

## **JOU4930: Sports Media & Social Change**

Fall 2015

Tuesdays, 12:50pm-1:40pm

Online

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

While plenty of time is spent working on the reporting of sports scores and news, there is an area of sports journalism that has long gotten too little attention: Political and social issues. More and more athletes and sports figures are engaging on these issues – be it through social or traditional media – and there is a wealth of opportunity for media figures who understand how to engage. This course will prepare future journalists to engage on these “tough” issues and more.

These issues include:

- Racism
- Sexism
- Homophobia & Transphobia
- Ableism
- Religion
- Class & Social status
- Partisan politics
- Domestic violence
- Drug use

The course is conducted online through two venues: 1) A weekly Google hangout Tuesdays from 12:50pmET-1:40pmET; 2) An online forum where the class will engage in discussion of hot news items and reporting methods.

| Classes will feature discussion about various topics including:

- Morals and ethics of reporting opinions of sports figures
- How to ask the tough questions
- When is it appropriate to engage
- Tips and tricks on getting what you want when they don't want to give it
- Disconnecting your reporting from your personal opinion
- Using sports media to advance a social cause
- Can you be a reporter and a columnist
- Using social media and other venues to expand your public persona

Guests will join the class throughout the semester and offer a wide range of perspectives, including:

- Former professional athletes
- Social-justice activists
- Current sports journalists
- Agents
- League representatives

## **GOOGLE HANGOUT AND DISCUSSION FORUM LOGINS**

The class will be held weekly in a Google hangout. I will send the link to the class via email every Tuesday at 12:20pmET, 30 minutes before the class begins. Class attendees must be logged in by the beginning of class – tardiness is not acceptable. You can log in via your mobile phone or computer.

Discussion-forum information will be distributed as soon as it is available.

## **GRADING & EVALUATION**

Grading of stories will take into account various components, including but not limited to quality of writing, copy editing, use of sources, pertinence of sources and quotes, originality and creativity, relation to the assignment, depth of discussion of social issue, etc....

Letter grades will be given to each story:

**A** = Outstanding work that demonstrates originality, excellent story structure, engages the reader in unique perspective and meets professional publishing standards.

**B** = Good work but still needs additional revising; achieves the objectives but lacks some elements that would make it an outstanding piece.

**C** = Acceptable but requires significant revising; story meets minimum requirements but may have problems with story structure, with appeal to target audience, lacking originality or advancement of the conversation or issue.

**D** = Unsatisfactory; work does not display a grasp of basic writing skills; story has significant problems with structure and mechanics or appeal to target audience; Does not satisfy the assignment.

**F** = Unacceptable; story has flaws in research, structure, basic reporting, writing elements, and comprehension of target audience. (Any plagiarism or falsification of information earns an F and a failing grade for the course.)

Students are encouraged to turn in a “first draft” of their story (could be a full draft, partial draft or outline) before the final due date. Anyone who turns it in five days ahead of the due date will receive within 48 hours a cursory review of the piece with limited notes about direction, sources and overall quality.

Grading scale used for overall course grade / stories:

A 100.00-93.00 / 95  
A- 92.99-90.00 / 92  
B+ 89.99-87.00 / 88  
B 86.00-83.00 / 85  
B- 82.99-80.00 / 82  
C+ 79.99-77.00 / 78  
C 76.99- 73.00 / 75  
C- 72.99-70.00 / 72  
D+ 69.99-67.00 / 68  
D 66.99-63.00 / 65  
D- 62.99-60.00 / 62  
F 59.99 and below / 50

Grades for the course will be weighted as follows:

**Attendance & Participation – 15%**

Given the limited scope of the reading and writing mandated for the class, attendance for discussion is particularly important. Missing this many classes will get you this percentage of the possible points for Attendance & Participation:

0-1 unexcused absences:	100%
2-3:	85%
4-5:	50%
6-7:	25%
8+:	0%

Excused absences must be cleared before class. Potential reasons may include (and may require an email or note from doctor or official):

- Religious holiday observance
- Doctor-excused illness
- Jury duty
- Military service
- Death in the family
- Coverage of live sporting event

**Bonus Participation:** Discussion within the online forum can be worth +1 or +2 points on your total course numerical grade.

+2: Exceptional and consistent contributions to the discussion, including pertinent links and well-thought arguments.

+1: Occasional contributions to the discussions.

0: Rare or non-existent contributions to the discussions.

**Interview story due Oct. 5 – 10%**

Single-source story in which you interview one sports figure about their thoughts on an issue of current interest and pertinence. Sports figure must be an active athlete or coach in NCAA Div. 1, NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, MLS, PGA, LPGA, ATP, WTA, NASCAR or WNBA. Current or former Univ. of Florida sports figures are excluded. Must be 750-900 words.

**Midterm Story due Oct. 26 – 20%**

A feature-length story that explores how an incident or event in sports triggered or educated a broader culture-wide conversation about a social or political issue. The feature should offer a fresh take on the incident and include some current news hook. Story must include at least one interview with a sports figure directly linked to the incident, event or issue. Examples could include Ray Rice's impact on domestic-violence discussions, Lance Armstrong's revelations about PEDs, Michael Sam's lasting effect on LGBT athletes, etc.... Story pitch must be accepted by Oct. 5. 1,100-1,500 words.

**Column due Nov. 16 – 10%**

A personal column in which you discuss some aspect of the interaction of social issues and sports. Hook must have had relevance to an incident or event from the prior eight weeks. Column must take a particular position. Must be 750-900 words.

**Final Story due Dec. 12 – 40%**

A feature-length story that explores in depth the impact of a broader social, political or cultural issue in sports. Story must include at least four different sources including at least two from the sports world, be they athletes, coaches, executives, administrators, agents, etc.... Examples of possible stories could include the reaction in the sports world to the Ferguson riots, the future of female coaches in the NFL or why more lesbian women's basketball coaches are not publicly out. Story pitch must be accepted by Nov. 20. 1,500-2,000 words.

**Social Media Engagement – 5%**

Engaging on social media is key to advancement in today's sports media. The expectation is that you will follow members of the sports media and athletes with whom you are interested in engaging on Twitter.

Follow 5+ new figures and retweet/tweet 10+ times: 100%

Follow 3 new figures and retweet/tweet 5+ times: 50%

Follow 0-2 new figures and retweet/tweet <5 times: 0%

**OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION****Academic integrity**

UF students live by an honor code that prohibits academic dishonesty such as (but not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, engaging in unauthorized

collaboration, reusing a paper from another class, writing a similar paper for two classes, and having someone else write your paper or do your class projects  
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>.

If you use someone else's words, image(s), artwork or video, permission must be obtained in writing (i.e. email) from an author/publisher and submitted to the professor along with your project. You must abide by the university's honor code as well as the Department of Journalism's policy on academic honesty found at <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academic/jou/honesty/>.

### **Students with disabilities**

Students requesting accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when making a request for accommodations. I am more than happy to work with anyone needing such accommodations, but please do not wait until the last minute to request accommodations, see me as soon as possible.

### **Grading policies**

All information related to grading can be found in UF's undergraduate catalog:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

### **Help with Coping**

The UF Counseling and Wellness Center is a free resource for all UF students who need help managing stress or coping with life or classes. The center is located at 3190 Radio Road and is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday - Friday. To receive after-hours assistance or make an appointment, call 352-392-1575 <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>.

### **UF Police**

The UF Police can be reached at 352-392-1111 or, in an emergency, by dialing 911.6 Student Nighttime Auxiliary Patrol (SNAP): If you are on campus at night and need an escort to your car or on-campus residence, SNAP is a free service that operates 7 days a week, 6:30 p.m. – 3:00 a.m. during the fall and spring semesters and 8:30 p.m. – 3:00 a.m. during the summer semesters. [www.snap.ufl.edu](http://www.snap.ufl.edu) or 352-392-SNAP (7627)

### **Evaluations**

Students can provide feedback on the instructor and the course itself at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.