Sports Writing
JMC:3400:0001
Summer 2016
MW, 9:30 a.m.-12:50 p.m.
W336 Adler Journalism Building

Dr. David Schwartz
Office: E341 AJB
david-schwartz@uiowa.edu
Office Hours: After class, or by appointment

Course Description:
This course explores modern sports media by focusing on sports writing, which continues to drive the industry’s content philosophically, if not economically. Using different story forms – digital, magazine, narrative, blogs, etc. – students will learn the nuances of human-interest stories and rapid reactions to industrial and cultural news. Students will survey storylines of modern sports media, 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 you must come ready to discuss and debate current events in sports and sports media.

Course Objectives and Goals:
To learn how to function as a sports journalist in 2016 and beyond. 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 length.

Required Text:
Travis Vogan, ESPN: The Making of a Sports Media Empire. Available at the IMU bookstore.

Requirements:
• Discussion Posts: Each student must post to the discussion board AT LEAST once a week. I will post a question each Monday that starts the discussion. Where it goes from there is up to you. These discussions must be civil and professional. Each entry must run between 250-400 words.

Discussions will take part on Slack. David will send you an invite.

(Remember: The UI College of Liberal Arts considers a “C” an average grade. Posting the minimum once a week will be considered average for this course and you will be graded accordingly.)

• Class Participation – You are expected to come to class prepared to participate fully in class discussions. Whatever day a reading is listed on the syllabus, that is the day it will be discussed in class. Be sure to have it read before class.

• Industry Survey – You will perform an analysis of the content of three sports-media organizations, comparing and contrasting their content. Details forthcoming.
• **Feature Story** – You will write a standard 500-600-word feature story on a local athlete, team, or organization. Features of this length are commonly produced by media companies that formerly operated primarily as newspapers but are now heavily digital (Chicago Tribune, Washington Post, LA Times, etc.). Details forthcoming.

• **Human-interest story** – For your final writing assignment, you’ll write 1,500-2,000 words on an athlete with whom you have a realistic shot of communicating. Although not quite long enough to be considered “long form” in today’s media climate, this assignment will give you a taste of what type of effort needs to go into assignments such as this. Details forthcoming.

**Course Rules and Responsibilities:**

• **Administrative Home** – UI School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the CLAS. See the CLAS Academic Handbook for more on policies regarding credit, add/drop deadlines, and other details: [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/index.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/index.shtml)

• **Computer Responsibilities** — You are responsible for knowing how to use a computer. This includes maintaining back-up files of your work. Losing an assignment due to failure to back up a file will result in a “zero” for the assignment. You must have a uiowa.edu account and be able to receive e-mail there. Check this account regularly and forward to your primary account if necessary. All email communication for the course (both sent and received mail) must move through your uiowa.edu account. Course announcements will also be posted on ICON, so be sure to check in regularly.

• **Academic Fraud** – Attempting to disguise another’s work as your own is strictly forbidden. Words that are not your own must be clearly identified by the use of quotation marks. Paraphrased material must be properly cited. We examine papers carefully for signs of plagiarism and will prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of university policies. The University provides penalties for plagiarism ranging from disciplinary probation to dismissal from the University. We will review the proper techniques to research and write papers and tests correctly to avoid even accidental plagiarism. If you are in doubt as to whether you may be plagiarizing, ask for help from your section leader. Ignorance or indifference to these guidelines is not a defense. For more details, see the CLAS Academic Handbook linked above.

• **Office Hours** – I’ll be available most days right after class, or by appointment. I take my office hours seriously and encourage you to make the most of them.

• **Severe Weather** – If the warning system indicates severe weather, we should immediately seek shelter in the innermost part of the building, if possible at the lowest level. Stay clear of windows and freestanding expanses. The class will reconvene after the severe weather has ended.

• **Special accommodations** – I want to hear from anyone who has a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements. Please contact me during my office hours, by e-mail or after class. Special academic arrangements for students with disabilities are handled in cooperation with Student Disability Services ([www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/)). Students who feel they need special accommodations for any aspect of the course are encouraged to contact SDS and to speak with the instructor and/or TAs early in the semester, so that accommodation can be made as soon as possible.
• **Conflict resolution** – Should conflict arise, please seek to resolve them with us directly. Students seeking to resolve a conflict should first contact myself, then, should the issue remain unresolved, Dr. David Ryfe (Chair of SJMC). For more information, see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook at: [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml).

• **Harassment policy** – Together, we will strive to make the classroom a space where freedom of expression and egalitarian democracy can be realized as fully as possible. One of the goals of this course is to foster openness and respect for differing viewpoints. Being respectful of others (and of their written and spoken discourse) does not imply agreement or consent. Nevertheless, each of us is obliged to work with thoughtfulness and openness and to hold ourselves responsible for our own and for each other’s words. Any and all responsible and respectful positions are welcome (see below). While we encourage a diversity of perspectives, we will not tolerate any actions denying the humanity of another in this classroom. Words are powerful – please communicate carefully. If at any time you feel attacked or that the classroom is a hostile environment, please feel free to leave and talk to me about it right after class. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. We all have a duty to report incidents of sexual harassment immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment at [www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/sexual-harassment-guide/index.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/sexual-harassment-guide/index.html) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy. Immediately report any concerns to Professor Oates or Horace Porter.

**Grading Procedure:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Cumulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion posts</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Cumulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry survey</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>June 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature story</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>July 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human-interest story (final paper)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Aug. 3, 11:59 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading scale**

- **A+** 98-100%
- **A** 94-97%
- **A-** 90-93%
- **B+** 87-89%
- **B** 84-86%
- **B-** 80-83%
- **C+** 77-79%
- **C** 74-76%
- **C-** 70-73%
- **D+** 67-69%
- **D** 64-66%
- **D-** 60-63%
- **F** 59% and below
Calendar (ALL READINGS EXCEPT TEXTBOOK ON ICON UNDER “LINKS” MENU)

**June 13:** Introductions. Course overview. First assignment discussion.

**June 15:** Sportswriter is one word (Begin on page 7)
Deadspin, ESPN, and the sports media revolution: A blogosphere anthem

**June 20:** When dyslexia blocked his path …
Wrestler doesn’t let life’s pains pin him to the mat

**June 22:** DUE: Industry survey
The big book of Black quarterbacks

**June 27:** Vogan, Introduction
Vogan, Chapter 3

**June 29:** The education of Alex Rodriguez
The secret history of Tiger Woods

**July 4:** No class.

**July 6:** DUE: Feature story
The sportswriting machine

**July 11:** Women who write about sports, and the men who hate them
Video: #morethanmean (also on ICON under “links”)
Serena Williams doesn’t help female athletes …

**July 13:** Vogan, Chapter 1
Vogan, Chapter 6

**July 18:** Vogan, conclusion
Where will Bill Simmons go next …
NFL pressure said to lead ESPN to quit film project

**July 20:** Michelle Beadle calls Colin Cowherd’s show …
MLB Confidential
The Cavs knocked the stuffing out of the Warriors …

**July 25:** Shadow boxing

**July 27:** The silent season of a hero

**Aug. 1:** Giants’ Sergio Romo inspired a teen girl to keep fighting

**Aug. 3:** No class
DUE: Human-interest story final paper (due Aug. 3 by 11:59 p.m.)
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