



JOUR 478: Politics of Sports Writing 4 Units

Fall 2021 – Thursday – 6-9:20 p.m.

Section: 21283R

Location: ANN 309

Instructor: Cristina Daglas

Office: TBD

Office Hours: Thursdays, 5-6 p.m., and by appointment

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Pronouns: she/her

Course Description

We are in the middle of a journalistic reckoning – social unrest, newsrooms in crisis, a startling lack of diversity, a still-surging pandemic. All of this adds on to an already complex sports landscape, one that has converged with racism, sexism, mental health, discrimination and corruption. To put it simply, sports are human, and sports are political. As Howard Bryant writes in his Introduction to Best American Sports Writing (a reading assignment for Week 2), “Despite the ubiquity of the phrase ‘stick to sports,’ sports has never quite known how to stay in its lane, never allowed itself to be relegated to the kids’ table, even when newspapers would derisively refer to it as the ‘Toy Department.’” This course will explore those complexities, delving into reporting, writing, editing, access, source-building and social media. We will critically examine the different styles of sports writing, focusing on the social context of sports and writing, and the relationship between sports and politics.

The course will be reading, writing and research intensive. It will require a deep level of critical thinking. And it will require thoughtful and consistent participation. Classes will include lively group discussions, respectful debate and exercises designed to make you question even the most basic journalistic principles. You will be asked to challenge your own opinions and those of your classmates, working together to refine your perspectives on sports and sports journalism. And you will have the opportunity to learn from award-winning writers and editors. They will join us to discuss their work and specific topics, providing individual case studies as we work our way to final projects.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will:

- Have a stronger understanding of the current state of sports journalism
- Be able to differentiate between styles of sports writing, and when each is applied
- Identify and execute in-depth reporting techniques and challenges
- Think critically about the role of sport in society, particularly the intersection of sport and politics
- Develop in-depth reporting and editing skills

Description and Assessment of Assignments

Students will spend the semester reading, participating in conversation and debate, and working on a reported narrative of their own. Each assignment will build toward the final project – the pitch letter, first draft, second draft, peer edits and final draft. Students will learn reporting, writing and editing techniques, while also hearing from some of the best sports journalists in the business, understanding their approach to their jobs in an evolving media climate.

Course Notes and Policies

The culture of this course will be based in respect.

- All opinions will be encouraged and valued. Any issues will be quickly addressed. Approaching each discussion with an open mind will lead to more fruitful conversation.

- To that end, participation is essential. Please come prepared to discuss readings and ask questions.
- And to that end, attendance is crucial. If you're going to miss a class, please notify me in advance. A pattern of missed classes will impact your final grade.
- I will hold office hours before class each week and by appointment. The best way to reach me is via email. I will respond within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours on weekends.

Required Readings, hardware/software, laptops and supplementary materials

This course will carry a heavy reading load each week, both in assigned readings and those required for your final project. All assigned readings will be made available on Blackboard. Other readings for your project may require subscriptions.

All USC students have access to the AP stylebook via the USC library.
(https://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=http://www.apstylebook.com/usc_edu/.)

Students will be graded on adherence to AP style in assignments, including when writing about race and ethnicity. The updated AP style guidelines include capitalizing Black and deleting the hyphen in terms such as Asian American.

The following style guides will be available on BB:

NLGJA Stylebook on LGBTQ Terminology: <https://www.nlgja.org/stylebook/>

Native American Journalists Association: <https://najanewsroom.com/reporting-guides/>

National Association of Black Journalists: <https://www.nabj.org/page/styleguide>

Asian American Journalists Association: <https://aaja.org/2020/11/30/covering-asia-and-asian-americans/>

The Diversity Style Guide: <https://www.diversitystyleguide.com>

The NAHJ Cultural Competence Handbook: <https://nahj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NAHJ-Cultural-Competence-Handbook.pdf>

Transjournalist Style Guide: <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide/>

SPJ Diversity Toolbox: <https://www.spj.org/diversity.asp>

Annenberg also has its own style guide that students can access through the app Amy the Stylebot on the Annenberg Media Center's Slack workspace. Annenberg's style guide is being developed with input from students, and whether or not students use our guide, they can provide valuable input here: <http://bit.ly/annenbergediting>

In addition, Annenberg Media's Guide for Equitable Reporting Strategies and Newsroom Style (<https://bit.ly/AnnMediaEquitableReportingGuide>) created by students, has detailed guidelines on thoughtful language and best practices for creating journalism respectful and reflective of a diverse world. Along with other useful resources, it can be found on Blackboard and is incorporated into Amy the Stylebot (mentioned above).

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 Digital Lounge for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's Information Technology Services website.

Annenberg is committed to every student's success. There are multiple resources available to assist students with issues that limit their ability to participate fully in class. Please reach out to a professor and/or advisor for help connecting with these resources. They include the Annenberg Student Success Fund, a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities, and other scholarships and awards.

News Consumption and Knowledge of Current Events

As journalists, you should keep up with what is happening on campus, in the Los Angeles area, in the United States and around the world. USC provides subscriptions for students, staff and faculty to The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, as well as the Wall Street Journal.

Through the USC library, you have access to many regional news outlets and a variety of publications that cover specific communities. You should be familiar with publications covering the many communities of Los Angeles such as The Los Angeles Sentinel, The Los Angeles Blade, The Los Angeles Wave, La Opinión, L.A. Taco, The Eastsider, The Armenian Weekly, High Country News, the Asian Journal and others. You should keep up with the Daily Trojan and uscannenbergmedia.com, including USC student-led verticals Dímelo and Black., listen to NPR and news radio, watch local and national television news, read news email newsletters and push alerts and follow news organizations social networks, including Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. You're encouraged to sign up for Nieman Lab's newsletter, which publishes brief, readable articles on important issues in the media. Following the news will sharpen your judgment and provide good (and bad) examples of the state of mainstream journalism.

Grading

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Pitch Letter	50	5%
Questions for guest speakers, reading reflections, assignments	150	15%
First Draft	200	20%
Second Draft	200	20%
Peer Edits	100	10%
Final Draft	300	30%
TOTAL	1000	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

Journalism

Our curriculum is structured to prepare students to be successful in a professional news organization with the highest standards. Students will be evaluated first on accuracy and truthfulness in their stories. Good journalism prioritizes transparency, context and inclusivity. All stories should be written in AP style unless Annenberg style conflicts, in which case students can follow Annenberg style.

The following standards apply to news assignments.

“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. Sources are varied, diverse and offer a complete view of the topic.

“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. Sources are mostly varied, diverse and offer a complete view of the topic.

“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. Sources are repetitive or incomplete.

“D” stories require excessive rewriting, have numerous errors and should not have been submitted. Camera work is unsatisfactory or fails to show important elements. Sources are repetitive or incomplete.

“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.

For assignments other than conventional news reporting, quality of research and clarity of expression are the most important criteria. In research papers, good research should be presented through good writing, and good writing should be backed up by good research. Clarity of expression includes thoughtful organization of the material, insight into the subject matter and writing free from factual, grammatical and spelling errors. Research should draw on a diverse range of sources.

Students are encouraged to submit their work for consideration to Annenberg Media or the Daily Trojan, or pitch it to mainstream media outlets. Visit <http://bit.ly/SubmitAnnenbergMedia> for more information about that submission and review process and email Daily Trojan news editors at dt.city@gmail.com for more on how to pitch work to the campus newspaper.

Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/23/21 – 12/3/21)

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20213/calendar/>

Friday, September 10: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, September 10: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall

Tuesday, September 14: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of “W” and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001

Friday, October 8: Last day to drop a course without a mark of “W” on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of “W” will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]

Friday, October 8: Last day to change pass/no pass to letter grade for Session 001. [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

Friday, November 12: Last day to drop a class with a mark of “W” for Session 001

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 Thurs, Aug. 26	Journalism’s Reckoning and How We Got Here	“A Reckoning Over Objectivity, Led by Black Journalists” (Wesley Lowery); “Marty Baron Made The Post Great Again. Now, the News is Changing.” (Ben Smith); “What Went Wrong at the Los Angeles Times” (Laura Wagner); “NYT opinion editor resigns after outrage over Tom Cotton op-ed”; “A Disparaging Video Prompts Explosive Fallout Within ESPN” (Kevin Draper)	+ Read before class
Week 2 Thurs., Sept. 2	The Many Forms of Sports Reporting	“Introduction” (Howard Bryant, BASW 2017); “Michael Jordan Has Not Left the Building” (Wright Thompson); “Lawdy, Lawdy, He’s Great” (Mark Kram); “Roger Federer as Religious Experience” (David Foster Wallace); “Naomi Osaka is Part of a Larger War Within Sports” (Jemele Hill)	+ Read before class + Pitch Letter
Week 3 Thurs., Sept. 9	The Politics of In-depth Reporting and the art of the tick-tock w/ Ramona Shelburne	“Inside the tension between Kawhi Leonard and the Spurs” (Ramona Shelburne, Michael C. Wright); “How LeBron’s decision	+ Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Ramona about these stories and/or her process

		instantly changed the Lakers, Cavs and NBA” (Shelburne); “Inside the NBA coronavirus shutdown: How a few tense hours changed everything” (Shelburne) Plus: Listen to Episode 1 of the Sterling Affairs	
Week 4 Thurs., Sept. 16	The Politics of Social Justice Reporting w/ Katie Barnes	“Inside WNBA legend Maya Moore’s extraordinary quest for justice;” “The battle over Title IX and who gets to be a woman in sports: Inside the raging national debate;” “They are the Champions;” “Azzi Fudd is Unbreakable”	+ Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Katie about these stories and/or their process
Week 5 Thurs., Sept. 23	The Politics of Source-building w/ Adrian Wojnarowski	“Clippers to land Leonard, George” (Woj); “Sources: Fear of Lakers dynasty drove Clips’ deal” (Woj); “The coronavirus pandemic shut the NBA’s doors – here’s how the league is determining its next steps” (Woj); “Woj Was the Real Star of the 2018 NBA Draft” (Bryan Curtis) Plus: Listen to Episode 1 of The Giannis Draft	+ Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Woj about these stories and/or his process
Week 6 Thurs., Sept. 30	Race & Sports w/ Howard Bryant	“Why it matters that Roger Goodell didn’t say Colin Kaepernick’s name;” “The exile of Oakland A’s Bruce Maxwell and the birth of MLB’s Black player movement;” “The reality of Black pain is breaking American sports’ status quo”	+ Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Howard about his work and/or process
Week 7 Thurs., Oct. 7	Covering the moment, from social unrest to COVID and the NBA Finals w/ Malika Andrews	“How close are we to live sports? Where the world’s biggest leagues stand right now;” “How the NBA bubble has	+ First Draft Due + Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Malika about these stories and/or her process

		become a platform for social justice;" "NBA Playoffs: Jimmy Butler and the Miami Heat are in a barista battle;" "What the work behind political change looks like for LeBron James and star athletes"	
Week 8 Thurs., Oct. 14	NO CLASS		Fall Recess
Week 9 Thurs., Oct. 21	Covering the Culture w/ Joon Lee	"Don't be fooled by Kim Ng's hiring. Women in baseball say MLB has a long way to go;" "Inside the rise of MLB's Ivy League culture: Stunning numbers and a culture of what's next;" "Unwritten rules are made to be broken! How a new generation of players is shifting MLB's culture;" "Election 2020: How does political perception differ from reality in American sports?" Watch: Joon on First Take	+ Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Joon about his stories and/or his process
Week 10 Thurs., Oct. 28	The Politics of Investigative Reporting w/ Diana Moskovitz	"Here's What Happened When Jane Doe Sued Chauncey Billups For Sexual Assault;" "Inside The Closed-Door NFL Hearing That Reinstated Greg Hardy;" "When The Robert Kraft Case Fell Apart, The Women Were Left To Pay The Price;" "This Is How Las Vegas Protects Floyd Mayweather"	+ Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Diana about these stories and/or her process
Week 11 Thurs., Nov. 4	The Politics of Editing	"How Reche Caldwell Googled his way from the Patriots to prison" (David Fleming); "Why did Derrick Gordon	+ Read before class + Second Draft, this time to peer editors.

		make history and then suddenly shun the spotlight?" (Pablo Torre); "The courageous fight to fix the NBA's mental health problem" (Jackie MacMullan); "How NBA executive Jeff David stole \$13 million from the Sacramento Kings" (Kevin Arnovitz)	
Week 12 Thurs., Nov. 11	Getting it So, So Wrong	"Dr. V's Magical Putter" (Caleb Hanan); "SB Nation Removes Article Criticized as Sympathetic to Convicted Rapist" (Sydney Ember and Daniel Victor); "A Rape on Campus" (Sabrina Rubin Erdely)	+ Peer Editor edits due + Read before class + Reading reflection: 300-500 words on what went wrong in these stories. What are the biggest issues at play?
Week 13 Thurs., Nov. 18	The Politics of Access and Event Coverage	"Bearing witness to the disaster at 12" (Kevin Van Valkenburg); "Watching Drake is almost as exhausting as being Drake" (Tim Keown); "Almost There" (Roger Angell); "In Chicago, the final wait for a Cubs World Series win mixed joy and sorrow" (Wright Thompson)	+ Read before class
Week 14 Thurs., Nov. 25	NO CLASS		Thanksgiving Recess
Week 15 Thurs., Dec. 2	From Finance Reporter to Football Analyst w/ Mina Kimes Plus: Finally, The Intersection of Sports and Politics	"So, Mina Kimes Walks Into a Bar..."; "The Search for Aaron Rodgers" (Kimes); Watch: Mina Kimes frustrated with minority experience in sports "Why President Trump Ignites Gregg Popovich" (Kevin Arnovitz); "Inside the NBA's silent	+ Due: Think beyond the gamer. Pick a game. Write about anything but the game. 500-700 words. + Read before class + Three thoughtful and specific questions for Mina + Course Evaluations

		tension surrounding Daryl Morey” (Arnovitz); “Election 2020: Inside the political donation history of wealthy sports owners”	
FINAL EXAM PERIOD Thurs., Dec. 9, 7-9 p.m.	So What’d You Learn?		+ Final Draft

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 be unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, 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

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

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

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

uscsa.usc.edu

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

About Your Instructor

Cristina Daglas is a senior deputy editor for ESPN.com, overseeing NBA, WNBA, college basketball, MLB, MMA and boxing coverage, as well as ESPN+ written editorial. Daglas joined ESPN in 2014 as a senior editor at ESPN The Magazine where she primarily covered NFL. Prior to ESPN, she was the editor of D Magazine and Milwaukee Magazine. Daglas holds a B.A. in journalism from the University of Wisconsin and an M.A. in journalism from the University of Missouri, where she was awarded the Thurgood Marshall Fellowship.