

Sports Media & Society



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

Times & Location

Weimer Hall 1064
Tuesday Period 3
Thursday Period 3-4

Instructor: Ted Spiker

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G-Chat/Skype: ProfSpiker (appointment)

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Office Hours: W 9:30-11:30 a.m.

(best by appointment)

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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 for additional readings.

Prerequisites

None

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The Course

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. This course is about developing literacy and critical-thinking skills about the sports industry and its relationship with the media. 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.



Discussions

The course site on Canvas will serve as the central hub for course-related material. Here, you will find links to the syllabus, discussions, and some readings. 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 in the discussion section during the course of the semester (see more below).



Twitter/Social Media

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 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, tweets using #SportsMediaUF will be eligible to win Tweet of the Week, which will earn the student extra-credit points. There's no limit to how many times you can win. #boom

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The Grading

You will have the opportunity to accumulate 1,000 points for the semester.



- 200: Exam 1
- 200: Exam 2
- 200: Exam 3
- 200: Discussion Comments (10)
- 200: Reading Quizzes (6 quizzes @ 40 points, drop the lowest)

Exams: Only material from lectures and guests

Quizzes: From required reading only (not links on the course blog). They will vary between scantron multiple-choice and handwritten short-answer.

Discussion Comments: You must make 10 discussion comments on the Canvas site (3 in Aug./Sept., 3 in Oct., 3 in Nov., and 1 in Dec.).

Grad Students: See separate file in Canvas.

The Dates

EXAMS

Sept. 29
Nov. 3
Dec. 8

QUIZZES

Sept. 10
Sept. 22
Oct. 8
Oct. 22
Nov. 12
Dec. 3

DISCUSSION COMMENTS

3 in Aug./Sept.
3 in Oct.
3 in Nov.
1 in Dec.

IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Sept. 10: Quiz 1
Sept. 22: Quiz 2
Sept. 29: EXAM 1
Sept. 30: Have 3 discussion comments completed
Oct. 8 Quiz 3
Oct. 22 Quiz 4
Oct. 31: Have 3 discussion comments completed
Nov. 3: EXAM 2
Nov. 12: Quiz 5
Nov. 30: Have 3 discussion comments completed
Dec. 3: Quiz 6
Dec. 8: Exam 3
Dec. 9 at 5 p.m.: Have 1 discussion comment completed
(Note the time for the December deadline.)

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The Required Reading

For all readings not in text, links will be on Canvas. Recommended: Do not wait until night before to read them.

For Quiz 1

- >>“The Worldwide Leader in Dong Shots,” GQ, Gabriel Sherman, February 2011.
- >>“How ESPN Ditched Journalism,” Deadspin, November 11, 2012
- >>”ESPN’s Plan to Dominate the Post-TV World,” The Atlantic, July 9, 2015.

For Quiz 2

- >> ESPN book (all pages correspond with paperback edition):
From Chapter 3 (pages 139-157; 178-190; 198-209)

For Quiz 3

- >>“Damned Yankee,” Sports Illustrated, Gary Smith, 1997.

For Quiz 4

- >>ESPN book:
From Chapter 4 (pages 224-252; 322-329), From Chapter 5 (pages 445-468)

For Quiz 5

- >>“Sexual harrassment toward female reporters,” Richard Deitsch, Sports Illustrated, 2015
- >>“Pregnant and on-air,” Richard Deitsch, Sports Illustrated, 2015.
- >>Richard Deitsch podcast with Bob Ley, 2015.

For Quiz 6

- >>ESPN book:
From Chapter 6 (pages 469-495; 510-557)
From Chapter 7 (pages 609-631)
From Chapter 8 (pages 707-714; 726-751)

The Grading Breakdown

925–1000	A	725–774	C
900–924	A-	700–724	C-
875–899	B+	675–699	D+
825–874	B	625–674	D
800–824	B-	600–624	D-
775–799	C+	0-599	E

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



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The 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.

Case Study: Bill Simmons

He redefined what "sportswriter" means. With a fan voice and strong opinion, Simmons became the face of new sports media. Then he got canned from ESPN.

TV Coverage and the Power of 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.

The Business of Sports Media

What is the financial structure of media companies?

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.

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The Topics (cont.)

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?

Portrayal of Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation in Sports

A look at the historical and current cases that have changed the way sports is covered. What is the media's role and responsibility when it comes to these and other social issues?

Women in the Locker Rooms

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

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 and the fan's experience?

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?

PLUS MORE!

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The Fine Print

UF's Grading Policy

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

Academic Integrity

The College of Journalism and Communications 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, 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 take 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/>



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The Instructors

The Instructor

Professor Ted Spiker is the chair of the department of journalism at UF. He came to UF in 2001 after being articles editor at Men's Health, and he oversees the department's magazine sequence. A graduate of the University of Delaware (go Blue Hens!) and 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 the author of the book DOWN SIZE and the co-author of a dozen books, including the YOU: The Owner's Manual series with Dr. Mehmet Oz and Dr. Mike Roizen. He is a Philadelphia sports fan, but has never once booed or thrown snowballs at Santa Claus.

Twitter: @ProfSpiker
Web site: www.tedspiker.com

The Teaching Assistant

Sarah Papadelias is a joint degree student, pursuing her law degree and a Master's in Mass Communications. She received her undergraduate degrees in Classics and Journalism from the University of Alabama. She plans to practice media and telecommunications law in Washington, DC after graduation. She enjoys crafting and traveling in her spare time.

