

RTV 3593: Multimedia Sports Reporting

Fall 2020

College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida

Place: Zoom

Day and Time: Wednesdays, Periods 9-10 (4:05 - 6:00 p.m.)

Instructor: Dr. Roxane Coche

E-Mail: rcoche@ufl.edu

Office Hours: By appointment.

⇒ Email or text me at any time! My cell number is on Canvas.

Canvas Link: <https://ufl.instructure.com>

Course Text: [The Field Guide to Covering Sports \(Second Edition\)](#), [Joe Gisondi](#)

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Other Readings and Resources will be posted and available online.

Overview

RTV 3593 is designed to offer instruction, analysis and training in sports information gathering and research, writing, interviewing and reporting in a digital age. Special emphasis is placed on improving sports writing skills and reporting judgement, research and analysis of sports events and issues, basic sports production, radio reporting assignments and generation of sports content for the Internet. In addition, students receive practical experience in the Innovation News Center and WRUF-ESPN AM 850-FM 98.1 in the College of Journalism and Communications.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will not meet in person at any time this semester. Lectures will be posted on Canvas, and we will meet on Zoom at our regular scheduled times on Wednesday afternoons for discussions, exercises and guest speakers.

Course Learning Objectives

The overall objective for this class is for you to learn how to function as a sports journalist in 2021 and beyond. As such, after successful completion of this course, you should have:

- (1) developed skills to effectively research, gather and analyze sports information;
- (2) learned to write high-quality sports stories (news & features) meant for on-air radio broadcast and the Internet – this includes learning about sources needed for sports research and honing your interviewing skills;
- (3) an enhanced understanding of (a) UF, local, high school, national and international sports, and (b) the ethics and values of sports journalism;
- (4) published on WRUF-ESPN AM 850/FM 93.5 (radio and the Internet);
- (5) enhanced skill in voicing work, live and recorded, on-the-air;

Some Rules

1. Professionalism

Respect your classmates, their work and their views. Be polite, professional and respectful when expressing yourself. In addition, I believe part of my job is to get you as ready for the professional industry as possible. Not following basic instructions disqualifies anyone from jobs, so, to get you ready for these expectations, you will have to follow every single instruction on any given assignment. Failure to do so will result in an automatic 20% deduction (of the maximum number of points possible) the first time, 50% the second time and 100% any time after that. Detailed instructions for all assignments are available on Canvas.

2. Preparation

As the old adage goes, “by failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail,” so do the required reading and listen to the lectures before completing any assignment, story or project. Ask questions if you have any doubts. I check my emails and texts way more than recommended by mental health professionals. I will always get back to you as soon as I can. If I seem to have forgotten for whatever reason (it doesn’t happen often, but it might), message me again. You are not bugging me by staying on top of things. **However:** If you have a question about an assignment, don’t text me at the last minute and expect an answer right away/before the deadline. I may be sleeping or showering at that time. I may use technology in unhealthy fashion (or so *they say*), but I am still a human being.

3. 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 assignments, stories and projects on the date and time they are due. Unlike Spring 2020, this class was prepared to be online, so you may do most of the work at your own pace. If you want to get ahead, you are welcome to. I will always try to provide feedback in a timely manner. Exceptions *may* be made for extraordinary circumstances if the student notifies the instructor before the due date. I am available for calls (almost) on a daily basis, please reach out!

4. Feedback

Some assignments will be discussed as a class, so your work may be critiqued by your peers. While this can be uncomfortable, it is much better to get such criticism in class than from Internet trolls. Of course, refer to rule #1 when you are doing the critiquing.

5. Course Content

In the interest of honest and frank discussions, all materials I post on Canvas or other instructing tools (lectures, comments of guest speakers, discussion boards) are strictly off the record. This means that they may not be published in any format, either in a print publication or on a web site, personal blog or social media.

6. Zoom

Our weekly class sessions will be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image.

Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

7. Engagement

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

8. 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 academic integrity expected will result in a minimum academic sanction of a grade of zero on the appropriate assignment, and the student being reported to the journalism department. Note that plagiarism specifically is unforgivable in journalism. It essentially ends a journalist's career.

9. Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this process as early as possible in the semester.

10. Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on a minimum of 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. They typically open during the last three weeks of the semester. Announcements will be made giving specific times when they are open. Summary results are available at the URL above.

ESPN Gainesville

In this course, students receive professional training and experience each week in the Innovation News Center and WRUF-AM ESPN 850 studios. The ESPN experience may include all or some of the following: research, writing web stories, writing and recording radio sports updates, operating the control board, and covering events such as press conferences and sports competitions (likely remotely this semester).

This is a critical component of the course and the evaluation of the effectiveness of this training experience will comprise 33% of the final grade. Considering the COVID-19 crisis, each student is exceptionally offered three options to complete the requirement this semester:

- (1) "Normal" on-campus shift – requires presence in the INC. While publication on ESPN Gainesville is not 100% guaranteed, students usually finish the semester with several stories published on the website.

You must cover your shift each week and be on time. If you cannot work, you are responsible for getting someone to cover the shift for you and informing the sports director.

There is a professional dress code for the INC where you represent the properties, the College and the University of Florida. Closed toed shoes and collared shirts are required. Neutral colors are required for sports journalism students, meaning no orange or blue or UF attire. Athletic wear, hats, sleeveless shirts and flip-flops are not allowed. The dress code for the current year will be distributed in class.

- (2) Online shift – no required presence on campus; complete weekly shift as normally as possible from home. While publication on ESPN Gainesville is not 100% guaranteed, students usually finish the semester with several stories published on the website.

You must cover your shift each week and be on time. If you cannot work, you are responsible for getting someone to cover the shift for you and informing the sports director.

- (3) Replace weekly shifts with a monthly in-depth feature story, all of which will be considered for publication on ESPN Gainesville. Only high-quality feature stories go on the website, so publication is not guaranteed. Students may pair up for one story.

If you choose options (1) or (2), note that shifts may include evening or weekend hours, and can change, and you may be asked to work during times outside your regular shifts. These shifts are a recognition of your good work (those are typically the times sports happen!).

Steve Russell, Sports Director for the multimedia properties, will assign the shifts.

Introductory training sessions will be held in the beginning of the semester with ESPN Gainesville staff and alumni during class time. Attendance is required for everyone in the class, even students who have previously worked at one of CJC's multimedia properties.

Throughout your time in this class and in the ESPN Experience, you will advance through different phases. You must master all the skills in a phase before you can move on to the next. Phase One must be mastered before you start your ESPN Gainesville experience.

1. Phase One Objectives

- Can perform and record telephone or online interviews
- Can edit sound bites and write sound story
- Can create fact sheet on a story/interview
- Answer and transfer telephones
- Follow proper social media accounts and aware of what WRUF.com posts on social media

2. Phase Two Objectives

- Can do in-person interviews in the field on stories, help cover press conferences for audio/radio [likely suspended for all of Fall 2020]

- Pitch viable story ideas
- Compose a web story for WRUF.com
- Begin to understand workflow for social media protocols
- Continue mastery of Phase One

3. Phase Three Objectives

- Can cover a press conference on your own [likely suspended for all of Fall 2020]
- Compose more than one web story during a shift
- Can meet higher level of expectation for field work
- Has the understanding and ability to post to WRUF.com social media account
- Continue mastery of Phases One and Two

Course Grading

You will be graded in accordance with [UF policies](#) out of 1,400 points with the following breakdown:

Evaluation Components	Note	Points Per Component	% of Total Grade
Assignments (9)	One 25-point assignment will be dropped	(6) 25 pts each (3) 50 pts each = 300 pts	21.4%
Participation (12)	Two will be dropped	10 pts each = 100 pts	7.1%
Projects (3)	-	100 pts each = 300 pts	21.4%
Final Project (1)	-	200 pts	14.3%
WRUF work (1)	-	500 pts	35.7%
Total	-	1,400 pts	100%

Note that for every assignment, story or discussion you turn in, errors of fact (including misspellings of proper names) will lower your grade by 20% each time they appear in a story (of the maximum number of points possible).

Easily avoidable mistakes (missing words, typos, basic spelling errors) will each cost 5%.

Final grades will be calculated with the following table:

		1,300-1,400 points	A	1,260-1,299	A-
1,220-1259	B+	1,160-1,219	B	1,120-1,159	B-
1,090-1,119	C+	1,020-1,089	C	980-1,019	C-
940-979	D+	880-939	D	840-879	D-
839 and under	F				

Course Outline

Note: This course outline is tentative. Any changes will be announced as early as possible depending on the situation.

Week 1 Zoom class day: 09/02/20	Canvas lecture: Reminders: Reporting and writing basics Zoom meeting: Intro to class and review of syllabus; Sports reporting uniqueness discussion Assignment 1 due Friday, Sept. 4
Week 2 Zoom class day: 09/09/20	Canvas lecture: Writing for the web Zoom meeting: Lecture discussion, relevant exercises and ESPN Gainesville guest speaker Assignment 2 due Saturday, Sept. 12
Week 3 Zoom class day: 09/16/20	Canvas lecture: Interviewing skills Zoom meeting: Lecture discussion, relevant exercises and ESPN Gainesville guest speaker Assignment 3 due
Week 4 Zoom class day: 09/23/20	Canvas lecture: Covering live sports Zoom meeting: Project One discussion, lecture discussion and relevant exercises Assignment 4 due
Week 5 Zoom class day: 09/30/20	Canvas lecture: Writing for radio Zoom meeting: Lecture discussion, relevant exercises and ESPN Gainesville guest speaker Assignment 5 due
Week 6 Zoom class day: 10/07/20	Canvas lecture: Pitching stories Zoom meeting: Finalize Project One topics as needed, lecture discussion and relevant exercises Assignment 6 due
Week 7 Zoom class day: 10/14/20	Canvas lecture: Writing feature stories Zoom meeting: Guest speaker TBA, Project Two discussion, lecture discussion and last Project One questions Assignment 7 & Project One due
Week 8 Zoom class day: 10/21/20	Canvas lecture: Argumentative writing Zoom meeting: Project One feedback, lecture discussion and last Project Two questions Project Two due
Week 9 Zoom class day: 10/28/20	Canvas lecture: Ranked lists Zoom meeting: Guest speaker TBA, lecture discussion and Project Two feedback Assignment 8 due
Week 10 Zoom class day: 11/04/20	Canvas lecture: Using social media as a reporter Zoom meeting: Guest speaker TBA, lecture discussion and Project Three discussion Assignment 9 due
Week 11 NO ZOOM CLASS	Canvas lecture: Creating visuals Extra points opportunity: Bonus assignment due

Week 12 Zoom class day: 11/18/20	Canvas lecture: Data in sports journalism Canvas guest speaker Zoom meeting: Lecture discussion, guest speaker video reactions and last Project Three questions Project Three due
Week 13 – NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING WEEK
Week 14 Zoom class day: 12/02/20	Canvas lecture: Final project checklist Zoom meeting: Meeting optional; last Final project questions Final Project due
Week 15 Zoom class day: 12/09/20	Canvas lecture: Ethics Case Studies and exercises Zoom meeting: Lecture discussion, class goodbyes

Resources

1. Health and wellness resources on campus

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department:* [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

2. Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support:* Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus:* [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).
- *On-Line Students Complaints:* [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).