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Office: Boynton 208B
Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 11:00am-12pm, Tue. & Thu. 10:00am-11:00am
Department: Mass Communication
Class meeting time and place: M & W, 1-2:15pm, Boynton 212

Required Course Materials:


Overview of the Course:
This course examines a wide variety of issues and topics centering around the world of sports. Central to our inquiry and at the core of the course’s content are two centralizing questions:

1) How does sport shape, shift, or influence the everyday world we live in?
2) How does sport communication uniquely address issues such as community, identity, gender, crisis, and politics in ways that other forms of popular culture cannot?
Why study sports? Why spend an entire semester devoted to something that is entertainment? At face value, these might be decent questions to ask, especially as you are considering how many credits you need to graduate and move on into the real world. However, one does not need to look far across campus (hint, massive new basketball complex) to understand the impact something as frivolous as throwing a rubber ball through a metal hoop has on our lived experience. To ignore, or not critically evaluate, the impact the industry, mediatization, and rhetorical effects of sport has in our world would be somewhat akin to living with your head under a rock.

To be clear, this is not a class where we sit around debating our favorite athletes and/or sports teams. Sure, there will be times our discussion might focus on those concepts. But, our main objective is to train ourselves to critically examine the way in which sport can influence various facets of our everyday lived experience. With this approach, it really will not matter if you have a favorite team or athlete, although I hope you are a fan of sports in general. If not, at the very least you will be able to gain insights that will help prepare you for a world that is dominated by this topic. And if your future career or job is related to this area of inquiry, it is my intention to give you a deeper understanding of sport communication in order to separate you from the competition.

I argue sport is a generative concept to study in that it has an incredible ability to unite us culturally. For example, think of how patriotic we might all get during the Olympics. While at the same time, sport by definition is meant to divide, due to its relationship with competition - someone has to win and some team will inevitably lose. Given the highly polarized climate and society we find ourselves in, sport communication offers us a lens examine how we might better navigate a world of “us vs. them.” Finally, there should be room for this class to be, dare I say, fun! Sports at times can wow, inspire, encourage, and connect people from all backgrounds. We should examine many of the topics with a critical posture, but we should also enjoy the fact that at the end of the day, we’re studying the effects of grown adults playing games.

**Course Objectives:**

This course will:

1. introduce you to the academic study of sport communication.

2. introduce you to communication studies theories and research.

3. develop your critical writing, research, and listening skills.

**Communication Program Learning Objectives:**

1. Theory Knowledge: Students majoring in Communication Studies should display comprehension of major communication theories.

2. Theory Application: Students majoring in Communication Studies will apply the major theories in the field to communicate effectively in a variety of settings.
3. Research Methods: Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to use and demonstrate understanding of appropriate methodology in critical, humanistic, or social scientific paradigms in examining research questions in communication.

4. Diversity and Freedom of Expression: Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to recognize the central role of diversity and freedom of expression in a global community.

5. Constitutive Nature of Communication: Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the constitutive nature of communication, which includes forces that enable and constrain communication such as technology, ethics, and organizational life.

6. Higher Order Thinking: Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to demonstrate oral and written competence in logical and critical thinking.

**Accommodations:**
If you have a disability that hinders your ability to perform your best in this course without special attention, please contact me as soon as possible. I will make every effort to meet your accommodation needs.

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Academic Dishonesty:**
As this is an upper-division course, you should know by now what does or does not constitute plagiarism or academic dishonesty. If for some reason, you need a refresher, please consult the electronic Student Handbook: [http://catalog.sfasu.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=78](http://catalog.sfasu.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=78)

There’s really no reason to cheat. If a numerical grade is more important than your personal integrity, you should probably step back and reexamine somethings. If you’re about to miss a deadline, I’d much prefer an email at midnight before explaining your situation so that we can find some workable solution thereafter. Cheating/plagiarism is a short cut that only fixes your situation temporarily, and you’re ultimately only letting yourself down. If you’ve made it this far in life, you’re smart, so keep open lines of communication with me so we can see you excel in this class. Remember, cheaters never prosper….. unless you’re the 2017 Houston Astros, or the 2023-24 Michigan Football team, but we’ll get to that eventually.
Academic Freedom
Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion. In no way are students compelled to learn through the instruction provided within this course.

Acceptable Student Behavior:
“Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.”

We can disagree. We can debate. Shoot, at times we might even find ourselves getting emotional when discussing topics we are passionate about. It is my goal to build and foster a productive classroom environment where you feel comfortable in communicating your perspectives. But there is zero room for demeaning other classmates for their thoughts and opinions. Additionally, there is zero room for intolerant or unsubstantiated hateful conduct and communication. If that seems paradoxical for you, schedule an appointment with me and we can address your concerns privately.

Course Policies:
Communication – It is important that you are familiar with D2L. All your grades and assignment instructions will be posted in D2L. You are also encouraged to regularly check your SFA email. Students who do not check email regularly will still be held accountable for missed information.
**Evaluation:**
This grade will evaluate your success in a different way than what you are accustomed to. Your grade in this course will be earned based on your fulfillment of a grading contract which is posted in a separate document on D2L. Because I would rather you spend your time working, learning, and improving rather than worrying about what grade you receive, none of your submitted assignments will be graded beyond a simple pass/fail system (although I will provide you feedback on most of your assignments). Rather, if you complete all of the required work for this class in the spirit of learning and contributing positively to our overall classroom community, you will receive at minimum a B. If you do more than that, you can receive a higher grade. Here’s a quick breakdown of what this labor based grading looks like. Further details will be provided in the contract.

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**Assignments:**
Here’s a quick rundown and explanation of the work will be doing this semester. More detailed instructions will be provided via D2L or in lecture when necessary.

**Participation/Attendance** – The success of this course depends on an environment where students feel the security in voicing their opinions and discussing freely with other classmates. Which means, the less I talk the more you will get out of this course. Without your active participation (or your presence) you (and I) will be bored to death. I promise to make sure to moderate an open atmosphere where students can free express their ideas and opinions in a safe environment.

**Reading Discussion Posts** – Each Thursday I will open the content for the week. You will have 24 hours to respond to the discussion questions for each respective chapter. You will read the chapter in question and then respond to the specific questions provided. A satisfactory, full credit post will include a 250 – 300 word response and replying to two students. Your post should engage with the material, offer analysis, ask questions, and provide a well-written critique or evaluation based on how you respond to it. Additionally, you must respond to another classmate’s post to receive full credit.
For the record “Yeah I totally agree, you raise great points!” won’t satisfy as a response. Put some effort into reading and responding to your fellow classmates’ brilliant ideas.

Paper #1
**Sports Hero Icon analysis** - We will look broadly at the sports industry and various organization that are involved within it. However, for this assignment your task will be to write 1000 - 1500 word count paper that identifies and argues for your favorite Sports Hero Icon. What athlete has influenced you most, and how or why do you identify with them? What characteristics and values make this athlete your favorite and worthy for consideration as representative of their respective culture? As a paper, you should make an argument that considers your favorite athlete as a symbolic for some particular "rhetoric" or representative of more than just an individual who plays a sport.

Paper #2
**Documentary Response**
We will watch a documentary in class that centers on a subject matter related to our course. You will write a minimum 750-1000 word, double-spaced, essay formatted response paper. You will need to take a position on the subject matter of the documentary, respond to provided discussion questions, and support your perspective through examples and evidence.

Paper #3
**Final Project proposal**
Throughout this semester you should start to conceptualize a project that focuses on sport & communication in some form. Perhaps you want to offer a feminist critique of how your favorite athlete is portrayed in the media. Or, you are fascinated by a specific sports crisis that warrants further investigation. Maybe you want to explore and analyze a current new phenomenon within the sport industry that changes how we, as communication students, understand how sport communicates. All of these approaches could potentially satisfy what I’m looking for.

Since I’m really kind and generous, I give you two options for the final project in this course:

**Option A)** A formal paper that focuses on sport communication topic. Or,

**Option B)** Develop and execute a creative project that focuses on a sport communication related subject matter. The potential for this option is only limited to your creativity, and I’m willing to hear out any idea you have for this.

Regardless of which option you choose you must submit a formal proposal. For this proposal you will provide the following:

1. A brief abstract of what your project will be. Offer a central thesis argument that positions your ideas for the project, and some background information to justify why the project fits the theme(s) of the course.
2. Include an annotated bibliography, in APA format, with 5 entries to show that you’ve done some initial research into the project.

**Sport Crisis Press Conference**

Students will produce and conduct a mock press conference addressing a sport crisis issue that I will detail beforehand. Students will be divided into groups and will need to structure their response in accordance with our understandings of how to effectively communicate as a stakeholder amidst a sports crisis scenario.

**Project Presentation** – In our final two weeks, everyone will present a 8-10 minute presentation on their research project. Share your genius with us!

**Final Paper/Project** – For your final assignment you will complete one of the two options mentioned previously:

1. 1) A formal paper that focuses on a sport communication subject matter. Your analysis should be 2000 – 3000 words in length, articulate a clear thesis/argument, and include at least 5 peer-reviewed sources.

   - Or –

2. 2) Develop and execute a creative project that focuses on hip hop related subject matter. The potential for this option is only limited to your creativity, and I’m willing to hear out any idea you have for this. You will still submit a 500 – 750 word written essay, explaining your theoretical and academic basis for your project.