Instructor: Dr. Dan Durbin  
Office: ASC 324D  
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Course Objectives: This course examines the interrelationship between sports and media in today's society and how that interrelationship reinforces social values, sometimes challenges social norms, and draws on the cultural identification of class, race, and gender to identify sports values with cultural values. Drawing on theories of rhetoric and social criticism, we will examine media's role in telling the story of sports and, in telling that story, shaping and reinforcing cultural values. Students will study several critical approaches to sports and public discourse and will apply those approaches to sports organizations, the news media, and popular media.

Required Reading:


Course Notebook (available at the bookstore).

Course Reader (available through University Readers at www.universityreaders.com/students).

Assignments: Much of this course is taken up in a study of sports narrative in various media and how those narratives draw on and reinforce larger social values. Thus, most assignments will offer students the opportunity to carry on their own critical research into how sports organizations and media create meaning from the events played out on the field. Students will write two critical analyses and take two exams.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation---------------------------------------------------------------5

Sports Event Reaction Paper-----------------------------------------------20

Sport and Society Critical Analysis Paper----------------------------------30

Midterm---------------------------------------------------------------20
Course Notebook: I have extended several sections of the course notebook considerably this semester. This has allowed for more complete coverage of several important eras in the evolution of sports media in the United States. So, be certain you get a new course notebook for the semester.

Readings: While the first readings will largely focus on critical approaches to the subject, much of this semester’s readings will include actual reports of sporting events, editorials on sport, and critical analyses of sports films and television shows. There will also be articles and book chapters on larger social issues that have both impacted and been impacted by sports and the communication complex that creates the story of sport. Thus, you have readings on issues of race and sport by Jackie Robinson and Frank Robinson and issues of gender and sport by Alison Gordon (among others). We will not discuss all these texts in detail. But, it is important that you immerse yourself in them (and, they are one helluva lot more fun than reading dry textbooks). They will give you a much stronger sense of how the story of sports has been told and how that story intersects culture.

Diversity Issues: This course focuses on several important diversity issues and their interrelationship with sports and sport culture. Issues of social class, race, and gender have been part of the history, culture, and communication of sports since at least the nineteenth century. During the first month of class, we will discuss in detail the role social class had in defining the concept of “sport” and “sportsman” in the United States. Drawing from this discussion, we later discuss the role of sports in social change and in issues of race and gender. By its nature, sports directly impacts social values and social change. So, it is nearly impossible to discuss sports without also discussing the ways it has impacted society. In this discussion, we will focus on how various media (television, film, radio) have helped create the interaction between sport and culture over these issues. Finally, several guest speakers will visit to discuss issues of gender and race in sports, sports culture, and sports media.

Paper Grades: All written work is to be typed following the guidelines for research paper writing found in either the MLA or APA handbook. Papers will be graded on quality of organization, clarity and depth of analysis, and writing competence. Each error in spelling or grammar will result in a reduction in your paper grade. All papers for COMM 383m must be turned in to turnitin.com. Instructions on submission will follow from the T.A.s.

Participation and Absence Policy: Attendance in class cannot be counted as participation. Students will receive participation grades based on the quality and quantity of their vocal participation in class throughout the semester. You will be allowed four unexcused absences during the semester. Each absence beyond four will result in an
automatic 5% deduction from your final class grade. Also, remember that, when you are
absent, you cannot participate in class. So, excessive absences will also impact your
participation grade. Being tardy or leaving class early will be counted as half an absence.
Also, please turn off cell phones while in class. Leaving class to answer a cell phone will
be counted as an absence.

**Classroom Behavior:** Do not text, email, search the Internet, fall asleep, or use class
time to do work for other classes. Any of these activities will be counted as class
disruption and will have a negative impact on your participation grade. Also, if you are
hydrating to an excessive degree and absolutely must leave class to visit the restroom,
please do so discretely and quietly (and return the same way). Getting up in front of the
class and walking in front of the professor while s/he lectures is not only disruptive, it's
incredibly (indescribably) rude behavior.

**Guest Speakers:** Guest speakers take time out of their schedules to come speak with
you on important topics related to this class. Many of these people are busy executives
whose time is very valuable. They cannot be expected to take time to speak if students
are online "facebooking" or "myspaceing" or text messaging on cell phones while they
speak. Any time we have a guest speaker, you are expected to turn off your computers
and cell phones and focus on the speaker. Students found on their computers during
guest speaker sessions will be docked one point off their participation grade (one percent
off their total class grade). As we will likely have several guest speakers, this can add up
fast. So, close your computers and give a listen to the guest speakers. It will make class
(and your life) a much more fulfilling experience.

**Late Work:** All late papers will be docked one letter grade for each class period they are
late. Any time after the start of the class in which the papers are due will be considered
late.

**Disability Services:** Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a
disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each
semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from
DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.
DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The
phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Students requesting accommodations for
taking tests in DSP must have their information to me and DSP in sufficient time to set
up accommodations at DSP.

**Academic Integrity:** The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to
upholding the University’s Academic Integrity code as detailed in the Scampus guide. It
is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any
serious violations or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in
the student’s expulsion from the Communication major or minor. If you have any doubts
about what is and is not an academic integrity violation, please check with me. The
University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies; should
you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies
will not be accepted as an excuse.

**Special Note:** On February 15-16, the Annenberg Institute of Sports Media and Society will be hosting a special conference on the Olympics. We will have special speakers in class and a number of events throughout those days. On the evening of February 15, we will be hosting the Nike sponsored Sports and Social Change program as part of the conference. It is currently scheduled for Town and Gown that evening and attendance is mandatory for this class. Exam questions will be drawn from that program. So, you will want to be there to take notes in preparation for your midterm and final exams.

**Final Note:** We are examining a fast growing area of communication research. As this study is beginning to gain momentum in the field, we all need to immerse ourselves in the subject. That means, I want you to hit as many sports events, see as many sports themed movies (time to hit Netflix), watch as much sports on television (like it's gonna kill you to see a couple hours of Fox Sports or ESPN) as you can stand (and enjoy). If someone questions how much time and money you are spending on watching sports, tell them it's important research.
Tentative Class Schedule and Due Dates

Weeks One and Two
1/10-1/19
Introduction and Critical Approaches

During our first two weeks, we will examine approaches taken by rhetorical and communication scholars who have critically analyzed sports discourse. We will also discuss semiotic approaches to social icons.

Readings: Wenner, Chs. 1, 3 (pp. 13-48, 70-96).

Weeks Three, Four and Five
1/24-2/16
Sports Organizations: Social Class and the Evolution of Sports Organizations in America

During this section, we will discuss how social class determined “sporting” activity in nineteenth century America with the “leisure” class defining “sport” as a “leisure” (not “labor”) activity. We will also discuss how early sports organizations sought to identify their sport with the leisure class and developed rules to identify their sport with the values of the leisure class (e.g. incorporating “blue laws” into organizational rules). We will examine the use of stadiums and other venues as settings for the sports drama and as symbols used to purvey values that identify the sports organization’s goals with the values of the larger culture.

Readings: Wenner Chs. 4-5 (pp. 97-133); Course Reader- Mullen and Mazzocco, “Coaches, Drama, and Technology: Mediation of Super Bowl Broadcasts from 1969 to 1997 (pp. 347-363), Anderson, “Saving the National Pastime’s Image: Crisis Management During the 1919 Black Sox Scandal” (pp. 105-111), Durbin, “Wrigley Field in Popular Culture” (pp. 1-3), Angell, “Being Green” (pp. 94-123), Murray, “Pete Rozelle Sold Entire Nation on His Sport” (pp.1-2).

Week Six
2/21-2/23
News Reports: Communicating the Story

Our discussion of news will focus on the extended story of sport, media’s role in changing information into event, narrative, and epic. We will discuss both immediate reporting and extended reporting on on-going stories. Our analysis will focus on how broadcasters and reporters identify “heroes,” “villains,” and the “values” of sport.

Readings: Wenner Chs. 2, 10 (pp. 49-69, 225-240). Course Reader-Hansen, “Narrating the Game: Achieving and Coordinating Partisanship in Real Time.” (pp. 269-290), Barber, “The Catbird Seat” (pp.28-29), “Associate Broadcasters” (pp. 259-263), "Radio vs.
Both sports and reporting sports have gone through tremendous change over the past century. This change has greatly impacted and been impacted by larger social changes. This section will cover the impact of social change on sports, the story of sports, the values sports embody, and the role of the storyteller in sports. We will focus on the evolving concerns of race and sports from the social caste of the "Gentleman Sportsman" of the nineteenth century, through the controversial reigns of Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali, the role of Jackie Robinson in breaking baseball’s color barrier, to current controversies involving race, sports organizations, and players. We will also discuss in some detail Native American protests to depictions of race and ethnicity among sports organizations.

Readings: Course Reader-Miller, “‘Indians,’ ‘Braves,’ and ‘Redskins’: A Performative Struggle for Control of an Image” (pp.188-202), Robinson, “The Noble Experiment” (pp. 38-49), Murray, “One Man’s Opinion,” “As White as the Ku Klux Klan,” “From Russia with Love Or . . . I’ll Never Smile Again,” and "Louisville Loudmouth Secedes from the Union."


Midterm Exam-March 1.
Guest Lecture: Christie Lugo Leigh, Supervisor of Sports and Special Productions for KTLA-TV will speak during this section on being a Hispanic woman in sports television production.

Readings: Fink and Kensicki, “An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and Textual Constructions of Femininity in Sports Illustrated and Sports Illustrated for Women” (pp. 317-340), Shugart, “She Shoots, She Scores: Mediated Constructions of Contemporary Female Athletes in Coverage of the 1999 US Women’s Soccer Team.” (1-31), Gordon, “Foreword” and “Token Broad” (pp. 7-10, 118-137).

Week Twelve
4/3-4/5
The “Inside” Story: Sports Diaries, Race, and Social Values

We will examine the phenomenon of sports diaries and their role as apologies, promotional devices, and “history.” We will also discuss the role of sports diaries in advocating social change (Frank Robinson’s diary offers a particularly compelling, even disturbing, reflection on the pressures baseball’s first African-American manager faced.)

Readings: Wenner, ch. 9 (pp. 204-224). Course Reader-Trujillo, “Interpreting (the Work and Talk of) Baseball: Perspectives on Ballpark Culture” (pp. 350-371), Brosnan The Long Season February 22 to March 1, Kramer Instant Replay “War’s End” January 3 to January 14, Bouton Ball Four “Introduction” and March 3, Gabriel Player of the Year September 18 to September 22, Robinson Frank: The First Year “Prologue: The First Shall Not Be Last.”

Class Viewing: Selections from “When It Was a Game.”

Week Thirteen
4/10-4/12
Media, Fans, and Sports in the Home

Sports become part of social life as they enter homes and modify the behavior of fans. This section explores some of the more profound changes sports have brought into American homes. We will focus on several sub-cultures that have grown from fan reaction to sports and the desire of fans to take part in sports as “coaches” and “players.”

Readings: Wenner Chs. 7, 11 (pp. 157-179, 241-269); Course Reader-Daglow and Kavanaugh “Fantasy Baseball” (pp.629-632), Angell, “Three for the Tigers” (pp. 95-122), Gordon, “The Fans” (pp. 86-98), Durbin, “Take Me Home to the Ballgame: Baseball Board Games in American Popular Culture” (pp. 1-13), Miller, “The Boys Life in Reel Time” (pp. 64-74) Class Viewing: “Of Dice and Men.”

Sport and Society Paper Due April 12.
Week Fourteen  
4/17-4/19  
Sports Television and Radio

We will examine the way in which television and radio create drama and meaning in the sports events they broadcast and the larger sports stories they tell. We will examine the evolution of television and radio broadcasts from representations of sports and community to creations of sports events. We will also discuss the impact of television in particular on discussions of race and gender in sports (focusing in particular on the media response to incidents involving Billie Jean King, Al Campanis, and Jimmy “The Greek” Snyder).


Class Viewing: Selections from radio sports reports of the 1930s, 1950s, and today, Ken Burns “Baseball,” “Monday Night Mayhem,” “Retro-Game.”

Note: November 24, Thanksgiving vacation, no class.

Week Fifteen  
4/24-4/26  
Sports and Film: Sports Myth and Reconstructing Race, Gender, and Patriotism in Sports Films

We will study the representation of sports and sports myth from its earliest portrayal in silent films to iconic images in films such as “Pride of the Yankees” to historical reconstructions in films such as “61*.” We will examine the image of sports each approach creates and the sports and social values each reinforces. In particular, we will focus on issues of race in the film “Brian's Song” and will have Allan Graf discuss his current film project on the color barrier in college football across the South in the 1960s and 1970s. We will also discuss the reconstruction of gender norms in “A League of Their Own.”

Readings: Course Reader-Aden, “Nostalgic Communication as a Temporal Escape: When it was a Game’s Re-construction of a Baseball Work Community” (pp. 20-38), Most and Rudd, “Don't Bet on it . . . The Representation of Gambling in Baseball Cinema” (pp. 233-242). Course Notebook, Durbin, “‘Cinderella Man:’ Deconstructing the Male Myth in American Sports Films” (pp. 131-144).


Final Exam May 9, 2-4.
Sports events are made up of the story being told by the organization and the one being
told by the media. Often, these stories are one and the same (especially when a sports
organization hires its own broadcasters). This paper gives you the opportunity to write a
critical analysis of the stories you are being told through the venue and the broadcast of a
sports event.

You are to choose a major sports event to attend, one that will be broadcast on either
radio or television. You are to write a brief (5-7 page) reaction paper that critically
assesesses the ways in which a sports organization promotes its goals through its sports
venue and through the broadcasting of its event.

You are to attend a professional sports event in which you are not participating
(MLB baseball game, NFL football game, professional hockey or basketball game, boxing
match). You are to attach your ticket stub from the game to your paper. At this event,
you are to study all the ways in which the sports organization sells its product(s), from
the advertising on scoreboards to promotional announcements to advertising throughout
the stadium to the structure of the venue and how it guides your actions and eyes.

You should take notes on all these acts of suasory communication as they appear
throughout your visit. You are to choose several representative acts and write a brief
analysis that discusses each of the ways in which these acts give meaning to what occurs
on the field, promote organizational goals, and use and sustain social values.

As you attend the event, you are to also listen to it on a radio broadcast or Internet
broadcast or record and later watch the television broadcast of the event. As you listen to
or watch the event, you are to look (and listen) for ways in which the broadcasters also
create you as an audience (and fans) for the game (and team). Look and listen for ways
in which the broadcasters identify the home team as "your" team. As we will discuss in
class, broadcasters often do this by giving the home team "agency" (identifying the home
team as the "actors" and the visiting team as opponents or the challenge to be overcome).
You are to note illustrations of actual comments that create the home team as your team
and, consequently, create you as fans. Note, in particular, when broadcasters use
language commonly identified as "homer" language.

This paper is observational. You do not need to draw on class theory beyond the use of
basic concepts in narrative construction and broadcasting that we have covered. Your
primary goal is to create a clear, insightful, and illuminating examination of how fans are
created through the visual and aural rhetoric of sports organizations. Papers will be
Writing Assignment #2  
Sport and Society Critical Analysis Paper  
7-9 pages

We have discussed the intersection between sports and society on a variety of issues including race, gender, and social class. You are to trace a story involving sports and one of these key social concerns (or other major social concerns) from the last ten years. You are to trace the entire “story” of one major sports event of the last ten years. You are to follow the story’s trajectory from first report to last report. Thus, the story must be considered dead (ended).

Your analysis of the story will involve a critical discussion of the value systems sports and society brought to this particular issue. As we’ve noted, in some cases, sports have been well ahead of society in bringing about social change, in other cases, sports have been well behind society and in most cases sports have followed their own unique value criteria in matters of race, gender, and social class. In examining the story, you are to describe the values exemplified in the actions of sports organizations, compare those to the values shown in the actions of the contemporary society and compare the two. Your comparison should illuminate the distinct value systems brought to these important social arguments.

For example, in 1987, Al Campanis, General Manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, made some infamous remarks on ABC-TV’s “Nightline” program. Campanis stated that African-Americans may not have the “tools” to be Major League Baseball managers. These comments immediately caused a firestorm of controversy throughout the country. Yet, as groups throughout the United States voiced anger over Campanis’s comments, the first reaction of the Dodgers and Major League Baseball was to defend Campanis as a leader in positive race relations in baseball. These actions showed a clear disjunction between the perspective of the sports organizations and of the larger culture. Or, as we’ve discussed in class, in 1965, the Chicago Bears started assigning rooms on the basis of position rather than race. This action was perceived as radical and offensive in some parts of American society, especially the South. Yet, it made Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo into sports icons whose story was eventually told in *Sports Illustrated* and a pair of movies.

The tension between the pragmatics of sports and the views of the larger culture should give you a fascinating field to explore in examining the trajectory of a sports story that deals with issues of gender, race, or social class.
To examine your story, you will need to search the archives of a major news service (The LA Times, The NY Times, etc.). You are to examine the reports to find the first notes indicating the event(s) that reflected social change or controversy, the developing narrative as the story began to develop characters/setting/events/social tensions, and the climax and conclusion of the story.

Drawing on the theoretical approaches discussed at the start of the semester, you are to examine the narrative construction of the story, how reports turned events into stories, how those stories framed events and sustained or challenged cultural norms, and how the narrated relationship between characters, setting, and events exemplified the tension between various players in the cultural drama.

This is not a review of the events that were reported, nor is it a repetition of news reports. You are to critically assess the stories, explaining their role in sustaining cultural assumptions.

Papers should be 7-9 pages in length. Each paper should have a bare minimum of 6 cited references (you should easily find far more than this in news reports alone). All papers must follow MLA or APA guidelines for research paper writing. Papers will be graded on quality of writing, clarity of argument, depth of analysis, and quality of insights. While you will need to perform only limited academic research for this assignment (few journal articles), you will need to complete a full study of one story and your works cited page should note references to a complete cycle of reports.