

Introduction to Sports Reporting and Writing
JRLC 3850
Carmical Sports Media Institute
Spring 2022
#introsports #sportsmediauga

Prof. Johnston: 11:10-12:25 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays

Profs. Ledbetter and Suggs: 2:20-3:35 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays

Congratulations and welcome to the first class in the sports media certificate program! You are embarking on a fast-paced, intense program that will challenge you and reward you in equal measure. Our program is small enough that instructors and faculty get to know one another over the course of two or three years, not to mention during your careers once you leave UGA. We will provide you with the experiences you need to gain the skills to be successful in sports media, as well as in any other fields that prize communication skills.

Make no mistake. We expect a lot from you. You will need to be focused and prepared for class, and you will be required to participate in out-of-class field assignments that may take an evening or an entire day over the course of the semester. But we would not have chosen you if we did not believe you have what it takes to succeed in this field. All of us are here to work with you and help you build the skills and the background knowledge that will take you to your dreams. Don't hesitate to reach out with questions, concerns, or to strategize about how to meet the challenges of this class and those beyond. We are excited to work with you.

Course objective: To prepare students to cover sporting events and report on them professionally across modern media platforms.

In the context of the professional values and competencies of journalism and mass communication, students will...

- Understand and practice the standards for professional ethics, behavior and etiquette in the sports media environment. ([ACEJMC principles 1, 6](#))
- Recognize the roles, responsibilities, and privileges of coaches, athletes, media-relations officials, and media in gameday situations. ([ACEJMC principles 1, 2](#))
- Critique the quality of sports media content. ([ACEJMC principles 6, 10](#))
- Identify and interview the sources vital to good sports reporting. ([ACEJMC principles 6, 8](#))
- Learn the basic style, form and guidelines followed in coverage of sports events. ([ACEJMC principle 9](#))
- Write stories and video scripts using appropriate grammar, mechanics, and style rules. ([ACEJMC principle 9, 12](#))
- Track and interpret statistics to tell the stories of sports events. ([ACEJMC principle 11](#))
- Report and write stories of sports events on deadline. ([ACEJMC principle 9](#))
- Report sports events on social media. ([ACEJMC principles 5, 9, 12](#))
- Recap sports events on video. ([ACEJMC principles 5, 9, 12](#))

- Produce advance and follow-up stories for audience consumption. ([ACEJMC principle 9](#))

Diversity statement: Sport is a world in which we expect meritocracy: The better teams and athletes earn opportunities and victories regardless of personal background or characteristics. We all know this is not always the case. In our reading and our coverage, we will be sensitive to our own potential assumptions and biases as well as those we see in the coverage of others. We will discuss issues of diversity in the hiring and work of teams and news organizations, as well as in the content they produce.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Class participation (10%): We expect you to be engaged and contribute to class discussions and activities. The best part of the sports media program is that each of you brings unique strengths and contributions to the program, and we want you all to push each other (and us) by working together and building skills.

Homework (20%): Most of our homework assignments are reviews and practicing for the field assignment. Work must be completed by the deadline for credit. Homework assessments are graded on a scale of 0-2: 0 means you did not complete the assignment; 1 means you completed only part of it; 2 means you completed it fully. The quizzes are diagnostics for us to review what you're getting out of the background work; the actual scores will not be reflected in your grade.

News/style/grammar quizzes (10%): We will have periodic discussions of grammar and AP style issues and will quiz you on them. Being able to follow the Associated Press style is a base-level requirement for virtually all jobs in sports media, as is accurate grammar and writing mechanics. Finally, most jobs require you to stay up to date on current developments, and ESPN is renowned for quizzing job applicants about the wide world of sports. You will have five quizzes that cover current news as well as grammar and style issues we will discuss in class. We recommend following the [AJC](#), [ESPN](#), and the [Axios Sports newsletter](#) several times a week, if not daily, to stay up to date.

Portfolio (5%): You will create a professional website featuring your work to be used in job and internship applications. More information will be provided throughout the semester in the "Careers" classes.

Field assignments: (55%):

All field assignment material should be shared as Google Docs with your instructor via Slack DM.

Each element of the field assignment (pregame, in-game, post-game, follow-up, will be counted equally.)

- Stats: 10%

- Play-by-play: 10%
- Gamer 1: 10%
- Social media 10%
- Running gamer 15%

Extra credit: Up to three points on your final grade can be achieved from the following sources:

- Live-tweeting designated events. These will be discussed in class and will include the Title IX symposium on Feb. 2.
- Participating in the college's [research pool accessed via Sona Systems](#) (each study completed counts as one point)
- Participating in other scholarly research (must be discussed with the instructor first)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Gisondi: Field Guide to Covering Sports (2nd edition)

Subscription to [AP Stylebook Online](#)

A Twitter account (use your own or create one for this class)

Slack: Instead of using the hated ELC or a class website, we're going to be doing most coursework using [Slack](#), one of the fastest-growing communication platforms for media and technology organizations. This is an app many news organizations and other corporations are using to manage information and workflow. It's designed to replace shared services, email, texting, etc. for all internal communications. The goal is to give you a sense of how "real world" work takes place. There are apps available for computer, tablet, phone, and Apple Watch, so please install on the devices you use for coursework. Slack "channels" are conversations involving all who subscribe, and we will be doing some work on beats and hosting discussions about skills and issues in those channels. You can also message classmates and me directly using direct messages just like Twitter. They show up on my phone and computers as quickly as texts and emails do. I'd prefer you ask me questions about class that way so you have a record of all class material there.

Axios Sports: You will come to know and love the weekly news/grammar/style quizzes, and many of the questions will be drawn from the daily Axios Sports newsletter. [Subscribe here.](#)

Equipment: Must have before the beginning of Module 3 (Statistics):

- A smartphone that can shoot video and a lavalier mic that can plug into it. [This one is fine](#); [this is the \(more expensive\) one](#) Dr. Suggs recommends.
- A tripod (like [this](#)) and bracket (like [this](#)) for your smartphone.
- Recommended: [A small light kit like this one](#).

CLASS POLICIES

The most important thing to know about this class is that it is fast-paced and deadline-driven. If you miss a deadline, you get NO credit for the assignment. The only exceptions are if you have a serious issue and if you get in touch with your instructor BEFORE the deadline.

We also teach and require a high degree of professionalism. Along with not missing deadlines, this includes being intellectually curious and committed to learning more through this class. It also requires very strict attention to detail, including facts, instructions, and grammar and proper style.

General class policies

- All assignments and exercises are to be turned in by the designated deadline, unless the instructors announce otherwise.
- We will not accept assignments turned in after deadline. Deadlines are 11:59 p.m. on the date specified unless otherwise listed. If you miss the deadline, you get a zero for the assignment. No exceptions, unless you provide documented proof of a major medical or other emergency that took place while completing the assignment. Problems with technology or other equipment do not constitute excusable emergencies. If we are working on a tight deadline, you are responsible for testing your equipment ahead of the deadline.
- Your assignments must be written to the assigned length. We will deduct 10% from the assignment grade for stories that are more than 10% shorter or longer than the assigned length.
- Your assignments must conform to AP style and the rules of proper grammar. If you have more than five style and/or grammar errors in one assignment, we will deduct 50 percent from your assignment grade.
- You must avoid factual errors, including misspelled names. The first one you make will automatically reduce your assignment grade by half. Any others, throughout the duration of the semester, will result in a grade of zero for the assignment.
- You must silence your cell phones at the start of every class. Any exceptions must be approved by the instructors.
- We will be working with social media and visiting web sites as part of our class work and discussion. But if you are online for personal reasons during class, you will be assessed an absence for that class.
- You are allowed three unchallenged absences during the semester. Any absences beyond the three each will result in a two-point deduction from your overall class grade. There are no other "excused" absences. If you have a major medical or other emergency that results in more than three absences, you must provide documentation. In general, we would classify a major emergency as something that keeps you out of all your UGA classes and activities for more than a week. We only want documentation for major emergencies. If you have a medical or other situation that keeps you out of class for just

a day, that day will count against your unchallenged absences. We do not want documentation in those instances.

- While you are in class, and while you are representing the class, you are not a sports fan. Leave your loyalties at home. Do not wear team or event logos or any other sports-related clothing or other items to class, or to any event you attend or any interview you conduct for this class. You will be counted absent from any such event
- Be aware that any form of plagiarism will trigger harsh consequences, possibly including a failing grade for the class and expulsion from the University. If you are unclear on what constitutes plagiarism, please check with the instructors.

Coronavirus Information for Students

First off, we strongly encourage you to get vaccinated and boosted if you have not done so already. Second, we urge you to wear N95 or KN95 masks to classes and indoor field assignments, certainly during the early-semester surge in cases. Many other universities, in the SEC and nationally, have chosen to require both these things. UGA has not. However, we strongly believe these are the best things we can do to protect each other and ourselves.

If you do have to quarantine and/or test positive, please let your Introsports instructor know as soon as possible. Students who are in quarantine will have a separate meeting by Zoom each week to go over issues in class and discuss progress. Quarantining students from all three sections will meet together at a specific time; we'll call it "Section Q." We will not do "Zoom-ins" to class or split the class up unless we are instructed to by the university. Section Q participants will not be counted absent from their regular classes as long as they have told their instructors of quarantining prior to class.

Finally, to emphasize that last point, just let us know what's going on. If you're struggling with the problems of this year, reach out and let us know. We'll make a point of reaching out to you, but you need to do the same with us. In particular, if you have challenges with class or with field assignments, you need to let us know BEFORE, not after. We can work with alternative schedules, but we can't solve your problems once you've created them.

If one of the instructors tests positive, we will let you know how we will proceed.

University COVID policies:

What do I do if I have symptoms?

Students showing symptoms should self-isolate and schedule an appointment with the University Health Center by calling 706-542-1162 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). Please DO NOT walk-in. For emergencies and after-hours care, see <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>.

What do I do if I test positive?

Any student with a positive COVID-19 test is **required** to report the test in DawgCheck and should self-isolate immediately. Students should not attend classes in-person until the isolation period is completed. Once you report the positive test through DawgCheck, UGA Student Care and Outreach will follow up with you.

What do I do if I am notified that I have been exposed?

Revised Guidelines for COVID-19 Quarantine Period

Effective Jan. 4, 2021, students who learn they have been directly exposed to COVID-19 but are not showing symptoms should self-quarantine for **10 days** (consistent with updated Department of Public Health (DPH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines). Those quarantining for 10 days must have been symptom-free throughout the monitoring period. Please correspond with your instructor via email, with a cc: to Student Care & Outreach at sco@uga.edu, to coordinate continuing your coursework while self-quarantined.

We strongly encourage students to voluntarily take a COVID-19 test within 48 hours of the end of the 10-day quarantine period (test to be administered between days 8 and 10). Students may obtain these tests at Legion Field (<https://clia.vetview.vet.uga.edu/>) or at the University Health Center by calling 706-542-1162 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). Please DO NOT walk-in the University Health Center without an appointment. For emergencies and after-hours care, see <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>

If the test is negative, the individual may return to campus, but MUST continue to closely monitor for any new COVID-19 symptoms through 14 days. [DawgCheck](#) is the best method for monitoring these symptoms. If new symptoms occur, the individual must not come to campus and must seek further testing/evaluation.

If the test is positive at the end of the 10-day period, the individual must begin a 10-day isolation period from the date of the test.

How do I participate in surveillance testing if I have NO symptoms?

We strongly encourage you to take advantage of the expanded surveillance testing that is being offered from **January 4 – 22: up to 1,500 free tests per day at Legion Field and pop-up locations**. Testing at Legion Field can be scheduled at <https://clia.vetview.vet.uga.edu/>. Walk-up appointments can usually be accommodated at Legion Field, and pop-up saliva testing does not require pre-registration. For planning purposes, precise sites and schedules for the pop-up clinics are published on the UHC's website and its social media as they are secured: <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/healthtopics/covid-surveillance-testing>.

Counseling and personal needs:

Students who are having a hard time balancing the demands of class, work, and life in general should not feel alone; the combination of freedom and responsibility that comes with college (and especially upper-division courses) is really hard for a lot of people. It's okay to seek

professional help, and UGA has ramped up its counseling services significantly over the past few years. Take advantage of them at <http://www.uhs.uga.edu/caps/>. More broadly, ask for help and feel free to seek advice from us or others before you get in over your head. That said, asking for help is your responsibility. We cannot accommodate undiagnosed learning disabilities or other challenges as excuses for missing deadlines. The University of Georgia is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for qualified students with disabilities in accordance with state and federal laws including the American Disabilities Act. Help for disabled students is available from the Disability Resource Center. More information is available at www.dissvcs.uga.edu. If you have a particular issue that needs to be accommodated, please share it with the instructor as early as possible in the semester.

University policies:

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found here. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

Students who train or use service animals should be aware of UGA policy. A FAQ is available at <http://eoo.uga.edu/policies/pdfs/ServiceAnimalPolicyFAQ.pdf>.

Extra credit:

Special events will be announced throughout the semester, and attending one and live-tweeting it will generally be good for one point on your final grade. Also, you can participate in research studies for one point of extra credit apiece, up to a maximum of three. Sign up through the Grady Research Participation Pool (<http://grady.sona-systems.com>) or send your instructor a screenshot of the thank-you page for a non-Grady study to ensure you get credit.