

USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS

CTWR 431: WRITING THE SPORTS FILM

Fall 2024, 2 units, Section 19373

Tuesdays, 7:00 – 10:00 pm

Location: SCI 106

Professor: Tyger Williams

Email: Clarencw@usc.edu

Office: SCA 359

Phone: (310) 890-6242

Office Hours: By Appointment

DA: Daniel Ramirez

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COURSE OBJECTIVE:

Why are we drawn to sports movies? Wish fulfillment? Hero worship? Admiration? Community? Identity? Empathy? Why do we sometimes cry? Why do we care? The sports movie is one of the most ubiquitous genres ever. American narrative sports movies, not counting documentaries, number well into the hundreds. They include sub-genres of the biopic, family film, inspirational drama, tragedy, comedy, character drama, social drama, animal stories, fantasy, and anything else anyone decides to mash up with a sports motif.

In this course, you will learn the storytelling elements that make these movies what they are. And you'll discover the hidden competitive stories in your own personal experience. The sports movie generally begins with the character. There is often a clear goal and a clear obstacle. These three elements, along with others, make the sports film one of the most consistent and engaging genres of all time.

COURSE GOALS:

Competition is as old as humanity itself. Sport is simply the organization of the competitive spirit into specific tasks and activities. This class is about more than simply "sport." It's also about competition and what it means to compete. The principles of the "sports movie" extend far beyond a field, court or pool. Together we'll explore how these principles permeate our daily lives and why they are so powerful.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

- Class attendance (see "Class Attendance Policy")
- Assignments/ Participation in discussions and Q & A's
- Midterm & Final Exams

SUGGESTED READING, SCREENWRITING

(Screenplays of the movies we're viewing)

The Writer's Journey by Christopher Vogler

Screenwriting is Rewriting by Jack Epps, Jr.

The Tools of Screenwriting by David Howard and Edward Mabley.

GRADING

Grades will be based on:

-- Grades on Midterm Exam and Final Exam

-- Attendance. Attendance will affect your final grade. Please see attendance policy below,

Weight of Grades as follows:

Midterm: 50%

Final: 50%

Attendance (see attendance policy below)

WRITING DIVISION ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to be on time, prepared for each class, and meet professional standards. CTWR 431 only meets once a week and timely attendance is mandatory and failure to attend all class sessions from beginning to end may affect grades. Students are allowed two absences throughout the semester. On the third absence, students will have their final grade lowered by 10% and an additional 10% for each absence thereafter. Two late arrivals equates to one full absence.

NOTE: Exceptions will be made in the case of religious holidays and DSP accommodations.

In the case of medical emergencies, family emergencies, or allowances needed for personal well-being, all concerns must be communicated and approved by the Instructor. If there is a difference of opinion, the student can contact the Writing Division at (213) 740-3303 or writing@cinema.usc.edu

Exemptions to the attendance policy will be allowed on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).

Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments. Faculty are no longer required to provide an option for students to zoom into class. However, Faculty may choose to use zoom at their discretion in an effort to help students stay current in their course work.

If a student has an emergency and additional accommodations are needed, those accommodations will need to come through the USC Campus Support and Intervention (CSI) office. The Writing Division recommends the student and/or advocate contact CSI at 213-821-4710 and their home department adviser for additional support.

Students must contact the professor 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason.

COMPUTER/TABLET/CELL PHONE USE

You are not allowed to use computers, tablets, or phones in class.

Please take notes by hand. The final and midterm are based on the lectures.

If you use your phone, tablet, or computer in class after one warning, your grade will be lowered by one third for every additional time you use your phone, tablet, or computer in class. (Example: A- to B+.)

RECORDING OF LECTURES IS PROHIBITED AND WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION.

INTERNET, PODCASTING, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND BLOGGING POLICY

Our class lectures and discussions are considered private communications. Not only will we be sharing personal stories, but we'll be sharing intellectual property. Additionally, students and guests come into the class with an understanding that their open and free discussion will be in the safety and privacy of a classroom. Anything that takes place in the class, be it discussions. Debates. Guests talking and/or including lecture material, is off-limits when it comes to posting anywhere on the internet.

A.I. POLICY

The uses of generative Artificial Intelligence to create narrative continue to evolve throughout the media workplace. However, it is vital that before relying on AI to assist in aspects of storytelling that we learn to source and execute our work via our own unique imagination.

Creating, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course. All assignments should be prepared by the student working individually or in groups. Students may not have another person or entity complete any substantive portion of the assignment. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, using AI-generated tools is prohibited in this course, will be identified as plagiarism, and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Note: Screenings are subject to change at Professor's discretion and/or guest availability.

Class 1, August 27:

Lecture: History of sports stories and sports movies. Why do we love them (or hate them)? What do they say about society?

The basics: Character, Plot, Structure, Theme

Assignment: Watch Rudy and complete the structure sheet (TWO WEEKS to complete)

Clips: The Champion (1915), The Champ (1932)

Film : Gran Turismo (2023)

Class 2, September 3:

Lecture: Genres and types of sports movies.

Film: Akeelah and the Bee (2006) Guest: writer-director Doug Atchison

Class 3, September 10:

Lecture: Focus on character stories. The importance of the character arc. Want vs. need

Discussion: Film structure sheet. Rudy/Rocky Gran Turismo/Million Dollar Baby. How do they work?

Film: Million Dollar Baby (2004)

Class 4, September 17:

Lecture: The individual vs the team. Building bonds. Raising the stakes

Film: Friday Night Lights (2004)

Class 5, September 24:

Lecture: Stakes. The sporting world. Getting details right. Dirty Laundry. Comedy and satire.

Discuss: I, Tonya, Bull Durham

Film: Bring it On (2000) Guest: writer Jessica Bendinger (pending)

Class 6, October 1:

Lecture: The Mentor. The fish out of water. The Savior.

Clips: TBD

Film: Edge of America (2003)

Class 7, October 8: Midterm

Lecture: Docs and shorts. Finding interesting subjects.

Film: Trojan War (2015) Guest; writer-director Aaron Rahsaan Thomas

Class 8, October 15: *(or Midterm Assignment)*

Lecture: Sports and society. Sports as vehicles for social change. Race/Gender and sport.

Film: Bend it Like Beckham (2002)

Class 9, October 22:

Lecture: Biography. The business of sport. Plot.

Film: Air (2023) Guest: writer Alex Convery (pending)

Class 10, October 29:

Lecture: Biography. Where to start? What to keep. Truth from Fiction

Film: Nyad (2024) Guest: writer Julia Cox

Class 11, November 5:

Lecture: TBD

Film: Real Steel (2011) Guest: writer John Gatins (pending)

Class 12, November 12:

Lecture: TBD

Film: For Love of the Game (1999) Guest: writer Dana Stevens (pending)

Class 13, November 19:

Lecture: TBD

Film: Fantasy Football (2022) Guest: writer Zoe Marshall

Class 14, November 26:

Seabiscuit

Class 15, December 3:

Final Class

Suggested, not required, viewing over the course of the semester:

Downhill Racer (1969)
 Brian's Song (1971)
 The Longest Yard (1974)
 The Bingo Long All-Stars (1976)
 Bad News Bears (1976)
 Rocky (1976)
 Breaking Away (1979))
 Raging Bull (1980)
 Chariots of Fire (1981)
 Personal Best (1982)

All the Right Moves (1983)
Hoosiers(1986)
Top Gun (1986)
Bull Durham (1988)
Barton Fink (1991)
A League of Their Own (1992)
The Cutting Edge (1992)
Jerry Maguire (1996)
Remember the Titans (2000)
Love & Basketball (2000)
Gladiator (2000)
Billy Elliot (2000)
Miracle (2004)
The Wrestler (2008)
Black Swan (2010)
Moneyball (2011)
Whiplash (2014)
I, Tonya (2017)
Hustle (2022)
The Iron Claw (2023)
Beautiful Game (2024)
Arthur the King (2024)

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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 Workshop on plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://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, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

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.
<https://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. <http://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
genderbased harm. <https://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: <http://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.
<https://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.

<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessmentresponse-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs Provides certification for students with
disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://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. <https://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. <https://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, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

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

DISRUPTIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive
behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability
to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be
required to leave class pending the resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office
of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

**PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN
ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX.**