

## **Sports Writing/Reporting**

**JOUR 4150/6150-001**

**Fall 2025**

**Meeting: MW, 12:40 to 2:05 p.m.**

**Meeman 208**

**Thomas J. Hrach, Ph.D.**

**Meetings:** 12:40 to 2:05 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, 208 Meeman

**Office:** 308 Meeman Journalism Building

**Office Hours:** MW 10 a.m.-noon or by appointment

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## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Catalog description**

Development of advanced writing, reporting, and professional skills specific to sports media. Emphasis on practice of game reporting, feature stories, column and opinion writing, and multimedia.

### **Prerequisites**

JOUR 3120 or 3629

JOUR 3526

### **Textbooks, Software and Required Materials**

Required: Gisondi, J. (2017). Field Guide to Covering Sports Second Edition. Washington: CQ Press. / ISBN-13: 978-1506315683 / ISBN-10: 1506315682.

Here is the link to the textbook:

[https://sagepub.vitalsource.com/reader/books/9781506315690/epubcfi/6/2\[%3Bvnd.vst.idref%3Dcover\]!/4/2\[cover-image\]/2%4038:34](https://sagepub.vitalsource.com/reader/books/9781506315690/epubcfi/6/2[%3Bvnd.vst.idref%3Dcover]!/4/2[cover-image]/2%4038:34)

### **Classroom format**

This course is designed to develop writing, reporting, and professional skills specific to sport media. You will learn about writing strategies for stories produced in print, Web, social media, audio, and video. Some sessions will require students to leave the classroom, in which case conduct will be governed by the rules of the classroom and the rules of the venue in which the class is meeting. A typical class session will consist of a lecture, discussion, and assignment/lab

time. Students are required to complete multiple writing and media projects throughout the semester, as well as a final project.

### **Accessing the course website**

- Go to the University of Memphis Canvas home page: <https://memphis.instructure.com>
- Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
- In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JOUR 4150/6150-001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

### **Assignments & Grading**

Assignment categories and points or percentage weights.

A = 92%-100%

A- = 90%-91%

B+ = 87%-89%

B = 82%-86%

B- = 80%-81%

C+ = 77%-79%

C = 72%-76%

C- = 70%-71%

D = 65%-69%

F = 0%-64%

#### *Grading Philosophy*

A=Professional quality work that could be use with little or no modification; B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement but would require revision to be used professionally; C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement but would need significant revision; D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality; F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirement. NOTE: Plusses and minuses may be given.

### **Undergraduate Assignments**

Quizzes: 14 (15 points each) 225

In-class exercise 14 (5 points each) 70

Assignments: 14 (20 points each) 280

Final In-Depth Story (40 points) 40

Online Portfolio 1 20 points

Total 635 points

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

*Week One, Aug. 25 and 27: Course introduction/No Cheering the Press Box*

Quiz 1: AP Style 1

In-class Exercise 1

Assignment 1: Inverted Pyramid Story

*Week Two, Sept. 3: Writing Workshop/Pre-Game and Gamer*

Quiz 2: AP Style 2

In-Class Exercise 2

Assignment 2: Write the game story from the press conferences

*Week Three, Sept. 8 and 10: Covering a Beat*

Quiz 3: AP Style 3

In-Class Exercise 3

Assignment 3: Choose a Sports Specialty

*Week Four, Sept. 15 and 17: Covering a Game Story*

Quiz 4: AP Style 4

In-class Exercise 4

Assignment 4: Game story

*Week Five, Sept. 22 and 24: Interviewing*

Quiz 5: Baseball

In-class Exercise 5

Assignment 5

*Week Six. Sept. 29 and Oct. 1: Feature Stories*

Quiz 6: Volleyball

In-class Exercise 6

Assignment 6: Re-write game story

*Week Seven, Oct 6 and 8: Columns*

Quiz 7 Ice Hockey

In-class exercise 7

Assignment 7: Write a Column

*Week Eight, Oct. 15: Blogging/Social Media*

Quiz 8: Soccer

In-class exercise 8

Assignment 8: Re-write the Column

*Week Nine Oct. 20 and 22: Social Media Writing*

Quiz 9: Sports Book 1

In-class exercise 9

Assignment 9: Live Tweet a Game

*Week 10, Oct. 27 and 29: Writing for Mobile*

Quiz 10: Sports Book 2

In-class exercise 10

Assignment 10: Game story

*Week 11, Nov. 3 and 5: Visuals*

Quiz 11: Sports Movie

In-class exercise 11

Assignment: Photo package from game

*Week 12, Nov. 10 and 12: Radio/podcasting*

Quiz 12: Olympics

In-class exercise 12

Assignment 12: Radio/podcast

*Week 13, Nov. 17 and 19: Writing for TV*

Quiz 13: Golf

In-class exercise 13

Assignment 13: Write a TV script

*Week 14, Nov. 24: Ethics*

Quiz 14: Tennis

In-class exercise 14

Assignment 14: Re-write the TV script

*Week 15, Dec. 1 and 3: Presentation of Final Stories*

Homework: Final In-depth Stories

*Week 16, Dec. 10: Turn in your online portfolio by the scheduled Final date and time.*

## **ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES**

### **Professional Values and Competencies in JOUR 4150**

Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, both in a global context and in the United States.

Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.

Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.

Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.

Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **How professional values and competencies will be met**

*Cognitive objectives to be mastered (ability to explain, analyze, understand, think critically)*

Understand the role of a multimedia sports journalist in the field of sports journalism.

Demonstrate the ability to conduct interviews with coaches, players, and other stake holders in the sporting community.

Understand the role of social media in sports journalism.

Think critically about the images, video, audio, and graphics presented in stories and packages.

Think critically about the role of race, gender, gender expression, class, sexuality, ability, and power in the sports world and how that plays into the sports journalism.

Analyze published sports stories and packages for accuracy, fairness, and diversity.

Understand AP Style and use it sports reporting.

Understand the role of multimedia platforms in sports journalism.

*Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)*

Students will write several sports news stories or produce several sports broadcast packages during the semester. Story length and details will vary by assignment.

Students are responsible for developing the story idea and researching and writing the story within the stated deadline.

Students will conduct interviews with players, coaches, and stakeholders that incorporate a multicultural understand of the sports world.

Students will analyze award-winning sports journalism for class discussion.

Students will use AP style when writing sports stories.

### **How assessment of student learning will be met**

#### *Awareness*

- Recognize various kinds of sports writing.
- Learn about a variety of sports (outside of men's basketball, men's football and men's baseball).
- Find out what opportunities exist in the field of sports writing.

#### *Understanding*

- Understand the professional requirements needed to become a sports writer.
- Understand the importance of reporting on diverse populations and of writing for equally diverse readers.
- Understand the differences between journalistic sports writing and fan-written sports stories, and between critical analysis and opinion.
- Appreciate the role of multimedia in sports writing.

#### *Application*

- Read pre-selected news stories about “minor” sports (any sport other than men’s football, men’s basketball and men’s baseball).
- Take weekly quizzes about these stories about “minor” sports.
- Meet professionals from the sports media industry.
- Cover live sports events on Twitter and with full-length stories.
- Write an in-depth thematic feature, a profile, a review of a sports book, and opinion columns, all on deadline.
- Record one-minute sports news audio updates.

## **JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES**

### **Portfolio requirement**

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)

A current résumé

A personal profile

Contact information/means of contact

Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

### **Email**

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) [Links to an external site.](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

### **Electronic devices**

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

### **AI/Chat GPT**



The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

### **Course repetition**

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

### **Academic integrity**

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#)[Links to an external site.](#).

In addition to University-wide policies, the Department of Journalism & Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on your own, as acts of cheating and punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

### **Online SETEs**

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the “Student Pages” dropdown menu and select “My Resources” and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

### **AP Style and grammar**

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

### **Disability and accommodations**

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

### **Weather policy**

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.

### **Student support**

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> Links to an external site. or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.