



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Journalism

MPJO-770-40: SPORTS JOURNALISM

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM

Thursdays, 5:15 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. | Summer 2016

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- Georgetown Downtown Location, C121
- Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The basics of sports reporting have not changed, but the way information is gathered differs dramatically from just five years ago. This course will emphasize the best practices of modern sports journalism — combining traditional methods with non-traditional tools like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Vine. We will also emphasize how to take a story wider through video and audio interviews and how to create a network of one's own through search engine optimization and social media.

Students should be prepared to tackle sports coverage at home as well as in exercises during class that will be completed on deadlines designed to replicate what students may encounter while working at major news outlets. We expect students to use the newest tools in newsgathering. We will emphasize giving students a hands-on experience — not lecturing.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will have:

- * Practice the basics of sports reporting across various media
- * Evaluate how the demands of different media affect the telling of a story
- * Use a variety of multimedia tools to verify content
- * Create and curate opinion/analysis/criticism style sports content

REQUIRED READING

There is no required text for this course. Instructors will instead assign weekly, online readings/viewings during the semester that students should read/watch and be prepared to discuss in class.

Students should be prepared to use their AP Stylebooks (from Reporting and News Writing) or use the online AP Stylebook available through the Georgetown library.

EQUIPMENT



Some of the assignments require that students use audio and/or video equipment. As a reminder, students can check out equipment from the Digital Media Center at Georgetown Downtown (<https://scs.georgetown.edu/students/student-resources/digital-media-center>) or at Gelardin New Media Center in Lauinger Library on Main Campus (<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/gelardin>). It is the responsibility of students – not that of the instructors – to make arrangements to check out whatever equipment they need and to find the time and place to edit their multimedia pieces. We advise students to review the check-out guidelines for equipment both at Georgetown Downtown and at Gelardin and what the hours are for the Mac lab at Georgetown Downtown and the editing booths on Main Campus.

ATTENDANCE

As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). **Absences for classes beyond the initial two will result in further reduction of the final grade.** If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

This class relies heavily on attendance and participation. Punctual attendance is critical. If you have to miss a class – family emergency, medical emergency or other act of God – you must let the instructors know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE AND OTHER GUIDELINES

Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers or other communication devices while in class, unless required to use them for an in-class assignment. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others' views and opinions. Students should come prepared for class discussions and for talks with speakers.

Strict deadlines separate journalism from other professions. You must meet them. All late work will receive a grade of a zero, unless you have asked for an extension of the deadline prior to an assignment being due. Students will only be excused from deadlines due to genuine emergencies, but all reasonable effort must be made to notify the instructors ahead of time.

Many of our deadlines have a short turnaround. That is done intentionally to give students a taste of what it's like to be a sports reporter. Journalists who cover sports have to turn things around quickly – often in a matter of minutes or hours, depending on when games end and when their paper or blog publishes or when their show runs.

ASSIGNMENTS

There are seven assignments in the class, including six topical assignments and the final project. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments should be emailed to both instructors. If at least one instructor hasn't confirmed via email response that assignment hasn't been received, then it hasn't been received. The assignments are as follows:



1. Game coverage critique: Find an example of game coverage that touches on as many elements of modern journalism as possible and discuss in 500 words what you feel the reporter did well and did poorly. (Example: Game coverage that uses video, social media as well as traditional “what happened” play-by-play.)

Deadline: 9 p.m. on Sunday, May 29

2. Game coverage: Students will be assigned a game to watch and cover (accessible online or on TV) with a game story of 1,000 words. (All students will watch and cover the same game.)

Deadline: 5 p.m. on Monday, June 6

3. Sourcing: Find an example of a successful sports story that has used sources from Twitter/Instagram/Vine or other non-traditional sources. Explain in 800 words why you think it is successful.

Deadline: 9 p.m. on Sunday, June 12

4. Live blogging: Write a live blog report off the NBA draft, which will be going on during class, of 1,000 words using multimedia.

Deadline: End of class, June 23

5. Broadcast report: Cover an assigned game for radio (in at least 60 seconds but no more than 90 seconds) or for television/video (in at least 90 seconds but no more than 120 seconds). Audio reports should be submitted via email to a SoundCloud link. Video reports should be submitted via email to a YouTube or Vimeo link.

Radio Deadline: 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 29

-OR-

TV Deadline: 5 p.m. on Wednesday, July 6

6. Reporting across platforms: Using an assigned game, write your coverage tailoring it for a game story, blog post, radio and TV report.

Deadline: 9 p.m. on Sunday, July 17

7. Final project: Write an assigned feature of 1,500 words, do a live 90-second standup for TV and a 2-minute radio talkback. Submit audio via a link to SoundCloud and video via a link to YouTube or Vimeo. Students may choose to revise their final projects, but revisions are not required. If students submit a revision, the grade from the first version and the revised version will be averaged.



Deadline for final project pitch: 5 p.m. on Monday, June 27 (to be submitted via email).

Deadline for final project: 5 p.m. on Friday, July 29.

Deadline for optional revision: 5 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 11.

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Beat coverage using Twitter:	5 points
Topical assignment No. 1:	5 points
Topical assignments No. 2 through 6:	50 points (10 each)
Final project:	30 points
Class attendance and participation:	10 points
Total:	100 points

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

A	100-93	B-	82.99-80
A-	92.99-90	C	79.99-70
B+	89.99-88	F	69.99-0
B	87.99-83		

The instructors will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program
202-687-4246
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center
202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services
202-687-6985
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY



Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of our agenda. The instructors will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (THURSDAY, MAY 26)

Introductory class

Who are we? Who are you? How did you get to be doing what you're doing and what are your career goals? What are we all doing here?

The class goals are to establish and hone baseline journalism skills for traditional and multiplatform outlets. Today's journalist shoots video, conducts interviews, covers games, establishes a social media presence and takes his/her journalism to another level with commentary/analysis while creating a community and conversation around the beat. All this is done responsibly and ethically.

Assignment: Game coverage critique

Deadline: 9 p.m. on Sunday, May 29

WEEK 2 (THURSDAY, JUNE 2)

Reporting and writing basics

Getting started. You're assigned to cover a team. What do you do?

Much of the job, in the beginning, is just showing up, listening, watching, talking to people and establishing your constant presence. Ideas will come from the daily grind of event coverage, as well as from off-day assignments and inspiration from what others are doing in other places. It may come from a pitch by a PR person. Most likely, it's going to come from coverage of a team or event and being immersed and embedded over a season or event (like the World Cup). We'll discuss how a writer tailors his or her style based on the sport he or she is covering, the audience and other variables.

Assignment: Game coverage

Deadline: 5 p.m. on Monday, June 6

WEEK 3 (THURSDAY, JUNE 9)

Sources

A reporter without them isn't a reporter. Because teams are more and more watchful in locker rooms and at practices, it's essential that reporters develop other ways of interacting with players and developing a trusting relationship.

Working with agents is enormously important, but how does a reporter keep from being used? What kind of communication is best? Face-to-face is preferable because of the nuances of communication, but in this age (and because teams are trying to exert more control), working with athletes away from the arena/ballpark/stadium is essential. That means that texting is often a means of getting a comment -- but it's a method that must be used very, very carefully.



Tweets yield stories. Tweets yield reaction for stories. But there are dangers, as with texts.

WEEK 4 (THURSDAY, JUNE 16)

Radio basics

What makes for good radio coverage? The lede is different, for one thing. In radio reporting, it's all right to do a summary lede, the kind one would never do with written files.

There are several ways sports in particular is done for radio:

- 1) Doing periodic updates from an event, usually 20-30 second bites, on the 15s, 30s or 45s until it is over. Usually, these are three to four bites.
- 2) Being interviewed by the radio host, either setting up a game or coming out of one and looking at the big picture of what a win or loss means.

Part of class will be a visit from a radio reporter TBD.

Assignment: Radio report (if you choose to do this over the TV one)

Deadline: 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 26

WEEK 5 (THURSDAY, JUNE 23)

Blogging basics

This is a different beast – and it's an art form that every reporter is expected to master. You may be augmenting your coverage with a blog or using a blog to aggregate and curate.

Augmenting coverage with a blog is ideal because:

- 1) Updates can be done quickly.
- 2) They create a community where fans will hang out while they're waiting for news (Example: The Insider).
- 3) They offer reporters a chance to become comfortable with offering analysis and commentary news.
- 4) There will be times when a reporter is beaten on a story. Blogs allow you to aggregate the coverage from other places (ESPN's Adam Schefter, CSN's Tarik El-Bashir, ESPN 980, NFL Network) while working to confirm the information and taking it further. What did the move that this other person reported on mean? Is another move coming?
- 5) Expectations for a blogger are far broader than for beat coverage. The blogger is expected to select/add photos, graphics, video, tweets, Facebook posts, Instagram, etc. The expectation is that he/she will do so responsibly, with full credit/links supplied.
- 6) The same rules apply for blogs as for anything else in journalism: Do NOT plagiarize. Take no more than a couple of paragraphs and use them in indented form, with links, etc. Attribution is key.
- 7) Transparency helps you build an audience.



Assignment: Live blog report from the NBA draft

Deadline: End of class, June 23

WEEK 6 (THURSDAY, JUNE 30)

TV/Video basics

Covering an event for TV requires collecting the same information but you have to package and use it differently. It's often chopped up into several pieces. Some of it's live for that night, and other parts are taped for the following day or used exclusively for web videos.

You can't rely on using crutches, otherwise known as teleprompters. Notes are minimal because you have to maintain eye contact and not sound scripted. The better command you have of your subject - and that includes the rules of a Collective Bargaining Agreement, for instance - the easier it is.

Also, sports reporters for newspapers or online outlets are often called upon to be an interviewee after they have written a particular story. How do you tell the story succinctly in this other medium?

Not everyone has access to a TV or radio network, but that doesn't mean the modern sports writer won't be able and expected to supplement coverage by filming his or her own reports, doing standups for a website and even doing a podcast. We'll look at how to approach each of those.

Part of class will be a TV reporter TBD.

Assignment: TV report (if you choose to do this one over the radio report)

Deadline: 5 p.m. on Wednesday, July 6

Assignment: Final project pitch

Deadline: 5 p.m. on Monday, June 30

WEEK 7 (THURSDAY, JULY 7)

Using social media

What does Raju Narisetti, deputy head of strategy for News Corp. and the Wall Street Journal, call a journalist who isn't on top of Twitter, Facebook and other social media outlets?

Unemployable.

- Which platforms keep you most informed and spark story ideas?
- Organizing Twitter feeds, Facebook feeds.
- Who can you trust on Twitter?
- Can Reddit be your friend?



Social media is a key component of crowdsourcing, whether it's reaction to big news (Kobe Bryant's retirement announcement) or reaching out to your audience for reporting help.

WEEK 8 (THURSDAY, JULY 14)

Telling the same story across multiple platforms

You've covered a game. Now what? A newspaper reporter is also a TV reporter; a TV reporter must also blog. How does one break the story down from every angle, finding the right one for the platform he or she is using at the moment?

Assignment: Reporting across platforms

Deadline: 9 p.m. on Sunday, July 17

WEEK 9 (THURSDAY, JULY 21)

Round-table discussion

Sports reporters from TV, radio, newspapers, blogs discuss how they do what they do.

WEEK 10 (THURSDAY, JULY 28)

Field trip

We will not meet altogether at Georgetown downtown this evening. Instead, we'll head up to CSN Mid-Atlantic studios to watch a show taping, which happens between 6 and 7 p.m. There are occasional tapings for later shows before the 10 p.m. SportsNet Central and SportsTalk Live. More details to come. Address 7700 Wisconsin Ave, Bethesda, Md. (via Metro, take the Red Line to Bethesda stop).

Assignment: Final project

Deadline: 5 p.m. on Friday, July 29

WEEK 11 (THURSDAY, AUG. 4)

Features and long-form journalism

When are longer stories warranted? How do you make that determination? It isn't enough any more to "just" tell a story in long form, thanks to the New York Times' groundbreaking "Snow Fall."

Assignment: Final project revision (if you choose to do this)

Deadline: 5 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 11

WEEK 12 (THURSDAY, AUG. 11)

Ethics boot camp

Wrap-up/review with real-time ethical decisions.