

J399: SPORTS, MEDIA AND SOCIETY

CRN: 16956

FALL 2015

10 to 11:50 a.m., Mondays and Wednesdays

Global Scholars Hall 123

(Unless we have a speaker or a film, class will end by 11:30 a.m.)

Instructor: Lori Shontz

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Class hashtag: #SOJCsms

Office: 149 Franklin Building (It's the pink building between the two Best Westerns on Franklin Ave. Entrance is in the back. Turn right for SOJC offices.)

Office hours:

- Mondays and Wednesdays, after class until 12:45 p.m. in GSH M104
- 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesdays, Franklin 149
- 4 to 6 p.m. Wednesdays, Allen 228
- By appointment

GTF: Patrick Jones

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WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

I love this story, from a *60 Minutes* profile of Red Smith, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* sports columnist. The interviewer, Morley Safer, basically asked Smith why he had wasted his life writing about something so trivial as sports. (I'm paraphrasing here.) Smith answered: "The only thing left standing in Rome is the ballpark."

As usual, Smith packed a lot of power—and a lot of nuance—into one sentence. A catchy one.

Sports matter. Americans devote a significant amount of time to athletics: participating, watching, arguing, despairing, rejoicing. This means that sports reflect—and often magnify—our society, our culture, our strengths, our weaknesses. Those who trivialize sports, who say they are "only a game" or not worth worrying about, are shortsighted. There, that's my bias. Straight up.

In this class, we will go beyond the proverbial box scores, wander far from the field of play. We'll examine sports through a number of lenses: race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationalism, social class. We'll invoke economics and politics. We'll talk Jackie Robinson, Billie Jean King, Muhammad Ali, Serena Williams, Abby Wambach.

The readings, videos and discussions are intended to broaden your perspective about sports. It's possible that something will surprise you, perhaps even make you uncomfortable. That's OK. Everyone benefits when we find the courage to slip away from our comfort zones. This class will be a safe space for us to do so.

You don't have to agree with every idea. You don't have to endorse the actions of the people we study. But you do need to engage with the concepts. If you're going to be a sports media or sports industry professional, this class will help you to perform your eventual job with greater sophistication and nuance. If you're going to be a sports media consumer, this class will help you to be able to do so critically.

Specifically, by the end of this course, you'll be able to do the following:

- Identify seminal moments when sports figures and events intersected with cultural change or illuminated controversies in society.
- Explain how and why issues of race, gender, nationalism, social class and sexuality intersect with sports.
- Critique how sports media cover (or don't cover ...) off-the-field issues.
- Critique the relationship between sports and media.
- Create ways to incorporate sociological and historical perspectives into works of journalism, public relations and advertising.

WHAT YOU'LL READ AND WATCH

All course readings and video links will be posted on Canvas. You do not need to buy any texts for this class.

I assume that if you are taking this class, you read, listen and/or watch sports news regularly. Keep doing that. Notice stories that are related to the issues we are discussing. Tweet them with the hashtag #SOJCsms. We'll talk about them in class.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

- **Courtesy:** Be on time for class. Don't distract your classmates by spending the class on your phone or computer. If you're going to disagree with someone, don't make it personal.
- **Honesty:** Of course, do your own work and don't plagiarize: that's basic. But in addition, I will provide opportunities for you to (anonymously) critique the class. Let me know what we're doing well and what we can do better.
- **Engagement:** In most classes, we'll spend time in small groups, discussing the readings and videos. Be active. You'll learn more, and you'll help your classmates—and Patrick and me—learn.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME

- **Feedback:** Patrick and I will do our best to provide comments on assignments that will help you to do a better job on the next one. We will also review graded assignments in class, showing anonymous examples that better explain our feedback. This is a large class, so individual comments may not be extensive. Never hesitate to email or stop by office hours with additional questions. We are happy to clarify and explain further. We love talking about these topics.
- **Prompt return of assignments:** It's going to take us at least a week to a week and a half—this is a large class—to grade assignments. But we will always return assignments, with feedback, before the next similar assignment is due. If something prevents us from doing so, we will announce in class and/or adjust deadlines.
- **Help:** These concepts can be difficult. Let me know if you want to review something, whether in class, after class, during office hours or via email.

GRADING

There are 400 total points in this class, broken down as follows:

- **Pop quizzes:** 30 points
- **Reading responses:** 50 points
- **Not Just a Game critique:** 10 points
- **Media critique No. 1:** 25 points
- **Media critique No. 2:** 50 points
- **Final media critique:** 100 points
- **Research paper:** 100 points
- **Participation:** 15 points

I don't do anything fancy—just division. Grades follow a straight percentage:

- A 93-100 percent
- A- 90-92 percent
- B+ 87-89 percent
- B 83-86 percent
- B- 80-82 percent
- C+ 77-79 percent
- C 73-76 percent
- C- 70-72 percent
- D 60-69 percent
- F 0-59 percent

Six important notes on grading:

1. The point values for the critiques rise each time. That's because I expect you to get better as the class continues and as you receive feedback.

2. You have an opportunity to revise your research paper. You don't have to take this, but if you want to use feedback and work for a better grade, you will have a couple of weeks to do that.
3. Don't ask about extra credit. If there is any, I'll let you know. It's unlikely.
4. Late assignments will be penalized. One letter grade drop for every six hours. If it's more than 24 hours late, we won't grade it.
5. If you improve steadily, I will take that into account in your final grade. If you have a rough start, don't give up.
6. Conversely, if you start strong and then give up or coast the rest of the way, I'll take that into account, too.

ASSIGNMENTS

Pop quizzes: Seven unannounced quizzes over the course of the term. Two questions each, based on the readings due for that day. These aren't designed to trick you; they are designed to reward you for participation and doing the readings.

- I'll drop the lowest score. Six quizzes will count.
- **Quizzes start at 10:02 a.m. promptly.** If you aren't in your seat when we hand out the quiz, you don't get to take it. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- No make-up or alternate quizzes. You get to drop one, so there's your buffer. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- We will do a practice quiz on Day 2 so you understand the format.

Reading responses: On average, you'll have one due per week. These aren't designed to add a significant amount of work to your week. They are to help you gather your thoughts before our small-group and whole-class discussions. We are not going to rehash and review the readings in class. We are going to use them as jumping off points for discussion.

- Each response is worth 5 points. (Easy points! Just participate!)
- Each response is due at 10 a.m. sharp on the day of class. If it is late, 0 points. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- We will do a practice response on Day 2 so you understand the format.

Critiques: We will do four throughout the term, giving you a chance to improve your analysis skills as the weeks go on. The point total increases with each one, so be sure to learn from your feedback on the early assignments, and/or make appointments with Lori or Patrick to discuss how you can improve.

- **Not Just a Game critique:** Based on a documentary we will watch together and discuss in class. This is to get you started and thinking and used to the format. Points: 10.
- **Media critique No. 1:** You will choose something in the news—an ongoing story, a feature piece, a documentary, something you observed yourself—and analyze it using the framework we have developed in class. Points: 25.
- **Media critique No. 2:** Same as Media Critique No. 1. But more insightful and more in-depth. Points: 50.

- **Final media critique:** Due Tuesday, Dec. 8. Think of this as your final. You will choose one of two documentaries that I will post on Canvas, and you'll apply all of the skills you have developed over the previous 10 weeks to analyze it. Points: 100.

Research paper: You will choose a general focus, then narrow within that focus to research a specific event or person and produce a five- to seven-page paper. You will need to cite academic research and also popular press accounts. Much, much more info to come during class. You will be graded first on your proposal, then on your paper. You will also have a chance to revise the paper if you would like.

Participation: This is to reward students who contribute to the class in small group sessions, in whole-class discussions and on social media (#SOJCsms).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University Student Conduct Code (conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct.

In J399—and in any journalism class or environment—that means the following:

- **Do not plagiarize:** Do not copy someone else's work and pass it off as your own. That includes the work of professional reporters as well as the work of your classmates, friends, family, fraternity brothers, sorority sisters, teammates, roommates, fellow club officers, etc. You get the picture.
- **Attribute your work properly:** Use first and last names for everyone you quote or paraphrase in an assignment. Quotations are direct quotes—don't tweak what someone said to make the sentence sound better. If you use information from another news source or from an academic journal, attribute it to that source.
- **Don't copy directly from websites or other background sources:** This is plagiarism, too. Don't think you can fool me—or your readers—by changing a word or two around. That doesn't fly. Again: Attribute your work properly.
- **Do not make things up:** Don't invent sources, facts, people, scenarios, scores, quotes, etc. I truly hope this is self-evident.
- **IF YOU AREN'T SURE, ASK.**

If you plagiarize or otherwise violate these principles of academic integrity, you will flunk this class. Period.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

The best journalism reflects the community it covers. That's why I am passionate about increasing and maintaining diversity in newsrooms and about treating sports as, well, more than a game. If everyone is the same gender, race, ethnic group, sexual orientation, religion, etc., you're going to produce a homogenous publication that is at best boring, at worst riddled with errors of fact and/or omission.

In this class, I will encourage open inquiry, freedom of expression and respect for difference. I expect you to respect the differences among you and your classmates and between the class and me. I will respect yours. We can certainly disagree—in fact, I expect that we will at times, especially in a class such as this. We're going to be thinking about sports in a sociological and historical context, and that can be uncomfortable. But we can all respect each other, and we can all learn from each other.

If you have concerns that you'd like to discuss, please stop by office hours or make an appointment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If the way this course is taught or designed is causing barriers to your participation, please let me know as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at (541) 346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu.

If you don't have a documented disability through Disability Services but would like me to know about class issues that may impact your ability to learn, please make an appointment with me so we can talk about it.

ATTENDANCE

All journalism courses are covered by the university's mandatory attendance policy: "Academic departments may require students to attend the first and/or second meetings of designated classes. ... Students who do not attend the first two sessions of these classes may be directed by the academic department to drop the course so that the seat may be given to another student. Students are responsible for dropping the class; there is no automatic drop. The university refund schedule applies."

SCHEDULE

1. Finish the readings *BEFORE* class; they are intended to prepare you for our discussions and additional materials we will use. Your reading reflections (easy points!) are due when class starts. **Zero points if they are late.**
2. Readings are subject to change if news happens and we want to address it in class. I'll update in class, via Canvas announcement and on Twitter.
3. Remember: We are not going to rehash and review all of the readings in class. Just coming to class and listening isn't enough.

WEEK 1: WHAT'S A SPORT? WHY DO SPORTS MATTER?

We'll take a quick look at each major theme in this class: sports and race, sports and gender, sports and sexuality, and sports and culture.

Readings for Wednesday, Sept. 30

- Fagan, Kate (2015, July 30). It's time we got away from determining who is 'female enough' to compete. *ESPNW*. Retrieved from <http://espn.go.com/espnw/news-commentary/article/13343132/time-got-away-determining-female-enough-compete>
- Gordon, Allen (n.d.). Here's how often ESPN draft analysts use the same words over and over. *Vice Sports*. Retrieved from https://sports.vice.com/en_us/article/heres-how-often-espn-draft-analysts-use-the-same-words-over-and-over
- Jenkins, Sally (2011, Oct. 5). NCAA should consider offering sports as an academic major. *The Washington Post*.
- Ziegler, Cyd (2015, Sept. 15). One of the guys. *Outsports*. Retrieved from <http://www.outsports.com/2015/9/15/9321513/mason-darrow-gay-football-princeton>

WEEK TWO: CRITIQUING AND ANALYZING 'NOT JUST A GAME'

In class, we will watch the documentary *Not Just a Game*, produced by Dave Zirin, sports editor at *The Nation*. We're going to watch it slowly – over two days. After each section of the film, we will stop to discuss and critique it, using the readings to flesh out what the documentary does well and what it could do better. The result will be a model and framework for our discussions and assignments throughout the term.

Readings for Monday, Oct. 5

- Coakley, Jay (2015). The sociology of sport: What is it and why study it? In *Sports in society: Issues and controversies*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2-22.
- Lapchick, Richard, et. al. (2015). The 2014 Associated Press Sports Editors Racial and Gender Report Card.

Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 10: Written critique of Only a Game based off class discussion and readings.

WEEK THREE: HOW THE SPORTS MEDIA WORKS

We take a lot for granted when we consume sports media. This week is about getting past those assumptions. On Monday, we'll build off the Lapchick report with additional readings. On Wednesday, we'll use the issue of athletes and sexual assault/domestic violence as a case study.

Also Monday, Carolina Hernandez, the journalism and communication librarian, will visit class to explain how best to use the databases as you prepare your research paper proposal. Bring a laptop if you can; she will walk us through the process.

Readings for Monday, Oct. 12:

- Edwards, Harry (1970). Sports and the mass media. In *Revolt of the black athlete*. The Free Press: New York. 30-37.
- Greer, Jennifer D., Hardin, Marie, and Homan, Casey (2009). 'Naturally' less exciting: Visual production of men's and women's track and field coverage during the 2004 Olympics. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 53(2), 173-189.
- Vader, J.E. (1993). Real trouble with Sports Illustrated's swimsuit issue is not the photos. In *A kind of grace: A treasury of sportswriting by women*, ed. Ron Rapoport. 44-45.

Readings for Wednesday, Oct. 14:

- Fagan, Kate (2014, Dec. 19). Bo Pelini's disturbing use of that other c-word: core values. *ESPNW*. Retrieved from <http://espn.go.com/espnw/news-commentary/article/12049955/bo-pelini-disturbing-use-other-c-word-core-values>
- Rios, Tomas (2013, Dec. 7). Misplaced priorities. *Sports on Earth*. Retrieved from http://www.sportsonearth.com/article/64469260/?tcid=tw_share
- Smith, Gary (1996). Crime and punishment. In *Beyond the game: The collected sportswriting of Gary Smith*. Atlantic Monthly Press: New York. 234-262.

Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18: Research paper proposal.

WEEK FOUR: RACE

I could teach a whole class on this topic alone, but it doesn't work that way. The first week of our race unit focuses on historical milestones by black athletes and the racism faced by for African-Americans in sport.

Readings for Monday, Oct. 19:

- Zirin, Dave (2008). No Depression. In *A people's history of sports in the United States*. The New Press: New York. 63-89.
- Zirin, Dave (2008). War and its discontents. In *A people's history of sports in the United States*. The New Press: New York. 91-111.

Readings for Wednesday, Oct. 21:

- Dufur, Mikaela J., and Feinberg, Seth L. (2009). Race and the NFL draft: Views from the auction block. *Qualitative Sociology*, 32(1), 53-73.
- Martin, David R. (1997). Integrating New Year's Day: The racial politics of college bowl games in the American south. *Journal of Sport History*, 24(3), 358-377.

WEEK FIVE: RACE

This week focuses on black athletes and activism, specifically Muhammad Ali and the Black Power movement, most notably associated with the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. We'll bring this into the present moment (Williams sisters, Michael Jordan, LeBron, etc.) in class.

Reading for Monday, Oct. 26:

- Edwards, Harry (1970). The emergence of the black athlete. In *Revolt of the black athlete*. The Free Press: New York. 1-29.

Readings for Wednesday, Oct. 28:

- Early, Gerald (1998). Tales of the wonderboy. In *The Muhammad Ali Reader*. HarperCollins: New York. vii-xx.
- The Black Scholar interviews Muhammad Ali. In *The Muhammad Ali Reader*. HarperCollins: New York. 83-89.

Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 1: Media critique No. 1

WEEK SIX: OLYMPICS, WORLD CUPS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Reading assignments will be lighter for the next two weeks as you focus on your research papers. In Wednesday's class, we'll watch and discuss the Academy Award-winning documentary *One Day in September*, about the massacre of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympics.

Reading for Monday, Nov. 2:

- Nossel, Suzanne (2015, May 19). Faster, higher, more oppressive. *Foreign Policy*.

WEEK SEVEN: OLYMPICS, WORLD CUPS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Again, light reading assignments this week. In Monday's class, we'll watch and discuss another award-winning documentary, *Freedom's Fury*, about the 1956 water polo semifinal between Hungary and the Soviet Union, universally known as the "Blood in the Pool" match.

Readings for Wednesday, Nov. 11:

- Robertson, Linda (2014, Feb. 4). For Vladimir Putin, medals aren't only potential prize at Sochi Olympics. *The Miami Herald*.
- Zirin, Dave (2013, Sept. 26). Slave labor? Mass prisons? FIFA mangles the World Cup and the beautiful game. *The Nation*.

Due 11:59 p.m. Friday, Nov. 13: Research paper

WEEK EIGHT: GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The first week of this unit focuses on the history of women's sport, society's opposition to women competing and Title IX, both its opportunities and unintended consequences. We'll spend most of Wednesday talking about Billie Jean King and her "Battle of the Sexes" match against Bobby Riggs, a seminal moment in women's sport history.

Reading for Monday, Nov. 16:

- Ware, Susan (2011). Before the sports bra: A short history of women's sports through the 1970s. In *Game, set, match: Billie Jean King and the revolution in women's sports*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill. 117-146.

Readings for Wednesday, Nov. 18:

- Lichtenstein, Grace (1974). Astrotennis. In *A long way, baby: Behind the scenes in women's pro tennis*. William Morrow and Co.: New York. 21-31.
- Lichtenstein, Grace (1974). The old lady. In *A long way, baby: Behind the scenes in women's pro tennis*. William Morrow and Co.: New York. 150-160.
- Lichtenstein, Grace (1974). You've come a long way, Billie. In *A long way, baby: Behind the scenes in women's pro tennis*. William Morrow and Co.: New York. 229-239.

WEEK NINE: GENDER AND SEXUALITY

This week we'll take a deeper look at where race intersects with gender issues. We'll focus a little on Olympic hurdler/bobsledder Lolo Jones and a lot on tennis players Venus and Serena Williams. We do have class Wednesday before Thanksgiving, but we will watch and discuss an ESPN IX for IX documentary, *Venus Vs. I promise: No pop quiz that day.*

Readings for Monday, Nov. 23:

- Cooky, Cheryl, Messner, Michael A., and Hextrum, Robin H. (2013). Women play sport, but not on TV: A longitudinal study of televised news media. *Communication & Sport* 1(3), 203-230.
- Longman, Jere (2012, Aug. 4). For Lolo Jones, everything is image. *New York Times*.
- Rhoden, William C. (2012, June 10). Black and white women far from equal under Title IX. *New York Times*.

Readings for Wednesday, Nov. 25:

- Corbett, Merlisa Lawrence, (2015, Sept. 3). The problem with the conversation surrounding Serena Williams. Bleacher Report. Retrieved from <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2550762-the-problem-with-the-conversation-surrounding-serena-williams>
- Rankine, Claudia (2015, Aug. 25). The meaning of Serena Williams: On tennis and black excellence. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/magazine/the-meaning-of-serena-williams.html?action=click&contentCollection=magazine®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=53&pgtype=sectionfront&r=0
- Williams, Venus (2006, June 26). Wimbledon has sent me a message: I'm only a second-class champion. *The London Times*.

Due 11:59 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 29: Media critique No. 2

WEEK 10: GENDER AND SEXUALITY

On Monday, we'll focus on gay and lesbian athletes, something we've mentioned occasionally over the past two weeks. And on the last day of class, we'll have a discussion about the ethical issues surrounding a piece about a transgender woman on *Grantland*. This will give everyone a chance to put into practice, as if we were in a newsroom, how to use the historical and sociological frameworks we've built this term in a real-life media situation.

Readings for Monday, Nov. 30:

- Griffin, Pat (1992). Changing the game: Homophobia, sexism and lesbians in sport. *Quest*, 44(2), 251-265.

- Zigler, Cyd (2015, Feb. 8). One year later, has Michael Sam been frozen out of the NFL? *Outsports*. Retrieved from <http://www.outsports.com/2015/2/8/8000303/michael-sam-nfl-teams-gay-roster>

Readings for Wednesday, Dec. 2:

- Hannan, Caleb (2014, Jan. 15). Dr. V's magical putter. *Grantland*. Retrieved from <http://grantland.com/features/a-mysterious-physicist-golf-club-dr-v/>
- Kahrl, Christina (2014, Jan. 20). What Grantland got wrong. *Grantland*. Retrieved from <http://grantland.com/features/what-grantland-got-wrong/>

Due 11:59 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4: Revision of research paper (if you so choose)

Due 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8: Final media critique