The University of Iowa  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Specialized Reporting and Writing: Sports Reporting and Writing / 019:120:004  
Fall 2011

Policies relating to this course are governed by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Building/time:** AJB Room W240, Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-11:20 a.m.  
**Website:** ICON

**Instructor:** Dave Schwartz  
**Office location and hours:** Wednesdays 12:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m., AJB Room E346B. And by appointment.  
**Phone:** 335-3318  
**Email address:** david-schwartz@uiowa.edu  
**DEO:** David Perlmutter (AJB, Room E305B)

**Description of Course**  
This writing-intensive course helps students focus their skills by exploring sports writing, social networking and self-marketing online and in print. Using different story forms – web, magazine, narrative, blogs, deadline, Q&As – students will learn how to write human-interest and socially significant stories, embrace the freedom and responsibilities of web journalism, and survive in a genre increasingly driven by rapid interaction with its audience. Students will survey all storylines of modern sports communications, including sports business, sports and crime, sports marketing, the evolution of nationally driven stories, and sports celebrity as cultural phenomenon. You will be critiqued by the instructor and each other. Expect to read the work of sports media’s past and present greats, and come ready to discuss and debate current events.

**Objectives and Goals of the Course**  
To learn how to function as a sports journalist in 2012 and beyond. Acquire basic, intermediate and advanced sports writing skills in terms of news gathering, writing and online incorporation. To improve your writing, interviewing and reporting skills. Using the basis that the way to learn to write and report is to write, report and read, expect this term to write and read at great length. You also will learn how to use current technologies to reach, communicate with and increase your audience.

**Required Texts**  
- Best American Sports Writing 2010 (available at IMU Bookstore)  
- Field Guide to Covering Sports (available at IMU Bookstore)

**Recommended Text**  
- The Associated Press Stylebook
All remaining texts …

… On reserve on the class website, or as assigned from online sources.

Grading System and the Use of +/-
*Please note that the grade of A+ is very rarely given in this course and only in extraordinary situations.*

Assignments and Percentage of Final Grade
*Final grades are based out of 835 possible points, broken down as follow:*

**435 Writing and stories (See Iowa Dozen – included – for standards)**
- 50 - One game story. 50 points – Sept. 6
- 50 - One Q&A. 50 points – Sept. 8/13
- 75 - One human-interest profile stories. 75 points – Sept. 20/22
- 150 - Two first-person narrative non-fiction stories. 75 points apiece – Oct. 18/20 and Nov. 3/8
- 30 - First-person essay. 30 points – Nov. 8
- 30 - One Bubba spot-news story. 30 points – Nov. 17
- 50 - One column. 50 points – Dec. 1/6

**100 Blogs**
You will set up your blog during the second day of class. Beginning the week of Aug. 29, blogs will be updated a minimum of two times a week. The direction of your blog entries is entirely your decision, although there will from time to time be blog assignments. The general focus will be creating content for events related to sports media (e.g. “I don’t understand how the NCAA can let Texas’ news sports network be in bed with ESPN. It causes the following problems XYZ.”)

a. Acceptable blog posts and comments: Tactful; educational; professionally argumentative; a couple of sentences in length to as long as you want to write; varying in length over the course of the semester
b. Unacceptable blog posts and comments: Personal attacks; demeaning comments; comments of a hurtful or harassing nature; comments that attack a person’s gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or ethnicity; comments that violate UI policies and procedures
c. Every time you update your blog – and I mean every time – shoot me an email saying it’s been updated and include the URL of the post (not the blog). This is the best way for me to know whether you’re keeping up

**150 Class participation**
70 points (35 points apiece) for leading two discussions based on assigned readings
80 points for being engaged consistently in classroom discussions. That means …
Participate in daily discussions. … When you’re in the classroom, be in the classroom. … Engage in daily current-event discussions as well as those born from the reading. … Leave comments on others’ blogs. … Come prepared with questions for guest speakers, if applicable. You can learn more from them in 30-45 minutes than in a week’s worth of class. … A ringing cell phone amounts to a one-point class-participation deduction for each person in the class who hears it. There are about 20 people in the classroom. If your phone rings, that’s at least 20 points off, which is almost 2 percent of your final grade. … Text message at your own risk.

Requirement for leading discussions:

- **At least 24 hours** before class begins, e-mail me five study questions for the reading, which I will forward to the class. I will do my best to remember to remind you. It is, however, ultimately your responsibility to remember which date and assignments you signed up for.

150

Final project
100 writing component
50 blog component
The final, a multi-platform story, will be a longer project pitched by the student and approved by the instructor. Elements will include the printed enterprise or feature story and a participatory element for readers attached to your blog. Length of the story will run between 1,000-2,000 words. The blog component will be as long as it needs to be.

Project timeline:
Sept. 29 – Topic due. Written out, should include ideas for blog component. **IN ADDITION TO YOUR TOPIC, TURN IN A BACKUP TOPIC.** Things sometimes fall through. In case they do, be prepared to go a different direction.
Oct. 13 – Outline of final project due (should include potential sources and questions you will need to answer in your story)
Nov. 17 – If you wish (**this is not required**), you may turn in a rough draft of your final project this day (not the blog part). I will review it and get it back to you with my thoughts, suggestions and criticisms on Monday, Nov. 29.
Dec. 14 – Final draft uploaded to ICON and blog component posted to your blog

Course Policies

Course attendance and timeliness
Except in cases of death in the family, illness serious enough to keep you home, or other genuine emergencies or crises, you are expected to attend all class meetings. If you have a valid reason for an absence, **notify the instructor by e-mail ahead of time, and provide relevant documentation.** Missing classes greatly reduces your opportunity for scoring an above-average grade in the course. Showing up late to class corrupts discussions and the general flow of things.
Participation in class discussions
This is essential both to the function of the class and to your final grade. In addition to discussing current events and readings, students will break into groups to exchange, discuss and critique stories they have written. Open mouth. Talk.

Timely completion of assignments
Except in cases of death in the family, illness serious enough to keep you home, or other genuine emergencies or crises, you are expected to complete all assignments as scheduled. If you have a valid reason for not completing something on time, notify the instructor by e-mail ahead of time, and provide relevant documentation.

Calendar of Course Assignments
(subject to change)

WEEK ONE
Tuesday, Aug. 23
• Introductions
• Class expectations
• Definitions
• Your expectations
• READING (in class): Gisondi, Chapter 1, From Sports Fan to Sports Reporter
• READING (in class): The Ultimate Assist. L. Jon Wertheim (ICON)

Thursday, Aug. 25
• Blog introduction
• PODCAST: ESPN VP John Walsh and Bill Simmons
• READING: Hunter S. Thompson, The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved. The Best American Sports Writing of the Century. (ICON)
• READING: Gisondi, Chapter 6, Blogging: Finding a unique perspective
• Set up blogs
• DUE: Bring two examples to class of blogs you’d like to emulate

WEEK TWO
Tuesday, Aug. 30
• Interviewing exercise #1
• GAME STORIES: An introduction
• READING: Gisondi, Chapter 3, Getting the Most Out of An Interview
• READING: Gisondi, Chapter 2, Writing Game Stories
• GUEST SPEAKER: Joe Stevenson, sports writer, Northwest Herald (Chicago)
• DUE: First blog entry.

Thursday, Sept. 1
• READING: Wright Thompson, Father Bear, ESPN.com. (ICON)
• IN-REVIEW: Game stories
WEEK THREE
Tuesday, Sept. 6
• DUE IN-CLASS: Game story

Thursday, Sept. 8
• Interviewing exercise #2
• READING: Wayne Drehs, *Ray of Hope*, ESPN.com. ON RESERVE (ICON)
• READING, etc.: Wayne Drehs, *Charlie Wittmack: The World Triathlon*, ESPN.com. (ICON)
• GUEST SPEAKER: Wayne Drehs, ESPN.com Senior Writer
• DUE FOR WORKSHOPPING: Q&A

WEEK FOUR
Tuesday, Sept. 13
• In-class writing exercise #1
• FEATURE/PROFILES: An introduction
• DUE FOR ASSIGNMENT: Q&A

Thursday, Sept. 15
• Interviewing exercise #3
• READING: Gisondi, Primer A, *Working with Sports Information Directors*
• READING: Bill Simmons, *Now that Jocks Talk to Us Directly, Press is Boxed Out*, ESPN The Magazine (ICON)

WEEK FIVE
Tuesday, Sept. 20
• DUE FOR WORKSHOPPING: Human-interest profile. Must be on a human being who is not your relative.
Thursday, Sept. 22
• READING: Douglas Looney, Bo’s Not One to Go With the Flow, Sports Illustrated, 1986. (ICON)
• READING: Michael Weinreb, Bo Knows Best, The Best American Sports Writing 2008. (ICON)
• DISCUSSION: Ethical blogging
• DUE FOR ASSIGNMENT: Human-interest profile #1. Any athlete who is not your relative or roommate.

WEEK SIX
Tuesday, Sept. 27
• In-class writing exercise #2

Thursday, Sept. 29
• READING: Mike Sager, Scito Hoc Super Omnia (or, Kobe Bryant Doesn’t Want Your Love), The Best American Sports Writing of 2008 (ICON)
• READING: Gisondi, Chapter 5, Developing and Writing Features
• DUE: Final project topic + blog tie-in possibilities

WEEK SEVEN
Tuesday, Oct. 4
• READING: Gisondi, Primer C and Primer D: Avoiding Clichés and Ethics: Sports writers can’t act like fans
• GUEST SPEAKER: Brian Hedger, NHL.com Chicago reporter.

Thursday, Oct. 6
• READING: Jeanne Marie Laskas, This is Your Brain on Football, The Best American Sports Writing 2010.
• READING: Robert Sanchez, This is Ted Johnson’s Brain, The Best American Sports Writing 2010.
• READING: David Haugh, The Final Days of Dave Duerson, Chicago Tribune (ICON)
• DISCUSSION: What happens when sports media latches on to something?

WEEK EIGHT
Tuesday, Oct. 11
• Column writing: An introduction
• READING: Reinardy and Wanta, pages 157-165 (ICON)
• READING: Matthew Teague, Inside the Mind of a … Genius?, The Best American Sports Writing of 2009. (ICON)
Thursday, Oct. 13
• DUE BY NOON, uploaded to ICON and bring to class: Detailed outline of final project. Should include:
  The topic
  Questions you will need answered
  Potential sources
• READING: To be assigned.
• Discussion: Reporting as narrative
• GUEST SPEAKER: Maureen Lynch, sports writer, Northwest Herald (Chicago)

WEEK NINE
Tuesday, Oct. 18
• GUEST SPEAKER: Mike Triplett, New Orleans Saints beat reporter, New Orleans Times-Picayune.
• DUE FOR WORKSHOPPING: First-person narrative feature #1

Thursday, Oct. 20
• READING: Tony Kornheiser, A Voice Crying out in the Wilderness, Sports Illustrated. (ICON)
• READING: Columns in-class, TBD
• DUE AS ASSIGNMENT: Revision of first-person narrative feature #1

WEEK 10
Tuesday, Oct. 25
• READING: Charles Robinson and Jason Cole, Cash and Carry – Reggie Bush Investigation, Yahoo Sports, 2006. (ICON)
• READING: Selena Roberts and David Epstein, Sources tell SI Alex Rodriguez tested positive for steroids in 2003, Sports Illustrated, 2009. (ICON)
• PODCAST: Selena Roberts and Dan Patrick
• PODCAST: Selena Roberts on the Jim Rome Show
• PODCAST: Jason Whitlock on the Jim Rome Show

Thursday, Oct. 27 – NO CLASS
• READING: John Vincent, Equitable Media Coverage of Female and Male Athletes: Is there a solution? (ICON)
• DUE TO BLOG: On your blog, analyze and react to Vincent’s paper, using the following three questions as your guide:
  1. In Vincent’s study, what are the primary factors he uses to gauge whether media coverage of the genders is equitable?
  2. What are some of the conclusions and inferences of the study?
  3. Are his recommendations realistic? In your opinion, why or why not?
WEEK 11
Tuesday, Nov. 1
• READING: Rick Reilly, Taking One for the Team, Sports Illustrated, 2003 (ICON)
• READING: Columns in-class, TBD
• PODCAST: ESPN’s Rick Reilly and Bill Simmons
• Discussion: Search Engine Optimization and writing online

Thursday, Nov. 3
DUE FOR WORKSHOPPING: First-person narrative feature #2. Must be an Iowa athlete – varsity or club – whatever sport.
• READING: CNN.com, Vick Pleads Guilty, apologizes, CNN.com, 2007. (ICON)
• READING: Steve Aschburner, Will it ever be OK to cheer for Vick? Sports Illustrated, 2009. (ICON)
• READING: Phil Taylor, Ethical Treatment for a Quarterback, Sports Illustrated, 2009. (ICON)
• READING: Judy Battista, With Vick, Eagles Up the Ante on the Wildcat, New York Times, 2009 (ICON)
• READING: Will Leitch, The Impossible, Inevitable Redemption of Michael Vick, GQ, 2011. (ICON)

WEEK 12
Tuesday, Nov. 8
DUE AS ASSIGNMENT: First-person narrative feature #2. Must be an Iowa athlete – varsity or club – whatever sport.
• Eric Neel, The Saturday Game. The Best American Sports Writing 2007. (ICON)
• In-class exercise

Thursday, Nov. 10
• READING: Alex French and Howie Kahn, The Greatest Paper that Ever Died, Grantland.com, 2011. (ICON)
• READINGS: SB Nation, Bleacher Report and Deadspin TBD.
• DISCUSSION: Online storytelling

WEEK 13
Tuesday, Nov. 15
• DUE TO BLOG: On your blog, a column generated from either Lapchick report. 500 words max. Use your judgment to decide what you are going to write about, so long as you use Lapchick as your primary source of information
Thursday, Nov. 17
• DUE: In-class Bubba spot-news story.
• DUE (OPTIONAL): A first draft of your final project. I will provide detailed feedback for revision.

WEEK 14 – Thanksgiving recess

WEEK 15
Tuesday, Nov. 29
• READING: Charles Robinson, Renegade Miami football booster spells out illicit benefits to players, Yahoo! Sports, 2011 (ICON)
• READING: Dan Wetzel, Miami Scandal is Symptom of NCAA flaws, Yahoo! Sports, 2011 (ICON)
• READING: Tommy Craggs, A Not Entirely Constructive Exchange With Yahoo’s NCAA Scandal Hunter, Charles Robinson, Deadspin, 2011. (ICON)

Thursday, Dec. 1
• PODCAST: Jim Rome and Michael O’Keeffe
• DUE FOR WORKSHOPPING: Column on current event that took place NO EARLIER than Monday, Nov. 28

WEEK 16
Tuesday, Dec. 6
• THE DECISION: Examining the media’s pursuit of LeBron James’ summer free agency.
• READING: Lisa Taddeo, LeBron James’s Magnum-Sized, Ultrashiny, Nike-Powered Lawn Mower to Next Century. The Best American Sports Writing 2009 (ICON)
• READING: Don Ohlmeyer, The “Decision” Dilemma, ESPN.com (ICON)
• READING: Dan Klores, Mind over Media: Shoot the Handlers, Grantland.com, 2011 (ICON)s
• DUE FOR FOR ASSIGNMENT: Your column, revised.

Thursday, Dec. 8
• READING: Chris Jones, The Things We Forget. The Best American Sports Writing 2009
• Course evaluations

FINALS WEEK, Dec. 12-16

***Final project is due Wednesday, Dec. 14, uploaded to ICON. Blog component also be posted by noon.***
About your instructor
Prior to joining the UI in 2007, David Schwartz was a national leader in digital sports media innovation. He served as managing editor for news and photography for Shaw Suburban Media in Chicago, overseeing the news operations for three websites and two daily newspapers. Previous to that he was sports editor for three years, including 2007, when the Northwest Herald was one of nine news publications in the country to be named Top 10 nationally for daily coverage, Sunday coverage, and coverage in a special section. As editor of McHenryCountySports.com, he increased unique visitors by more than 120 percent in one year and later went on to present his work at the APSE national convention, where sports editors from the L.A. Times, Washington Post, Dallas Morning News and other publications attended Schwartz’s sessions to learn about online prep sports innovation.

Prior to becoming an editor, Schwartz was a beat writer in Chicago covering Major League Baseball, college football and basketball, and high schools, and he provided coverage in a supporting role for the NBA, NHL, NFL and PGA.

Schwartz earned his B.A. from the University of Iowa and his M.S. from Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism. He held internships at the Dallas Morning News, Arizona Republic and Chicago Tribune and worked part time at The Washington Post before landing his first job at The Sporting News, where he worked as an editor for the publication’s weekly and annual publications as well as its fledgling online coverage. His current position at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication includes overseeing all of the school’s scholastic outreach efforts, including the Iowa High School Press Association, Iowa Summer Journalism Workshops, the Iowa Journalism Academies, and serving as the school’s liaison to UI Admissions. He is president of the board of directors for the Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Policies and Procedures
Administrative Home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the Academic Handbook.

www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/index.shtml

Academic Fraud
Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is reported to the departmental DEO and to the
Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services who enforces the appropriate consequences. www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtm

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor and the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml#5

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should register with Student Disability Services and meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. For more information, visit this site: www.uiowa.edu/~sds/

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu for definitions, assistance, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, the class members should seek shelter in the innermost part of the building, if possible at the lowest level, staying clear of windows and free-standing expanses. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. (Operations Manual 16.14. i.)

Important University of Iowa Deadlines for Off-Cycle Courses
(Note: Use only for off-cycle courses. To find the deadlines for a particular course, visit this Registrar site and type in the course number and title: www.registrar.uiowa.edu/more/coursedeadlines.aspx)
Since this course begins or ends at a time different from other courses, please be aware of these deadlines:
Last day to add: Monday, Sept. 8
Last day to drop: Monday, Nov. 3

*The CLAS policy statements have been summarized from the web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The Iowa Dozen
As one of more than 100 programs in journalism and mass communication accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), we assess student learning to assure that each of our graduates meets the following standards.

We learn to ...
1. Write correctly, clearly and well.
2. Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
3. Edit and evaluate carefully.
4. Use media technologies thoughtfully.
5. Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value ...

6. Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
7. A diverse global community.
8. Creativity and independence.

We explore ...

10. Theories and concepts.
11. The history, structure and economy of media institutions
12. The role of media in shaping cultures.