

JOU 4313 SPORTS REPORTING

Adj. Prof. Zach Abolverdi

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No Office Hours; Please call/text to make appointment
(352) 283-3253

COURSE OBJECTIVE

Instruction and practice in reporting sports with special emphasis on game coverage and interviewing techniques. Includes features, sidebars, advances and press conference coverage. Opportunities for publication of stories.

COURSE GOALS

- To expose you to multiple forms of sports reporting and improve your skill set.
- To learn techniques used by sports reporters and apply them to your career.
- To produce original content of professional quality across various genres.

COURSE TOPICS

Techniques

Developing ideas
Reporting/breaking news
Interviewing
Writing
Multimedia/podcasts

Genres

Game/deadline stories
Columns/blogs
In-depth stories
Features/video
Live-tweeting/social media

COURSE GUESTS

- The class will include guest speakers who cover prep, college and professional sports, including reporters from *The Orlando Sentinel*, *The Athletic*, *ESPN*, *Sports Illustrated*, *USA TODAY* and more.

READING

The Best American Sports Writing 2015 by Wright Thompson; recommended

GRADING

You will be graded on a 1,000-point scale:

| | | | |
|-----|-----------|-----|---------|
| A: | 925–1,000 | C: | 725–774 |
| A-: | 900–924 | C-: | 700–724 |
| B+: | 875–899 | D+: | 675–699 |
| B: | 825–874 | D: | 625–674 |
| B-: | 800–824 | D-: | 600–624 |
| C+: | 775–799 | E: | 0-599 |

ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Class Assignments (500 points)

- 50 points:** Week 2 Assignment
- 75 points:** Class Assignment 1
- 75 points:** Class Assignment 2
- 100 points:** Class Assignment 3
- 100 points:** Sports Reporter Q&A
- 100 points:** Participation/Attendance/Professionalism

Customized Syllabus (500 points)

Half of your grade will consist of a content plan of your choosing. Why? This class will have students with a variety of experience, so I want you to customize your coursework. Your objective should be developing a skill set you want to focus on, improve or try, and not creating a plan that plays to your strengths. If you have done dozens of features or sidebars, pick other genres you're not as familiar with. If you have never covered a game, that should be in your mix. We will individually outline your path and goals. By Week 2, you will pick your customized portion to total 500 points. To get there, select at least two genres from the options below to build your syllabus. Then I will create your individualized plan with assignments, deadlines, etc. You can mix and match in any way you want, but again, you should choose based on your skill level and experience.

Here are your options (you may pick multiple of the same genres, but must choose at least TWO):

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Game story | (100 points) | Game sidebar | (50 points) |
| Multimedia game story | (150 points) | Live-tweet game | (50 points) |
| Column/blog | (75 points) | Profile; writing or multimedia | (150 points) |
| Basic feature | (150 points) | In-depth feature; writing or MM | (250 points) |
| Alternative story form | (150 points) | Other | (points TBD) |

Samples:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 500 | 500 | 500 |
| 2 game stories (200) | 3 game stories (300) | 2 columns (150) |
| 1 live-tweet (50) | 1 basic feature (150) | 1 feature (150) |
| 1 in-depth feature (250) | 1 game sidebar (50) | 1 game story (100) |
| | | 2 live-tweets (100) |

ASSIGNMENTS

Week 2 (50 points)

For Week 2, you will attend an individual 10-minute Zoom meeting with me to have your customized syllabus proposal reviewed (submit via email). I will schedule appointment times with each student during the first week of class. You will also email one piece of previous work that you are open to having critiqued (won't count against assignment grade).

Sports Reporter Q&A (100 points)

You will conduct a Q&A session with a sports reporter of your choice. The person must do some reporting (not exclusively commentary or hosting). The Q&A should cover the reporter's background, introduction to journalism, career path, knowledge of the profession, advice to students and prompts for discussion. One week before your presentation, post one reading/multimedia from that reporter. You will be graded on your interview topics, follow-up questions and the overall quality of the Q&A. Submit via email.

Class Assignments (250 points)

We will have three class assignments designed to sharpen a skill for sports reporting. Details of each assignment will be provided on Canvas and you will be given one-week notice.

Participation/Professionalism (100 points)

You are expected to complete every module, submit assignments on time, attend scheduled Zoom meetings and participate in discussions on Canvas. These should be the easiest points you earn if you're on top of your coursework. Points will be deducted at the instructor's discretion for missing modules and/or failure to participate in online discussions.

Customized Syllabus (500 points)

Rubrics for the customized syllabus assignments will be emailed out after everyone finalizes their plan.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Email a copy of your work (do not submit in Canvas).
- Include source info (name, phone, e-mail, links) at bottom of every story.

Failure to follow guidelines will result in a point penalty at instructor's discretion

DEDUCTIONS

Failure to meet assignment deadlines will result in a 20-point deduction for every 24-hour period it's late. Fact errors will result in a deduction at instructor's discretion, depending on the error and assignment.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Please use professional courtesy during online discussions. We will all contribute ideas and critiques of others' work and ideas.

A NOTE ON COURSE CONTENT

In the interest of honest and frank discussions, my lectures and comments of guest speakers 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.

CLASSROOM NEEDS

Students requesting special classroom needs must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide the documentation to the instructor.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

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. 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>. Evaluations are typically open during the last three weeks of the semester, but announcements will be made giving specific times when they are open. Summary results of these evaluations are available to students at the evaluations website URL above. Course Grading Students will be graded in accordance with UF policies for assigning grade points as articulated in the link that follows.

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

U MATTER, WE CARE

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

HONOR CODE

Violation of the honor code includes plagiarizing material from other sources or fabricating material, as well as other forms of cheating. Violations will result in a failing grade, and you will be dismissed from the journalism program and reported to the Honor Court. See the Department of Journalism website, as well as UF guidelines, for specific outline of honor code violations.

THE INSTRUCTOR

Zach Abolverdi is the Senior Sports Reporter at the Gainesville Sun and Sports Reporting Adjunct Professor at the University of Florida. Orlando born but Gainesville raised, he grew up on college football during the Steve Spurrier era and started his sports journalism career prior to Urban Meyer's final season with the Gators. Zach is a Hearst Award winner and graduated from University of Florida's College of Journalism in 2014. After a five-year stint at the Gainesville Sun, he rejoined the paper in December 2020 following stops at Rivals, SEC Country and the Lake City Reporter. Zach enjoys spending time with family and his boxer dogs. SEC football, March Madness and NBA hoops provide his sports fix.