

**JOUR 432: Sports Commentary**

**Units: 4**

**Spring 2018 – Wednesdays – 6:30-9:50 p.m.**

**Section:** 21293R

**Location:** ANN L116

**Instructor: Miki Turner**

**Office:** ANN414E

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 3-4 p.m., or by appointment

**Contact Info:** mpturner@usc.edu

**I. Course Description**

Sports commentary is an art that goes well beyond covering athletes and the games they play. We will explore the issues around sports, personalities and yes, the game itself on all platforms. This section of 432 produces a weekly YouTube show called “You’ve Been Schooled,” in which students will express their thoughts on relevant sports-related issues of the week.

**II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment**

The purpose of this class is to teach students how to write engaging, thought-provoking and artful sports commentary that will challenge the way people think and allow readers and viewers an opportunity to get to know athletes beyond the x’s and o’s. We’ll work to uncover the inspirations, motivations and influences behind the athletes, events and others involved in sports. It could be a millionaire that spends his weekends coaching Little League; it could be writing a column supporting Pete Rose’s inclusion in the Hall of Fame or encouraging Kobe Bryant to retire now while he’s on top. Not only will we focus on world-class athletes; but also those on the collegiate, prep and community levels. All of their stories can be as compelling and enlightening as those who receive daily coverage if approached in the right way. Sports commentary is an art form and often is the best writing in a newspaper, website or broadcast outlet.

**III. Description of Assignments**

Students will have to maintain their own text/video blog on individual medium.com sites. Additionally, they will provide written and video coverage of field trips to professional and collegiate sporting events; and create content for our web series "You've Been Schooled." Blog links must be turned in by 5 p.m. Sunday night to Blackboard. If turned in at 5:01 it is considered a missed deadline and your grade will be impacted. The final project will be a multiplatform presentation on a current issue in sports. It can include coverage of a player, event or issue and must be presented in a compelling column and video interview. Students must demonstrate that they have thoroughly researched the topic with graphics, a timeline or archival footage to supplement their package.

**IV. Grading**

**a. Breakdown of Grade**

| Assignment | Points | % of Grade |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Blog posts | 15 | 15% |
| Show prep and participation | 20 | 20% |
| Participation | 5 | 5% |
| Final Project | 60 | 60% |
| **TOTAL** | **100** | **100%** |

**b. Grading Scale**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 95% to 100%: A | 80% to 83%: B- | 67% to 69%: D+ |
| 90% to 94%: A- | 77% to 79%: C+ | 64% to 66%: D |
| 87% to 89%: B+ | 74% to 76%: C | 60% to 63%: D- |
| 84% to 86%: B | 70% to 73%: C- | 0% to 59%: F |

**c. Grading Standards**

To maintain a 3.0 average students are required to turn in classwork on time, participate in class discussions--particularly when there is a guest lecturer; provide technical assistance when needed in the field and pass any in-class quizzes or assignments.

All assignments will be edited on a professional basis and you will be judged first on the accuracy, fairness and objectivity of your stories. You will then be evaluated for broadcast style, editing, production value, originality and the ability to meet deadlines.

**“A” stories** are accurate, clear, comprehensive stories that are well written and require only minor copyediting (i.e., they would be aired or published). Video work must also be shot and edited creatively, be well paced and include good sound bites and natural sound that add flavor, color or emotion to the story.

**“B” stories** require more than minor editing and have a few style or spelling errors or one significant error of omission. For video, there may be minor flaws in the composition of some shots or in the editing. Good use of available sound bites is required.

**“C” stories** need considerable editing or rewriting and/or have many spelling, style or omission errors. Camera work and editing techniques in video stories are mediocre or unimaginative, but passable. Sound bites add little or no color - only information that could be better told in the reporter’s narration.

**“D” stories** require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted.

Camera work is unsatisfactory or fails to show important elements.

**“F” stories** have failed to meet the major criteria of the assignment, are late, have numerous errors or both. Your copy should not contain any errors in spelling, style, grammar and facts. Any misspelled or mispronounced proper noun will result in an automatic “F” on that assignment. Any factual error will also result in an automatic “F” on the assignment. Accuracy is the first law of journalism. The following are some other circumstances that would warrant a grade of “F” and potential USC/Annenberg disciplinary action:

• Fabricating a story or making up quotes or information.

• Plagiarizing a script/article, part of a script/article or information from any source.

• Staging video or telling interview subjects what to say.

• Using video shot by someone else and presenting it as original work.

• Shooting video in one location and presenting it as another location.

• Using the camcorder to intentionally intimidate, provoke or incite a person or a group of people to elicit more “dramatic” video.

• Promising, paying or giving someone something in exchange for doing an interview either on or off camera.

• Missing a deadline.

**V. Assignment Submission Policy**

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior consent from the instructor. Any late or missed assignment will result in an automatic F. Assignments must be sent through the instructor’s email. All written assignments are due at 5 p.m. on Sunday unless otherwise stated by instructor. Any assignment received after 5:01 will be considered a missed deadline and result in an F.

There will be in-class assignments with deadlines and other assignments that will take place out in the field. It is very important that you establish contacts with campus and outside agencies and publicists when you are assigned to shoot events. Again, the deadline is the deadline and deadlines are not negotiable.

Students will be expected to adhere to all deadlines and to contribute weekly to class social media accounts that will be set up.

**VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

You will need a Smartphone to record interviews and video. You will also need to bring your laptop to every class and to establish notification alerts from at least two major sports apps (ESPN, FOX Sports, CNN, Sports Illustrated, various newspapers).

**VII. Laptop Policy**

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the [**Annenberg Virtual Commons**](http://vc.uscannenberg.org/) for more information. To connect to USC’s Secure Wireless network, please visit USC’s [Information Technology Services](http://itservices.usc.edu/wireless/support/) website.

**Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 1/7/19 – 4/26/19)**

Friday, January 25: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, January 25: Last day to drop a class without a mark of “W,” except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001

Tuesday, January 29: last day to drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund for Session 001

Friday, February 22: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the week three equivalent for short sessions) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, April 5: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

**VIII. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

***Important note to students:*** *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topics/Daily Activities | Readings and Homework | Deliverable/Due Dates |
| Week 1  Dates: 1/9 | 1/9: Discussion of syllabus and lecture on the art of sports commentary. We’ll also recap the national championship game. Students will be asked to write a commentary on a tape of the game to be played in class. | 1/9 Commentary on national championship. | 1/9 assignment due on 1/15 at 5 p.m. |
| Week 2  Dates: 1/16 | 1/16: Discussion of commentaries. Studio A training. | Pick a sports topic to write a blog post on. | 1/16 assignment due on 1/22 at 5 p.m. |
| Week 3  Dates: 1/23 | 1/23: Christine Brennan of USA Today, Skype lecture. You will interview her, tailoring your commentary on your own questions and not others. The important thing to remember here is: focus. | Students will write a feature commentary on Brennan based on her Skype interview. | 1/23 assignment due on 1/29 at 5 p.m. |
| Week 4  Dates: 1/30 | 1/28: Will attend Lakers game on 1/29 | Students will write column on the game. | 1/28 assignment is to write an opinion piece on the upcoming Super Bowl. Offer your assessment of both teams and which team you think will win. |
| Week 5  Dates: 2/6 | 2/8: First Show featuring commentary on the Super Bowl, local teams. | Studio A |  |
| Week 6  Dates: 2/13 | 2/13: Clippers game. 7 p.m. Must arrive at Staples by 5 p.m. | Will do pre-game standups at the game. | 2/13 assignment is to come prepared with topics to discuss for podcast on 2/20 class. |
| Week 7  Dates: 2/20 | 2/20: Podcast commentary. |  |  |
| Week 8  Dates: 2/27 | 3/27 Guest speaker: TBD |  |  |
| Week 9  Dates: 3/6 | 3/6 Studio A Session. Second Show | Students will come prepared to discuss issues. You can pick a topic, team or player to debate. | Assignment due by the end of class. |
| Dates: 3/10-3/17 | **No Classes** |  | **[Spring Break]** |
| Week 10  Dates: 3/20 | 3/20: Discussion on feature commentary for print and TV and Audition training. Guest speaker: TBD. |  | 3/20: Feature commentary. Find a USC athlete do a podcast with. You’ll discuss their journey to USC, their role on the team (if it is a team sport), individual highlights, etc. Assignment due on 3/26 at 5 p.m. |
| Week 11  Dates: 3/27 | 3/23: King’s Game (Saturday date) | Students will listen to analysts and analyze the game for a podcast | 3/27 assignment. Written commentary on the Los Angeles Dodgers. Will they be as good as they were last year and why? What went wrong in the World Series and what have they done to correct the situation.  Also, students will do an oral presentation of their final projects |
| Week 12  Dates: 4/3 | 4/3: Field Trip to NFL Network |  | Students need to book studio time with instructor for Final production by 4/10. |
| Week 13  Dates: 4/10 | 4/10 SHOW 3: session focusing on the NFL draft and first week in MLB baseball |  | 4/10 assignment, rough cut of Final elements due on 4/18. Prepare topics for final show. |
| Week 14  Dates: 4/17 | Final Show. |  |  |
| Week 15  Dates: 4/24 | Run throughs for Final Project with guest speaker to critique. |  |  |
| FINAL EXAMS  Dates: 5/1, 7-9 p.m. | Summative experience.  Finals due by 9 p.m. |  |  |

**IX. Policies and Procedures**

**Additional Policies**

* Please be prompt to class. Assignments or exercises given in class may not be made up if you are late or absent. Please let me know in advance if possible if you have a family emergency or illness.
* Failure to bring your SD card, computer or camera to class will result in an F for the day unless otherwise notified.
* Participation is part of your grade. Using technology for unrelated class activities should be avoided, as this will affect your participation grade. Use of your computers and digital devices is encouraged for this class when these tools are used for class assignments and projects.
* When e-mailing your instructor, please include the name of the course and your last name in the subject line.

**Internships**

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must by unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism class.

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**a. 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/b/11-00-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/>.

*USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity*

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism’s policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

“Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an ‘F’ on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators.”

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

**b. Support Systems**

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

*Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

*USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.* Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu

**X. About Your Instructor**

Award-winning photojournalist/producer/author Miki Turner (***journey to the woman i’ve come to love, tomorrow***) has been working in the communications industry for more than 29 years, specializing in print, television, radio and new media. Before completing her first book, ***journey to the woman i’ve come to love***, Turner held positions at the NFL Network, Jet magazine, ESPN, MSNBC.com, AOL.com, BET, and several newspapers. Additionally, her work has appeared in Ebony, Essence, Upscale and Arise magazines. Her photography has been featured in exhibitions in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Los Angeles, Richmond, Va. and Paris. She recently won a prize for photography at the Florence Biennale X in Florence, Italy; and was a guest instructor at the South Pacific Photo Workshop in Dumaguete, Philippines.