DEPARTMENT OF MASS MEDIA
DIAGNOSTIC EXAM STUDY GUIDE

Below is a sampling of things with which you should be familiar if you wish to do well on the Department of Mass Media diagnostic examination. While this study guide is not intended to be exhaustive, it gives a good idea of many of the basic things over which you will be tested.

**Spelling:** Common words (e.g., prejudice, cemetery, unnecessary, neighbor, occurred, accidentally, forty, embarrass) – nothing too obscure or seldom-used.

**Vocabulary:** Also common words (e.g., mundane, pompous, foil, idyllic) – match them with a synonym.

**Grammar, punctuation, word choice:**
- noun/pronoun agreement: they vs. he/she/it; their vs. his/her/its
- subject-verb agreement: is/are; was/were; has/have
- try to/try and
- affect/effect
- lie/lay
- less/fewer than
- it’s/its
- that/which
- on/onto (and in/into)
- to/too/two
- they’re/their/there
- compared with/compared to,
- who/whom and whoever/whomever and whose/who’s
- I/me and he/him and she/her (e.g., “If it were up to Jana and I, me, we would cancel the party.”)
- comma splices (sometimes called comma faults or run-on sentences)
- commas with appositives and with essential/non-essential (restrictive/non-restrictive) clauses/phrases
- commas separating independent (but not dependent) clauses joined by a conjunction (such as and, but): “He loves baseball, and he never misses a game” vs. “He loves baseball and never misses a game.”
- sentence fragments
- redundancies (e.g., mandatory required courses: widower man)
- dangling modifiers
- compound adjectives (hyphenation: e.g., need hyphen in “rat-infested house” but not in “boring biology lecture”)
- possessives (e.g., women’s, not womens’: “Bill’s and Betty’s bicycles were stolen” vs. “Bill and Betty’s house caught fire” {individual vs. joint possession})
- neither/nor and either/or with number of verb (singular vs. plural)
- none usually means “not a single one,” and so it almost always takes a singular verb, as in “None of the stores sells (vs. sell) that item.”

**STUDY RESOURCES:** The Associated Press Stylebook will help you review for parts of the exam; it is required in MASS 221 and is inexpensive. Any one of countless basic English grammar texts also will help you prepare. Consider Kessler & McDonald’s When Words Collide; Strunk & White’s Elements of Style; Brooks, Pinson & Wilson’s Working With Words; Arnold’s Media Writer’s Handbook. Grammar review material also is abundant online.

Exam takes approximately an hour. You will only need to bring a no. 2 pencil. Don’t forget to write down the day and time you are registered to take the exam. Tests are given in Nelson Hall 138. Questions? Call 389-6417 or 389-3299.