The Editor’s Vision
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How do editors create a distinctive identity for their magazines? This course will look at both iconic print publications and digital startups, exploring how articles, display type, design and photography convey an editor’s ambitions and interests—and the personality of a magazine. We will study celebrated publications then and now, and examine how new technology is changing the way we read and think about magazines. We will explore the elements that go into creating a successful magazine: eye-catching covers, great writing, memorable visuals, signature sections. In class discussions and written assignments, students will think as editors, rather than reporters or writers. Class participation is vital to this process, and will be reflected in the students’ final grades.

Students will pick two publications—one print, one digital—to study in detail through the course. In the first half of the semester, students will write a personal essay about magazines that have influenced them, and a midterm paper will compare a historic magazine and its original mission to what that publication is like today. In the second half of the semester, students will write short analytical papers about their chosen publications. As a final project, students will collaborate to create a prototype for a new digital publication.

We will have in-class editing workshops: sharing assignments, and re-editing published articles (students will bring in a magazine story they think is badly edited for the class to re-work). Students will also spend class time through the semester developing ideas, design concepts, and stories for the final project.

GRADES: Grades will be based on the quality of your written assignments and class participation (which will account for 20 percent of your grade).

ASSIGNMENTS
All written assignments are due by Monday at noon and should be emailed to me. Please double-space, double-check for typos, and send as a Word doc.

REQUIRED READING and VIEWING:
Books:
*The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century*, by Alan Brinkley
*New York Stories: Landmark Writing from Four Decades of New York Magazine*, Forward by Tom Wolfe

Book excerpts to be handed out in class:
*About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made*, by Ben Yagoda
*The Years with Ross*, by James Thurber (New Introduction by Adam Gopnik)
*DV*, by Diana Vreeland

Articles:
“Making the Magazine: A Reading List”—Longreads
http://blog.longreads.com/2014/06/16/making-the-magazine-a-reading-list/

Video:
*The September Issue* – A Film by R.J. Cutler (DVD)

Other excerpts and articles will be listed on this syllabus or assigned in class.

SUGGESTED READING:

**Class One. Jan. 25: Introduction--How to Think Like an Editor**
What is the mission of a magazine? What are the main ingredients—stories, sections, visuals? Who is the reader? What makes you want to read this publication? What constitutes a magazine on the web? Who are the great editors? How is the role of the editor changing in the age of digital and social media? We’ll analyze a few magazines to be handed out in class. And we will discuss a class handout: “8 Ways of Looking at a Magazine.”

ASSIGNMENT: Due next week—the first draft of a personal essay (850 words) on a magazine or magazines that that have influenced you. We will workshop your essays, so please be sure to bring one hard copy to class.


**Class Two. Feb. 1: Magazines Then and Now**
A selected history of the glory days of print magazines, from the roaring 20’s to the postwar ‘40s through the revolutionary ‘60s, with a look at the 21st century crunch.

We will also workshop your personal essays.

ASSIGNMENT: Submit second draft of your personal essay by midday Friday, Feb. 6.

READING for next class: Handout from About Town: The New Yorker and the World it Made, by Ben Yagoda

The Years with Ross, by James Thurber: Foreward by Adam Gopnik; Chapter 6 ("Miracle Men," especially Theory and Practice of Editing New Yorker Articles)

New Yorker writer Jill Lepore on Henry Luce vs. Harold Ross
http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2010/04/19/100419crat_atlarge_lepore

For our next class, LOOK AT the following multimedia features:

- The Atavist for "Love for My Enemies," by Lukas Augustin and Niklas Schenck, June, at atavist.com
- Consumer Reports for "A Beautiful Death," in December print edition and at consumerreports.org
- Powder for "The Human Factor," by David Page, December 9, at powder.com
- Slate for "The Year of Outrage," December 17, at slate.com
- The Texas Observer in Partnership With The Guardian for "Beyond the Border," by Melissa del Bosque, August 6, at texasobserver.org

Class Three. Feb. 8: The Multimedia Magazine
How are online publications with a magazine sensibility different from all other websites? What role do video, audio and data visualizations play in the magazine experience? We will discuss the assigned multimedia features.

AND: Articles to be assigned from New York Stories and other publications

Select a published piece you find badly written or edited and send it to me, for future in-class editing sessions.

NO CLASS: FEB. 15

Class Four. Feb. 22: Great Writing—From an Editor’s Perspective
How different kinds of writing—profiles, long-form reported stories, essays, features, reviews and criticism—shape the personality of a magazine.


Class Five. Feb 29: Editing Workshop I
We will spend part of our class group-editing some of the badly-edited pieces you have sent in.

START: Thinking about/talking classmates about ideas for the final project.

MIDTERM ESSAY: 1500 words comparing the concept and start-up of an iconic magazine (i.e., a 20th century publication like Time, Fortune, Sports Illustrated, The New Yorker, New York, Vogue, Harper’s Bazaar, Esquire, Harper’s, Glamour, Cosmopolitan) with the magazine as it exists today. FIRST DRAFT DUE MARCH 9, by noon. Please bring a hard copy to class.

Class Six. Mar. 7: The Soul of a Startup
In the past year, magazine startups outnumbered magazine closures. What does it take to start a new publication at a time of transformational change in the media world?

We will also workshop your Midterm Essays.

FINAL DRAFT of your Midterm Essay is due by noon on Monday, March 23.

For the next class, WATCH: The September Issue

READ: DV, by Diana Vreeland excerpt


NO CLASS: Mar. 14

Class Seven. Mar. 21: The Personality of the Magazine vs. the Personality of the Editor
Whose brand it is, anyway? We will look at publications whose identities have been shaped by their history and traditions (Time, The New Yorker, Vogue) and those that bear the personal stamp of individual editors (O, the Oprah Magazine).

ASSIGNMENT: Analyze your two publications in terms of the writing they feature: articles, short pieces, tone and voice. 750 words.

LOOK AT: ASME’s Top 40 Covers of all time: http://www.magazine.org/asme/top_40_covers/index.aspx

And ASME’s 2014 Best Covers Readers’ Choice Award https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10151832530036436.1073741845.59153151435&type=1

Class Eight. Mar. 28: Covers and Headlines—Drawing the Reader In
In this class, we will look at iconic magazine covers and discuss the balance of images and words, examining cover design trends over the decades. We’ll have a practice session in class, writing headlines for both print and online stories. What may be clever wordplay for headlines in print publications doesn’t cut it for websites in the age of SEO.

ASSIGNMENT: Submit two versions of a mission statement or “About Us” introduction for your final project: one of 250 words, the other of a Tweet-like 140 characters. Bring a copy of both and be prepared to talk about your publication’s concept.

Class Nine. Apr. 4: Editing Workshop II
In this session, we will focus on the conceptual side of editing, brainstorming ideas for a new publication of our own devising. And we will discuss the mission statements for your final projects.

ASSIGNMENT: 750 words on the visual presentation of your two selected publications.

Class Ten. Apr. 11: In the Details—Creating Signature Sections
To examine how sections add to the editorial mix of a magazine, we’ll look at those in the four magazines that were finalists in the “Magazine Section” category for the 2015 National Magazine Awards:

- Bloomberg Businessweek for “ETC”
- Inc. for “Made”
- New York for “The Culture Pages”
- New York for “Strategist”
- Popular Mechanics for “How Your World Works”

WORK ON final project.

Class Eleven. Apr. 18: The Church/State Divide: Native Advertising and Sponsored Content

In the scramble for revenue, how do editors of digital and print publications deal with the advertising that appears in their publications? We will look at the new ASME rules governing native advertising and sponsored content.

ASSIGNMENT: Work on final project.

Class Twelve. Apr. 25: All About Appearances—Design, Photos, and Graphics

We will discuss the design of leading publications from the perspective of art directors and photo editors.

We will also devote part of the class to the final project. I will consult with individual editors, so please be ready with any questions.

For next week:

WORK ON: Final project

Class Thirteen. May 2: The Next Generation

Students from previous Editor’s Vision classes will come in to talk about their lives and work since NYU and offer their perspective on the job search.

Class Fourteen. May 9: Final Project Presentation

Your final project prototype is due by noon.

Plus: Editor’s Vision course wrap-up