

COMM 383m
Sports, Communication, and Culture
Course Syllabus
MW 10:00-11:45
Fall, 2006

Instructor: Dr. Dan Durbin

Office: ASC 324D

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Course Objectives: This course examines the interrelationship between sports and media in today's society and how that interrelationship reinforces social values, sometimes challenges social norms, and draws on the cultural identification of class, race, and gender to identify sports values with cultural values. Drawing on theories of rhetoric and social criticism, we will examine media's role in telling the story of sports and, in telling that story, shaping and reinforcing cultural values. Students will study several critical approaches to sports and public discourse and will apply those approaches to sports organizations, the news media, and popular media.

Required Reading:

Wenner, Lawrence A. (ed.) Media, Sports, and Society. Newbury Park: Sage Publications 1989.

Course Notebook (available at the Paper Clip).

Course Reader (available through University Readers at www.universityreaders.com/students).

Assignments: Much of this course is taken up in a study of sports narrative in various media and how those narratives draw on and reinforce larger social values. Thus, most assignments will offer students the opportunity to carry on their own critical research into how sports organizations and media create meaning from the events played out on the field. Students will write three critical analyses and take two exams.

Grade Breakdown:

Participation-----.5

Sports Venue Reaction Paper-----10

Sport and Society Critical Analysis Paper-----20

Critical Analysis Paper-----	20
Midterm-----	20
Final Exam-----	<u>25</u>
Total Points-----	100

Readings: While the first readings will largely focus on critical approaches to the subject, much of this semester’s readings will include actual reports of sporting events, editorials on sport, and critical analyses of sports films and television shows. There will also be articles and book chapters on larger social issues that have both impacted and been impacted by sports and the communication complex that creates the story of sport. Thus, you have readings on issues of race and sport by Jackie Robinson and Frank Robinson and issues of gender and sport by Alison Gordon (among others).

Diversity Issues: This course focuses on several important diversity issues and their interrelationship with sports and sport culture. Issues of social class, race, and gender have been part of the history, culture, and communication of sports since at least the nineteenth century. During the first month of class, we will discuss in detail the role social class had in defining the concept of “sport” and “sportsman” in the United States. Drawing from this discussion, we later discuss the role of sports in social change and in issues of race and gender. About forty percent of our semester will be spent discussing important diversity issues and their interaction with sports and sports values, including representations of race and gender in sports films, through sports reporting, and in sports magazines. In this discussion, we will focus on how various media (television, film, radio) have helped create the interaction between sport and culture over these issues. Finally, we will have a variety of guest speakers visit to discuss issues of gender and race in sports, sports culture, and sports media.

Paper Grades: All written work is to be typed following the guidelines for research paper writing found in either the MLA or APA handbook. Papers will be graded on quality of organization, clarity and depth of analysis, and writing competence. Each error in spelling or grammar will result in a reduction in your paper grade.

Participation and Absence Policy: Attendance in class cannot be counted as participation. Students will receive participation grades based on the quality and quantity of their vocal participation in class throughout the semester. You will be allowed four unexcused absences during the semester. **Each** absence beyond four will result in an automatic 5% deduction from your final class grade. Also, remember that, when you are absent, you cannot participate in class. So, excessive absences will also impact your participation grade. Being tardy or leaving class early will be counted as half an absence. Also, please turn off cell phones while in class. Leaving class to answer a cell phone will be counted as an absence.

Late Work: All late papers will be docked one letter grade for each class period they are late. Any time after the **start** of the class in which the papers are due will be considered late.

Disability Services: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776. Students requesting accommodations for taking tests in DSP must have their information to me and DSP in sufficient time to set up accommodations at DSP.

Academic Integrity: The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the Scampus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report **all** violations of the code. Any serious violations or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

Final Note: We are examining an under explored area of communication research. Since there is so little strong research in the field, we all need to immerse ourselves in the subject. That means, I want you to hit as many sports events, see as many sports themed movies (time to hit Blockbuster), watch as much sports on television (like it's gonna kill you to see a couple hours of Fox Sports or ESPN) as you can stand (and enjoy). If someone questions how much time and money you are spending on watching sports, tell them it's important research.

Tentative Class Schedule and Due Dates

Weeks One and Two
8/22-8/31
Introduction and Critical Approaches

During our first two weeks, we will examine approaches taken by rhetorical and communication scholars who have critically analyzed sports discourse. We will also discuss semiotic approaches to social icons.

Readings: Wenner, Chs. 1, 3 (pp. 13-48, 70-96); Course Reader-Roland Barthes "Myths Today" (pp. 109-131).

Weeks Three and Four
9/5-9/14
Sports Organizations: Social Class and the Evolution of
Sports Organizations in America

During this section, we will discuss how social class determined "sporting" activity in nineteenth century America with the "leisure" class defining "sport" as a "leisure" (not "labor") activity. We will also discuss how early sports organizations sought to identify their sport with the leisure class and developed rules to identify their sport with the values of the leisure class (e.g. incorporating "blue laws" into organizational rules). We will examine the use of stadiums and other venues as settings for the sports drama and as symbols used to purvey values that identify the sports organization's goals with the values of the larger culture.

Readings: Wenner Chs. 4-5 (pp. 97-133); Course Reader- Mullen and Mazzocco, "Coaches, Drama, and Technology: Mediation of Super Bowl Broadcasts from 1969 to 1997 (pp. 347-363), Anderson, "Saving the National Pastime's Image: Crisis Management During the 1919 Black Sox Scandal" (pp. 105-111), Durbin, "Wrigley Field in Popular Culture" (pp.1-3), Angell, "Being Green" (pp. 94-123), Murray, "Pete Rozelle Sold Entire Nation on His Sport" (pp.1-2).

Week Five
9/19-9/21
News Reports: Communicating the Story

Our discussion of news will focus on the extended story of sport, media's role in changing information into event, narrative, and epic. We will discuss both immediate reporting and extended reporting on on-going stories. Our analysis will focus on how broadcasters and reporters identify "heroes," "villains," and the "values" of sport.

Readings: Wenner Chs. 2, 10 (pp. 49-69, 225-240). Course Reader-Hansen, "Narrating the Game: Achieving and Coordinating Partisanship in Real Time." (pp. 269-290), Barber, "The

Catbird Seat” (pp.28-29), “Associate Broadcasters” (pp. 259-263), “Radio vs. Television” (pp. 303-304), Murray, “Scully Handles a Mike like Ruth did a Bat” (pp. 303-304).

Class Viewing/Listening: comparative analysis of 1950s, 1960s, and 2000 tv broadcasts).

Sports Venue Reaction Paper-Due September 21.

Midterm Exam-October 5.

Weeks Six, Seven and Eight

9/25-10/12

Sports, Social Norms, and Social Change: Issues of Race

Both sports and reporting sports have gone through tremendous change over the past century. This change has greatly impacted and been impacted by larger social changes. This section will cover the impact of social change on sports, the story of sports, the values sports embody, and the role of the storyteller in sports. We will focus on the evolving concerns of race and sports from the social caste of the “Gentleman Sportsman” of the nineteenth century, through the controversial reigns of Jack Johnson and Muhammad Ali, the role of Jackie Robinson in breaking baseball’s color barrier, to current controversies involving race, sports organizations, and players. We will also discuss in some detail Native American protests to depictions of race and ethnicity among sports organizations.

Guest Lecture: Don Newcombe of the Brooklyn Dodgers will discuss breaking baseball’s color line.

Readings: Course Reader-Miller, “‘Indians,’ ‘Braves,’ and ‘Redskins’: A Performative Struggle for Control of an Image” (pp.188-202), Robinson, “The Noble Experiment” (pp. 38-49), Murray, “One Man’s Opinion,” “As White as the Ku Klux Klan,” “From Russia with Love Or . . . I’ll Never Smile Again,” and “Louisville Loudmouth Secedes from the Union.”

Class Viewing: Selections from “Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson,” “Hank Greenberg,” “When We Were Kings,” “The 1968 Tigers.”

Weeks Nine and Ten

10/17-10/26

Sports, Social Norms, and Social Change: Issues of Gender

This section extends the discussion of social issues to gender concerns. We will discuss Alison Gordon and the first women sports reporters, the response of sports organizations to the deeper involvement of women in sports, Billy Jean King and Bobby Riggs’s “Battle of the Sexes,” the impact of gender equity rulings, and the image of female and male athletes in sports publications. We will also discuss feminist responses to sports media and the objectifying of women in *Sports*

Illustrated, on sports television (including ESPN and Fox Sports), and through the variety of sports media.

Guest Lecture: Christie Lugo Leigh, Supervisor of Sports and Special Productions for KTLA-TV will speak during this section on being a Hispanic woman in sports television production.

Readings: Fink and Kensicki, “An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and Textual Constructions of Femininity in *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*” (pp. 317-340), Shugart, “She Shoots, She Scores: Mediated Constructions of Contemporary Female Athletes in Coverage of the 1999 US Women’s Soccer Team.” (1-31), Gordon, “Foreword” and “Token Broad” (pp. 7-10, 118-137).

Week Eleven

10/31-11/2

The “Inside” Story: Sports Diaries, Race, and Social Values

We will examine the phenomenon of sports diaries and their role as apologias, promotional devices, and “history.” We will also discuss the role of sports diaries in advocating social change (Frank Robinson’s diary offers a particularly compelling, even disturbing, reflection on the pressures baseball’s first African-American manager faced.)

Readings: Wenner, ch. 9 (pp. 204-224). Course Reader-Trujillo, “Interpreting (the Work and Talk of) Baseball: Perspectives on Ballpark Culture” (pp. 350-371), Brosnan The Long Season February 22 to March 1, Kramer Instant Replay “War’s End” January 3 to January 14, Bouton Ball Four “Introduction” and March 3, Gabriel Player of the Year September 18 to September 22, Robinson Frank: The First Year “Prologue: The First Shall Not Be Last.”

Class Viewing: Selections from “When It Was a Game.”

News Analysis Paper Due October 31.

Week Twelve

11/7-11/9

Media, Fans, and Sports in the Home

Sports become part of social life as they enter homes and modify the behavior of fans. This section explores some of the more profound changes sports have brought into American homes. We will focus on several sub-cultures that have grown from fan reaction to sports and the desire of fans to take part in sports as “coaches” and “players.”

Readings: Wenner Chs. 7, 11 (pp. 157-179, 241-269); Course Reader-Daglow and Kavanaugh "Fantasy Baseball" (pp.629-632), Angell, "Three for the Tigers" (pp. 95-122), Gordon, "The Fans" (pp. 86-98), Durbin, "'Take Me Home to the Ballgame: Baseball Board Games in American Popular Culture" (pp. 1-13), Miller, "The Boys Life in Reel Time" (pp. 64-74)

Class Viewing: "Of Dice and Men."

Week Thirteen
11/14-11/16
Sports Television and Radio

We will examine the way in which television and radio create drama and meaning in the sports events they broadcast and the larger sports stories they tell. We will examine the evolution of television and radio broadcasts from representations of sports and community to creations of sports events. We will also discuss the impact of television in particular on discussions of race and gender in sports (focusing in particular on the media response to incidents involving Billie Jean King, Al Campanis, and Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder).

Guest Lecture: Ed Goren, President of Fox Sports, will discuss creating and maintaining sports television programming.

Readings: Wenner Chs. 6 and 12 (pp. 134-156, 270-289). Course Reader-Farrell, "Media Rhetoric as Social Drama: The Winter Olympics of 1984" (pp. 158-182), Brummett and Duncan, "Theorizing without Totalizing: Specularity and Televised Sports." (227-246).

Class Viewing: Selections from radio sports reports of the 1930s, 1950s, and today, Ken Burns "Baseball," "Monday Night Mayhem," "Retro-Game."

Week Fourteen
11/21-11/23
**Sports and Film: Sports Myth and Reconstructing Race,
Gender, and Patriotism in Sports Films**

We will study the representation of sports and sports myth from its earliest portrayal in silent films to iconic images in films such as "Pride of the Yankees" to historical reconstructions in films such as "61*." We will examine the image of sports each approach creates and the sports and social values each reinforces. In particular, we will focus on issues of race in the film "Brian's Song" and will have Allan Graf discuss his current film project on the color barrier in college football across the South in the 1960s and 1970s. We will also discuss the reconstruction of gender norms in "A League of Their Own."

Guest Lecture: Allan Graf, actor and film director, will discuss filming representations of sports and his current film project on breaking down the color barrier in college football in the South in the early 1970s.

Readings: Course Reader-Aden, "Nostalgic Communication as a Temporal Escape: *When it was a Game's* Re-construction of a Baseball Work Community" (pp. 20-38), Most and Rudd, "Don't Bet on it . . . The Representation of Gambling in Baseball Cinema".(pp. 233-242).

Class Viewing-Selections from "61*," "The Pride of the Yankees," "Raging Bull," "Somebody Up There Likes Me," "The Winning Team," "North Dallas Forty," "A League of Their Own," "Miracle."

Week Fifteen

11/28-11/30

Sports in Advertising and Conclusions

To conclude our discussion, we will examine how the images created by the various constructions of sport we have discussed throughout the semester are used to motivate viewers to purchase products and support social and political causes.

Readings- Selections from Ken Burns' "Baseball."

Critical Analysis Paper Due November 30.

COMM 383: Sports, Communication, and Culture

Class Assignments

Writing Assignment #1

Sports Venue Reaction Paper

3-4 pages

We have discussed how sports organizations both draw on and promote cultural values to create their “event” and sell their product. You are to write a brief (3-4 page) reaction paper that critically assesses the ways in which a sports organization accomplishes this task at a typical sporting event.

You are to attend a university or professional sports event **in which you are not participating** (USC football game, MLB baseball game, NFL football game, professional hockey or basketball game boxing match). You are to attach your ticket stub from the game to your paper. At this event, you are to study all the ways in which the sports organization sells its product(s), from the advertising on scoreboards to promotional announcements to advertising throughout the stadium to the structure of the venue and how it guides your actions and eyes.

You should take notes on all these acts of suasive communication as they appear throughout your visit. You are to choose several representative acts and write a brief analysis that discusses each of the ways in which these acts give meaning to what occurs on the field, promote organizational goals, and use and sustain social values.

Papers will be graded on completing the assignment, quality of writing, clarity of analysis, and value of insights into the persuasive use of symbols. Good luck and have fun at the game.

Writing Assignment #2

Sport and Society Critical Analysis Paper

5-7 pages

We have discussed the intersection between sports and society on a variety of issues including race, gender, and social class. You are to trace a story involving sports and one of these key social concerns (or other major social concerns) from the last ten years. You are to trace the entire “story” of one major sports event of the last ten years. You are to follow the story’s trajectory from first report to last report. Thus, the story must be considered dead (ended).

Your analysis of the story will involve a critical discussion of the value systems sports and society brought to this particular issue. As we’ve noted, in some cases, sports have been well ahead of society in bringing about social change, in other cases, sports have been well behind society and in most cases sports have followed their own unique value criteria in matters of race,

gender, and social class. In examining the story, you are to describe the values exemplified in the actions of sports organizations, compare those to the values shown in the actions of the contemporary society and compare the two. Your comparison should illuminate the distinct value systems brought to these important social arguments.

For example, in 1987, Al Campanis, General Manager of the Los Angeles Dodgers, made some infamous remarks on ABC-TV's "Nightline" program. Campanis stated that African-Americans may not have the "tools" to be Major League managers. These comments immediately caused a firestorm of controversy throughout the country. Yet, as groups throughout the United States voiced anger over Campanis's comments, the first reaction of the Dodgers and Major League Baseball was to defend Campanis as a leader in positive race relations in baseball. These actions showed a clear disjunction between the perspective of the sports organizations and of the larger culture. Or, as we've discussed in class, in 1965, the Chicago Bears started assigning rooms on the basis of position rather than race. This action was perceived as radical and offensive in some parts of American society, especially the South. Yet, it made Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo into sports icons whose story was eventually told in *Sports Illustrated* and a pair of movies.

The tension between the pragmatics of sports and the views of the larger culture should give you a fascinating field to explore in examining the trajectory of a sports story that deals with issues of gender, race, or social class.

To examine your story, you will need to search the archives of a major news service (The LA Times, The NY Times, etc.). You are to examine the reports to find the first notes indicating the event(s) that reflected social change or controversy, the developing narrative as the story began to develop characters/setting/events/social tensions, and the climax and conclusion of the story.

Drawing on the theoretical approaches discussed at the start of the semester, you are to examine the narrative construction of the story, how reports turned events into stories, how those stories framed events and sustained or challenged cultural norms, and how the narrated relationship between characters, setting, and events exemplified the tension between various players in the cultural drama.

This is not a review of the events that were reported, nor is it a repetition of news reports. You are to critically assess the stories, explaining their role in sustaining cultural assumptions.

Papers should be 5-7 pages in length. Each paper should have a bare minimum of 6 cited references (you should easily find far more than this in news reports alone). All papers must follow MLA or APA guidelines for research paper writing. Papers will be graded on quality of writing, clarity of argument, depth of analysis, and quality of insights. While you will need to perform only limited academic research for this assignment, you will need to complete a full study of one story and your works cited page should note references to a complete cycle of reports.

Writing Assignment #3

Critical Analysis Paper

5-7 pages

We have discussed how a variety of media create distinct visions of sport. We have also discussed how these visions intersect. This paper will allow you to study a particular popular text of your choosing.

Drawing on the theories we have discussed, you are to analyze a particular representation of sports in popular culture. You may choose a film, radio show, advertising campaign, television show, book, magazine, sports organization, news reporting service, or other attempt to “tell the story” of sports. **Pick the source that interests you most.** You are to critically analyze this text using one of the theories we have discussed in class.

From this analysis, you will show how this text uses its subject as a model to reflect and reinforce social values. You will need to introduce your text by noting its impact on society. You will then need to explain how the theory you use will illuminate the text, how it will inform us about the text’s persuasive force. Finally, you will need to apply the theory to the text.

Your paper should include references to at least three academic sources explaining your theory and at least four sources related to your text (your class textbook may count as one of those sources).

Papers will be graded on clarity, interaction with sources, strength of analysis and argument, and quality of writing. Remember to follow MLA or APA guidelines and enjoy your subject.

Sources for Course Reader

The course reader draws selections from the following sources.

Aden, Roger C. "Nostalgic Communication as Temporal Escape: *When it was a Game's* Re-construction of a Baseball/Work Community." Western Journal of Communication. 59(1995), 20-38.

Anderson, William B. "Saving the National Pastime's Image: Crisis Management During the 1919 Black Sox Scandal." Journalism History. 27(2001) 105-111.

Angell, Roger. Five Seasons. New York: Warner Books 1978.

Angell, Roger. Season Ticket. New York: Ballantine Books 1988.

Barber, Red and Creamer, Robert. Rhubarb in the Catbird Seat. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1997.

Barthes, Roland. Mythologies. (trans. Annette Lavers). New York: Hill and Wang 1982.

Bouton, Jim. Ball Four. New York: Barnes and Noble Books 1993.

Brosnan, Jim. The Long Season. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers 1960.

Brummett, Barry and Duncan, Margaret Carlisle. "Theorizing without Totalizing: Specularity and Televised Sports." The Quarterly Journal of Speech. 76(1990) 227-246.

Daglow, Don L. and Jack Kavanagh. "Fantasy Baseball." in Total Baseball: Fourth Edition. (eds. John Thorn, Pete Palmer, and Michael Gershman.) New York: Viking Press 1995.

Durbin, Daniel T. "Baseball Board Games and Popular Culture," from Sports Research On-line Publications 1999.

Durbin, Daniel T. "Wrigley Field in Popular Culture." in Sport in American Culture.. (ed.) Joyce Duncan. New York: ABC-Clio Publications 2004.

Farrell, Thomas B. "Media Rhetoric as Social Drama: The Winter Olympics of 1984." Critical Studies in Mass Communication. 6(1989), 158-182.

Fink, Janet S. and Kensicki, Linda Jean. "An Imperceptible Difference: Visual and

Textual Constructions of Femininity in *Sports Illustrated* and *Sports Illustrated for Women*.” Mass Communication and Society. 5(2002), 317-340.

Gabriel, Roman and Bob Oates. Player of the Year. New York: The World Publishing Company 1970.

Gordon, Alison. Foul Balls: Five Years in the American League. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1984.

Hansen, Alan D. “Narrating the Game: Achieving and Coordinating Partisanship in Real Time.” Research on Language and Social Interaction. 327(1999) 269-290.

Kramer, Jerry. Instant Replay. New York: The World Publishing Company 1968.

McAllister, Matthew P. “College Bowl Sponsorship and the Increased Commercialization of Amateur Sports.” Critical Studies in Mass Communication. 15(1998), 357-381.

Miller, Jackson B. “‘Indians,’ ‘Braves,’ and ‘Redskins’: A Performative Struggle for Control of an Image.” Quarterly Journal of Speech. 85(1999), 188-202.

Miller, Jon. With Hyman, Mark. Confessions of a Baseball Purist. New York: Simon and Schuster 1998.

Most, Marshall G. and Rudd, Robert. “Don’t Bet on it . . . The Representation of Gambling in Baseball Cinema.” Southern States Speech Journal. 61(1996), 233-242.

Mullen, Lawrence J. and Mazzacco, Dennis W. “Coaches, Drama, and Technology: Mediation of Super Bowl Broadcasts from 1969 to 1997.” Critical Studies in Media Communication. 17(2000), 347-363.

Murray, Jim. The Great Ones. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times Books 1999.

Murray, Jim. The Jim Murray Collection. Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company 1988.

Robinson, Frank and Dave Anderson. Frank: The First Year. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston 1976.

Shugart, Helene A. “She Shoots, She Scores: Mediated Constructions of Contemporary Female Athletes in Coverage of the 1999 US Women’s Soccer Team.” Western Journal of Communication. 67(Winter, 2003) 1-31.

Trujillo, Nick. "Interpreting (the Work and the Talk of) Baseball: Perspectives on Ballpark Culture." Western Journal of Communication. 56(1992), 350-371.