

MCOM 2315.001
SPORTS COMMUNICATION
Spring 2024

Class Schedule: MWF 12:20-1:15 p.m.
Room: RBN 2012
Instructor: Dr. Terry L. Britt
Office hours: M 10 a.m.-noon, Tu 2-3 p.m., and by appointment
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I. Course Description:

An exploration into the theory and practice of communication across specialized contexts sports professionals face and the development of journalistic and strategic communication skills needed to succeed in them, including areas such as the press conference, sports feature content, and sports reporting.

II. Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

Competency: Public Speaking

1. Display and master invention, disposition, style, and delivery skills in the presentation of informative, persuasive, and invitational messages to effectively impact a given audience. (Program Learning Objective – Public Speaking)
 - a) To analyze and practice communication that creates or results from complex social organizations.
 - b) To understand, analyze and practice informative and ethical written and oral communication in forms and styles appropriate for various situations, purposes and audiences.

- c) To identify, understand and practice various professional communication roles in sports.

Competency: Analysis and Systemic Inquiry

- 2. Access and analyze appropriate scholarly sources necessary to understand and analyze communication-based research questions and problems.
 - a) To identify, access, and comprehend appropriate scholarly and journalistic sources necessary to answer communication-based research questions, problems, or issues.
 - b) To utilize appropriate scholarly and journalistic sources in group discussion and analysis of topics particular to the social and cultural dimensions of sport, its participants, and its organizations.

Competency: Mediated Presentation

- 3. Gather and effectively communicate information to targeted audiences in a variety of mediated formats.
 - a) Demonstrate skills essential to media professionals and the development of content for dissemination to identifiable audiences.
 - b) Produce content appropriate to specific media channels, including print or digital news, audio-based media, and public relations.

III. Course Evaluation

Column/opinion writing (2)	15%
Sports event game story or feature article	20%
Audio Podcast Feature	15%
Press Conference (including advance and wrap-up)	20%
In-class activities and discussion	10%
Final Exam	20%
TOTAL	100%

A = 90-100% B = 80-89% C=70-79% D=60-69% F=0-59%

IV. Required Texts

A. Required:

- 1. Billings, A.C., Butterworth, M.L. & Turman, P.D. *Communication and Sport, Surveying the Field, 4th Ed.*

B. Recommended:

- 1. Associated Press Stylebook 2020-22 or AP Stylebook Online subscription

V. Assignments

- A. (15%) Column/Opinion Writing on Issues in Sports (Due dates – Feb. 26 and April 22) Twice during the semester, you will write an original sports column or opinion piece of 750-1,000 words on a significant social, cultural, or business issue. This may include topics we discuss in class during the semester. Personal experiences of sport-related topics are welcome within the paper, but please provide an analysis of the experience that clearly ties to issues and concepts we have discussed. Content will be evaluated based on content, grammar, and structure. **This assignment group addresses learning objectives 2(a) and 2(b).**
- B. (20%) Sports event game story or feature story (various due dates): You will cover one live UT Tyler sports event this semester (the sport and contest is up to you, but you **must** provide me at least 24-hour notice prior to the start of the event). Non-UT Tyler sports events are acceptable if you are willing to make a request for and receive a press credential for the event. Alternatively, you may, with prior approval from me, write a sports feature story on a local athlete or sports-related group or organization. In either case, you will notify me upon the completion of the event (or completion of interviews for a feature), from which time you will have 24 hours to produce and submit a 500-750 story. Work will be evaluated based on quality of content, story structure, and proper grammar and punctuation. **This assignment addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 3(a), and 3(b).**
- C. (15%) Audio podcast feature interview (Due Feb. 28): This audio assignment will have you interview a current UT Tyler student-athlete of your choice or other sport-related interview subject. You will produce a 5-6 minute audio spotlight which will be graded on knowledge of the subject, narrative building with identification of your subject's main theme and supporting details, and expression and organization of ideas. You will also be assessed on storytelling content, your delivery and technical elements of the audio production. **This assignment addresses learning objectives 1(b), 1(c), 3(a), and 3(b).**
- D. (20%) Press conference (Due dates TBA): This assignment will involve a mock press conference I will set up with a UT Tyler athlete or team on a specific class meeting date. The assignment consists of three parts: First, a short advance press release announcing the press conference and providing relevant background information, plus a set of five (5) well-developed questions you would like to ask at the press conference; second, activity and participation in the press conference itself; and, third, a follow-up press release (250-300 words) highlighting the content from the press conference. **This assignment addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 3(a), and 3(b).**
- E. (10%) In-class activities and discussion: You are expected to be an active participant in class discussion and in-class assignments and presentations throughout the semester. You should come to class each day having completed all reading assignments for that day and be prepared to engage in respectful discussion or

debate on various sport-related topics. Additionally, certain class days will feature special themed discussion topics, activities, or in-class assignments which require your undivided attention and participation. **This assignment group addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), 1(c), 2(a), and 2(b).**

- F. (20%) Final exam (May 1, 12:30-2:30 p.m.): The final exam will cover materials discussed in class, readings from throughout the semester, and terms and concepts from your media production assignments. The format of the final exam will be finalized no later than April 15 but is likely to include multiple choice or true/false questions, short answer questions, and 1-2 short concept explications. On the final class meeting date before finals week (April 26), we will have a final exam review session. **This assignment group addresses learning objectives 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c).**

VI. Extra credit opportunities: I will offer each student in this course 5 points added to the lowest assignment grade(s) for the semester for the following:

- 1. Patriot Talon published story, video, or audio story** – For the first time in the publication's history, the Patriot Talon is moving to an all-digital format. This is an excellent time for you to get involved with student media and put your media production skills to work. You must successfully pitch a story idea to the editor-in-chief, produce the story, and have it published on the Patriot Talon website or e-newsletter.
- 2. Participation in media research project** – During the semester, there may be a media research project conducted by myself or another Department of Communication professor. To encourage participation in these projects, I will offer extra credit for documented participation prior to the week of final exams.

VII. All Assignments Are Uploaded to Canvas.

- A. Your analysis papers and other assignments will be submitted to Canvas. Deadlines are vital elements in every form of sports communication and cannot be missed. A missed deadline will result in a 10% deduction per day.

VIII. Policies

- A. **Course Withdrawal:** The last date to withdraw from Spring 2024 classes is **March 25, 2024.**
- B. **Final Examination Due Date: Wednesday, May 1, 2024, 12:30-2:30 p.m.**
- C. **Electronic Devices:** Turn off all electronic devices including cell phones and MP3 players. Allowing a cell phone or other device to ring during class is rude and disrupts class. No text messaging or checking the time on your cell phone during class. Keep these devices in your backpack during class.
- D. **Use of Computers in Class:** Do not use computers during class for reading/writing e-mail, surfing the Web, playing games, working on assignments for other classes, or writing letters. You may use a laptop computer only for taking class notes. If you use your laptop for any other purpose, I will require you to immediately close the computer.

E. Assignment Policy:

1. Assignments will be given throughout the semester. Students are responsible for all course materials, including, but not limited to, class lectures, handouts, workbook and textbook reading assignments.
2. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
3. Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course. This does not mean that merely completing all assignments guarantees the student will pass the course.
4. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due at the beginning of class.
5. All papers must be typed or word-processed using the format required for the assignment.
6. Spelling, grammar, and structure are as important as the content of any written work.

F. Late Assignments: Late assignments are discouraged and will be assessed a penalty prior to evaluation. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the date specified.

G. Attendance and Tardiness Policy: Students are expected to attend class. **If you must miss a class session due to an illness (doctor or health clinic note required), funeral of an immediate family member (copy of obituary or service program required), or university-sponsored activity, please contact me as soon as possible to inform me of your expected absence.**

Five or more absences from class, unless resulting from a prolonged illness that requires the student to remain at home, will result in the deduction of one letter grade from the final course grade. See the current UT Tyler catalog for the university's policy on student responsibility for missed classes and assignments. Be familiar with the university's drop policy. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second class meeting. **Students over 15 minutes late are considered absent. If a student must be absent the day an exam or assignment deadline is scheduled, he/she must notify the instructor before class time. No make-up tests or assignment deadline extension will be allowed if the instructor is not given a legitimate excuse before the time of the exam or assignment deadline.**

H. Recording of Class Sessions: Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in this course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

I. Artificial Intelligence Policy: Artificial intelligence (AI) engines, bots, or applications may not be used on assignments without prior approval from the instructor, and only then with substantial justification and specific identification of what will be created

through AI and included in the assignment submission. Under no circumstances can AI be used to deceive, significantly alter, or fabricate assignment content; violation of this policy will be treated as plagiarism and will incur penalties as allowed by university policy.

Class Schedule (subject to change)

- Jan. 17 – Introductions; Sports Communication icebreaker activity**
- Jan. 19 – Key points of course expectations; Overview of audio podcast assignment; discussion of assigned online readings**
- Jan. 22 – Continue discussion of assigned readings**
- Jan. 24 – Discussion of Chapter 1, “Introduction to Communication and Sport”**
- Jan. 26 – Chapter 1 discussion continued; overview of reporting assignment**
- Jan. 29 – Sports reporting workshop session (Dr. Britt)**
- Jan. 31 – No class session for Labor Day holiday**
- Feb. 2 – Discussion of Chapter 2 “Community in Sport”**
- Feb. 5 – Continue discussion of Ch. 2**
- Feb. 7 – Discussion of Chapter 3 “Sport Media: Navigating the Landscape”**
- Feb. 9 – Continue discussion of Chapter 3; In-class activity – Favorite broadcast moment in sports you saw or heard.**
- Feb. 12 – Discussion of Chapter 4, “Sport Fan Cultures”; In-class activity – Fan identity and origin: Attend class in your favorite sports team shirt, jersey, cap, or jacket and be prepared to share your stories of fandom, what influenced you to become a fan of the team, and best and worst moments as a fan.**
- Feb. 14 – Continue discussion of Chapter 4**
- Feb. 16 – Discussion of Chapter 5 “Sport and Mythology”**
- Feb. 19 – Continue discussion of Chapter 5**
- Feb. 21 – Discussion of Chapter 6 “Gender in Sport”; overview of press conference assignment.**
- Feb. 23 – Continue discussion of Chapter 6**
- Feb. 26 – Discussion of Chapter 7 “Race and Ethnicity in Sport”; Column/opinion writing #1 due by 12:20 p.m. (start of class)**
- NOTE: Remainder of schedule subject to change for press conference activities.**
- Feb. 28 – Continue discussion of Chapter 7, racism issues within sport on social media. Audio podcast due by start of class (12:20 p.m.)**
- March 1 – Discussion of Chapter 8 “Politics and Nationalism in Sport”**
- March 4 – Continue discussion of Chapter 8**
- March 6 – Discussion of Chapter 9 “Performing Identity in Sport”**

March 8 – Discussion of Chapter 10 “Interpersonal Communication in Sport”

March 11-15 – Spring Break, no class meetings

March 18 – Continue discussion of Chapter 10

March 20 – Discussion of Chapter 11 “Small Groups/Teams in Sport”

March 22 – Continue discussion of Chapter 11

March 25 – Special topic discussion: Coaches and sport participant experiences

March 27 – Discussion of Chapter 12 “Crisis Communication in Sport”

March 29 – Continue discussion of Chapter 12

April 1 – In-class activity: How do you handle this? Team strategy exercise in crisis communication.

April 3 – Discussion of Chapter 13, “The Commodification of Sport”

April 5 – Continue discussion of Chapter 13

April 8 – Sport souvenir and memorabilia show-and-tell: Bring a sport-related item you own to class and tell us about it and how you acquired it; tentative due date for completion of press conference assignment

April 10 – Discussion of Chapter 14, “Sport Gaming” (Gambling on sports events)

April 12 – Continue discussion of Chapter 14 (Fantasy league sports)

April 15 – Special topic discussion: Sport gaming’s transition to online

April 17 – Special topic discussion: Branding and logos within sport; reporting assignments due no later than this date.

April 19 – Current event readings and discussion TBA

April 22 – Dr. Britt’s sports video games special; Opinion/column writing #2 due by 12:20 p.m. (start of class)

April 24 – Current event readings and discussion TBA

April 26 – Final exam review session

May 1 – Final exam: 12:30-2:30 p.m., Room TBD