
Sports Media & Society

MMC 3703, Section 1A32
MMC 6936, Section 8904 (Graduate)

FALL 2013



Course Times & Location

Weimer Hall 1064

Tuesday Period 3

Thursday Period 3-4

Course Description

In this survey course, we will cover the relationships between the sports industry, athletes, media, and audience. We will discuss the evolution of sports media from the early sportswriters to the day when athletes control their own messages via Twitter. We will cover the various mediums—newspapers, magazines, books, radio, TV, online, forums, blogs, and social media—in terms of their history, function, impact, and ethical implications. Ultimately, this course is about developing literacy and critical-thinking skills about the sports industry and its relationship with the media.

Course Structure

The course will consist of lectures, discussion, and guest speakers (live and via Skype). Please use professional courtesy when instructor, fellow students, and guests are talking.

Course Blog

The blog <http://sportsmediauf.wordpress.com/> will serve as the central hub for course-related material (we also have an e-learning account for posting grades). On the blog, you will find links to the syllabus, discussions, and some readings. For questions about class, please check the blog first to see if your question has been addressed there (under FAQs). Because we will not be able to cover all issues during class, you are encouraged to continue discussions on the blog. You are required to make 10 insightful comments about posts during the course of the semester (see more below). *If you use a username different than your own to make a comment, email the instructor and teaching assistant your name, UFID number, and username (and use the same username for the entire semester)*

Twitter/#SportsMediaUF

You are not required to have a Twitter account, but you are encouraged to be familiar with the social-media platform, because many current sports-media issues are played out on Twitter. The instructor will occasionally use Twitter to extend discussion, post relevant links, or give exam hints. If you do weigh in on any class issues on Twitter, please use the hashtag #SportsMediaUF, so everyone can search discussions. Every week, one tweet using #SportsMediaUF will win Tweet of the Week, which will earn the student 3 extra-credit points on an exam (no limit to how many times you can win). #boom

Instructor: Ted Spiker

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(Available by appointment)

Twitter: @ProfSpiker

Office Hours:

T 10:30-11:30am & W 1-3pm

Other times available by appointment

TA: Annelie Schmittle

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Office Hours:

T 10:30-11:30am & R 11:30am-12:30pm

Required Texts

Miller, A.M. & Shales, T. (2011)
*Those Guys Have All The Fun: Inside
The World of ESPN.* New York, NJ:
Little, Brown and Company.

Links will be provided on the blog for additional readings.

Prerequisites

None

Grading

You will have three 50-question multiple-choice exams that will cover lectures, guest speakers, and the required reading (blog postings will **not** be on exams, but those readings will be posted so you can monitor current events in sports media). You will have one 4-page paper, and you will be required to make 10 comments on the course blog.

- *Exam 1:* September 24 (20%)
- *Exam 2:* October 22 (20%)
- *Exam 3:* December 3 (20%)
- *Paper due:* November 21 (class) (20%)
- *Blog comments:* 10 for semester (20%)

Blog Comments

10 comments = score of 100; 9 comments = 90; 8 comments = 80, etc...

****Your 10 comments must be made in at least five separate weekly periods (a week will be considered Monday to Sunday). If you do not post in at least five separate weeks, three points will be deducted from your score for each week short of five. (Example: If you post 10 relevant comments in three different weeks, your score will be 94. You will get full credit for adding to the discussion, posting relevant links or contributing to the discussion in some other way. Comments do not need to be long (a couple sentences is fine; think roughly 100 words or so), but they must be more than a simple reply ("Right on, LeBron!"). Keep track of how many comments you make. The instructor will read all comments, but if you want to verify how many you have, please ask the teaching assistant. Unfortunately, WordPress does not allow users search for their comments.**

Deadline for last comments accepted will be 12/4 at noon.

Paper

Choose one specific case or issue in sports media and examine it. Pick a specific idea (i.e. the Twitter Strategy of XYZ Media Person or Athlete, or How the Media Portrayed the Riley Cooper Story), not something that is too broad (i.e. How Media Uses Twitter). Do not choose any topic that is covered in-depth on the syllabus, though if something is mentioned briefly in class, you can choose to explore it for your paper. If you have any doubts about the specificity of your paper topic, run the idea by the instructor or teaching assistant via email.

- *Due date:* November 21 in class (paper copy, not electronic). No late papers will be accepted. You will get 5 extra-credit points if you turn it in on or before November 7.
- *Pages:* 4 (Times New Roman, 12-point, double-spaced), not including your sources page
- *Sources:* Cite your sources within the paper (according to XYZ person in XYZ article), and then include full bibliographical details on a separate page.
- *Structure:* Your paper should be broken into three sections:
 - Background: Brief overview/context of the people/organizations involved
 - Content: What are the major issues and conflicts? What do critics and supporters say about the issue? (This should serve as the bulk of your paper.)
 - Analysis: What do you think? Your analysis of the conflict you're looking at.
- *Grading:* You will be judged on a 50-point scale (then multiplied by two)
 - 5: Originality and relevance of topic
 - 10: Background (facts, context)
 - 15: Content (discussion of the conflict)
 - 10: Analysis (thoughtful discussion of issues)
 - 5: Writing mechanics (follows rules of good grammar, clarity)
 - 5: Sources (minimum of eight)

Required Reading

For Exam 1

- ESPN book (all pages correspond with paperback edition):
 - From Chapter 3 (pages 139-157; 178-190; 198-209)
- “The Worldwide Leader in Dong Shots,” GQ, Gabriel Sherman, February 2011.
- “How Sportswriting Lost Its Game,” Utne Reader, April 3, 2008.
- “Hype,” Sports Illustrated, January 23, 1989.

For Exam 2

- ESPN book:
 - From Chapter 4 (pages 224-252; 322-329), From Chapter 5 (pages 445-468)
- “King of the Sports Page,” Sports Illustrated, Rick Reilly, April 21, 1986.
- “Damned Yankee,” Sports Illustrated, Gary Smith, 1997.

For Exam 3

- ESPN book:
 - From Chapter 6 (pages 469-495; 510-557)
 - From Chapter 7 (pages 609-631)
 - From Chapter 8 (pages 707-714; 726-751)
- “How ESPN Ditched Journalism,” Deadspin, November 11, 2012
- “Can Bill Simmons Win the Big One?” New York Times Magazine, Jonathan Mahler, May 31, 2011.

Grading Breakdown

93–100 avg	A	73–77 avg	C
90–92 avg	A-	70–72 avg	C-
88–89 avg	B+	68–69 avg	D+
83–87 avg	B	63–67 avg	D
80–82 avg	B-	60–62 avg	D-
78–79 avg	C+	59 avg or lower	E

Graduate Students

Graduate students enrolled in the MMC section of this course should see the document on the blog for adjustments to the grade distribution regarding graduate requirements.

Class Topics

Note: The order of topics covered in class is subject to change based on the availability of guest speakers, as well as current issues in the sports media. But this will serve as a rough order for the topics we'll cover.

Introduction: An Overview of the Sports Media & Basic Journalistic Principles

- A look at the media landscape of today. Plus, a quick primer on journalism ethics and law.

Case Study: The Decision

- We look at the ground-breaking (and often-criticized) event revolving around LeBron James's decision to go to Miami—and the relationship between his camp and ESPN. Has news now become an event?

Case Study: Media Coverage of Tiger Woods

- A classic case of who's controlling whom: We look at the pre-scandal era of Tiger, in which he worked diligently to preserve privacy, and how that all changed.

America's Best Sportswriters, Historical and Modern

- We'll look at the great early sports writers—Red Smith, Grantland Rice—what they meant to sports coverage and fans. We'll also explore how the role of newspaper sportswriters has changed because of TV, radio, and the Internet, and take a look at some of today's most talented writers.

Case Study: How Sports Handled 9/11

- When the world stopped, what did the sports media do?

Case Study: John Rocker's Mouth

- John Rocker, controversial Braves pitcher, makes inflammatory comments in Sports Illustrated. How it went down, and how Rocker's career changed forever.

Sports Radio: From Play-by-Play to Talk Radio

- The great voices of sports radio—and how radio has evolved from game coverage to talk radio. The precursor to message boards and blogs, radio gives fans their say.

TV Coverage and the Power ESPN

- History of ESPN and how it changed the sports landscape forever. Now, though, specialty networks with a niche (NFL Network and MLB Network) may be changing the game again.

Case Study: Brett Favre Sexting

- Deadspin.com break news of lewd photos—a subject traditional media may not have initially covered, but eventually did. What is news? What is public and private when it comes to athletes?

The Business of Sports Media

- What is the financial structure of media companies? What is the relationship between sports leagues and media, and how does that influence coverage?

Case Study: Gary Smith, America's Best Sports Writer?

- It's the merging of sports and literature, as the nation's most gifted sports writer dissects the human element of the games we watch.

Case Study: The London Olympics

- They were called the Twitter Olympics, and NBC came under fire for its tape-delayed coverage. Still, ratings were the best in history. What media issues come into play during this international event.

Case Study: The Penn State Saga

- Timeline of events and how the media managed this situation from the start. Media issues related to small media, ESPN, and crisis management on the part of Penn State.

The Cultural Importance of Sports Illustrated

- Why it was born, how it was developed, the great journalism and photojournalism that has come out of it, and what role a weekly plays in the era of 24-7 sports cycle. Much of the focus will be on great sports photojournalism and in-depth reporting.

Balanced Coverage: Who Gets It, Why, and Is It Right?

- Classic media debate: Who gets covered, how much coverage does a sport/athlete get, and what kind of play do they get in sports pages/broadcast? Popularity would seem to dictate those decisions, but who decides what's popular and can an argument be made that the media can influence that popularity by giving more coverage to lesser-known sports?

Women in the Locker Rooms

- History of how female sportswriters—the challenges of breaking into a male-dominated business and atmosphere. And we'll also discuss how the issues continue today.

Swimsuits in Sports: Sex and the Sports Media

- The sports industry is like any other industry when it comes to moving a product: Sex sells. That applies to media (SI swimsuit issue) and it also extends to athletes. We'll look at sex in sports and discuss ethical issues for media companies and athletes.

Case Study: The Manti Te'o Hoax

- What was the media's role and responsibility in telling the Te'o story—before the hoax was exposed and after?

Case Study: The Media Spectacles of Tebow and Manziel

- What role does the media play in coverage of often-polarizing stars? Who drives the messages—the media, the fans, the athletes?

Athletes in Control: The Twitter Effect

- Perhaps tired of the media having control over messages, many athletes are taking matters into their own hands, whether it's through 140-character tweets, fan pages, or books. How has that changed the media's role?

International Sports Media

- How does it differ from the American media culture? And what problems or issues does it bring up in global competitions?

Fictional Portrayals of Sportswriters

- A look at TV and movie characters and portrayals the sports-media business. Accurate or stereotypical?

Case Study: Lance Vs. The World

- What was the media's role and relationship with lance Armstrong before, during, and after the doping allegations and admissions?

PLUS (lectures, speakers, discussion...):

- Issues of Race
- Team Media
- Sports Photography
- The Art and Craft of the Sports Interview
- Big-Game Coverage
- Careers in Sports Media
- Local Media: Booster or Watchdog?

UF's Grading Policy

Please read: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Academic Integrity

The College of Journalism and Communication at UF is committed to upholding the University's Academic Honor code as detailed on UF's website. Academic dishonesty of any kind is not tolerated in this course. The university's guidelines provide additional details, which you are expected to understand completely.

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentrights.php#academichonestyguidelines>

Technology Devices (Phones & Computers)

We will incorporate technology in many of the class sessions, so you are encouraged to bring your laptop, smartphones or tablets to class. When using these devices you are expected to be on task; no texting, Facebook, Twitter or ESPN unless specified by the instructor. As research on learning shows, unexpected noises and movement automatically divert and capture people's attention, which means you are affecting everyone's learning experience if your cellphone or laptop makes noise or is visually distracting during class. In short, turn your cellphone settings to silent/vibrate and use your laptop to takes notes, not to watch funny YouTube videos (we'll do plenty of that in class).

Resources

The University of Florida is full of resources that can help you in your academic career. You are encouraged to make use of resources such as the library, tutoring, career resource center, etc. A list of useful UF resources can be found here:

<http://www.ufadvising.ufl.edu/student-resources.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for any students with disabilities. If you have a disability, the Dean of Students Office will give you official documentation, which you will give to your instructor. More information is on the Disability Resource Center page from the Dean of Students Office. <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Counseling & Mental Health Center

UF's Counseling and Wellness Center (CWC) offers support for students in need. CWC is located at 3190 Radio Road and is open from 8-5 Monday through Friday. Please refer to the CWC's website for more information:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>

Writing Assistance

The Reading and Writing Center in 303 Tigert Hall offers assistance to all students who wish to improve their reading and writing. Whether you are a native speaker or ESL, you may contact the center and set up an appointment with a tutor. Check out their website for more information: <http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/index.html>

About the Instructor

Associate Professor Ted Spiker heads the magazine sequence in the journalism department at UF. He came to UF in 2001 after being articles editor at *Men's Health*. He's currently a contributing editor to *Men's Health* and a freelance magazine writer. A graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Spiker has had work published in *Outside*, *O the Oprah Magazine*, *Fortune*, *Women's Health*, *Runner's World*, *Reader's Digest*, and many other magazines. He is also co-author of a dozen books, including the *YOU: The Owner's Manual* series with Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Mike Roizen.

Twitter: @ProfSpiker

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About the Teaching Assistant

Annelie Schmittel is a second-year doctoral student in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida. Although she is a German native Annelie has called the US her home for the past nine years. Annelie holds B.A. degrees in Mass Communication: Broadcast Journalism and German Literature & Language, as well as a M.S. in Sport Management. She received her degrees from Winona State University in Minnesota. Annelie's primary research area is the influence of social media technologies in the sports environment (sports organizations, athletes, fans, media outlets). She maintains secondary research interests in crisis communication in sports, athlete development and sport management.

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