

# PERSPECTIVES ON SPORTS & MEDIA

JOU/CMN 3953 COURSE SYLLABUS

Spring 2024

<b>PROFESSOR</b>	Joe Gisondi
<b>EMAIL</b>	jgisoni@eiu.edu
<b>PHONE</b>	581-6003
<b>OFFICE HOURS</b>	MW 1:20-2:50 p.m. T 3:30-4:30 p.m.
<b>OFFICE</b>	Buzzard Hall, Student Publications Office, room 1811
<b>TEXTBOOKS</b>	Field Guide To Covering Sports, Communication and Sport, American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports. Plus, selected articles, TV sports broadcasts, documentaries and other materials assigned as sports/media issues arise.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This three-credit course examines the symbiotic relationship between sports and the media, addressing the particular ways each impact the other. In addition, this course focuses on both current trends and the history of print, digital, radio and TV sports media.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will learn to:

- understand the symbiotic relationship between sports and mass media;
- understand the history and contributions of women and minorities to sports media;
- understand how athletes, regardless of gender and race, have been portrayed by sports journalists;
- comprehend ethical issues affecting sports media professionals
- comprehend strategies and practices used by sports media professionals to produce sports news across multiple news and public relations media platforms.
- write a sports story by collecting, comprehending, analyzing, synthesizing and critically incorporating source materials gathered from research, observation and interviews.

## ASSIGNMENTS

<i>Name</i>	<i>Points</i>
Quizzes/Responses	200
Assignments	400
Midterm	100
<u>Final</u>	<u>100</u>
<i>Total</i>	<i>800</i>

- **QUIZZES • RESPONSES** – Students will be asked to think critically and creatively related to assigned readings, documentaries, podcasts, and lectures so take comprehensive notes, which can usually be used, if handwritten, when taking quizzes in class. You must be in class (the

entire time) to earn points on quizzes and class assignments. You also must keep in touch, if you miss classes. The professor will supply assignment and topic information, if contacted, but you must also get notes from classmates.

- **ASSIGNMENTS** – There are 11 assignments through the semester, whose total equals 400 points. You do not have to do every one – although any assignments you do complete must fulfill all requirements outlined by the professor, which means they also must be edited for facts and grammar and be submitted by prescribed deadline to be eligible for a grade. Since we address contemporary issues and events, the class topics schedule may be fluid, at times. Incidentally, you may complete all assignments to potentially earn extra points. These assignments will be evaluated based upon content, presentation and writing/grammar. So, please, edit and proofread everything.
- **ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION** – Class is where we discuss ideas related to assigned readings, address new perspectives, and cultivate a deeper, more thorough, understanding of the main topics. So make sure you attend all classes and take comprehensive notes. Students may not make up quizzes or in-class assignments on days they miss class.
- **PAPER/PRESENTATION** – Students can present findings from an investigation into a topic related to sports/media that must be approved by the professor in order to present this extra credit topic. In order to secure a topic, you must submit a one-page pitch that includes a one-sentence thesis by March 1, along with a brief summary of main points to be addressed, a list of articles that have been reviewed (including links) and a description of visuals you plan to use for the presentation. Expect feedback and request for additional information before approval so do not wait until it becomes too late to create this presentation. Ultimately, you will submit all materials presented in an 8-10 minute presentation. (50 points)

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES** – If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Accessibility & Accommodations (OAA). All accommodations must be approved through OAA. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1272, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY** – Plagiarism is using someone else's work as your own without proper credit, and it will not be tolerated. Naturally, in journalistic writing you may use information from other sources, perhaps quotes or information originally posted in another publications. Just make sure you give credit within the story. Assignments that use plagiarized material will be given a 0 grade. Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

In addition, text-generating software such as ChatGPT, Bard, iA Writer, DALL-E, is also a form of plagiarism. Using artificial intelligence to evaluate verifiable stats or to more quickly review documents is fine. Using artificial intelligence to create, write or otherwise develop stories themselves, though, will be considered an academic integrity violation and, thus, will be subject to EIU's academic dishonesty process. The EIU Student Code of Conduct is available from the Dean of Students.

**NEED ACADEMIC HELP?** Besides speaking with me, students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Academic Support Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Academic Support Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 2230.

### **GRADING**

A – 630-700 points

B – 560-629

C – 490-559

D – 420-489

F – below 420

### **CLASS REVISIONS**

Syllabus may be changed at any time during the semester by announcement of the instructor.

# Schedule of Assignments

**JANUARY 8 & 10:** Defining Sports and Media – the symbiotic relationship between sports and media.

- What defines a sport? Address elements.
- Read “Sports Fan Cultures” in *Communication and Sport*, pp. 41-60.

**JANUARY 15:** MLK Holiday

**JANUARY 17-22:** Sports Media Ethics – Review Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics.

- Address ethical lapses made by sports journalists, sports media organizations and sports leagues
- **Assignment** – Evaluate an ethical situation involving sports media professionals during the past year. This assignment must be approved by the professor. Include brief background on the situation before evaluating how a sports media professional broke specific SPJ codes. (25 points)

**JANUARY 22-24-29-31:** Sports Journalism – Address the elements of sports journalism, including best approaches and processes.

- Facts vs. Opinion
- Read Chapter in *The Field Guide To Covering Sports* on game coverage.
- Print vs. Digital reporting
- Read “Reflections on Communication and Sport: On Reporting and Journalists” in *Communication and Sport*, pp.
- Redefining Sports Journalism
- **Assignment** – Critique several assigned sports stories (25 points)
- **Assignment** – Write a sports story about a game (50 points)

**FEBRUARY 5-7-12:** Digital, Social and new media approaches – Address practices, approaches and changes in sports media use of social media (Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) and in cultivating and connecting to readers through other approaches, such as newsletters.

- Review “The evolution from print to online platforms for sports journalists” in *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*, pp. 89-97.
- Review “Understanding Professional Athletes’ Use of Twitter: A Content Analysis of Athlete Tweets” (article, Booth)
- Read “Communication and Sport in the Future,” in *Communication and Sport*, pp. 291-308.
- Review sports websites, newsletters and social media
- **Assignment** – Develop a newsletter regarding the past week in sports. Check with professor regarding the dates to be covered. (50 points)

**FEBRUARY 14-19:** Seminal moments in sports/media – Discuss changes, moments, events and/or games related to sports that have had the greatest impact on American culture, such as technology/1920s, Jackie Robinson, 1959 NFL championship on TV, free agency, ESPN, social media, 1999 Women's World Cup soccer final, Fantasy Sports. Address the differences between exciting sports events and culturally significant sports events. What role has the media played in elevating sports events to being tagged myth, or even seminal?

- **Assignment** – Focus on a significant moment in sport media, regarding the questions and topics posted above. Make an argument why your choice is the most significant by citing its specific impact on sports/media – and by comparing it to other significant moments. (25 points)

Some additional questions to consider:

- Offer key historic information about this event (date, place, teams/athletes involved, sport, relevance of the game)
- What has been the event's impact on sport and sports media ?
- What has been the impact on American or global culture?
- Offer some comments by contemporary sports media.
- Offer some comments by today's sports media.

**FEBRUARY 21-26:** Sports media opinions vs. factual reports

- Review sports columnists, sports talk radio shows/podcasts and opinion-based sports media, such as PTI or The Undeated.
- Address issues in sports media that could be addressed via a column, such as: Should student-athletes be allowed to tweet without restrictions? Read "The Positives and Negatives of Twitter: Exploring How Student-Athletes Use Twitter and Respond to Critical Tweets" in *International Journal of Sport Communication* [Booth Library]
- **Assignment** – Write a sports column that includes research, interviews and observations regarding an issue in sports media. Verify topic with professor before developing this column. (50 points)

**FEBRUARY 28:** Sports Mythology – address myths and hyperbole related to sports/media

- Read "Sports and Mythology" in *Communication and Sport*, pp. 61-78
- Read "The Age of Sports Heroes" in *American Sports*, pp. 142-159.
- Watch documentary "You Don't Know Bo."

**MARCH 4:** Sabermetrics – Discuss how data has dramatically changed how sports journalists, broadcasters, general managers and fans view, evaluate athletes and teams.

- Discuss players who are considered mythic. Use sabermetrics to compare an athlete considered mythic during his/her prime anywhere from the 1920s-60s.
- Address how sabermetrics have transformed fans' perspectives and media coverage.
- Look at websites, such as FanGraphs, and TV shows, such as ESPN's Sports Science Segments and "Numbers Don't Lie," and MLB.TV's "Clubhouse Confidential.
- **Assignment** – Use sabermetrics to compare EIU athletes or teams vs. others in the conference and/or the nation. (50 points)

**MARCH 6:** Fantasy Sports – How have fantasy sports affected sports’ popularity? How much have fantasy leagues affected how fans watch sports?

- Read “Fantasy Sports” in *Communication and Sport*, pp. 271-289.
- Read Fantasy sports coverage
- **Assignment** – Name four teams you believe will keep playing deep into the NCAA mens basketball tournament, relying on numerous news sources to defend your choices. In this analysis, offer reasons you trust the media/experts you relied upon. Make sure you also link all information used within the story itself. (25 points)

**MARCH 11-13:** Investigate papers in Booth Library

**MARCH 18-20:** Spring Break

**MARCH 25-27:** TV Sports Media – Address approaches, of shows, TV broadcasts.

- Break down SportsCenter and other TV sports shows
- Read “College Sports in the Age of Television” in *American Sports*, pp. 280-296.
- Address Roone Arledge’s impact on sports TV
- Watch documentary “40th Anniversary of Wide World of Sports”
- **Assignment** – Assess FOX NFL Sunday, First Take, SportsCenter, game coverage (25 points)

**APRIL 1-3:** Audio Sports Media – Investigate history, approaches and changes in terrestrial radio, XM radio, radio shows, podcasts, and more.

- Read Chapter “Sports Talk Radio,” in *Baseball and the Media*, pp. 210-227.
- Listen to excerpts from sports-talk radio shows
- Discuss sports broadcasting.
- Listen to game announcers.
- **Assignment** – Compare two sports radio show hosts by using podcasts episodes assigned in class. (25 points)

**APRIL 8-10:** Sports Media Relations & Marketing – The duties, roles and responsibilities of sports information directors, along with their relationship with sports journalists and broadcasters.

- Address the duties, role of the sports information director.
- Conflicts with sports media (USC, Bradley, etc.)
- Twins media coverage/Emmy
- Taylor Swift’s affect on NFL
- Read “Crisis Communication in Sports Organizations” in *Communication and Sport*, pp. 229-249
- Review “New media and the changing role of sports information” in *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*, pp. 143-152
- **Assignment** – Interview a sports media relations professional at another school or

who works for a professional team or league in order to learn their specific challenges, roles and successes. (50 points)

**APRIL 15-17-22:** Challenges for female sports journalists, media coverage of women athletes

- Watch the documentary “Let Them Wear Towels,” which chronicles how female sports-journalist pioneers fought for acceptance and harassment-free work environments.
- Read “Gender in Sport” in *Communication and Sport*, pp. 81-104.
- How do sports media portray women? Watch the documentary “Branded,” which examines the role sex and gender play in the lives of female athletes and addresses how women athletes are covered by the media.

**APRIL 22-24:** International sports/media – Assess Olympics, World Cups and other international sports events/media coverage.