Far from merely recounting sporting events, sports writing has played a key role in constructing the meaning and value of sport in American and global culture—from Grantland Rice’s deification of sporting “Gods” like Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey to ESPN’s popular culture website Grantland.com. While traditionally associated with newspapers’ sports sections, sports writing spans the range of sports media and has been a driving force in its gradual shift from the periphery to the center of popular media culture. Furthermore, the emergence of online and social media has—for better or worse—significantly changed the practice of sports writing and the relationships among sports writers, those they cover, and their readers.

This course will provide an introduction to the history, culture, industry, and practice of sports writing. We will consider the role sports writing plays in creating the meaning of sport in American culture, the contexts that influence this relationship, and how this dynamic has shifted over time and with the introduction of new communication technologies. Simultaneously, we will produce and critique our own sports writing in a variety of formats and for multiple venues.

**Required Texts:**
- Other course readings will be available on our course ICON website

**The Classroom**
I have two major goals for this course. First, I want to build an environment where we are both challenged and compelled to develop our critical thinking skills. Second, I want to create a comfortable and encouraging climate for our discussions. Neither of these goals can be met without everyone’s cooperation. I promise to do my best as an instructor this term and I expect the same commitment, motivation, and enthusiasm from all of you. I also expect frequent and thoughtful participation. I realize this aspect of the course may be both refreshing and
daunting. So, as a basic rule for our class meetings I would like us all to treat our peers with kindness and respect. Each class member brings a unique perspective and background to the course that will aid us in grasping the materials covered and developing our skills as thinkers, speakers, writers, and members of the UI community. It is absolutely imperative that we respect this diversity and foster the texture it brings to our course.

Assignments/Grading (I will distribute detailed assignment sheets for each assignment)

Contextual Presentation (5%, 50 points)
Once during the semester, each student will provide a 10-minute contextual presentation on the writer/s we are examining on a given day and two discussion questions that place the readings in dialogue with the course. I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the first week of class.

Beat Reports (10%, 100 points)
Early in the semester, you will compose two beat reports on a local team. You may choose any team you like, but you are required to attend at least one game in person. Each report will have specific requirements and points of emphasis (leads, interviews, etc.) that I will outline in class.

Columnist Comparison and Presentation (10%, 100 points)
This short (1000 word) essay will ask you to compare and contrast two prominent sports columnists. Upon turning in this assignment, you will give a brief (5 minute) in-class presentation of your findings. Both your essay and presentation will factor into your final grade.

Columns (15%, 150 points)
Building upon the Columnist Comparison, you will compose three 750-word columns of your own on various topics of local and national relevance.

Exam 1 (10%, 100 points) and Exam 2 (15%, 150 points)
Exams will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Final Project (25%, 250 points)
Toward the end of the term, you will develop a blog on a specific topic related to sport media. Beyond creating the blog, you will establish a rationale for its construction and position within the sport media landscape. During our final three days of class, you will give a 10-minute presentation/launch that outlines the project. In addition to the blog, you will turn in a 1200-1500 word explanation of your blog, its focus, its construction and components, and the strategies you will use to publicize it.

Participation and Attendance (10%, 100 points)
Attendance is required. You have two “free” absences all term regardless of the circumstances. For each absence after two I will subtract one-third of a letter grade from your final grade. That means that if you miss three classes, the highest grade you can earn in this course is an A-. No exceptions.
I expect frequent and thoughtful participation in this course. This includes listening to others and working in groups as well as contributing during our class-wide discussions.

**Grading Scale**

- A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-77), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (>60).

**Course Policies and Expectations**

**Office Hours**

My office hours are for you. Please come by whenever and as much as you like with any questions or concerns you have about readings, assignments, or the course in general. If for some reason you are unable to make it during my office hours, I am happy to set up an appointment at a mutually convenient time.

**Formatting**

I expect all written assignments to be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around, stapled (if asked to submit them as a hard copy), and in 12-point Times New Roman font. There will be times when I ask for hard copies and time when you will turn assignments in via drop box. Be sure to follow all instructions carefully. I will subtract 1/3 of a letter grade for each formatting requirement you do not follow.

**Late Assignments and Absences**

I do not accept late assignments and do not give “make-ups.” Whether or not you are present in class, all assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. You will lose 1/3 of a letter grade for each day an assignment is late. I do not discriminate between “excused” and “unexcused” absences except when they are sanctioned by the university. It is your responsibility to contact me regarding any circumstances that may affect your ability to complete an assignment by the day it is due.

**Academic Integrity**

All graded work in this course must be your own. Cite all quotations, paraphrases, etc. If you have any questions as to whether or not your work might constitute plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask me. Any violation of the University of Iowa Code of Academic Honesty will result in a failing grade for this course and could result in further disciplinary action. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the Code of Academic Honesty: [http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code](http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code)

**Special Needs**

If you have any special needs that might affect your performance in this course, please let me know as soon as possible so we can create a plan to accommodate them.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1:** Course Introduction and Sports Writing as Sport Media

- **M 8/20**  
  Course Introduction and Policies

- **W 8/22**  
  Sports Writing as Sports Media
• Reading
  o McDonell, “In My Tribe” (ICON)

Week 2: The Golden Age of Sports Writing / Beat Reporting
M 8/27  The Golden Age
• Reading
  o Rice, “The Four Horsemen” (ICON)
  o Rice, “The Struggle in Tennis” (ICON)
  o Rice, “Game Called” (Halberstam)
  o Craggs, Why Grantland Rice Sucked” (ICON)

W 8/29  Beat Reporting and Leads
• Reading
  o Wilstein, “Beat Reporting” and “In the Trenches”
  o Beat Reports (In Class)

Week 3: Beat Reporting
M 9/3  No Class: Labor Day
W 9/5  The Golden Age / Workshop
• Reading
  o Smith, “Next to Godliness,” “Miracle of Coogan’s Bluff,” “Jim and His Baubles,” “The Babe Was Always a Boy—One of a Kind,” “And All Dizzy’s Yesterdays” (Halberstam)
• Assignment
  o In-class workshop

Week 4: Beat Reporting and “New Journalism”
M 9/10  Interviewing and Using Quotes
• Reading
  o Wilstein, “Quotes and Misquotes”
  o Graham, “All the Way to the Grave” (Halberstam)
  o Shah, “Oh, No! Not Another Boring Interview with Steve Carlton” (Halberstam)
• Assignment
  o Beat Report 1

W 9/12  Interviewing and “New Journalism”
• Reading
  o Thompson, “The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved” (ICON)
  o Tower, “A Command Performance” (ICON)

Week 5: Beat Reporting and Athlete Profiles
M 9/17  Humanizing the Athlete
• Reading
  o Kretchmer, “Butkus” (Halberstam)
• Howard, “The Making of a Goon” (Halberstam)

• Assignment
  o Workshop

W 9/19

Building and Demystifying Celebrity

• Reading
  o Moehringer, “23 Reasons Why a Profile of Pete Carroll Does Not Appear in This Space” (ICON)
  o Smith, “The Chosen One” (Halberstam)

• Assignment
  o Beat Report 2

Week 6: Columns
M 9/24

Exam 1

W 9/26

Introduction to Columns

• Reading
  o Wilstein, “Columns”
  o Boswell, “Pain” and “No Mást” (Halberstam)

Week 7: Columns
M 10/1

ESPN.com Columnists

• Reading
  o Reilly, “An Image Rehab Plan for Tiger” (ICON)
  o Reilly, “Woods Need to Clean Up His Act” (ICON)
  o Simmons, “Tiger Still Playing By His Own Rules” (ICON)
  o Simmons, “The Tiger Zoo” (ICON)

• Assignment
  o Workshop

W 10/3

In-Class Presentations

• Assignment
  o Column Comparison

Week 8: The Cultural Politics of Sports Writing
M 10/8

Sexuality in Sports Writing

• Reading
  o Colloff, “She’s Here. She’s Queer. She’s Fired” (ICON)
  o Pearlman, “Mom’s the Word” (ICON)
  o Pierce, “Gay (Non) Panic” (ICON)
  o Torre and Epstein, “The Transgender Athlete” (ICON)

• Assignment
  o Workshop

W 10/10

Politicized Sports Writing

• Reading
  o Zirin, “Jeremy Lin and ESPN’s ‘Accidental’ Racism” (ICON)
o Zirin, “Jeremy Lin! Why The Knicks’ New Star is Not the New Tebow” (ICON)
  o Zirin, “Feel the Lin-sanity: Why Jeremy Lin is More than a Cultural Curio” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Column 1

Week 9: Controversies in College Sports
M 10/15  Economic Exploitation in College Athletics
• Reading
  o Branch, “The Shame of College Sports” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Workshop

W 10/17  Title IX
• Reading
  o Fagan and Cyphers, “Five Myths about Title IX” (ICON)
  o Fagan and Cyphers, “The Glass Wall” (ICON)
  o Plaschke, “Phat Chants” (ICON)
  o Wulf, “Title IX: 37 Words that Changed Everything” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Column 2

Week 10: Controversies in College Sports
M 10/22  Penn State
• Reading
  o Wertheim and Epstein, “Scandal. Shame. A Search for Answers at Penn State” (ICON)
  o Pierce, “The Brutal Truth About Penn State” (ICON)
  o Weinreb, “Growing Up Penn State” (ICON)

W 10/24  Violence/Concussions
• Reading
  o Bissinger, “Why College Football Should Be Banned” (ICON)
  o Gladwell, “Offensive Play: How Different Are Dogfighting and Football” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Column 3

Week 11: The ESPNification of Sports Media
M 10/29  A Brief History of ESPN
• Reading
  o Miller and Shales, “Blood” from Those Guys Have All the Fun (ICON)

W 10/31  The Worldwide Leader?
• Reading
Week 12: Responses and Alternatives to “The Worldwide Leader”

M 11/5  The Blogosphere
  • Reading
    o Arango, “Tension Over Sports Blogging” (ICON)
    o Ballard, “Writing Up a Storm” (ICON)
    o Leitch, from God Save the Fan (ICON)
    o Sherman, “The Worldwide Leader in Dong Shots” (ICON)

W 11/7  Twitter
  • Reading:
    o Larimer, “How the Penn State Scandal Helped Ashton Kutcher Learn Basic Internet Skills” (ICON)
    o Simmons, “Now That Jocks Talk to Us Directly, The Press is Boxed Out” (ICON)
    o Thamel, “Tracking Twitter, Raising Red Flags” (ICON)
    o Travis, “ESPN’s New Revised Twitter Policy” (ICON)

Week 13: ESPN and New Media Projects

M 11/12  Exam 2

W 11/14  Introduction to Final Project
  • Reading
    o Blogs and Websites (TBA)

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15: Final Projects

M 11/26  Final Project Workshop
  • Reading:
    o Blogs and Websites (TBA)
  • Assignment:
    o Final Project Proposal

W 11/28  Final Project Workshop and Conferences

Week 16: Final Projects

M 12/3  Final Project Presentations

W 12/5  Final Project Presentations and Course Evaluations

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 CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Electronic Communication: University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

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

Academic Honesty: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences expects all students to do their own work, as stated in the CLAS Code of Academic Honesty. Instructors fail any assignment that shows evidence of plagiarism or other forms of cheating, also reporting the student's name to the College. A student reported to the College for cheating is placed on disciplinary probation; a student reported twice is suspended or expelled.

CLAS Final Examination Policies: Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint: Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Understanding Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather: In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety web site.
The Iowa Dozen

The mission of our School is to educate journalism and mass communication professionals, scholars and faculty. Through professional and creative research activities, they enhance a continually growing and evolving understanding of the social and cultural roles, responsibilities, and contexts for communicators in a democratic society, as well as in diverse global contexts.

To accomplish that mission:

We learn to ...

- Write correctly, clearly and well.
- Conduct research and gather information responsibly.
- Edit and evaluate carefully.
- Use media technologies thoughtfully.
- Apply statistical concepts accurately.

We value ...

- Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.
- A diverse global community.
- Creativity and independence.
- Truth, accuracy and fairness.

We explore ...

- Theories and concepts.
- The history, structure and economy of media institutions
- The role of media in shaping cultures.
References for Articles:


Colloff, Pamela, “She’s Here, She’s Queer. She’s Fired,” *Texas Monthly* (July 2005).


ESPNW, “The Power of Title IX,” ESPNW.com


Simmons, Bill. “Tiger Still Playing By His Own Rules,” ESPN.com (February 19, 2010).

Simmons, “The Tiger Zoo,” ESPN.com (December 10, 2009).


