

Grandstand



Home of the Hilltoppers: Steve Spurrier Field at Kermit Tipton Stadium is on the campus of Science Hill High School in Johnson City, Tennessee. | Photo Courtesy: Science Hill High School

ADVANCED SPORTS STORYTELLING

JOU 4930 | SPRING 2026

Thursday | Period 3-4 (9:35 AM - 11:30 AM) | 3024 Weimer Hall

Professor Ryan Hunt

Office Hours: Tue. & Wed, 1pm-3pm OR [by appointment](#). Weimer Hall #3040D

ryanhunt@ufl.edu Office: (352) 392-6303; Mobile: (908) 967-2560

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Advanced Sports Storytelling is an upper-level writing and reporting course designed to push students beyond game coverage and traditional beat reporting. The class challenges students to uncover deeper narratives within the sports world and to report and tell them in compelling ways. Storytelling may take many forms – longform features, short profiles, data-driven stories, infographics, social media content, photography and/or multimedia video – adapted for modern print, digital and social audiences.

Students will learn to identify strong angles, report with narrative depth and collaborate with editors to refine their work through multiple drafts. By the end of the semester, each student will have produced polished, publication-quality content for *Grandstand Magazine*. Projects may include multi-source long- or short-form features, enterprise stories addressing broader issues in sports, social-media storytelling or sports journalism enhanced through data and visual elements.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Understand how to compose impactful feature writing: key elements, narrative pacing & structure
- To get a better understanding of the industry and the type of content that connects with audiences
- Learn where and how to find – and then develop – compelling sports features, both short and long.
- Deepen your reporting, interviewing and research skills. How to get the most out of your elements
- Create a sports publication – print, digital and social – packed with compelling, engaging content

STRUCTURE AND TOPICS

This course functions as part lecture, part newsroom. Students will analyze strong examples of sports storytelling, learn from guest speakers across the industry, and apply those insights to their own work.

You'll learn how to organize articles within a focused structure, improve your writing, self-edit efficiently and revise with specific purpose. You will sharpen your skills for reporting in depth, the art of interviewing and writing with clarity. Classes are heavy on workshopping, emphasizing lessons on compelling storytelling, background research and the development of short and longer features.

Core topics include:

- Idea generation and conceptualization
- Feature storytelling for different mediums
- Constructing and improving a story's narrative
- Elements of effective visual storytelling
- Social media storytelling and promotion
- Magazine/digital design and layout

ASSIGNMENT STRUCTURE

You will be graded on the following categories over the course of the semester. Grading rubrics and specific deadlines for each assignment will be handed out separately and will be available in Canvas.

- **Content Creation** (600 points total). Each student must produce a minimum of **two** pieces that are fit for publication over the course of the semester. These do not all need to be long features; short features, data-driven stories, and social content are equally encouraged. A good sports magazine should have a good mix; everything should be creative and engaging. It all doesn't have to be serious. Sports are fun.
 - You will work with the professor and the Grandstand leadership team to come up with a customized plan of your assignments. All assignments **MUST** be approved in advance.
 - Each assignment will be in a minimum of two parts: first and final draft. Students are expected to demonstrate willingness to revise and refine their work based on feedback
 - Assignment 1: First Draft/Refinement (100 points), Final Draft (200 points). Due before Spring Break.
 - Assignment 2: First Draft/Refinement (100 points), Final Draft (200 points). Due before the end of the semester.
 - Due to production timelines, we will have **hard** print deadlines. To be considered for inclusion in the magazine, any story must be **COMPLETED** (including edits) by Feb. 8.

- **Story Ideas List** (50 points). Bringing compelling ideas to the table is essential for any journalist. Your first task of the semester will be to develop and submit a list of at least 10 original story ideas suitable for this publication. The goal is to think creatively about current trends, untold stories and different angles that would appeal to a diverse sports audience.
- **Tasks** (50 points). You'll have five small tasks throughout the semester – such as submitting your bios for the *Grandstand* website, evaluating various feature stories and your own personal reflection of your work over the course of the semester.
- **Promotion:** (50 points). Students are expected to actively promote both their own work and their classmates' across appropriate platforms, contributing to the visibility, consistency and voice of the *Grandstand* brand. Promotion may include sharing feature articles on social media, brainstorming audience-growth ideas, participating in coordinated rollout plans (digital, print and social) and identifying creative ways to drive engagement. Your score will reflect not just frequency of promotion, but thoughtfulness and effort to help expand *Grandstand's* reach.
- **Brainstorming and Creativity:** (25 points) We'll have frequent in-class sessions where we discuss ideas and/or suggestions for future content. Come prepared ... and be unique. Creativity applies not only to your own stories but also to elevating the magazine as a whole – through promotion, visuals and thoughtful input on digital and print design.
- **Collaboration and Engagement:** (25 points). Great journalism is fundamentally collaborative. This evaluates how well you work with the *Grandstand* editorial and leadership team. Strong performance includes being responsive to edits, communicating promptly on Slack, supporting others' reporting or production needs and demonstrating a willingness to revise and refine their work based on feedback. Your ability to be a reliable teammate is critical to our overall success.
- **Progress Reports** (60 points; four at 15 points each). You will have four 20-minute check-ins (about once a month) with the professor and the *Grandstand* leadership team to review your assignment progress. The first will be to finalize your customized plan. It's the student's responsibility to schedule these meetings.
- **Attendance** (140 points). Attendance is required given all classes will consist of workshopping and group discussions. Unexcused absences that do not follow the University's attendance policies will be an automatic 10-point deduction.

USING SLACK

We will use Slack as our primary newsroom communication tool. There will be a classwide channel where we have general conversations. Additionally, 1-on-1 discussions about content may be had there. Downloading the App and participating in conversations is a required element of this course.

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES

This class adheres to all University academic and attendance policies. For more detail on specific policies – including grading, accommodations, evaluations and honor code – plus a list of available academic resources, [please see this link](#).

COURSE OUTLINE

Specific weekly schedule elements subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Guest speakers to be added throughout the semester.

WEEK 1 (1/15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Introduction to Professor Hunt; Syllabus review, class expectations● What makes a good feature article?● Personal Bios for Grandstand Website Due
WEEK 2 (1/22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Developing story ideas, planning and execution● Feature article analysis.● Initial Story List Due
WEEK 3 (1/29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The importance of backgrounding● Interviewing, researching and note taking● Storytelling Assignment #1: Feature Writing
WEEK 4 (2/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Building observational and listening skills● How to find great anecdotes to build a story around● DEADLINE FOR CONTENT FOR PRINT ISSUE (FEB. 8)
WEEK 5 (2/12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Story structure: How to construct a feature that hooks readers● Working to find enticing leads and story endings● Storytelling Assignment #2: Themes and Series
WEEK 6 (2/19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Story structure: Sharpening the story's angle and content● Developing voice; Incorporating tempo and punchy language● Feature Assignment 1 Draft Due
WEEK 7 (2/26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Elements of effective visual storytelling● Photo and art. Magazine design and layout● Feature Assignment 1 Draft Due
WEEK 8 (3/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Editing your own work and the work of others● Making the feedback process collaborative
WEEK 9 (3/12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Workshopping: Putting the final touches on Grandstand print issue● Feature Assignment 1 Due
WEEK 10 (3/19)	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK
WEEK 11 (3/26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Feature storytelling for different mediums● Storytelling Assignment #3: Video/Social Review

WEEK 12 (4/2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promotion, Marketing and Brand Building ● Grandstand Magazine Print Issue Launch ● Feature Assignment 2 Draft Due
WEEK 13 (4/9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshopping: Putting the final touches on Grandstand digital copy
WEEK 14 (4/16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wrapping up the semester + GatorEvals ● Feature Assignment 2 Due ● Storytelling Assignment #4: Personal analysis

GRADING

You will be graded on a 1,000-point scale. Students will be graded in accordance with policies for [assigning grade points as articulated here](#). Grades may be rounded up at the instructor's discretion.

A: 93.5-100% (935-1,000 total points)

A-: 90-93.4% (900-934)

B+: 87.5-89.9% (875-899)

B: 83.5-86.4% (835-864)

B-: 80-83.4% (800-834)

C+: 77.5-79.9% (775-799)

C: 73.5-76.9% (735-769)

C-: 70-73.4% (700-734)

D: 60-69.9% (600-699)

E: 59.9% and below (Under 599)

STAFF ROLES

We will run this like a professional newsroom. Certain students will receive leadership roles, assigned by the professor/faculty advisor. These include both management responsibilities plus creative and production roles.

I am here to give you advice and feedback, but I will **NOT** be the editor in chief. We will workshop the content and design but the majority of the quality control is up to you and your fellow staff members.

PREREQUISITES

Students must have completed (receiving a C or better), be currently enrolled in Sports Reporting **-OR-** receive special approval from the instructor to join the class.

CONTENT SUBMISSION

In addition to submitting all assignment elements in Canvas, you must also share stories in a Google doc with me at ryanhunt@ufl.edu. Please also include the top editors on staff.

DEADLINES

Journalism is a deadline business. This course and project is designed to mirror the expected behavior of a professional newsroom.

Be considerate. Deadlines missed by one person inevitably affect someone else — and even the eventual production of the magazine. No matter your role, it's essential that you hit your deadlines. Failure to meet assignment deadlines will result in at least a 10-point deduction. Late assignments beyond 24 hours may not be accepted, and could be graded as a zero. They also may miss the magazine.

OTHER DEDUCTIONS

Your work must be grammatically correct and adhere to AP style. Accuracy is paramount. Fact errors – misspelled names, incorrect stats, wrong titles – will result in a minimum 15% deduction, depending on the scope of the error(s). Check the names and facts in your story. Then double check them.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Please disclose whether you're working for other outlets/organizations in advance, including – but not limited to – the Alligator, WRUF, Florida Victorious, the UAA or FloridaGators.com. You are allowed to work for select other outlets in defined capacities with permission. Athletes or staff members within UF Athletics may not cover their own programs.

However, submitting assignments completed for this class/publication to other sports outlets is strictly forbidden, unless given the express written permission from the instructor. The work that appears in our print and digital publications should come from this class, though in certain instances we will consider work done outside of class for publishing.

When reaching out to potential sources for your stories, identify yourself as working for Grandstand Magazine, a student-run sports magazine publication at UF – especially if you work/have worked for other local outlets. Please coordinate with me or the EIC before making interview requests so we can adhere to CJC policies.

A NOTE ABOUT AI

You will fail the class if you use AI to generate content passed off as your own. It compromises the integrity of Grandstand Magazine. It's akin to plagiarism, and that's one of journalism's biggest sins.

Using AI as a tool to help with idea generation for stories and/or headlines could potentially be useful, but this project is designed to help foster your creativity. The use of AI generative tools to create, add, remove, expand or alter images or videos in any way is expressly prohibited. Using generative AI to create graphics should not be done without prior consent AND clear recognition in the image's credit. Visual AI tools (e.g., for simple motion graphics) may be considered on a case-by-case basis for elements such as explainers or data visualizations. These requests must be submitted to the professor and editor in chief and are subject to editorial and legal review.

If you have **any** degree of uncertainty, please ask.

THE INSTRUCTOR

Ryan Hunt is a Sports Lecturer at the University of Florida and the faculty advisor for Grandstand Magazine. A 1997 graduate of the UF CJC, Ryan spent 25 years at *Sports Illustrated*, including the last four as its co-Editor-in-Chief. Ryan managed SI's editorial staff, leading a team of reporters and editors while overseeing digital strategy: from daily planning to major event coverage to franchise development.

At SI, Ryan started as an entry-level Associate Producer in Atlanta before climbing the ranks – Homepage Editor, News Director, Associate Managing Editor to Executive Editor – to become one of only 11 people to hold the top editorial title at the brand. He grew up in the St. Petersburg area and was the sports editor of the *The Independent Florida Alligator* during his time at UF.