

**COMM 383m**  
**Sports, Communication, and Culture**  
Course Syllabus  
TTh 2:00-3:20  
Fall, 2015

**Instructor:** Dr. Dan Durbin

**Office:** ASC G21A

**Office Hours:** MW 11-12, TTh 3:30-4:00; and by appointment.

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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. **Specific Student Outcomes Include:** 1.) Become conversant in the language of sports business and sports media; 2.) Become conversant in the language of sports research and theory; 3.) Understand the evolution of sports media in the United States and its impact on American culture; 4.) Recognize recurrent trends in sports and sports media; 5.) Demonstrate proficiency in examining sports communication critically.

**Required Reading:**

Billings, Andrew C. Butterworth, Michael L. and Turman, Paul D. Communication and Sport: Surveying the Field. Los Angeles: Sage Publications 2012.

Course Notebook (available at the bookstore).

Course Reader (available at the bookstore).

**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. So, 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, develop a twitter discussion log and take two exams.

**Grade Breakdown:**

Participation-----	8
Sports Event Analysis Paper-----	15
Sport and Society Critical Analysis Paper-----	25
Twitter Discussion Assignment-----	7
Midterm-----	20
Final Exam-----	<u>25</u>
Total Points-----	100

**Course Notebook:** I have overhauled the course notebook and class notes (again). You cannot take the class with an old notebook. Be sure you get the new one.

**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. Therefore, 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 read them (and, let’s face it, they are a 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.

**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. Papers with an excessive number of errors in grammar, spelling or MLA usage (fifteen or more) will be returned to the author for a rewrite. Failure to rewrite the paper will result in a zero for that assignment. Rewritten papers will be docked one letter grade for having been rewritten.

Should you have questions or concerns regarding the grade you got on a paper, the school identifies the appropriate procedure as follows. Take a forty-eight hour “cooling off” period as you review the comments on your paper. If you still have questions or concerns, contact the teaching assistant who graded your paper to set up an appointment to review the paper. Should a question or dispute remain after discussing the grade with the T.A. you should contact your professor who will discuss any potential next steps with you.

**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 participation in class (and on Twitter) throughout the semester. You will be allowed two unexcused absences during the semester. **Each** absence beyond two will result in an automatic 2% 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. Finally, note that the T.A.’s will be checking on attendance from student listings in the registration file throughout the semester---don’t rely on a friend to sign you in as, if you are found to be absent on a day that you are signed in, you will be counted as absent and reported to student conduct.

**Technology:** Note that computer laptops are not allowed during the discussion and lecture sessions of class. It is more important to participate than to take detailed notes and you will have the notes you need clearly outlined for you during class. So, handwritten notes will suffice. After each discussion and lecture session, you may want to take some time to reflect on the learning experience and type whatever notes may seem useful. However, all computers and tablets are to be turned off and stored during lectures. All cellphones and mp3 players must also be turned off and kept off throughout class. Receiving or sending communication or entertainment during class disrupts the

learning environment and is rude to those around you. Being called out for using devices in class will have an impact on your participation grade.

**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 text messaging on cell phones while they speak. Any time we have a guest speaker, you are also 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 may have several guest speakers, this can add up fast.

**Sports and Social Change Program:** Later in the semester, various programs will be offered for the spring Sports and Social Change series. Several may offer you extra credit opportunities. However, there may be a major program one evening during the semester (probably on a Thursday night). As part of your class responsibilities, you are to attend that event and take notes. Notes from the event will form the basis of a number of exam questions on your final exam and your attendance is mandatory. There will also be events during class. Any guest speakers or class events will generate questions for exams, as well.

**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.

## Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

**Academic Conduct:** Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally

unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

**Note: All writing assignments in this class must be turned in to Turnitin.com.** We will discuss this at greater length later in the semester.

**And, Another Note:** We have a TREMENDOUS volume of material to cover in this class. We will discuss many of the articles in the course reader and many of the chapters in the course textbook. However, we will not be able to cover all material. There will be questions on exams over reading material not covered in class. Any questions over material we don't cover in class will be very simple and general and will only test your basic comprehension of the material.

### *Tentative Class Schedule and Due Dates*

#### **Weeks One, Two and Three**

**8/25-9/10**

#### **Introduction and Approaches to Sports Studies**

During our first three weeks, we will examine approaches taken by rhetorical and communication scholars who have critically analyzed sports discourse. We will also trace the history and evolution of sport as an academic discipline and discuss current approaches to the subject.

Readings: Billings, et al. Chs. 1, 2, 5 and 14 (pp. 1-46, 92-113, 306-328).

#### **Weeks Four and Five**

**9/15-9/24**

#### **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: Billings, et al. Chs. 3, 4, 8 and 13 (pp. 47-91, 161-186, 283-305).

**Week Six**  
**9/29-10/1**

**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 examine the evolution of news media, the impact of evolving media on sports narratives, and the social implications of those changes.

Readings: Billings et al. Chs. 10-11 (pp. 209-257).

**Weeks Seven and Eight**  
**10/6-10/15**

**Sport Cultures and Media Narratives of Sport**

We will draw on research examining the ways in which sports organizations develop and maintain organizational culture, media construct narratives to fit social expectations and organizational interests.

Readings: Course Reader- Trujillo, “Interpreting (the Work and Talk of) Baseball: Perspectives on Ballpark Culture” (pp. 350-371), Hansen, “Narrating the Game: Achieving and Coordinating Partisanship in Real Time” (pp. 269-290), Mullen and Mazzacco “Coaches, Drama, and Technology: Mediation of Super Bowl Broadcasts from 1969 to 1997” (pp. 347-363), Farrell, “Media Rhetoric as Social Drama: The Winter Olympics of 1984.” (pp. 158-182).

**Midterm Exam-October 13.**

**Weeks Nine and Ten**  
**10/20-10/29**

## **Sports, Social Norms, and Social Change: Issues of Race**

We will examine issues of race and sports, the breaking of baseball's color line, the slow movement forward on many issues and the continued challenges. We will also discuss issues of naming and the reification of racist assumptions.

Readings: Billings et al. Chs. 7, 9 (pp. 139-160 and 187-208). 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), Robinson Frank: The First Year "Prologue: The First Shall Not Be Last," Murray, "One Man's Opinion," "As White as the Ku Klux Klan."

Class Viewing: Selections from "Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson," "Hank Greenberg," "When We Were Kings," "The 1968 Tigers."

### **Sports Event Analysis Paper-Due October 20.**

#### **Weeks Eleven and Twelve**

**11/3-11/12**

#### **Sports, Social Norms, and Social Change: Issues of Gender**

This section extends the discussion of social issues to gender concerns. We will discuss Alison Gordon and the first women sports reporters, the response of sports organizations to the deeper involvement of women in sports, naming issues and Title IX. We will also discuss feminist responses to sports media and the objectifying of women in *Sports Illustrated*, on sports television (including ESPN and Fox Sports), and through the variety of sports media.

Readings: Billings et al. Ch. 6 (pp. 114-138). Course Reader: Fink and Kensicki, "An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and Textual Constructions of Femininity in *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*" (pp. 317-340), Gordon, "Foreword" and "Token Broad" (pp. 7-10, 118-137).

#### **Week Thirteen and Fourteen**

**11/17-11/26**

#### **Sports, Sports Gaming, Legal and Virtual Realities**

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 participant cultures that have grown from fan reaction to sports and the appeal to fans to take part in sports as "coaches" and "players."

Readings: Billings et al. Ch. 15 (pp. 329-350). Course Reader-Daglow and Kavanaugh "Fantasy Baseball" (pp.629-632), 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), Hylton, “The Major League Players Association and the Ownership of Sports Statistics: The Untold Story of Round One” (pp. 87-108), *Uhlander v. Hendrickson*, *EI Newsletter* Vol. 4 No. 2, July 1974.  
Class Viewing: “Of Dice and Men.”

**Sport and Society Paper Due November 19.**

### **Week Fifteen**

#### **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.” 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 the reconstruction of nationalism in “Miracle.”

Readings: Billings, et al. Ch. 15 (pp. 291-308). 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).

Class Viewing-Selections from “The Pride of the Yankees,” “The Jackie Robinson Story,” “Brian’s Song,” “Miracle.”

**Final Exam December 10, 2-4.**



**COMM 383m: Sports, Communication, and Culture  
Class Assignments**

***Writing Assignment #1***

Sports Event Analysis Paper

5-7 pages

Fall, 2015

One of the premises of this class is that sports narratives are, to a great degree, shaped by the media on which they exist. At the same time, we assert that elements of the sports narrative must remain coherent across the various media on which the story is told or they will be meaningless. In this paper, you will examine a sports narrative across several media, identifying key elements of the narrative that shift, depending on the medium, and elements that remain stable.

As we discuss throughout the semester, for the vast majority of its audience, the narrative of a sporting event is created in the mediated presentation of the event. Even at live events, fans are treated to mediated framing of the event (scoreboards, replays, announcements of important milestones, and so on). However, the experience for those viewing sports over traditional and online media is typically even richer in narrative construction. The sports story told on the field or court is deconstructed by directors and producers and announcers and reconstructed as a mediated narrative.

You are to write a critical analysis of the presentation of a single sports event across three media platforms. One of those platforms must be traditional media (either television or

radio). Another must be some form of online media (espn.com, coverage on the league site, or the team site, take your pick). The third must be a twitter trend on some aspect of the game. You are to examine the varying ways in which these media create narrative coverage of the event.

**Key** to this assignment is recognizing that you are not examining the actions on the field but the ways in which broadcasters and online sources reconstruct the actions into stories. You are examining how these communicators create the experience of the sport for their viewers and readers and how, in creating that experience, create messages that tell their viewers/readers what is important, who are the heroes/agents of action, what is the struggle or dramatic focus.

You are to use the elements of narrative theory to make your analysis. You are to identify ways in which each narrative creates a coherent (internally consistent) story out of the event and ways in which the three media create fidelity (or fail to create fidelity) between their accounts. For instance, you might find a national broadcast on Fox Sports of an event that identifies a particular player or team as failing to live up to expectations, having a poor outing, or failing to play hard. You might find that story recast by the team's website so that the player or team is alleviated of blame for the failure. You can note that these stories lack fidelity probably because of the conflicting values of the story-tellers (the broadcasters want to offer a relatively unbiased opinion, the team wants to sell you their product---a "great" team worth cheering for).

You are not to examine any sports from USC. You must examine a **professional** sports event. I cannot make any exceptions to this policy, even if you mistakenly write a paper on an amateur event. You will receive no grade for a paper on an amateur event and will have to rewrite the paper at a ten percent loss of grade. So, make sure the event you want to examine is a professional event before writing your paper.

Drawing on class theory, your analysis should examine the ways in which the directors of classic media **construct the story** of the event and compare that construction with those of non-traditional, online media. How do the play-by-play announcer, color commentator and director (who chooses the shots) reconstruct the game? What do they focus on (and get you to focus on)? How do they create the impression that they are constructing an objective report of the event? What do they do that supports the interests of the sports team or league or athlete?

Specifically, you are to examine the construction of characters by the media. Who are the lead characters in this story for the media? Who are the heroes and/or villains? Who are the agents and who are the opposition? What actional tendencies do the story-tellers point to in order to reinforce their identification of certain characters as central, important, stars, agents, or heroes? What does this tell us about the values of the story-tellers (what do they value in heroes/agents . . . what do they criticize in villains or heels)?

Compare this to how the online source constructs the game. What is the focus of the online source? If it is a “fan” site, what does it create as “of interest” to fans (in other words, by focusing on one thing, what does it imply should be of interest to you as a fan?)? If it is a team or league site, what does it do to promote the interests of the team or league? What sort of advertising does it put forward? What team/athlete products, services or events does it promote? How does it create a “home team” language (verbal or nonverbal)?

Finally, during the game, you are to find a twitter conversation on some element of the game and follow the conversation to its end. You are to explain how the twitter users reconstruct the game. What do they focus on? What is of importance to them? How do they create the story of the game or event? This should only take a limited time and a limited part of your analysis as there are likely to be several different conversations that appear and disappear during the time that the event takes place. Follow one, review it, and explain how the twitter users create the game in a way that varies with those of the more traditional purveyors of the game (and may conflict with their interests). I realize that we are already into the era of Snapchat and Instagram and a variety of other forms of social media that may supersede Twitter. But, for the moment, Twitter will work fine as our engine of social media narrative.

This paper should be primarily descriptive in analysis. This means that you need to load it up with specific illustrations from the various media you examine. You also need to demonstrate a mastery of class concepts by showing how each narrative construction of the event: 1.) recreates the event in a way unique to that medium and 2.) displays the interests of the communicators who employ that medium.

Note, in spite of the fact that this is a class paper, you will be performing a pretty comprehensive marketing analysis (albeit, brief). Central to effective marketing is knowing your target audience(s), the media you have available and the ways in which that media shapes your message. So, this can be a particularly valuable exercise if you have any interest in working in sports media or marketing.

You don't have much space (only 5-7 pages), so you need to have very clear illustrations and explain them succinctly. This may seem like a lot to do during a single event. However, remember that you can review twitter feeds after the event. So, make sure you focus strongly on the broadcast of the event. C papers will simply repeat what was seen on the various media. B and A papers will show how the different media create different forms of communication and how the interests of the communicators inform their discourse.

Papers will be graded on clarity of explanation and analysis, strength of insights, and effective use of class concepts. Papers with excessive errors in spelling or grammar (over fifteen) will be returned to the author for a rewrite. Rewritten papers will lose a letter grade and the authors will receive a zero for the assignment until the rewritten papers are handed in.

Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. I'm excited to hear about what you find.

***Writing Assignment #2***

Sport and Society Critical Analysis Paper

7-9 pages

Fall, 2015

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 **five** years. Writing on an older story will lead to a zero on this assignment. You are to trace the entire "story" of one major sports event of the last five years. You are to follow the story's trajectory from first report to last report. Thus, the story must (for the moment) be considered dead (ended). If you have any questions regarding this, ask me.

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 many other cases, sports have been way behind society and in most cases sports have followed their own unique value criteria in matters of race, gender, sexuality, disabilities, and social class. In examining the story, you are to describe the values exemplified in the actions of sports organizations and compare those to the values shown in the actions of the contemporary society. 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, sexuality, management and labor, classic American value systems, social class, and so on.

Do NOT start with the most famous story you know. Likely, many other students have already started pursuing that one. Start with your favorite sport and look at various stories from the last five years that might impact the discussion of social issues and social change.

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 evolving 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 10 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.

### ***Twitter Conversation Assignment***

COMM 383m

Fall, 2015

As part of your class grade, you are to produce forty tweets during the semester to add to the conversation on the class Twitter account. You can produce these tweets by placing #USCAISMS at the end of your tweet. #USCAISMS will lead to your tweet being aggregated with the other class tweets on the Annenberg Institute of Sports, Media and Society web site. The Teaching Assistants will be asking for class Twitter account names early in the semester. You will need to provide your Twitter handle so that they can check on your aggregated total at the end of the semester.

Also, you **are required** to follow me on Twitter and **you are required to direct a tweet to me (@SCDurbin) at least twice during the semester**. I want to engage in conversation with you about sports subjects. Unfortunately, there are 150 of you and one

of me. In class, that tends to mean I speak a lot and you listen a lot. **I want to hear your opinions concerning current issues in sports, sports media and sports marketing.**

If I do not respond to your tweet, don't feel bad or think that bodes ill for your grade. I'm only one person and I may not have anything relevant or useful to say about the subject (not that that stops most folks on Twitter from commenting endlessly). I will note what you say and, if I can reply in any meaningful way, I will. Also, as I mention below, don't worry if I disagree with your tweet. A rousing conversation with robust disagreement (stated with civility) is always a huge plus.

I'm serious about hearing directly from you. Failure to tweet me directly at least twice will result in an automatic 30% reduction in your Twitter assignment grade.

For those of you who tweet, forty tweets over fifteen weeks should be a very light load. Producing the minimal number of tweets will get you 75% on your Twitter grade for the semester. If all your tweets for the semester are within less than a one-week span (for instance, you waited until the last week of the semester and then threw them together), you will lose an additional 25% of your grade. However, there are a number of ways in which you can add to your grade throughout the semester.

1. Posting a high volume of tweets (over half a dozen) in an important conversation (one that includes more than half a dozen other tweeters) should help move the conversation forward and give you a bump in your grade.
2. Posting especially insightful tweets will help your grade.
3. Starting a conversation that grows into an important conversation (more than ten other tweeters comment on it) can help.
4. Showing proficiency in tweeting language (e.g. using # and @ and other tweeting tools effectively) will help your grade.
5. Going well beyond the minimal number of assigned tweets will show that you are moving conversation forward, not simply fulfilling the minimal assignment. So, producing eighty or one hundred tweets or more during the semester will have a positive impact on your grade.
6. Of course, showing an understanding of course material in your tweets can help your grade (though, this may be a challenge in 140 strokes).

## **Subject Matter**

The goal of this assignment is to help you build a public profile in sports communication. A second goal is to create a class conversation on important or interesting sports issues of the day. So, you are to discuss important sports stories **as they occur**. Commenting on old or dead stories will not help your grade. You may discuss course material (however, note the comments below). The bulk of conversation should focus on what's happening at that moment in the sports and sports media worlds.

## Some Rules

Remember, TWITTER IS A FULLY PUBLIC FORUM. Do not say anything on Twitter you wouldn't want everyone in the world (including your friends, classmates, professor, and university) to see. You are not to criticize your classmates (even if they are famous athletes and/or fail in some public sports activity). You are not to criticize your teaching assistants, professor, the class, USC Annenberg, or the University. You may criticize USC athletes who are not in the class and USC coaches on performance issues as you would any well-known athletes. But, remember, you do have a relationship (whether you think you do or not) with these folks and you don't want to be at a party some Friday night and run into a particularly large and ticked off offensive linemen who read your tweet criticizing his inefficiency last week.

As for criticisms, never use any language that could be considered defamatory or personal, racist or sexist, or be offensive in any other way. You may criticize someone's performance or actions. But, do not call them "stupid" or "scared" or use any other personal attacks. This is not only important as a matter of class decorum. This is important for your public image and, frankly, is a matter of simple civility. You may get noticed for calling someone a "big, ugly, stupid oaf who should be put to sleep." But, you'd get noticed as the person who wasn't sharp enough to come up with a savvy criticism of a player's performance so fell back on name-calling.

Failure to follow these rules will lead to a reduction in your grade and the removal of your tweet. Persistent problems may lead to disciplinary action.

Finally, remember, even at 140 strokes a shot (minus nine strokes for #USCAISMS), this is your forum and you are creating a public persona on it. Build your own voice. You don't need to comment on every story that occurs in a day. But, make your comments your own and make them count for you. Create your own voice. These tweets will be seen by thousands of people (some will be seen by millions). Create a public brand for yourself.

Note: Tweets that offer vague questions ("Is anybody else watching the Lakers' game tonight?") do nothing to move conversation forward and won't help your grade. Have an opinion and express it (with grace). Your world is being more and more defined (and delimited) by the technologies that allow you to communicate. Your ability to use those technologies effectively to communicate will directly impact your success in life (in trying to get dates, get a job, not look too stupid on the job, and so on). Exploit the unique qualities of those technologies. Don't simply follow the herd.

I will try to run through the tweet discussions daily and will comment where appropriate. I certainly won't comment on every tweet (I will likely only comment on a small fraction of them---this is **your** conversation---I will only enter it when I believe I may have something useful to offer). If you believe I have said something inaccurate in class or in a tweet about a **current** event or issue, feel free to disagree with me (but, you'd better have some real strong points to back you up). Also, if I express disagreement with your

comments in a tweet that does not mean that you are going to lose points for that tweet. In fact, if you have good reasons for your comments and we get into a running disagreement online, you're likely to be helping your grade.