

# JOU 4313C: SPORTS REPORTING

## Fall 2018

**MAT 0117**

**3-6 p.m. W**

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### Course description

Welcome to JOU 4313C! This course is designed to develop writing, reporting, and professional skills specific to sports media. You will learn about writing strategies for stories in many forms: From straight news to features to opinion columns to investigative work. Most assignments will be multimedia in nature as you will be expected to produce stories that include not only copy, but also photos, videos and/or audio segments. If a class session requires us to leave the classroom, conduct will be governed by the rules of the classroom and the rules of the venue in which the class is meeting.



### Goals

This class is about reporting and writing about sports. Journalism today is more than words on paper. The overall objective for this class is for you to learn how to function as a sports journalist in 2018 and beyond. As such, by the end of the semester, you will have:

- 1) Enhanced your story idea generating, news gathering, interviewing, reporting and writing skills;
- 2) Acquired or improved visual (photography, graphics & video) and audio producing abilities;
- 3) Become (more) knowledgeable about a variety of sports;
- 4) Learned about the transcendent value of sports in society.



### Readings

There is no required textbook for this class, but required readings will be posted on Canvas.

An AP stylebook would be helpful, and I also recommend the following textbook: Gisondi, J. (2017). *Field Guide to Covering Sports* Second Edition. Washington: CQ Press. / ISBN-13: 978-1506315683 / ISBN-10: 1506315682.



## Some rules

Here are a few rules to follow for this to be a successful course:

### 1. Be professional

Respect your classmates, their work and their views. Listen to your classmates' opinions before voicing your own. All in all be polite, professional and respectful when expressing yourself.

Please also respect your classmates' and my time. Class will start and end on time. If you must walk in late or leave class early for some important commitment, please email or see me before the day that you will be doing so.

### 2. Be prepared

As the old adage goes, "by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail," so come fully prepared for each session. Do the required reading and complete the assignments to the best of your abilities. This preparation will help you retain the materials and make class discussions richer.

### 3. Be engaged

My role is akin to that of a coach. You are the players, the main actors of this course. Get involved!

## Deadlines

Remember there's a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." All deadlines are firm, especially in the media industry. You are responsible for turning in all projects on the date and time they are due. If you cannot make it to class that day, you are still responsible for uploading your project where appropriate. Exceptions may be made for extraordinary circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

## Assignments

When applying for a job, employers may discard your application for not following basic instructions. To get you ready for these expectations, you will have to follow every single instruction on any given assignment. Failure to do so will earn you a grade of zero. Detailed instructions for all assignments are available on Canvas.

## Honor Code

All students are expected to follow the University of Florida Honor Code. The full text of the Honor Code can be found on the [Dean of Students Office's website](#). Any violation of the honor code will result in the student being dismissed from the journalism program and reported to the Honor Court. Note that plagiarism specifically is unforgivable in journalism. It essentially ends a journalist's career.



## Grading

You will be given extensive feedback throughout the semester on stories you produce. Your course grade is based on your involvement and participation in the course, various assignments and a semester-long team project. Short descriptions for each are below. Detailed descriptions are on Canvas. Final grades will be calculated as follows:

|                                      |     |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Involvement and participation        | 10% |
| Assignments                          | 60% |
| Project (using Print, Web and Video) | 30% |

### Involvement and Participation (10%)

My role is to efficiently guide the class throughout the semester, but it is your responsibility, as a class, to bring all projects to fruition. This course will be successful only if all of you participate. Thus, part of your overall grade will be determined by your active involvement in class, group activities and discussions. This includes online activities. The first task is for you to email me a picture of a soccer ball as soon as you finish reading this syllabus. Note that all ungraded exercises and activities are taken into consideration for your participation grade.

### Assignments (60%)

Assignments include a thematic feature paper to be written in pairs, a video profile of an interesting person in the sports world, live tweeting of sporting events, games stories, opinion columns, and short weekly radio updates about a specific beat (unique to each of you). All assignments will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Depth and accuracy of reporting;
- Strength of your lede, nut graph and overall story structure;
- Grammar and AP Style;
- Brevity of your writing (don't use four words when you can use only one);
- Clarity of your writing;
- Strength of your multimedia components;
- Timeliness;
- Thoroughness of your analysis.

**Note: Errors of fact (including misspellings of proper names) will lower your grade by 20 points each time they appear in a story.** This deduction is not an arbitrary punishment. Such errors go to the heart of credibility for you and your organization. Errors can also have serious legal ramifications, such as libel suits. **Easily avoidable mistakes (missing words, typos, basic spelling errors) will cost 5 points each.** Refer to the appropriate instructions documents on Canvas for more details.

### Project (30%)

You will team up for a semester-long multimedia journalism project, whose topic will be decided within the first two weeks of class. The project will require professionalism, historical research, critical thinking, creativity, and multimedia skills, including video, graphics, photos, and text. More details will be given in class and on Canvas.



## Tentative schedule

- 08/22 – Introduction & Sports media industry
- 08/29 – From sports fan to reporter. Reminders: Leads, Story structure & Interviewing
- 09/05 – Sports beat writing
- 09/12 – Play-by-play & Game stories
- 09/19 – Working with sports information directors, team PR people and coaches
- 09/26 – Social media and sports
- 10/3 – Writing Columns
- 10/10 – Mega-Events
- 10/17 – Feature Stories
- 10/24 – Ethics and conflicts in sports reporting
- 10/31 – Searching public records, investigative and enterprise
- 11/7 – Radio and podcasts
- 11/14 – Women and minorities in sports writing
- 11/21 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)
- 11/28 – HS and College Sports
- 12/05 – Final class. Group projects due