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 readers.

This course will provide an introduction to the practice, history, culture, and industry 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 writing and critical thinking skills. Second, I want to create a comfortable and encouraging climate for our workshops and 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 writers, thinkers, 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** *(Detailed instructions for each assignment will be distributed in class)*

**Reports** (15%, 150 points)
Early in the semester, you will compose three 600-word beat reports on a local team—except for the UI football team. You may choose any team you like, but you are required to attend all of the team’s locally played games during the course of this assignment and the profile assignment and to establish contact with players, coaches, and other significant individuals. Each report will have specific requirements and points of emphasis (leads, interviews, photos, etc.) that I will outline in class.

**Profile** (10%, 100 points)
Building upon your game reports, you will research and write a 1000-word profile on a player, coach, or other person involved with the team you have elected to follow.

**Columns** (10%, 100 points)
Two 750-word columns on controversial topics of national and local relevance.

**Sports Television Review** (10%, 100 points)
750-word critical profile/review of one of ESPN Films’ 30 for 30 documentaries

**Sports Media Profile** (15%, 150 points)
Research and write a 1000-word profile on a well-known sports media personality.

**Quizzes** (15%, 150 points)
Over the course of the term, we will have three quizzes that cover our readings, discussions, and my lectures.

**Final Multimedia Project and Presentation** (15%, 150 points)
For this project, you will develop a personal professional website to showcase your resume, writing, and other work you may have produced (video, radio, podcasts, etc.). As part of this assignment, you will THROUGHLY revise two works composed for this course and develop a cover letter for a potential professional position. Students will present their projects to the class and field questions during the last week of the term.

**Participation and Professionalism** (10%, 100 points)
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. I also expect professionalism. This means coming to class on time, being prepared, and consistently adding value to and enriching our course meetings—not simply showing up to class.

**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%).
Grading Expectations
The “A” assignment follows all instructions perfectly and demonstrates a degree of engagement, insight, organization, sophistication, persuasiveness, and originality that significantly exceeds the task’s baseline requirements. It has been carefully revised and edited. Consequently, it is free—or at least very close to free—of any writing errors or typos.

The “B” assignment follows all instructions and is expertly organized, persuasive, and insightful. It has been revised and contains very few writing errors and typos. It, however, does not exceed baseline requirements to the same degree as the “A” paper and may lack the “A” paper’s exceptional originality and sophistication.

The “C” assignment follows instructions, meets the task’s basic expectations, but evidences little engagement with the assignment beyond this point. In other words, it gets the job done. It likely contains some writing errors and typos, though not to an overwhelming or distracting degree.

The “D” assignment does not carefully follow instructions and demonstrates a lack of engagement, creativity, and care evidenced by writing errors, factual errors, poor organization, inconsistencies, etc.

The “F” assignment does not follow instructions and/or is incomplete.

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, the course as a whole, or your academic and professional career. 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.

Attendance
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. This means that if you miss three class meetings, the highest grade you can earn in this course is an A-. No exceptions. I count three late arrivals as once absence.

Formatting
I expect all written assignments to be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around, stapled (if submitted as a hard copy), and in 12-point Times New Roman font. There will be times when I ask for hard copies and times when you will turn assignments in via Dropbox. 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
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 be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day an
assignment is late. It is your responsibility to contact me regarding any circumstances that may affect your ability to complete an assignment by its due date/time.

**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)

**Writing Center**
If you are having any difficulties with or would simply like another opinion on your writing I encourage you to make use of the UI Writing Center: [http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/)

**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**

*Course Introduction and Policies*

**M 8/26**

**W 8/28**

**Sports Writing as Sports Media**

- **Reading**
  - Gisondi, “From Sports Fan to Sports Reporter”
  - Gisondi, “Ethics: Sports Writers Can’t Act Like Fans”

**Week 2: The Golden Age of Sports Writing / Beat Reporting**

*Labor Day: No Class*

**M 9/2**

**W 9/4**

**The Golden Age / Leads**

- **Reading**
  - Heinz, “Death of a Racehorse” (**ICON**)
  - Rice, “The Four Horsemen” (**ICON**)
  - Gisondi, “Writing Game Stories”
  - Gisondi, “High School Sports”

- **Assignment**
  - Workshop

**Week 3: Beat Reporting**

*Interviewing and Using Quotes*

**M 9/9**

- **Reading**
  - Gisondi, “Avoiding Cliches”
  - Gisondi, “Getting the Most Out of an Interview”
  - Gisondi, “Working with Sports Information Directors”
• Assignment
  o Beat Report 1

**W 9/11**

_The Reluctant Interviewee_

• Reading
  o Shah, “Oh, No! Not Another Boring Interview with Steve Carlton”  
  (Halberstam)
  o Titus, “Oden on Oden” (ICON)

• Assignment
  o Quiz 1

**Week 4: Beat Reporting and Literary Sports Writing**

**M 9/16**  
_New Journalism_

• Reading
  o Thompson, “The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved”  
  (Halberstam)
  o Tower, “A Command Performance” (ICON)

• Assignment
  o Workshop

**W 9/18**  
_The Embattled Hero_

• Reading
  o Gisondi, “Beyond Games: Developing and Writing Features”
  o Colloff, “She’s Here, She’s Queer, She’s Fired” (ICON)

• Assignment
  o Workshop

**Week 5: Profiles**

**M 9/23**  
_The Anti-Hero_

• Reading
  o Howard, “The Making of a Goon” (Halberstam)

• Assignment
  o Workshop

**W 9/25**  
_The Savior_

• Reading
  o Smith, “The Chosen One” (Halberstam)

• Assignment
  o Beat Report 2

**Week 6: Profiles**

**M 9/30**  
_The Jester_

• Reading
  o Ballard, “The Last Happy Man” (ICON)
  o Morris, “The Tao of Gronk” (ICON)

**W 10/2**  
_The Enigma_
• Reading
  o Lewis, “The No-Stats All Star” (ICON)
  o Horowitz, “Shane Battier and the Good Life” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Workshop

Week 7: Profiles
M 10/7  Alternative Approaches to the Profile
• Reading
  o Moehringer, “23 Reasons a Profile of Pete Carroll Does Not Appear in This Space” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Workshop

W 10/9  Video Profile
• Screening
  o Coach
  o Here, Now
  o Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel
  o E:60
• Assignment
  o Profile

Week 8: Columns
M 10/14  Introduction to Columns / The Glass Wall
• Readings
  o Fagan and Cyphers, “The Glass Wall” (ICON)
  o Greenwell, “Title IX Was Great for Female Athletes. And Terrible for Female Coaches” (ICON)

W 10/16  Mascots
• Readings
  o Kindred, “Out With The Slurs” (ICON)
  o Lukas, “Time to Rethink Native American Imagery” (ICON)
  o Zirin, “Enough” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Quiz 2

Week 9: Columns: Pay for Play
M 10/21  Pay for Play
• Reading
  o Branch, “The Shame of College Sports” (ICON)
  o Daugherty, “College Athletes Already Have Advantages and Shouldn’t Be Paid” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Workshop
W 10/23  Pay for Play
• Reading
  o Dohrmann, “Pay for Play” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Column 1

Week 10: ESPN: The Worldwide Leader?
M 10/28  ESPN’s Early Years
• Reading
  o Johnson, “Sports Junkies of the U.S., Rejoice!” (ICON)
  o Smith, “Cable TV for Sports Junkies” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Workshop

W 10/30  Diversification
• Reading
  o Mahler, “Will Bill Simmons Win the Big One?” (ICON)
  o Vogan, “ESPN and the Construction of Prestige in Contemporary Sports Television”
• Assignment
  o Column 2

Week 11: Contesting ESPN
M 11/4  Alternatives to ESPN
• Reading
  o Leitch, “God Save the Fan” (ICON)
  o Sherman, “The Worldwide Leader in Dong Shots” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Workshop

W 11/6  Alternatives to ESPN
• Reading
  o Leitch, “No Such Thing as a Free Sport” (ICON)
  o Zeigler, “The Desperate Consequence of Casual Words” (ICON)
  o Zirin, “The Power of Gabby Douglas” (ICON)
• Assignment
  o Sports Television Review

Week 12: Sports Media
M 11/11  Sports Media Profiles
• Reading
  o Reilly, “The Mourning Anchor” (ICON)

W 11/13  Sports Media Profiles
• Reading:
  o Fontana, “In Defense of Dick Vitale” (ICON)
  o Morris, “Does This Suit Make Me Look Insane?” (ICON)
o Ryan, “Doris Burke is ESPN’s Multi-Sport Star” (ICON)

- Assignment
  - Quiz 3

Week 13: Profiles
M 11/18
  Sports Media Profiles
  - Reading:
    - Cohen, “They Taught America How to Watch Football” (ICON)
  - Assignment
    - Workshop

W 11/20
  Final Project Introduction
  - Assignment
    - Sports Media Profile

Week 14: Final Projects
M 12/2
  Final Project Workshop

W 12/4
  Final Project Workshop

Week 16: Final Projects
M 12/9
  Final Project Presentations

W 12/11
  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).


