTALS OF EDITING & REPORTING I: A BEGINNING WRITING, EDITING AND REPORTING CLASS

Abstract

A grammar error or typo on a resume can mean the difference between getting the job or having your resume deleted. Factual errors and inconsistencies can also affect a writer's credibility. Accuracy, style, word choice and consistency matter for these reasons and more. Journalism students in particular should come to internships, classes and jobs with the skills they need to succeed. The course Jour200A: The Fundamentals of Reporting & Editing I attempts to meet this demand by providing all majors in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications with a strong foundation in editing and writing. This project sought to develop and deploy learning outcome measures to better understand the course's weaknesses and strengths by examining student work and test scores from select students and a class of 19 students. Assessment tools were created and deployed in one section of Jour200A taught in spring 2021 and showed that student test scores improved from the first to the last week of the semester. Student writing success as assessed via rubric improved in all categories including writing, style and organization, but the rubrics and tests also provided guidance on areas of improvement. The learning assessment tools provide a baseline of knowledge about one cohort of Jour200A students that can be used to better understand how to assess learning outcomes in Jour200A going forward.

Keywords: editing, AP Style, writing, journalism, college

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Course Description	3
Teaching Methods	4
Teaching Tools	5
Canvas	5
Homework	6
Sample Assignments	6
Measuring Student Learning	7
Methods and Data Collection	7
Analysis of Student Learning: Writing	8
Analysis of Student Learning: AP Style, Grammar and Word Usage	10
Summary and Reflection	11
Goals for Jour200A	11
Appendices	12
Appendix A: Jour200A Spring 2021 syllabus	12
Appendix B: Student A first-week writing sample	28
Appendix C: Student A final project	28
Appendix D: Student B first-week writing sample	29
Appendix E: Student B final project	30
Appendix F: Student C first-week writing sample	30
Appendix G: Student C final project	31

MEASURING STUDENT SUCCESS IN JOUR200A: FUNDAMENTALS OF EDITING & REPORTING I: A BEGINNING WRITING, EDITING AND REPORTING CLASS

Course Description

Jour200A: Fundamentals of Editing and Reporting I is a course that teaches students about writing and editing and gives them ample opportunities to build those skills. Topics include:

- editing for grammar, style, language, word usage and typos
- journalism trends and how newsrooms work
- clear and concise writing
- basics of news writing, or the journalistic style of writing
- ethics and bias

Jour200A and Jour200B were created in 2017 when Jour201 (beginning editing) and Jour202 (beginning reporting) were merged. Jour200A was first offered in the fall of 2018. In January 2020, the course became a requirement for all students in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications, yet it wasn't revamped entirely. It was previously required for journalism and broadcast students. It's still very journalism focused, but this was intentional in its design. Jour200A provides a brief, general overview of how newsrooms work and how journalism is changing but is primarily a skills learning and application class. Students must get a passing grade (at least a 74) before they can take advanced classes in the college.

The college has four majors: journalism, advertising and public relations, sports media communication and broadcast. After Jour200A, students go on to take more specialized writing classes specific to their majors. In fall 2020 in Jour200A, there were 123 enrolled students including: 11 freshmen, 51 sophomores, 49 juniors and 12 seniors. There are other students who took the class who were not enrolled in the journalism college but were required to take Jour200A.

For many students, this is the first time they have used the AP Stylebook, which is the style manual used in most newsrooms. Students come into this class with a wide range of skills. Some easily pick up this new style of writing; others struggle with basic grammar concepts such as using articles at the beginning of sentences and agreement, wordy writing or passive voice.

At the most basic level, by the end of the semester, students should be able to write and communicate at a higher level. They should have certain basic AP Style rules memorized and have the skills to apply those rules.

Students should also come to think of themselves as editors and understand that if they work for a brand, a newspaper, an ad agency, TV station, sports public information office or PR firm that they might be the last person to read their work before it goes out to the masses. That's a big responsibility.

Rationale for Course Selection

I chose this class because I teach it every semester; I helped design it, and I am the coordinator. Jour200A has taken on various forms in the last several years and suffers from a lack of identity. One of my jobs is to work to keep the curriculum consistent across a myriad of instructors including full-time and part-time teachers. The first semester Jour200A was required of all students, there were more than 10 sections and half a dozen instructors, including adjuncts and several professors who had never taught it before. It was also the semester that COVID-19 was declared a world health emergency.

There is no cross-section information about the skill levels of students coming in and out of the class, which makes it difficult to understand the areas in course design that need work and those areas that are working. The college is in the process of reviewing the curriculum and delivery of Jour200A, and results of that review will be considered and help form the basis of any curriculum changes to the course.

I focused this portfolio on better understanding where Jour200A students are when they come into the class and where they are when they leave. With this knowledge, we can understand if students are achieving the course goals and consider what, if any changes, could be made to the course delivery. For this project, I developed benchmarking mechanisms for writing and editing that can be used in all sections to assess writing and editing skills and improvement.

Teaching Methods

There is only one prerequisite for this class, so the methods, materials and activities are structured in a way that considers this will be the very first exposure to these skills and concepts for many students. This is why I design low-stakes assignments with lots of rewrite opportunities, peer editing and feedback in class. The class prepares students with the baseline writing and editing skills they'll need to go on and write social media posts, news stories, press releases, sports information guides or ad copy. They should be able to take their solid writing skills and adapt their writing to meet their audience. The course activities and methods are based on these goals and objectives:

Jour200A COURSE GOALS

- (1) Understand why editing, style and grammar are important
- (2) Understand the journalistic principles of news judgment, accuracy and ethics
- (3) Learn how and when to apply principles of grammar and Associated Press Stylebook rules
- (4) Learn how to write clearly and concisely and organize a news story
- (5) Understand how to write for different platforms and audiences

Jour200A COURSE OBJECTIVES

- (A) Identify the basics of editing, news judgment and media trends
- (B) Examine modern-day journalism ethics, journalism bias and accuracy
- (C) Edit and evaluate stories and texts for adherence to grammar rules and AP style
- (D) Organize information and write news stories and social media posts for different audiences that adhere to AP style and news writing best practices
- (E) Apply interviewing and quoting best practices in reporting and story writing

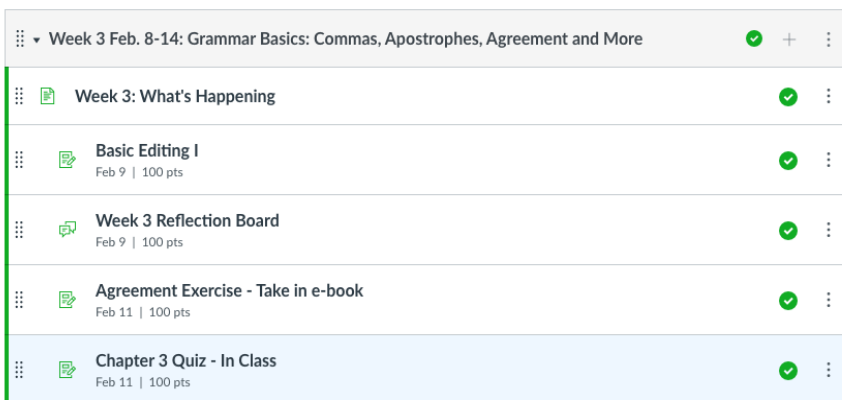
Teaching Tools

I use a variety of teaching methods including lecture, small group work, two-person peer editing, all-group conversations, assignment review and interactive quizzes. I sprinkle these methods throughout the semester. The core of my course organization is Canvas.

Canvas


An unorganized or illogical Canvas course can create frustration and confusion for students; none of that is good for learning. I believe by providing a clean, sensible, student-focused Canvas course, students are being set up for a successful learning experience. The following are some strategies I use for Canvas organization.

Assignments due at a glance. Each week students can scan the module for assignments due. They know if things are in-class or out-of-class and what platform they should use to submit.



Week 3 Feb. 8-14: Grammar Basics: Commas, Apostrophes, Agreement and More		
Week 3: What's Happening		✓
Basic Editing I Feb 9 100 pts		✓
Week 3 Reflection Board Feb 9 100 pts		✓
Agreement Exercise - Take in e-book Feb 11 100 pts		✓
Chapter 3 Quiz - In Class Feb 11 100 pts		✓

Weekly overview page with objectives. This page includes inside and outside the classroom work including slides, practice exercises and assignment submit links. I list the week's objectives at the top of each page so students know why they are learning what they are learning.

	<p style="text-align: center;">AP Style: Providing Clarity and Consistency</p> <p style="text-align: center;">This week you will practice editing and learn about AP Style.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Week 4 Objectives</p> <p style="text-align: center;">After this week, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Modify AP Style errors in a sentence or storyIdentify why style is importantExperiment with editing for AP Style
---	--

Before class Tuesday:

1. Submit [Punctuation Perfection](#) in Chapter 3 in the e-book.
2. Read Chapter 4 in "Everybody's an Editor."
3. Post to the [Week 4 Reflection Board](#).

During class Tuesday:

1. Get to know your AP Stylebook
2. Learn about abbreviations, titles and addresses using these [skeletal notes](#) to follow along with [these slides](#)

Before class Thursday:

1. Submit [Abbreviations](#) in the e-book

During class Thursday:

1. Continue to learn about AP Style numerals using [these skeletal notes](#) and [this cheat sheet](#). Look up Numerals in the stylebook for guidance.
2. Learn about capitalization and third-party names with [these skeletal notes](#) and [these slides](#).
3. Practice editing with [Police and Fire stories](#)

Homework

Students have a lot of homework assignments outside of class including quizzes, multiple choice editing exercises, news stories and a little reporting. This is because editing is repetitive, and I believe in lots of low stakes assignments with opportunities to learn without too much penalty. I believe students learn editing best by practicing editing. Below, I describe some course assignments and activities and why I do them.

Sample Assignments

Notecards. During pre-COVID-19 times, students jotted notes from chapter readings on a paper notecard. Note-taking is important for comprehension, so I encourage students to take notes as they are more likely to recall and learn information. Studies have shown that laptops are a distraction for student notetaking; students take better notes if they take notes by hand. I used discussion boards in spring 2021. As I did with the notecards, I took the student comments and questions and addressed them in a group discussion or in small groups prior to their chapter quiz.

Reflection Papers. It's important students think of editing not just as looking for missing commas, but also in a big picture way: Is this phrase insulting to someone who is transgender? Is this sentence intentionally written in passive voice and why? What does the word murder mean and when should I use it? Here's an example of three reflection papers I use. They correspond with the weekly content that correlates to these themes. I designed the reflection papers to encourage students to think about race and language: [Reflection Paper 1](#), [Reflection Paper 2](#) and [Reflection Paper 3](#).

Zoom breakout rooms for peer editing. When it was time for peer editing, I randomly assigned two students each to a breakout room, gave them an editable Google doc and asked them to each edit and then share and discuss. Students in class worked together in a socially distanced manner.

Final project. Students wrote a deadline story in class for their final project. The class period before the final project, they practiced writing a deadline story and got feedback.

News stories and editing assignments. Throughout the semester, students practice editing in Word documents and on multiple choice quizzes. They also practice editing when they write and rewrite news stories. Students write several news stories toward the end of the semester.

Measuring Student Learning

Measuring student learning is difficult. One way is to look at student grades. Are they following a curve, or are there an inordinate number of As or Cs? If so, the class might be too easy or too hard. I chose to look at improvement because students in this class are novice learners and come to the class with little to no knowledge of the news writing and editing. In spring 2021, I implemented the following learning assessment tools:

- A final AP style, grammar and word usage test that is 5% of a student's grade
- A non-graded pre-assessment test of AP Style, grammar and word usage skills
- A first-week writing sample. Students wrote a news story in class on deadline based on a press release. It was not graded.
- A final project. Students wrote a news story in class on deadline based on a press release. This was 15% of their grade.

Methods and Data Collection

Test scores and writing samples were selected from three of 19 students taking one section of Jour200A, which was delivered in person and via Zoom. Students were selected as high-performing (Student A), mid-performing (Student B) and low-performing (Student C) based on their final grade. Only students who signed an informed consent were selected.

I also collected and analyzed section-wide data that was deidentified.

To assess writing samples, I developed a Qualtrics rubric to be used for each first-week writing sample and last-week writing sample. The Qualtrics rubrics were identical and designed to provide a quick assessment of key areas of a student's writing: lead writing, AP Style/grammar/word usage, story organization, attribution and publishing prospects. A final category included a grade range that the student would be given on the story had the story been written the last week of class. [Click here](#) to see an example of the rubric.

To compare first week and last week AP Style, grammar and word usage skills, students took a pre-assessment and a post-assessment in their required textbook "Everybody's an Editor." I accessed blind data to get scores.

Analysis of Student Learning: Writing

It is always challenging to assess student writing, but rubrics can help. Some criteria that are crucial to a successful, coherent and accurate news story include: active voice leads, correct AP style, grammar and word usage and attribution of information to sources.

The first week of the semester, students were given time in class to read a press release and write a news story to the best of their ability. They were given 30 minutes and provided no guidance or instruction other than to write a news story. All students received a 100% on the pre-writing sample assignment for their participation. The scores below reflect the grade that each of the selected students would have received had the pre-writing sample been graded at the end of the semester. For the selected students, all the leads were passive voice, all stories contained four or more AP Style, grammar or word usage errors and lacked attribution for information.

	First-week writing sample	Last-week writing sample
Student A	65%	95%
Student B	65%	87%
Student C	65%	78%

Based on the examples, each of the three students improved his or her news writing skills to varying degrees. Student A improved 30 percentage points, Student B improved 22 percentage points and Student C improved 13 percentage points. Below are samples of each student's first-week and last-week lead.

Leads	First week	Last week
--------------	-------------------	------------------

Student A	A local man was arrested early Sunday morning after fleeing a traffic stop and attempting to avoid arrest by the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP).	The Lincoln Police Department cited an off-duty Lincoln police officer for assault and driving under the influence yesterday after a reported assault occurred in the Grata Bar and Lounge parking lot, police said.
Student B	Early Sunday morning at 12:00am The Nebraska State patrol reported a high speed pursuit with a 2005 Lincoln LS with an open trunk and fictitious license plate. The driver was identified as Dylan Pritchard, 26, from Holstein, Nebraska.	The Nebraska State Patrol cited an off-duty Lincoln police officer the morning of Oct. 11, after he reportedly assaulted a woman and failed multiple sobriety tests.
Student C	A Nebraska man was arrested early Sunday morning, November 18th, 2018, in Polk County following a police pursuit of the man, later identified as Dylan Pritchard.	Off-duty Lincoln Police officer assaulted a woman and was cited with two misdemeanors in the early morning hours of Oct. 11, at the Grata Bar and Lounge.

For the class, scores on the rubric improved as well. The Qualtrics rubric was used for 18 first-week student stories and 19 last-week student stories. One key measure is how students organized stories. Students learn to organize news stories by importance, not chronology or merely the order in which they are presented the information. For example, only 11% of students organized their first-week story by importance, but 100% of students in the last-week sample organized their stories by importance. Students also improved their lead writing. For example, only 5% of students included all the necessary components of a lead in their first-week writing sample, but 57% of students included all the necessary components of a lead in their last-week sample.

[Click here](#) for the results of the Qualtrics rubric for the first-week stories.

[Click here](#) for the results of the Qualtrics rubric for the last-week stories.

Students also improved their application of AP Style and grammar rules in their writing. For example, in the first-week writing sample, 94% of students had three or more AP Style or grammar errors. In the last-week writing sample, 47% had three or more errors and 52% had two or fewer errors. Finally, by the end of the semester a majority of students were writing

stories that were publishable with minor edits. For example, in the first-week writing sample, 22% of stories were publishable with minor edits, but in the last week, 57% were publishable with minor edits.

Analysis of Student Learning: AP Style, Grammar and Word Usage

The first week of class, students completed a 50-question test assessing their knowledge of AP Style rules, grammar and word usage. The post-assessment was completed in class. There were 50 questions, and students were given 50 minutes. It was open book, and they were allowed to use their AP Stylebooks. Students were advised to retake the pre-assessment as practice. The pre-and-post assessments do not have the same questions, but the questions are similar in nature. Below is an example of two questions from each test that are related, but different.

Pre-assessment question:

- 1) Jill and Dave live at _____, about five blocks from _____.
- 4590 Milner Road / Main Street
 - 4590 Milner Rd. / Main Street
 - 4590 Milner Road / Main St.
 - 4590 Milner Rd. / Main St.

Post-assessment question:

- 25) Wanda lives at _____.
- 703 Elm Avenue
 - 703 Elm Ave.

Below are the test results for the high-performing (Student A), mid-performing (Student B) and low-performing (Student C) students.

AP Style/Grammar/Usage Test	Pre-assessment	Post-assessment
Student A	50%	96%
Student B	76%	90%
Student C	54%	84%

For the 19 students in the class, the average score on the pre-assessment was 60.6% and the average score for the post-assessment was 90.6%. Only assessments for students who took both the pre and post assessments were used.

[Click here](#) for the classwide scores on the preassessment and post assessments.

Summary and Reflection

Prior to being involved in the Peer Review of Teaching Project, I had no way to objectively gauge how much or little students were improving their writing and editing skills. Through this process, I have developed a system that can be deployed across all the Jour200A sections to collect first-week and last-week data on student learning in key skills areas: news writing and editing.

It has also prompted me to view successful learning outcomes in terms of how much students improve, not necessarily how high class scores are. One challenge is to figure out how much improvement should be expected.

Based on the samples, rubric results and tests, students are improving their AP Style, grammar and word usage skills. On average, students improved their AP Style/word usage/grammar test scores 30 percentage points from an overall failing grade to an A minus. A few things should be noted: Students were not given any instruction to use the stylebook or textbook for the pre-assessment nor were they required to spend a certain amount of time.

But, in the end only about 60% of them are writing stories that could be publishable with minor edits. While this was an improvement, I would aim for a higher percentage of publishable stories. Students vastly improved their test scores, but there are a few caveats. The rubrics showed that even though the class average on the AP, grammar and usage test was 90%, students still made errors in their stories, although to a lesser extent than the first week.

Goals for Jour200A

- Examine in-depth the breakdown of what topic areas students are struggling with in the post-assessment
- Create a more detailed Qualtrics rubric
- Achieve buy-in from instructors section-wide to have students do the pre-and-post assessments and use the Qualtrics writing rubric for their pre-and-post assessments.
- Explore ways to make the course more consistent as it is taught by different instructors.

Appendices

Appendix A: Jour200A Spring 2021 syllabus



Jour200A: The Fundamentals of Editing and Reporting I

Instructor information

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Class information

Course prerequisites

A minimum 2.00 GPA and completion of JOMC 101 with a grade of C or better is required.

Course description

This course covers the fundamentals of reporting, writing and editing for news media in print, digital and broadcast platforms.

Course format

This is an in-person class taught in a classroom by a real human being twice a week. Because this is a large classroom, we can all meet together twice a week. There will be a Zoom option

for students who are sick or quarantining. You can find the Zoom information in Canvas in the left hand navigation bar under Zoom. You can also find the link here:

<https://unl.zoom.us/j/2927480269>

The university's COVID-19 protective health measures apply to this class. Those are explained in detail below.

Required reading. Please purchase before our first class.

- **“Everybody’s an Editor Navigating Journalism’s Changing Landscape,”** 3rd edition, by Sue Burzynski Bullard and Jessica Fargen Walsh, ISBN: 978-1-61549-703-4, Great River Technologies. This e-book contains the reading assignments, exercises and quizzes you will use during the semester. Access codes can be purchased online with a credit card. Go to <https://www.grlcontent.com/> and click on the “Purchase access now” in the bottom right hand corner. You also may purchase an access card at the University Bookstore. Enter the access code the first time you log on to the site. Please make sure you register for the correct section of the class.
- **“Writing & Reporting for the Media,”** 12th edition, by Bender, Drager, Davenport, Fedler, ISBN: 978-0190649425. You do not need to purchase the workbook. Purchase this before class starts.
- **The Associated Press Stylebook** (2020-2022 edition). I encourage you to purchase the online version. You can purchase the online stylebook at <https://www.apstylebook.com>. Your online subscription is good for a year. If you do purchase the hardbound version, please purchase the latest version because there are changes every year.

Note: Journalism and broadcast majors will need the same books for Jour200B. You will automatically have access to “Everybody’s an Editor” during Jour200B.

Hello,

Welcome to this class!

I thought I’d take a few minutes to talk to you before you dig into the syllabus.

First of all, congratulations on conquering this new way of learning and making it to your second semester.

Last semester, many classes were taught in the hybrid model: Some instruction was online; some was in person. This semester, all your learning will be in the classroom because our room is big enough for all 20 students.

Below, you can read about the principles behind this course. But, basically, it's designed to make you a better editor, a better writer and a deeper thinker when it comes to ethics, bias and journalism's importance and role in our society. The leaders of this college think these skills are so important that this class is required for everyone.

You can't succeed in mass communications without being a good writer and editor.

I am your partner in success in this class, and I'm here to help you learn and become a better writer and editor.

Finally, I like my students to call me by my first name, so you can call me Jessica. Thank you, and I look forward to getting to know you this semester.

Jessica

ACEJMC competencies

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications is accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). The mission of ACEJMC is “to foster and encourage excellence and high standards in professional education in journalism and mass communications.” ACEJMC recommends that all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies. This course addresses the following competencies:

- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;

- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.

Course goals and objectives

One of ACEJMC's principles is to promote student learning by assessing your achievement of the competencies listed above at the course and program level. After completing this course, students will have met these objectives aligned with these goals. All your assignments in this class are aligned with these goals and objectives.

Course Goals

- (1) Understand why editing, style and grammar are important
- (2) Understand the journalistic principles of news judgment, accuracy and ethics
- (3) Learn how and when to apply principles of grammar and Associated Press Stylebook rules
- (4) Learn how to write clearly and concisely and organize a news story
- (5) Understand how to write for different platforms and audiences

Course Objectives

- (A) Identify the basics of editing, news judgment and media trends
- (B) Examine modern-day journalism ethics, journalism bias and accuracy
- (C) Edit and evaluate stories and texts for adherence to grammar rules and Associated Press style
- (D) Organize information and write news stories and social media posts for different audiences that adhere to Associated Press style and news writing best practices
- (E) Apply interviewing and quoting best practices in reporting and story writing

Class procedures and expectations

What you get out of this course will largely depend on what you put into it. I will do my best to help you understand why I'm doing particular assignments and to make sure the work is meaningful to you as future media professionals.

Students should always bring a laptop and sometimes bring their textbook to class. The entire class is expected to be in class Tuesday and Thursday. If you are ill with COVID, have been exposed to someone with COVID and have to quarantine or are otherwise sick, please do not come to class. Please let me know before class that you can't make it.

Many students tell me they enjoy this class, and they learn a lot. This is not a class that you can miss frequently and get notes on later. Each class period we learn a new skill and practice it. Miss class, and you can fall behind fast.

We meet for less than three hours a week even though this is a 3-credit course. Because we have so little time in class, you'll be doing a lot of work outside of class.

This will be a big change for you if you just finished high school. In high school, about 20% of the work you do is outside of class and 80% is in class. In college, those numbers are flipped. You will have readings and assignments as homework to do before class. This will give us more time in class for editing, writing, reporting and robust discussions. Keep in mind that editing mechanics are learned best through practice and repetition. Early on, you'll be assigned many exercises. The repetition is deliberate; it's the only way you'll learn editing skills.

Attendance and engagement

The following is the university's policy for in-person class attendance, which I will be following: On days when students do not attend in person, they will engage with the course remotely or independently with materials provided by the instructor. Students will be expected to attend their in-person classes unless they have an approved accommodation, are in quarantine or isolation, or have an instructor-approved absence.

We will be meeting twice a week in person. However, it is possible that you'll miss these sessions for various reasons. If you miss class, you miss out on discussions, skills practice and learning. This class just becomes harder the more classes you miss.

To ensure that all students are fully engaged in the course, I expect the following from you as a student in this course:

- That each week, you attend class in person unless you are ill or in quarantine
- That for each class you are unable to attend in person that you read all assigned course content and watch the full recording of the session
- That you complete all assignments before the stated deadline

- That you let me know ahead of time if you will not be able to meet the stated deadlines so that we can make alternative arrangements

Late assignments

You get one freebie late assignment. You have 24 hours after the due date to submit it. It doesn't matter why it was late, please just turn it in within 24 hours, and let me know it will be late. Additional late assignments that are submitted will be recorded as a zero in the gradebook. This policy is in place to be fair to our community of students who are turning in assignments on time. In addition, if you turn in late assignments, you'll fall behind in this class.

But also, you will be entering a career where deadlines matter. Social media responses are done in real time - during a meeting or sports game - and so are many news stories these days. Stories for printed newspapers - yes, those still exist - must be in by deadline or it could cost the publisher money or result in your story not getting in the paper. It's a good idea to get used to deadlines because they will be a part of your life.

Assignment weighting

All assignments in this course are 100 points, but some count more toward your final grade than others. Below, you can see how assignments in this course are weighted.

- **Reporting and writing (25%)** You'll write multiple news stories and writing assignments this semester for a variety of platforms including broadcast, social media and digital.
 - Some assignments include: Leads 1 and 2, news story assignments, broadcast leads, interview story, wordy sentences
- **Editing (20%)** You'll learn to edit via online exercises and story editing.
 - Some assignments include: Punctuation Perfection, AP Style Basics 1-3, Editing Tip Quizzes, Abbreviations, Style & Usage
- **Engagement (10%)** You'll earn engagement points for being present (in-person or online) and engaged in our class and by thoughtfully completing weekly reflection boards. While I will record attendance, day-to-day attendance will not be tracked for grading purposes. Instead, you will earn points that I'll add at the end of the semester under the category class contributions, which assesses a semester's worth of engagement. This category is weighted more than other assignments in the Engagement category. You can earn points in the class contribution category by offering comments and asking questions during our group discussions, by showing improvement each week on your assignments and asking for help when you need it.
- **Reflection papers (15%)** You'll write three reflection papers, answering specific questions on issues related to ethics, bias, diversity or accuracy.
 - These assignments include: Reflection Papers 1-3

- **Final project (15%)** You'll write a deadline story, script and social media post in class using all the skills you've learned this semester.
 - The only assignment in this category is your final project, a deadline story in class
- **Chapter quizzes (10%)** You'll take multiple-choice quizzes based readings and other topics.
 - This includes all chapter quizzes
- **Final AP Style test (5%)** You'll take an in-class, timed AP Style test during Week 13. There is no final for this class during finals week.
 - This is a timed AP Style/grammar test

Grading scale

97-100 = A+

94-96 = A

90-93 = A-

87-89 = B+

84-86 = B

80- 83 = B-

77-79 = C+

*74-76= C

70-73 = C-

67-69 = D+

64-66 = D

60 -63 = D

Under 60 = F

*You must receive at least a C (74 or above) to pass this class.

Face covering policy

As of July 17, 2020, and until further notice, all UNL faculty, staff, students and visitors are required to use a facial covering at all times when indoors except under specific conditions outlined in the COVID 19 [face covering policy](https://covid19.unl.edu/face-covering-policy). It can be found at: <https://covid19.unl.edu/face-covering-policy>

To protect the health and well-being of the university and wider community, UNL has implemented a policy requiring all people, including students, faculty and staff, to wear a face covering on campus that covers the mouth and nose. The classroom is a community, and as a community, we seek to maintain the health and safety of all members by wearing face coverings when in the classroom. Failure to comply with this policy is interpreted as a disruption of the classroom and may be a violation of UNL's Student Code of Conduct.

Individuals who have health or medical reasons for not wearing face coverings should work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to establish accommodations to address the health concern. Students who prefer not to wear a face covering should work with their advisor to arrange a fully online course schedule that does not require their presence on campus.

Students in the classroom:

1. If a student is not properly wearing a face covering, the instructor will remind the student of the policy and ask the student to comply with it.
2. If the student will not comply with the face covering policy, the instructor will ask the student to leave the classroom, and the student may only return when properly wearing a face covering.
3. If the student refuses to properly wear a face covering or leave the classroom, the instructor will dismiss the class and will report the student to [Student Conduct & Community Standards](#) for misconduct, where the student will be subject to disciplinary action.

Instructors in the classroom:

1. If an instructor is not properly wearing a face covering, students will remind the instructor of the policy and ask them to comply with it.
2. If an instructor will not properly wear a face covering, students may leave the classroom and should report the misconduct to the department chair or via the TIPS system for disciplinary action through faculty governance processes.

Spring 2021 Schedule

For the most up-to-date course schedule, due dates and assignments, please check Canvas. Only some assignments are listed below. With few exceptions, assignments are due by 8 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays.

UNL is operating under an adapted schedule this semester so there is no spring break, and the semester is 14 weeks, instead of 16 weeks. Assignments listed correspond to the week they will be assigned.

Week 1: The role of editors and journalism's transformation

Read before class: "Everybody's an Editor," Chapter 1

Assignments: Syllabus & Canvas quiz, Chapter 1 quiz in e-book: Post-test for text

Pre-Assessment in e-book

Week 2: Examining news judgment and the role of editors

Read before class: "Everybody's an Editor," Chapter 2

Assignments: Basic Editing, Chapter 2 quiz in e-book: Post-test for text

Week 3: Grammar basics: commas, apostrophes, agreement and more

Read before class: "Everybody's an Editor," Chapter 3

Assignments: Agreement Exercise, Punctuation Perfection Exercise, Chapter 3 quiz in e-book: Post-test for text

Week 4: AP Style: Providing clarity and consistency

Read before class: "Everybody's an Editor," Chapter 4

Assignments: Abbreviations, Style & Usage

Week 5: AP Style: Language norms are changing, but clarity and consistency still matter

Assignments: AP Style Group Presentations, Reflection Paper 1, AP Style Basics 1, Chapter 4 quiz in the e-book: Post-test for text

Week 6: Media law primer: ethics, libel, accuracy

Read before class: "Everybody's an Editor," Chapters 5 and 6

Assignments: AP Style Basics 2, Reflection Paper 2, Chapters 5 and 6 quizzes in e-book: Post-test for text

Week 7: Better writing: active voice, strong verbs, less clutter

Read before class: "Everybody's an Editor," Chapter 7

Assignments: Wordy Sentences, Reflection Paper 3, AP Style Basics 3, Chapter 7 quiz in e-book: Post-test for text

Week 8: Writing news leads: Summarizing and grabbing attention

Read before class: "Writing & Reporting for the Media," Chapter 7

Assignments: News Lead I

Week 9: Adapting your lead writing to new platforms

Read before class: "Writing & Reporting for the Media," Chapter 9

Assignments: News lead II, Broadcast Leads, News Story

Week 10: Putting it together: news leads and stories

Assignments: News story

Week 11: Building your news writing skills

Read before class: "Writing & Reporting for the Media," Chapter 13

Assignments: News Story 2

Week 12: Talking to people and quoting them

Read before class: "Writing & Reporting for the Media," Chapters 10 and 11

Assignments: Interview story

Week 13: Writing for public relations

Read before class: “Everybody’s an Editor,” Chapter 7, “Writing & Reporting for the Media,” Chapter 19, and crisis communication slides

Assignment: PR writing assignment

Assignment: Final AP Style test, an in-class, timed test

Week 14: Editing and writing on deadline with accuracy and organization

Assignment: Final project practice, an in-class deadline assignment for practice

Assignment: Final project, an in-class deadline assignment for a grade

Recording of class-related activity

I invite all of you to join me in actively creating and contributing to a positive, productive and respectful classroom culture. Each student contributes to an environment that shapes the learning process. Any work and/or communication that you are privy to as a member of this course should be treated as the intellectual property of the speaker/creator and is not to be shared outside the context of this course.

Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape class-related activities, you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Failure to follow this policy on recording or distributing class-related activities may subject you to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

Technology requirements

This class doesn’t have a lot of technology requirements. You will need a laptop for class everyday to access the e-book, a notebook to write in and possibly headphones. We will use Canvas a lot.

- To get help with Canvas problems, click 'Help' from the left side menu in Canvas. Help is available 24/7 via phone (1-877-244-8884) or [chat](#).
- To get help with other technological problems, contact the UNL Huskertech Help Center by phone at 402-472-3970 or email at support@nebraska.edu

Academic integrity

Every student must adhere to the policy on academic integrity set forth in the UNL Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the UNL Bulletin. Students who plagiarize may receive a failing grade on an assignment or for an entire course and may be reported to the Student Judicial Review Board. The work a student submits in a class must be the student's own work and must be work completed for that particular class and assignment. Students wishing to build on an old project or work on a similar project in two classes must discuss this with both professors.

Academic dishonesty includes:

- handing in another's work or part of another's work as your own.
- turning in one of your old papers (including something you wrote in high school) for a current class.
- turning in the same or similar paper for two different classes,
- using notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining another's answers for a quiz or an examination.
- copying another student's work
- collaborating with other students in this class unless collaboration is explicitly part of the instructions for the assignment

Anything and **everything** you include in your papers that comes from another source must be attributed with proper citation. That includes ideas and opinions.

Unless explicitly included in the instructions for the assignment, you cannot share your work with another student or provide answers to another student. Everything you submit in this class must be your work and your work only.

Plagiarism consists of using phrases, sentences or paragraphs from any source and republishing them without alteration or attribution. The sources include, but are not limited to, books, magazines, newspapers, television or radio reports, web sites and other students' papers.

Student Support Services

Academic success coaching

UNL offers individual coaching sessions on time management, goal setting, motivation, study routines, study skills, test preparation, study groups, and general transition issues related to

academic success. You can schedule free appointments for individual academic coaching with First-Year Experience and Transition Program staff through MyPLAN. You can also take advantage of study stops, which provide individual and group study with learning consultants in a variety of disciplines, as well as free group workshops on topics such as time management, goal setting, test preparation, and reading strategies. See <https://success.unl.edu/> for schedules and more information.

Well-being coaching

UNL offers individual coaching focused on student well-being and strengths. The student coaches have been trained to help other students thrive using the nine dimensions of the well-being framework. You can schedule online with the coach of your choice at <https://resilience.unl.edu/>.

Mental health

UNL offers a variety of options to students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. Counseling and Psychological & Services (CAPS) is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450. Visit <https://caps.unl.edu/> for more information. Big Red Resilience & Well-Being (BRRWB) provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770. Visit <https://resilience.unl.edu/> for more information.

Writing center

At the Writing Center, located in 102 Andrews Hall, you can work with an individual writing consultant on any type of writing at any stage in your writing process. This is a free service available to all UNL students. For an appointment, call 472-8803 or schedule online at <https://www.unl.edu/writing/home>.

Students with disabilities

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations

so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 117 Louise Pound Hall; 402-472-3787.

Diversity and inclusiveness

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation.

The College of Journalism and Mass Communications values diversity in the broadest sense – gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, physical and intellectual ability, religion, education and geography. We recognize that acknowledging, building understanding and incorporating diversity throughout the curriculum prepare students for communications careers in a global society. As communicators, we know journalism, advertising, public relations, broadcasting and other forms of strategic communications must reflect society in order to be credible, reliable and effective. Inaccuracies or biases in our written, spoken and visual reports mean we have failed as journalists. Diverse voices and perspectives improve our accuracy and truthfulness. In advertising and public relations, we cannot succeed if we do not understand the value of or know how to create inclusive communications that reflect a diverse society.

Trespass policy (Regents' Policy 6.4.7)

The areas of University academic, research, public service, and administrative buildings of the University used for classrooms, laboratories, faculty and staff offices, and the areas of University student residence buildings used for student living quarters are not open to the general public. Any person not authorized to be or remain in any such building area will be deemed to be trespassing on University property, and may be cited and subject to prosecution for criminal trespass in violation of Neb. Rev. Stat., § 28-520 or § 28-521.

Classroom emergency preparedness and response information

UNL Alert

UNL Alert provides free notification by landline, cell phone, text message, e-mail, fax, and pager during an emergency. Visit <http://emergency.unl.edu> for a link and instructions on how to sign up for alerts pertaining to UNL. If you receive a UNL Alert notification during class, please share the information immediately.

Additional information about emergency preparedness and response at UNL as well as the university's operating status can be found on emergency.unl.edu.

Weather Extremes

- Listen to the latest National Weather Service warnings and bulletins on radio and television.

During a Tornado

- When sirens activate, move to the lowest, interior area of the building or designated tornado shelter.
- Stay away from windows.
- Stay near an inside wall when possible.
- Keep calm. Even though a warning is issued, the chance of a tornado striking your building or location is slight.

During a Winter Storm

- If conditions worsen during the day, the administration may decide to close the university early. When such a determination is made, you will be notified through UNL Alert, campus email, and UNL's website.
- Decisions to close for the day are communicated usually by 6 a.m.
- If roads leading to your home have been closed, caution should be used in determining whether to travel home.

Mobility Assistance

- Anyone who needs/wants help with moving to evacuation or shelter-in-place locations should let me know.
- I will locate volunteers students in this class who will assist you in the event we evacuate or shelter-in-place

Shelter-In-Place (Hostile Intruder, External Hazardous Materials Release)

- Remain calm.
- If it is possible to flee the area safely and avoid danger, do so.
- Notify anyone you encounter to exit the building immediately. Evacuate to a safe area away from the danger and take protective cover. Stay there until help arrives.

- Call the UNL Police Department or 9-1-1 with your location if possible. If you cannot get through by phone and have text message capability, text University Police at 41513. Enter the letters **UNLPD** and then type your message. Dispatch will receive and respond to the message.
- If flight is impossible, secure yourself in your space. Barricade doors and block windows. Turn off all the lights, close blinds and close and lock all windows and lock and barricade all doors.
- Seek protective cover for yourself and any others (concrete walls, thick desks, filing cabinets may protect you from bullets).
- Keep calm, quiet and out of sight.
- Silence cell phones (mute or turn off cell phone ringer). Consider turning off radios and computer monitors.
- Do not answer the door. If you do not recognize the voice that is giving instructions, do not change your status (stay put). Unknown or unfamiliar voices may be false and designed to give false assurances.
- Place signs in exterior windows to identify the location of injured persons.
- Do Not Approach Emergency Responders—let them come to you.
- Remain where you are until an "all clear" instruction is given by an authorized known voice.

Evacuation (Fire, Internal Hazardous Materials Release)

- **Always** evacuate the building if the fire alarm sounds.
- In the event of an evacuation, gather your personal belongings quickly (purse, keys, cell phone, NCard, etc.) and proceed to the nearest exit.
- Exit through the emergency exit doors at the south end of the building and assemble on the sidewalk on the south side of Andersen Hall.
- Do not use the elevator.
- Move away from the problem, use alternative exits.

- Help those who need assistance moving.
- Be ready to be guided by additional instructions.

Appendix B: Student A first-week writing sample

A local man was arrested early Sunday morning after fleeing a traffic stop and attempting to avoid arrest by the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP).

At midnight on Sunday, a man was seen driving a 2005 Lincoln LS with the trunk open and with fictitious license plates. This man was later identified as Dylan Pritchard from Holstein, Nebraska. After being spotted by an NSP trooper, a traffic stop was performed on Highway 81. While this traffic stop was underway, Pritchard fled the scene.

The suspect, driving south on northbound lanes, drove at a speed as high as one hundred miles per hour in order to bypass the troopers following behind. Amid the pursuit between Pritchard and NSP troopers, the driver collided into an NSP cruiser and caused minor injuries to the passenger inside. The suspect then began to drive north on southbound lanes.

In order to stop the vehicle, one trooper performed what is called a tactical vehicle intervention which would then stop the suspect's vehicle on Highway 81. After this was performed, Pritchard was taken into custody. The suspect was arrested for felony flight to avoid arrest, assaulting an officer using a motor vehicle, resisting arrest, willful reckless driving, fictitious license plates, and several traffic violations. It was later found that Pritchard was in possession of methamphetamine and was then charged with drug possession as well.

Pritchard has been transported to Polk County hospital for injuries that resulted from the pursuit and was then transferred to the Polk County Jail. The troopers involved have since been treated for their injuries and have been released from the hospital.

Appendix C: Student A final project

The Lincoln Police Department cited an off-duty Lincoln police officer for assault and driving under the influence yesterday after a reported assault occurred in the Grata Bar and Lounge parking lot, police said.

Police said the off-duty police officer, Austin Espinoza, called the police after an argument occurred between him and two individuals.

The Lincoln Police Department dispatched officers to the parking lot of Grata Bar and Lounge at 6891 A Street at 2:30 a.m., October 12, 2020, to investigate the reported assault. Officers learned of Espinoza's involvement in an argument he had with a man and woman who were family acquaintances, police said.

Espinoza reported being assaulted by the man, and the woman reported being assaulted by Espinoza, police said. Police said the assaults occurred while Espinoza was in his vehicle. The individuals involved sustained minor injuries that required no medical attention, police said.

Officers believed that Espinoza was under the influence of alcohol after speaking with Espinoza about the situation, police said. Espinoza failed standardized field sobriety tests and a preliminary breath test. Police said an official chemical test showed that Espinoza had an alcohol concentration of .112 grams of alcohol/210 liters of breath.

Officers cited Espinoza for driving under the influence and assault, police said.

The Lincoln Police Department placed Espinoza on unpaid, investigative suspension, police said. Police said an internal investigation concerning this incident, alongside a criminal investigation, is ongoing within the Lincoln Police Department.

Tweet: @Lincoln_Police cited an off-duty #LNK police officer yesterday with two misdemeanors: driving under the influence and assault.

Appendix D: Student B first-week writing sample

Early Sunday morning at 12:00am The Nebraska State patrol reported a high speed pursuit with a 2005 Lincoln LS with an open trunk and fictitious license plate. The driver was identified as Dylan Pritchard, 26, from Holstein, Nebraska.

The pursuit started after patrolmen were stopped at a traffic light on Highway 81 south of Osceola. The vehicle was driving southbound on Highway 81 carrying speeds up to 100 mph.

The State Patrol vehicle was struck during the pursuit causing minor injuries to the patrolman. The vehicle continued north while other troopers continued to intervene, finally bringing the car to a stop on Highway 81 between Stromsburg and Osceola.

Pritchard (driver) was then taken into custody on account of flight to avoid arrest, assaulting an officer using a motor vehicle, resisting arrest, willful reckless driving, fictitious license plates, and several traffic violations. While searching the vehicle, troopers found methamphetamine

which was later added to his list of chargers. Pritchard was then taken to the Polk County Hospital after suffering minor injuries and was later released to Polk County Jail.

The trooper who suffered minor injuries was successfully treated and released from the hospital.

Appendix E: Student B final project

The Nebraska State Patrol cited an off-duty Lincoln police officer the morning of Oct. 11, after he reportedly assaulted a woman and failed multiple sobriety tests.

Austin Espinoza reported an assault in the parking lot of Grata Bar and Lounge at 6891 A St. that involved a man and woman who were family acquaintances.

The Nebraska State Patrol responded to the report around 2:30 a.m. and began an investigation. Espinoza reported the man assaulted him, and the woman reported Espinoza assaulted her. Both assaults occurred while Espinoza was seated in his vehicle. All parties reported minor injuries of the assault and neither required medical attention, according to police.

Officers developed reason to believe Espinoza was under the influence of alcohol during the investigation and submitted him to Standardized Field Sobriety Tests and a preliminary breath test and he failed both.

Officers transported Espinoza to The Bridge and conducted an official chemical test. His results revealed an alcohol concentration of .112 grams of alcohol/210 liters of breath. Espinoza was cited for driving under the influence and assault, both misdemeanors.

The Nebraska State Patrol placed Espinoza on unpaid, investigative suspension. In addition, they are conducting criminal and internal investigations relating to the incident.

@NEStatePatrol cited an #off-duty @Lincoln_Police officer yesterday morning after reports of assault @grata_bar and failed sobriety tests. #TheBridge

Appendix F: Student C first-week writing sample

A Nebraska man was arrested early Sunday morning, November 18th, 2018, in Polk County following a police pursuit of the man, later identified as Dylan Pritchard.

Pritchard was pulled over after cops stopped him driving a 2005 Lincoln LS with the trunk open and fictitious license plate. He was pulled over on Highway 81, located three miles south of Osceola.

During the routine traffic stop Pritchard took off and raced southbound on highway 81, reportedly reaching speeds in the triple digits as he attempted to get away from the police. After he entered Stromsburg with multiple police in pursuit of the Lincoln LS, Pritchard struck a NSP cruiser on the drivers side, luckily only causing minor injuries to the officer.

After striking the NSP cruiser, Pritchard proceeded to move northbound in the southbound lanes on Highway 81. Another trooper in pursuit then performed a tactical vehicle intervention to bring the suspect vehicle to a stop on Highway 81 between Stromsburg and Osceola.

The 26 year-old from Holstein, Nebraska was arrested for felony flight to avoid arrest, assaulting an officer using a motor vehicle, resisting arrest, willful reckless driving, fictitious license plates, and several traffic violations.

Pritchard was transferred to the Polk County Hospital for minor injuries and was later transported to the Polk County Jail. The trooper was injured, treated and released from the hospital.

Appendix G: Student C final project

Off-duty Lincoln Police officer assaulted a woman and was cited with two misdemeanors in the early morning hours of Oct. 11, at the Grata Bar and Lounge.

Off-duty Lincoln Police officer, Austin Espinoza, was involved in an argument which led to an altercation with a couple who were family friends of his in the parking lot of the Grata Bar and Lounge. Espinoza claimed that the man had physically assaulted him, and the woman made the same accusations, saying Espinoza did the same thing to her.

These assaults both happened when Espinoza was allegedly sitting inside of his car, none of the injuries of the assaults proved to be harsh enough for hospitalization or required any sort of medical attention.

During police questioning, officers believed Espinoza to be under the influence of alcohol at the time of the assault, as well as after. Espinoza took a Standardized Field Sobriety Test, as well as a preliminary breath test, failing both. Espinoza was later escorted by officers to The Bridge for chemical tests, resulting in .112 grams of alcohol/210 liters of breath.

Officers cited Espinoza for driving under the influence and assault, both of which are misdemeanors in the state of Nebraska. He is now on unpaid, investigative suspension as the investigation continues, as well as the Lincoln Police Department is conducting their own internal investigation.

More information can be found about the Lincoln Police Department's internal investigation policy at lincoln.ne.gov.

Off-duty @LincolnPD officer Austin Espinoza cited with multiple misdemeanors following an altercation at Grata Bar and Lounge #LPD #Lincoln