

# Issues in Sports and Media

JRSM 4704/6704-001

Spring 2026

Meeting: TR, 9:40-11:05 a.m.

Meeman 112

## Robby Byrd, Ph.D.

Office: 334B Meeman Journalism Building

Office Hours: MW Noon to 2:30 p.m. or by appointment

Email: rbyrd@memphis.edu

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Examines the ongoing relationship of sports and media. Students will think more critically about the role of sports in the contemporary media landscape and vice versa.

### Prerequisites

No prerequisites

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Required: Hull, K. (2025). Sports, Media, and Society. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics. /

ISBN: 9781718217591

### Classroom format

The class will be presented in both lecture and discussion formats. Class discussion will involve application of concepts to the case studies presented in class. Assignments will require students to analyze case studies and apply the theoretical principles discussed.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis Canvas home page: <https://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JOUR 4704/6704-001 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 used 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**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Points</b>
Quizzes	10	250 points (25 points each)
Weekly Discussion Posts	10	250 points (25 points each)
Midterm Exam	1	100 points
Research Paper	1	200 points
Research Presentation	1	100 points
In-class participation	1	100 points
Total		1,000 points

### **Graduate Assignments**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Points</b>
Quizzes	10	250 points (25 points each)
Weekly Discussion Posts	10	250 points (25 points each)
Midterm Exam	1	100 points
Research Paper	1	400 points
Research Presentation	1	100 points
In-class participation	1	100 points
Total		1,200 points

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### *Week One: Introduction to Sports and Media*

Chapters 1-2: Sports Media Basics

Discussion Topic: The evolution of sports media and its impact on society.

### *Week Two: Green—The Color of Sport*

Chapters 3-6 *The Big Business of Sport Media*

Discussion Topic: The business of sports media and its effects on fandom.

### *Week Three: Television's Impact on Sport*

Chapters 7-12 *Corporate Media and Broadcasting*

Discussion Topic: Who's setting the agenda for sports fans these days? Still ESPN?

### *Week Four: Sports and Social Issues: An Introduction*

Chapters 13-14 Theoretical Foundations

Discussion Topic: How do you see the theories presented in class play out in everyday sports coverage/discussions?

*Week Five: Sports Media and Race*

Chapters 15-17 Coverage of Race in Sports

Discussion Topic: Media narratives and their implications on race and ethnicity in sports.

*Week Six: Sports Media and Gender*

Chapters 18-20 Coverage of Women in Sports to Women in Sports Media

Discussion Topic: The depiction of female athletes versus male athletes in media coverage.

*Week Seven: Sports Media and Sexuality*

Chapters 21-22 Coverage of LGBTQIA+ athletes to LGBTQIA+ People in Sports Media

Discussion Topic: Representation of LGBTQIA+ people at different levels of sport.

*Week Eight: Spring Break*

No Class

*Week Nine: Sports Media and Gender Identity*

Readings provided on Canvas—Gender Identity and Presentation in today's sports landscape

Discussion Topic: Recent incidents in the sporting world have brought the issue of gender, gender identity and gender expression to the forefront. What's next?

Midterm Exam Due on Sunday by 11:59 p.m.

*Week 10: Crisis & Scandal in Sports (Part One)*

Chapters 23-25 Theoretical Foundations and Case Studies

Discussion Topic: Lance Armstrong's legacy nearly 20 years later.

*Week 11: Crisis & Scandal in Sports (Part Two)*

Chapters 26-28 Case Studies

Discussion Topic: The impact on sport and sports media when teams are caught cheating.

*Week 12: Emerging Trends in Sports Media*

Chapters 29-30 Theoretical Foundations and Strategic Comms

Discussion Topic: If teams can give the news themselves, why do we need the traditional media?

*Week 13: Impact of COVID-19*

Chapters 31-32 Disrupting the Old Ways/Athletes' Mental Health

Discussion Topic: A new generation of athletes have brought mental health issues to forefront.

*Week 14: New Laws and Technology*

Chapters 33-24 Rise of Esports and Online Betting

Discussion Topic: Sports betting has become a mainstay in sports media, making it impossible for fans, players and organizations to ignore.

## Week 15: Final Presentations

This week you'll present your final research projects to the class.

*Final exam: Turn in your final paper by the scheduled Finals date and time.*

## ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

### Professional Values and Competencies in JRSM 4704

- 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.
- 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.

### How professional values and competencies will be met

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

- Recognize the role of media in influencing the sport industry.
- Identify social issues in sport media and analyze the way these issues impact both the field and society.
- Critically examine, discuss and monitor the how and why behind the coverage of various issues in sports.

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

- Monitor an assigned current issue throughout the semester and share findings through a research paper and an oral presentation to the class.
- Participate in discussions involving issues that are covered in sport media.
- Take quizzes over course materials.
- Take part in at least one in-class debate on a controversial sport media issue.
- Write research paper on contemporary issues at the intersection of sport, media and society.
- Research, write and present findings related to an approved athlete and team regarding media representations.

### How assessment of student learning will be met

*Awareness*

- Deepen knowledge of the sport media industry.
- Learn about the various careers in the sport media industry.
- Evaluate how much new media technology changes sport.
- Be sensitive to the needs of diverse and under-represented groups in sport media.

*Understanding*

- Understand the ways in which sport journalism frames our understanding of sports.
- Synthesize the difficulties that minor sports face to get media coverage.

- Understand the changes taking place in sport media and how those changes affect both the field and society.

#### *Application*

- Participate in a class or large group debate on a recent issue affecting sport journalism, selected by the instructor. The topic will incorporate ethical decision-making and how both the sport media industry and society were affected by the decision.
- Write a paper about an issue in sports media applying theoretical concepts discussed in class.
- Follow an athlete and team on social media and conduct additional secondary research to complete an inventory on brand image and message consistency and present findings to class.

## 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 JRS 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](#) 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](#).

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> 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.